

**TRUDEAU SQUARED: AN ANALYSIS OF THE 1972 AND 2021 CANADIAN
FEDERAL ELECTIONS**

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Abstract

The Canadian prime ministers Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Justin Trudeau, each serving as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, governed the country during periods that involved both crisis and social transformation. Related as father and son, the Trudeau prime ministers both experienced strong support upon their initial election to the prime minister's office and developed a public image among citizens. Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Justin Trudeau were central individuals during the federal elections of 1972 and 2021, being regularly featured in newspaper coverage throughout these re-election campaigns. Comparatively analyzing newspaper coverage and Liberal Party campaign platforms corresponding to these two election periods supports arguments about the agenda of political topics, and details about the framing, tone, and structure within the coverage and platforms.

Newspapers shape the process of voters becoming politically informed by reporting on activities of the campaign trail, circulating messages of political parties/candidates, and by shining a spotlight on political issues. Elections communication of political parties and candidates guides agenda setting during campaigns, conjointly influencing and being influenced by mass media outlets. Canadian election campaigns are useful events to employ agenda setting because they generate high levels of newspaper attention and strategic communication by political candidates and parties.

Newspaper coverage of the 1972 and 2021 elections features similar political issues such as the economy, employment, and taxes; in particular, an economic slant is heavily present within the coverage. Newspaper coverage from 2021 features a rise in opinionated formats, alongside a subsequent decrease in journalistic objectivity when compared to 1972. While the 1972 Liberal

Party platform does not mention Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the 2021 Liberal Party platform is more leader-centric since many of the pledges are framed alongside Prime Minister Justin Trudeau or the opposition party leaders. Newspaper coverage and the Liberal Party platform from 2021 displayed much more adversarial dialogue compared to the 1972 election; direct quotes of Justin Trudeau were also more frequently adversarial compared to Pierre Elliott Trudeau. As political information across the media landscape continues to evolve, newspaper coverage and campaign platforms remain worthwhile communication forms to track agenda setting during elections.

Dedication

To my parents Joe and Janet, and my girlfriend Randa.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Justin Trudeau are two well-known prime ministers of Canada; they each made their mark on the nation through their leadership during times of societal change. The ways that these political leaders were depicted within mass media had a strong influence in shaping the information available about each Trudeau prime minister and their political parties. The Trudeau prime ministers had to remain aware and responsive to the work of journalists due to the large role they played in their representation within the public eye. This was especially important during election campaigns when the press itself becomes a political institution based on their function of writing about political leaders (Cook, 2005). The mainstream media in Canada, through their coverage of the Trudeaus and the Liberal Party, is especially important in constructing the image of each prime minister. The vision crafted by this dissertation constitutes a detailed portrayal of how these two political leaders and their parties engaged with media forms contextualized by the economic, political, and social conditions of Canadian society.

1972 and 2021 Federal Elections

Throughout their tenures as prime minister, the Trudeaus were especially visible in media coverage during election campaigns; elections themselves are crucial exercises in the democratic process (Fletcher, 1991). The Canadian federal elections of 1972 and 2021 were re-election campaigns for Pierre Elliott and Justin Trudeau respectively, with the information landscape of these elections focused on the proficiency of each Trudeau and the Liberal Party in navigating governance imperatives. 1972 and 2021 are election campaigns where value can be gleaned from the media coverage regarding trends, patterns, and shifts in the journalistic representations of each Trudeau prime minister, the Liberal Party, and the election contest overall. In these re-election

campaigns where the Trudeaus were incumbent prime ministers, they each had a track record of governing performance that they could be judged upon and held accountable for by the press.

The elections of 1972 and 2021 differ from the initial election campaign of Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1968, which was marked by a widespread phenomenon of frenzied support among the citizenry that has been dubbed as Trudeaumania (Litt, 2016). Justin Trudeau also experienced enthusiastic support among voters when first emerging as a federal leader through his own sunny ways approach to politics (Clarke et al., 2017); this reflected echoes of Trudeaumania in a new generation. However, media coverage of the 1972 and 2021 elections does not contain these elements of frenzied popularity and both prime ministers were busy with the quotidian burdens of governance of the nation. During their re-election campaigns of 1972 and 2021, the political climates were more polarized overall; this similarity makes these election years ideal for comparative analysis. The 1972 and 2021 elections both reflected periods of society when the Canadian national identity was contested under economic, cultural, language, and sovereign fronts, which impacts the election issues and media coverage.

Comparative Arguments of the 1972 and 2021 Election Campaigns

The research question posed by this work asks whether comparative trends exist in agenda issues presented by elections newspaper coverage and whether trends can be further detected in the format, framing, structure, and tone of newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms for the 1972 and 2021 federal elections. Analyzing the election coverage from 1972 and 2021 demonstrates that the topics featured in the coverage were largely consistent for each year; these topics tended to revolve around economic themes such as unemployment, cost of living, trade, and other finance-related matters. A recurring aspect is that the media and political agendas for the

2021 election were dominated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While one might presume this resulted in a political agenda dominated by discussions of healthcare, this was not the case. Although a large portion of 2021 election coverage was presented with a contextual frame rooted in the pandemic, most of the issues of focus were economic in nature such as employment, the cost of living, and pandemic welfare supports. The COVID-19 pandemic was not just a healthcare crisis but also a much broader affront against virtually all aspects of life in Canada, with far-reaching consequences for employment, the operations of businesses, and international travel/trade. The political agenda remained distinctly economic, despite the emergence of an unprecedented healthcare crisis in 2021 that dominated the political agenda and reframed societal priorities.

Election newspaper coverage from 2021 had a greater proportion of opinion pieces in comparison to the 1972 election, with a corresponding decrease in objective news coverage in 2021 as well. While objective news coverage is premised on journalistic values such as sticking to the facts, providing a balanced account of competing perspectives, and avoiding inserting one's personal voice within the piece, opinion columns are not value neutral in attempting to persuade the reader of a certain idea or viewpoint. The shift away from objective election coverage and towards opinion pieces in the 2021 coverage is a notable development for Canadian newspapers.

The prominence of political leadership and individual personalities also increased in 2021 when compared to 1972, especially surrounding references to the Trudeau prime ministers. This was consistently prevalent across the newspaper coverage mentioning Trudeau or including a direct quote from Trudeau; this occurred much more frequently in 2021. This leader-centric shift also emerges within the Liberal Party platforms; while the 1972 platform did not mention Pierre Elliott Trudeau aside from a single photograph, the 2021 platform frequently invoked Justin Trudeau in the discussion of policy pledges. The 2021 Liberal Party platform also commonly

frames Liberal Party perspectives or Trudeau's leadership in contrast to the leaders of other parties, primarily Conservative Party leader Erin O'Toole; the same did not occur in the 1972 election. This increased focus on political leadership within the newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms has implications for the process in which Canadian voters are democratically informed. The framing of political information through reference to an individual political leader can introduce renewed considerations for how political parties are presented and evaluated (Hale, 2023; Lapointe et al., 2024). For instance, Hale (2023) asserts the rising focus on individual leaders induces the potential for voting decisions to be led by factors that relate to personal characteristics rather than the substantive details of political policy.

Political conflict is more prominent in the 2021 Liberal Party platform since it contains frequent instances of adversarial dialogue while such dialogue is virtually non-existent in the 1972 platform. The election newspaper coverage from 2021 also published direct quotes with an adversarial tone from Justin Trudeau, which also represents a clear shift from the 1972 coverage and the direct quotes of Pierre Elliott Trudeau that lacked adversarial framing. These observations of adversarial dialogue in the campaign platforms and newspaper direct quotes indicate a shift in the political campaigning strategy of the Liberal Party towards a philosophy of mobilizing support through fostering voter discontent with political opponents.

The Informing Role of Political Journalism

The mainstream media, especially the press, is an important institution that contributes to the landscape of political information that is available during election campaigns. Gilens and Hertzman (2000) argue that "Without some form of institutionalized news media, citizens could not obtain the information necessary to evaluate political leaders, to assess social conditions, and

to judge the desirability or undesirability of alternative public policies (p. 369). Newspapers, among other forms of mainstream journalism, are a foremost means for observing political communication because newspapers report on political topics of relevance during elections according to professional journalism values that include objectivity, investigation, and holding political figures accountable (Anderson, 2019; Floyd, 2019; McKercher et al., 2011).

As noted by Anderson (2019), democratic elections are proceduralist in nature; professional journalism is similarly proceduralist in its occupational purpose of producing political information that adheres to certain standards. In writing about the close relationship between the democratic process and journalistic objectivity, Anderson (2019) states “...truth emerges via reportorial methods, a reasoned consideration of all sides of a debate, the amassing of evidence, and the fair presentation of opposing arguments” (p. 10). Given this unique public role of political journalism, there is a precedent of scholarship that analyzes newspapers to critically interpret political communication during election campaigns (Gidengil, 2014; Hayes & Lawless, 2021; Trimble, 2007; Wilczek & Thurman, 2022; Wolfgang et al., 2021).

Communications theorist Robert McChesney (2016) argues that journalism has high societal importance by stating, “...journalism is a requirement for a democratic society or a free society; any sort of quality society requires credible, independent, powerful journalism” (p. 128). According to this perspective, newspapers are necessary for democracy because journalists are professionals who have the training, access, and expertise to provide information to the public that is relevant for representative governance (Simons et al., 2017). McChesney (2016) adds that “You need journalism, a media system that provides a range of opinions, so that people, citizens, can weigh them, draw their own conclusions, and form their own opinions” (p. 128). Michael Schudson (2008) provides six functions of journalism to comprehensively outline the importance

of the press for the democratic process. The six functions are information (allowing citizens to make educated political choices), investigation (to investigate governmental power), analysis (to help citizens interpret complex issues), social empathy (to let people understand the perspectives of others, including those less fortunate), public forum (to provide an opportunity for dialogue between citizens), and mobilization (to advocate for relevant causes and motivate individuals to take action themselves). Consideration of these six functions further demonstrates how the press holds a unique societal role in contributing to the democratic process, providing information that is essential for meaningful self-governance.

Considering the crucial civic role of the press that has been outlined above, it is asserted that newspapers are a foundation of political information that offer an established record of the media agenda. While other types of political communication such as broadcast, radio, and digital media sources can also have an agenda setting effect, newspapers provide a baseline agenda for the media landscape, further influencing other political institutions. This baseline impact is rooted in the professional working values of newspaper reporters, whereby judgements are made about which topics, events, or individuals are considered newsworthy. The values that guide such judgements of newsworthiness are not merely held by individual journalists but also reflect the operating imperatives of newspapers as media organizations (Tuchman, 1978).

In their text *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, authors Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) emphasize that professional journalism is built upon a commitment to truth in providing citizens with the information they require to live autonomously. These authors also pinpoint that the function of journalistic gatekeeping has been, and continues to be, of crucial democratic importance:

The rise of the Internet and the coming of broadband, however, do not mean, as some have suggested, that the concept of applying judgement to the news – of trying to decide what people need and want to know to self-govern – is obsolete. They make the need all the greater. (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001, p. 24)

When considering the media logics of political journalism, traditional newspapers emerge as a foundational source of political information that influences the media agenda, political discourse, and public deliberation during election periods (Joyce, 2013; McChesney, 2016; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Minoio, 2021; Soroka, 2002). While it is recognized that broadcast, radio, and digital media sources can and do have an agenda setting effect, it is emphasized that newspapers provide a baseline of key issues during election campaigns. This stems from the precedent of newspapers as a written record of civic affairs within democratic societies as well as the pronounced occupational imperatives of newspaper reporters to identify newsworthy situations, interview sources, and act as a watchdog for powerful institutions.

Campaign Platforms as Political Party Outreach

During each election campaign and in advance of the voting day itself, it is customary for political parties to release an official election platform that informs voters of their philosophical positions and proposed actions for a variety of political issues. Within their campaign platforms, political parties have an opportunity to present their identity to readers, constructing their platform messages in a manner that maximizes the mobilization of voters and electoral success (Belchior, 2020). Akin to newspapers being the foundation for other types of political journalism and deliberation, several studies have found that election platforms are the root source of campaign discourse provided by politicians and parties (Askari & Page, 2020; Belchior, 2020; Dantzler,

2022; Robson & Jarvis, 2020). Given that journalism is an integral component of the communication landscape during elections, political parties are not only designing platform messages to influence public opinion but also to fulfill the journalistic conceptions of newsworthy material, thus amplifying and further legitimizing platform discourse (Belchior, 2020; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Wilson, 2013).

The formally released Liberal Party platforms corresponding to the 1972 and 2021 federal elections are prominent communication sources for analyzing the Liberal Party identity, the political issues perceived as important by the party, and their stance on such issues. The Liberal Party platforms provide a clear window into the values and objectives that the Trudeaus (and their campaign managers) sought to convey as their political brand to journalists and citizens. Analysis of the campaign platforms informs deeper insights surrounding the communicative engagement of the Trudeaus and the Liberal Party, deepening the perspectives that surface within the newspaper election coverage. The choice to focus on newspapers and campaign platforms is founded upon the existing precedent of political communication studies focusing on newspaper coverage and political party platforms (Belchior, 2020; Falasca, 2014; Gidengil, 2014).

Agenda Setting as a Theoretical Tool

Agenda setting is a particularly optimal theory to analyze communication during election campaigns because it provides a framework to measure how media affords exposure to a limited set of election issues (Glynn, 2018; Minooie, 2021). The research of McCombs and Shaw (1972) was formative in developing the idea of agenda setting by observing correlations between the topics discussed within media sources and responses by citizens to most important issue surveys. Agenda setting theory dictates that media coverage of political issues guides the topics of

consideration and deliberation among the public, illustrating the impact of media upon public opinion. By focusing on newspaper coverage and campaign platforms as established forms of political information, the opportunity to assess agenda setting through a comparative analysis allows for an understanding of our present information landscape as being in a state of continuous evolution (Brosius et al., 2019; Chernov & McCombs, 2019; Clarke, 2013; Pilon, 2017; Whaley, 2013). The frameworks of agenda setting have evolved to consider additional stakeholders beyond the mass media, since alternative sources of journalism, public relations campaigns, private corporations, and lobbyist groups have continued to impact the policy, media, and public agenda (Vargo, 2018).

The merit of agenda setting has been established through research that uses this theory to quantitatively measure the scope of media coverage; this is affirmed by Elisabeth Gidengil (2014) in discussing how “Agenda setting occurs because of individuals’ need for orientation; people turn to media to learn about politics” (p. 128). This argument further illustrates that agenda setting theory can inform political communication analysis by allowing researchers to track the role of media in providing an orientation of political issues that shape election outcomes. Since Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Justin Trudeau led their respective re-election campaigns of 1972 and 2021 during two distinct eras of Canadian society, there is value in comparing agenda setting outcomes while acknowledging the contextual differences of each period.

Analysis of the 1972 and 2021 elections focuses on the presentation of issues within newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms, rather than studying the preferences of citizens. By employing a media focused analysis of two Trudeau elections, the objective in drawing from agenda setting theory is not to assess the media influence on opinion formation but instead to compare the content of the media coverage and Liberal Party platforms between the elections of

1972 and 2021. Since these campaigns have certain parallels despite occurring in different eras, knowledge can be gained by observing trends or shifts in both a journalistic and (political) party sense. A principal objective in analyzing the newspaper coverage is to track the political topics (i.e., the agenda issues) that are selected as newsworthy by journalists during the campaigns.

It is equally important to track and evaluate elements of format, framing, structure, and tone within the coverage, since these aspects are important when considering the democratic function of journalism. Strömbäck and Nord (2006) assert that a crucial way journalists exercise a framing influence within articles is through their selective publishing of direct quotations within coverage; to analyze journalistic framing of the Trudeaus, the direct quotes of each Trudeau are isolated to determine the types of statements that are chosen by reporters to appear in the coverage. The closer examination of these quotes also illustrates the campaigning rhetoric of each Trudeau; this is relevant to the campaign since these leaders are recognized as iconic public symbols and newsworthy individuals (Aaldering & Van Der Pas, 2018; Bittner, 2018; Litt, 2016). Aspects of framing, tone, and structure are also tracked and evaluated within the Liberal Party campaign platforms for each election to observe comparative trends in the communicative outreach of the Liberals.

The Healthy Functioning of a Democratic Society

Accurate, balanced, and comprehensive journalism, as well as transparent and accessible communication from political parties, are necessary parts among several components of a healthily functioning democracy (Savoie, 2019). The function of political communication and the press in a democratic society is further unpacked by the public sphere, which is valuable as a theory that

demonstrates how private markets and structural conditions of media and politics impact the information landscape during elections.

The public sphere was conceptualized by German social theorist Jürgen Habermas (1989) to articulate how in the mid-sixteenth century the realm of public discussion underwent a transformation rooted in the accelerating privatization of the political arena and economic market. As a landmark theory of communication studies, the public sphere informs the study of elections by signalling the incompatibility of a neoliberal free market society with a representative and equitable democratic system. Notably, the newspaper industry and journalism as a practice have undergone distinct evolution throughout the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, which can raise implications for their function within the public sphere (Sundstrom, 2023; Väliverronen, 2022). More broadly, this signifies the merit of critically evaluating the landscape of journalistic and political communication based on an understanding of informed public deliberation as essential to democracy (Graham, 2013; Häussler, 2018, Johnson, 2005).

Journalism has an important public service role to promote the democratic ideal of citizens making informed voting decisions based upon how the policy positions of parties serve both individual interests and the collective good of society (Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024; Häussler, 2018; Joyce, 2013; Simons et al., 2017; Trenz, 2024). This public service role of journalism, especially during election periods, is fulfilled when newspapers adhere to procedural journalistic values such as accuracy and balance to provide readers with the necessary resources to ensure that their voting decisions are not guided by misinformation (Anderson, 2019).

The public sphere transformation is significant when considering the societal role of the press because a free-market economy has the tendency to impede political journalism as a service

rooted in the public good (McChesney, 2012; Schudson, 2008). Political and journalistic organizations each have sets of priorities, values, and objectives that guide their communicative approach to informing the citizenry during election periods (Anderson, 2019). These sets of priorities, values, and objectives are described by Sundstrom (2023) as political and media engagement respectively; this concept of strategic engagement encapsulates the positionality and vested interests of political and mass media institutions that often stem from market pressures.

The key point of tension however, rests in the fact that political and journalistic logics routinely come into conflict with not only each other, but also the idealistic conditions of a healthily functioning democratic society (Capella & Jamison, 1997; McChesney, 2016; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024; Štetka & Mihelj, 2024; Van Aelst et al., 2020). A fundamental premise throughout research in this field is that the landscape of political communication, especially during election periods, is heavily contested because of the juxtaposing imperatives of journalists and politicians (Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006; Sundstrom, 2023). The all-encompassing contestation that shapes political communication is not static but rather evolves alongside the economic, political, social, and cultural development of Canada (Pilon, 2013). A fundamental insight that arises from assessing the evolution of this relationship between political and journalistic logics is that an acceleration of neoliberal values further strains the contested nature of election communications (Glynn, 2018; Štetka & Mihelj, 2024).

Overview of Chapters

The subsequent content is organized into seven chapters that proceed to develop comparative argumentative discussion surrounding the contents of the newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms. The second chapter explores how communications scholarship has

examined election campaigns, illustrating the importance of key concepts including agenda setting, the public sphere, journalism values, the journalism crisis, and public opinion. The chapter demonstrates how the public sphere presents a contextual backdrop for the public discussion of political issues, further clarifying the role of the press and party platforms in creating the conditions for a properly functioning democratic society (Graham, 2013; Häussler, 2018; Johnson, 2005). Additionally, agenda setting has evolved from merely tracking the salience of political topics within media coverage to an expanded model that considers the modern wider landscape of communicative stakeholders and intersection that occurs between media, political, and public agendas (Joyce, 2013; Kowalewski & McCombs, 2019; Soroka, 2002).

The third chapter establishes the main sites of difference between the 1972 and 2021 election eras, especially surrounding the cultural, economic, and technological conditions of each period, serving as contextual knowledge for the research findings. The 1972 and 2021 elections share similarities in each representing periods of transformation and crisis within Canadian society; these eras reflected newfound political progress and unprecedented governing challenges. The fourth chapter describes how the methodology of content analysis is implemented to quantitatively record the agenda issues featured within the sample of newspaper coverage and elements of format, framing, structure, and tone within the coverage and Liberal Party platforms. An examination of elections literature demonstrates the strong precedent of content analysis as an employed method for the study of journalistic and political communication. Having established both the theoretical foundations and real-world societal conditions applicable to this study, the fifth chapter presents arguments that arise from the analysis of newspaper coverage for the 1972 and 2021 elections. In addition to assessing trends in the types of coverage and adversarial dialogue, the analysis provides a regionally stratified distribution of the agenda item topics for each election

year. The direct quotations included within the coverage attributed to each Trudeau prime minister are also analyzed to compare the types of comments made by each leader that were selected by journalists for publication.

The sixth chapter analyzes the Liberal Party campaign platforms for the 1972 and 2021 elections to comparatively evaluate the ideological branding conveyed through the framing, tone, and structure of the platform pledges. Areas of focus when comparing the Liberal Party platforms are the portrayal of political leaders, the presence of adversarial dialogue, and the style of language used in the pledges to mobilize support from voters. The seventh chapter summarizes and discusses a Liberal Party internal campaign memo from 1960, providing a glimpse into the strategic outlook of the Liberals in that year. This memo further contextualizes the research findings by indicating some of the Liberal Party objectives and motivations during their time serving as the opposition, rather than vying for re-election. The eighth chapter concludes the work by summarizing the arguments arising from the comparative analysis and affirming how trends in the newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms impact the role of the media landscape in democratic society. The concluding chapter also discusses avenues for future research that comparatively analyzes journalistic and political communication produced during Canadian election campaigns.

Chapter Two: Unpacking Agenda Setting and the Public Sphere

Democracy, and more particularly democratic elections, are deeply rooted in communication. Landmark concepts of communication studies such as agenda setting, the public sphere, public opinion, and the permanent campaign demonstrate how communication is produced and consumed. These theories contribute to insights of the process of Canada's democracy and election campaigns because they offer a lens for interpreting communication, especially political journalism, as an important aspect of elections. It has been firmly established in communications literature that the press holds an important function within the healthy functioning of democratic societies (Anderson, 2019; McChesney, 2016; Schudson, 2008); the public sphere offers clarity of what these democratic expectations of the press are and agenda setting sets out a framework of how the press exerts an influence through its coverage.

Democracy, the Public Sphere, and Agenda Setting

The public sphere and agenda setting are valuable theories to thoroughly understand the principles of a democratic society, the ideal elements of democratic elections, and the role of political communication in contributing to a well-informed citizenry (Häussler, 2018; Savoie, 2019). The term democracy, famously originating in Ancient Greece, is difficult to define due to its wide scope, contextual nature, and constantly evolving implementation. While charting its conceptual development, Savoie (2019) asserts that democracy is underpinned by three foundational notions: representation, accountability, and equality. He also writes, "At a minimum, a liberal democratic society calls for free speech, competitive political parties, due process of law, privacy, a free media, protecting individuals from the tyranny of the majority, a representative and transparent government, and a professional bureaucracy" (p. 5). The elements listed within this

passage involve individual liberties (such as the freedom of speech) or the ideally expected qualities of political actors and the press (such as competitive political parties and a free media). The study of Canadian democracy is by no means straightforward; there is debate of “whether democracy should be understood primarily as a set of procedural rules for public input or whether it necessitates a more substantial division and allocation of economic, social, and political power” (Pilon, 2021, p. 34). While essential democratic systems are formally enshrined in Canada, McGregor (2018) argues that deeper exploration of issues such as voter absenteeism are crucial to investigate whether the nation’s democratic health is most optimal.

To articulate how the foundational components of democracy intersect to produce societal and governing outcomes, the public sphere as a concept serves to illuminate the playing field in which qualities of democratic consequence unfold across the political-media information landscape. The public sphere was originally coined by German social theorist Jürgen Habermas in his 1962 publication *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, yet this volume was not translated into English until 1989 by Thomas Burger. In his monograph, Habermas is not merely introducing the idea of the public sphere but also demonstrating that it has undergone a transformation rooted in the accelerating privatization of the political arena and economic market.

The public sphere can be interpreted as an idea to encompass the discourse, interaction, and debate that exists among the public body of citizens, detached from their occupational identities. Habermas (1989) emphasizes how the modern democratic public sphere has been closely linked to the rise of capitalist economic and public markets in the mid-sixteenth century. As political reports (and later journalism) began to be published more widely, distinctions emerged between the literate professional class and illiterate labouring class. These changes necessitated an interest in the collective discussion of shared issues, resulting in “a forum in which the private

people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion” (Habermas, 1989, pp. 25-26).

The social change that accompanied the growth of markets was a mindset of accumulation and consumption which had an irreconcilable influence upon the nature of public debate. The sharpening distinctions of class and overwhelming doctrines of capitalism have resulted in changes to the very fabric of the public sphere. Debates were no longer grounded in a collective social interest but instead guided by an array of private economic imperatives (Whaley, 2013). Through this transformation, Habermas (1989) describes that the “equilibration of power now takes place directly between the private bureaucracies, special-interest associations, parties, and public administration” (p. 176). This bureaucratization of political issues and distancing of the public from the governing process is rigidly opposed to the founding values of democracy as an individually representative process. It is necessary for the public sphere to serve as a site of civic discussion and critical reasoning in which the laws of the state and market are disregarded. The outcomes of this bourgeois public sphere (or *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*) were ideas and ideology, with Habermas emphasizing how universal rules for debate allowed for the legitimate interpretation of subjective issues.

It is clearly expressed by Habermas that this early public sphere only included the elite, male, bourgeois class such as jurists, doctors, pastors, officers, professors, and capitalists. As such, even the idealized public sphere had fundamental flaws and inequalities; however, the crucial significance is that a structural transformation inhibits its core function. When incorporating the public sphere within research frameworks, it is also important to recognize that the original conception of the idealistic public sphere was exclusionary, given the historical context of rights holders being limited to property-owning men in the societies upon which the public sphere was

derived. However, Habermas himself has accepted this critique, in noting that there is a “...necessity of recognizing the contribution of nonbourgeois groups to the evolution of modern society” (Whaley, 2013, p. 19).

In an updated reflection upon this concept, the text *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere* by Nancy Fraser et al. (2014) provides nuanced contributions exploring the continued existence of a public sphere on a global scale. The introductory contribution by Fraser (2014) strives to overcome the Westphalian suppositions of Habermas’s public sphere, determining if the concept remains applicable in political communities without a geographically situated territory. Fraser emphasizes that a blind spot of Habermas’s work is that the potential for a public sphere is exclusively framed within the boundaries of the nation state. She asserts that for the public sphere to remain an effectively critical framework beyond the boundaries of a nation, there must be a rethinking of two concepts: legitimacy and efficacy. In terms of legitimacy, it is emphasized that the public sphere must constitute an inclusive environment for interaction. The transnational public sphere must exist according to the “all-affected principle” and can be considered legitimate if there is an equal opportunity for participation on a global scale (Fraser, 2014, p. 27).

It is also essential that the transnational public sphere presents itself as efficacious. According to the Westphalian conception, sovereign governments were presumed to be the means for public opinion to be translated into tangible amendments. Thus, it is now necessary for an international or global body to be held accountable in responding to the needs of this transnational public sphere. Fraser (2014) acknowledges the immense task that is required to “on the one hand, create new, transnational public powers; on the other, to make them accountable to new, transnational public spheres” (p. 33). In an increasingly globalized world, the decline of sovereign

powers is a formidable disruption to traditional notions of the public sphere, but also an opportunity for a reconceptualization of this idea.

The modern extent of globalization reflects how political issues are not often exclusively national in reach, with Canadian affairs closely tied to other nations or transnational corporations. Canada is a nation in which migration and multiculturalism are integral to its identity; according to the 2021 national census, approximately 8.3 million (23%) of Canadians reflect the demographic of landed immigrant or permanent resident (Statistics Canada, 2022d). This further affirms that public concerns of Canadians are not constrained to sovereign boundaries, given the close ties many residents hold to other nations. This entails that accelerating globalization has expanded the range of ideas that might influence the democratic principles and voting considerations of the public. The notion of transnationalization is important to integrate within the analytical framework of the public sphere because a decline in the rigidity of sovereign boundaries has resulted in both newfound sources of influence upon the public opinions of individuals and a broadening of pertinent issues that can factor into voting decisions and/or political engagement.

When considering how such debates practically emerge in the Canadian media landscape, the sovereign character of the public sphere is not erased but exists in a more complex position. In focusing upon radio, the scholarship of MacLennan (2011) investigates how the efforts of Canadian public radio to avoid cultural imperialism from the United States may have occurred at the expense of neglecting the regional distinctness of Canada's Northern communities. In a similar vein, the research of Ojo (2006) identifies crucial disconnects between Canada's multicultural legislation enshrined by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1971 and the scope of ethnic representation within mainstream print media. The public sphere shortcomings of mainstream media are further demonstrated in the work of MacLennan and Biswas (2023), illustrating how emerging media

forms on the Internet such as podcasts provide “new sources of non-regulated alternatives to broadcasting”, allowing for multilingual and multicultural content to receive representation (p. 6). These cases illustrate how the sovereign framing of media cannot be entirely neglected but rather stands to demonstrate the rationale behind content of different media forms.

Public sphere scholarship has also remained highly critical of the press in exacerbating the dominance of private interests, expressing how the commercialized nature of journalism has contributed to economic interests being privileged over the democratic need for civic information (Habermas, 1989; Krzyzanowski & Ekström 2022). This tension has revealed an important critique of journalism scholarship that has remained constant throughout the technological and cultural development of media (Hackett & Gruneau, 2000; Hackett & Carroll, 2006; McChesney, 1999; Nichols & McChesney, 2012; Postman, 1985; Tuchman, 1978). Furthermore, the market structure of corporate journalism invokes issues of media sustainability, as demonstrated by a case study of the news media industry in Nigeria (Ojo, 2018). Scholarship has demonstrated that democratic values and transparency in government are shaped by the relationships between journalists, parliamentarians, lobbyists, activists, and other civic actors (Mohr & Furey, 2018; Van Aelst et al., 2020; Wootten & Kiss, 2019).

Public sphere scholarship provides an avenue for understanding how democracy is, above all, an exercise in deliberation (Graham, 2013; Häussler, 2018; Johnson, 2005; Joyce, 2013; Paul & Terry, 2021; Trenz, 2024). The reason that journalistic coverage and party platforms are influential during election campaigns is not just because they represent static documents of the public record, but also because they are key drivers of the public deliberation that allows citizens to establish informed stances as their political preferences (Belchior, 2020; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Mohr & Furey, 2018). Democracy is therefore an interactive process, in which ideas are not

only presented but exchanged and moulded in light of differing perspectives (Graham, 2013; Saunders, 2020). Furthermore, it is argued that “Deliberative democracy places discursive checks on the actors insofar as they can neither convincingly represent contradicting positions at the same time... nor positions that directly contradict their actions...” (Häussler, 2018, p. 23). This signifies how the press is a crucial measure for deterring politicians from acting undemocratically and also distills political events and information into news coverage that the public can understand (Anderson, 2019).

While polarization and disenfranchisement can be antagonistic to a healthy public sphere, the notion of contrasting ideas and conflict rest at the heart of democracy itself. It is noted by Wilson (2013) that “...conversation and public reasoning, and the tension between individual freedom and the authority of the state, are central elements in the public sphere” (p. 20). This perspective has been advanced by several scholars of the public sphere who take note that political conflict cannot and should not be eliminated; rather, rigorous scrutiny must be applied towards the conditions of debate and informational resources to ensure that political conflict occurs in a manner that is equitable and serves the best interests of society (Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024; Häussler, 2018; Joyce, 2013; Russell & Eissler, 2021; Štetka & Mihelj, 2024; Thomas, 2024; Trenz, 2024; Van Aelst et al., 2020; Vu et al., 2020; Wilson, 2013). The contents of such debates are strongly influenced by the agenda setting function of mass media, in recognizing the relationship between political topics that are considered newsworthy by the press and the topics that receive attention in the public sphere.

It is important to begin any discussion of agenda setting by recognizing the landmark article of McCombs and Shaw (1972), which serves as a formative early study of this concept. This study involved two main components surrounding the 1968 United States presidential election: a content

analysis of the ten most visible media outlets in the area and a survey of 100 undecided voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The purpose of this research was to measure whether a connection existed between the political issues more prominently featured by the mass media and those identified as most important by the voters. The hypothesis of McCombs and Shaw (1972) was confirmed in observing “a very strong relationship between the emphasis placed on different campaign issues by the media and the judgments of voters as to the salience and importance of various campaign topics” (p. 181). As a result, this article is significant because it illustrates that the mass media appears to dictate (or at least correlate to) the specific issues that are considered important by citizens during elections.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) did not seek evidence that the media dictates how people formulate viewpoints about election issues but simply demonstrated that the media offers some topics increased attention while leaving out others. Thus, the influence of agenda setting can be understood as gatekeeping on a broad scale, as it has been noted that “agenda-setting is essentially the cumulative result of gatekeeping processes” (Soderlund et al., 1984, p. 31). These authors provide a useful distinction as gatekeeping reflects the intervention between journalists and events or sources, while agenda setting stems from the audience interpretation of media coverage (Soderlund et al., 1984). The relationship between agenda setting and gatekeeping continues to receive modern re-interpretation, especially as technological developments change the processes of information production and consumption. Notably, Blanchett (2021) focuses on how increased consumer data available to news outlets has led to a rise in participatory gatekeeping, defined as “the creation of processes, or news-room routines and norms, that are developed as a direct result of audience input interpreted through audience data” (p. 774). The concept of participatory

gatekeeping further illustrates the democratic implications of how audience receptivity exists within the form and content of political communications (Trenz, 2024).

The work of McCombs and Shaw (1972) also identifies what has perhaps become one of the foremost critiques raised by studies of political journalism. Namely, a lack of media focus on political issues themselves in favour of a sensationalist preoccupation that frames the election campaign as a sporting event or horserace (p. 178). This has been illustrated by critical analyses of media revealing a dramatization of campaigns in respect to the personalities of leaders, a fixation on poll results, the use of short soundbites that lack context, and the reduction of complex issues to two-sided, zero-sum conflicts (Brants & Voltmer, 2011; Gasher et al., 2016; Jamieson & Campbell, 1982; Marland et al., 2014). While the findings of McCombs and Shaw (1972) are considered highly insightful and informative of mass media influence, there are a couple of important caveats that ought to be considered when interpreting their arguments.

First, it must be emphasized that there are other factors besides mass media that shape the perceptions of individuals: social characteristics, lived experiences, conversations with friends or colleagues, direct campaigning from politicians, messages from advocacy groups, and countless other considerations (Edy & Meirick, 2019; Gidengil, 2014; Valenzuela, 2013). These varied factors are important to consider when interpreting how observations of agenda setting shape the production of political communication in its different forms. Second, there are so many different media sources that it is difficult to pinpoint the consequential impact of different information in relation to one another. This point continues to grow in prominence as the amount of available media content exponentially increases with the emergence of 24-hour news networks, satellite television, and the proliferation of online content (Paul & Terry, 2021; Trenz, 2024).

While the media landscape of a geographical population could be confidently reduced to ten outlets in the era of the McCombs and Shaw (1972) study, replicating such an exercise in the present day seems all but impossible. However, the meticulous data trails of individuals' online activity present newfound opportunities for the analysis of large and detailed datasets. Nonetheless, there are many barriers to the accessibility of such comprehensive and personalized user data, regarding both the liberty of individuals involved and the willingness of site owners to share this data. Furthermore, the algorithmic design of social media platforms represents a crucial means of understanding how individuals encounter political information online; however, corporations are typically not required to release this information (Noble, 2018).

In light of such considerations, questions emerge of whether it is truly possible to measure media agenda setting, and second, whether this framework is useful for studying democracy's viability. These uncertainties do not dampen the significance of McCombs and Shaw's (1972) study but rather indicate the complexity of individual opinion formulation. Agenda setting can be applied as a broader means for understanding how the journalism industry actively upholds the status quo of a society marked by consumerism and class inequalities. As a result, it becomes possible to realize how the well-documented critiques of political news are connected to glaring injustices and shortcomings in the democratic process.

A key point raised by Roessler (1999) posits that most existing research focuses on aggregate level media effects, rather than exploring how agenda setting occurs on a personalized basis. As a result, the term "individual agenda-designing" is offered to describe how people develop political knowledge based on three influences: (1) media consumption, (2) interpersonal factors, and (3) intrapersonal factors (p. 672). For Roessler (1999), interpersonal factors comprise the political discussions people have within their social networks while intrapersonal factors

constitute “the impression that an issue touches one’s own course of life, no matter if this influence factually exists or is only perceived” (p. 673). While this framework has certain limitations, it is rather valuable in illustrating how news coverage is not the sole means through which specific political issues become salient to individuals.

Stuart N. Soroka’s book, *Agenda-setting dynamics in Canada* (2002), offers a comprehensive contribution to agenda setting from a Canadian perspective, developing a singular framework that incorporates media, the public, and policymakers. Throughout the analysis, Soroka demonstrates how these three attributes originate from the three types of agenda setting (public, media, and policymaking, respectively), asserting that “differences in agenda-setting dynamics are most often products of differences in the issues themselves” (p. 16). In this all-encompassing approach to agenda setting, it is noted that the public, media, and policy likely have varying levels of influence over how issues are interpreted. This notion is supported by identifying factors that influence issue attributes including obtrusiveness, duration, abstractness, and dramatic nature; for instance, media effects are weaker for obtrusive issues, since citizens will develop an opinion more heavily based on their direct lived experiences (Soroka, 2002; Vu et al., 2020).

Soroka’s (2002) key findings entail that the prominent issues appear to be largely driven by real-world salience, the sensationalist issues guided by media attention, and the governmental issues directed by applicable legislation and speeches. Unique communication strategies are needed to establish the public, media, and policymaking agendas; this agenda setting framework allows for an understanding of why citizens are differentially receptive to information depending upon the prevalence of values related to the content and style of media (Edy & Meirick, 2019; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Kim, 2018; Martin, 2013). These material considerations of media, in conjunction with the issue attributes identified by Soroka (2002), can allow for deeply

substantiated insights of the logic of why certain media forms favour specific types of political discourse.

Considered in conjunction, the public sphere and agenda setting each serve as foundational anchoring concepts for communications research of democratic society. These two theories are of crucial importance in contributing to scholarship of elections, since each respectively demonstrate how political communication contributes to a broader social democratic environment. The public sphere and agenda setting are particularly valuable as interpretive lenses for researchers to establish parameters for the idealized expectations of a healthily functioning democratic society. While the public sphere serves as an abstract model for understanding how political communication is situated within the democratic process, agenda setting theory provides concrete nuance to assessing the political objects (i.e. issues) and salience (i.e. framing, tone, and structure) featured within media (Kowalewski & McCombs, 2019; Mohr & Furey, 2018). The recognition of issue types within agenda setting is fundamentally important for charting the implications of certain issues gaining prominence within media and policy agendas as opposed to others. The landmark research of Soroka (2002) provides an in-depth typology of political issues, illustrating how certain topics are more susceptible to originate from media, policymaking, or public sources respectively. An important distinction is between obtrusive and sensationalist issues; as argued by Gidengil (2014), “There are good reasons to believe that agenda-setting effects will be stronger for issues that are normally off the public’s radar screen, and weaker for issues like health are already matters of public concern as a result of people’s daily experiences (p. 128). As agenda setting research has demonstrated, the mere priming of certain issues receiving media attention versus other issues not being mentioned can have an immense impact on election campaigns (Belchior, 2020; Brosius et al., 2019; Edy & Meirick, 2019; Gidengil, 2014; Guo & Vu, 2018;

Joyce, 2013; Kim, 2018; Martin, 2013; Minooie, 2021; Mohr & Furey, 2018; Russell & Eissler, 2021; Wilson, 2013).

Beyond the agenda objects themselves, it is through the salience of issues that media has an agenda setting impact; attributes of agenda items can be revealed in framing and tone of media coverage (Chernov & McCombs, 2019; Mohr & Furey, 2018). As stated by Aruguete (2024), “The media not only define the political map of what is important but also give us clues to delimit our interpretation of what we learn about through the news” (p. 352). This awareness is reflected in a range of agenda setting literature that does not merely track the prevalence of issues but also analyzes considerations informed by journalistic norms and values (Russell & Eissler, 2021; Vu et al., 2020).

The consensus-building perspective of agenda setting recognizes both objects and their salience, whereby journalists are “presenting their audience with a limited set of issues and a particular representation of these issues... to provide agreement on important issues and a general perception of how to understand those issues” (Joyce, 2013, p. 232). The framework of agenda setting levels applies a networked perspective to evaluate how issue objects (first level) and issue salience (second level) together result in communicative outcomes (Aruguete, 2024; Kowalewski & McCombs, 2019; Mohr & Furey, 2018; Russell & Eissler, 2021). The framework of agenda setting levels has been further situated within an analytical framework known as agenda building, which “accounts for multiple stakeholders influencing the process of salience formation and transfer across multiple stakeholder groups” (Mohr & Furey, 2018, p. 86). While the earliest conceptions of agenda setting were limited to demonstrating how media outlets establish the parameters of dialogue through their selection of issues, modern research has shown that complex networks of political, journalistic, and private actors exert differential and contextual influence

upon the agenda of political issues (Belchior, 2020; Brosius et al., 2019; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Vargo, 2018; Valenzuela, 2013).

Scholarship of Journalism

The necessity of a free, independent press has been widely recognized as an integral component of a healthily functioning democratic society (Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024; Joyce, 2013; McChesney, 2016; Minooie, 2021; Savoie, 2019). Journalism is often considered as the foundational informant to the citizenry about issues and events that people cannot directly familiarize themselves with over the course of their everyday lives (Lippmann, 1922; Martin, 2013). A great deal of information provided by journalists is required for the basic level of understanding that citizens must possess when living as members of a community, making decisions as consumers, and voting in elections (Joyce, 2013; Trenz, 2024). Furthermore, it is commonly expected that journalists use their professional abilities to identify the most civically relevant topics and then convey relevant information with integrity. This perspective reflects a Western journalistic approach, placing paramount importance on values such as objectivity, accuracy, balance, facticity, and conciseness (Anderson, 2019; Floyd, 2019; McKercher et al., 2011).

Throughout the twentieth century, reporting standards have further developed to entail journalists as having a mediating role for the newsworthy topics of society, in presenting all sides of contentious issues and affording fair representation to different groups (Floyd, 2019; Thomas, 2024). This mediating function is important since the press acts as a filter or gatekeeper by routinely presenting messages of economic and political elites to the public (Joyce, 2013; Paul & Terry, 2021). However, the fact that most mass media outlets exist as capitalist enterprises raises

an array of concerns about how motivations of profit might impede the purpose of journalism as rooted in the public interest (Greenspon, 2017; McChesney, 1999; Schechter, 2005). Furthermore, these concerns extend beyond the information available to Canadians about domestic issues. Applying a content analysis of coverage of Africa by the Toronto newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, Ojo (2014) observes how the content is heavily limited to topics of an economic, political, military, or public health nature. A crucial finding of this research is that readers do not gain a “broader picture of the diverse cultural, geographic, human and linguistic dimensions of Africa” (Ojo, 2014, p. 54). This is especially concerning when one considers how a limited focus upon sensationalist and often negative stories can contribute towards simplified and stereotypical perceptions of geographically distant regions such as Africa. These concerns have also surfaced in studies of Canadian elections, since simplified, sensationalist, and context-deprived articles can hinder the process of informed democratic citizenship (Anderson, 2019; Boydston & Lawrence, 2019; Penney, 2022).

The research of Paul and Terry (2021) employs a concept known as the Power of First to explain the elevated role of the news media as shaping public deliberation; this entails the legacy or vertical media’s ability to “...introduce an issue in a certain way, to draw the first frames around that issue, will lay out the landscape where all subsequent consideration of that issue is considered” (p. 207). The fundamental importance of traditional journalism, particularly newspapers, of informing public deliberation and influencing political agendas has been recognized in an array of scholarly research (Brosius et al., 2019; Chernov & McCombs, 2019; Edy & Meirick, 2019; Gidengil, 2014; Guo & Vu, 2018; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Joyce, 2013; Kim, 2018; Martin, 2013; Minooie, 2021; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024; Trifiro & Zhang, 2021; Van Aelst et al., 2020).

While the rise of digital technologies and Web 2.0 have challenged the monopoly of traditional journalists as information sources for political affairs, there is strong evidence that professional reporters still hold a highly influential role in setting the agenda for online deliberation (Paul & Terry, 2021; Prochazka et al., 2018; Tenenboim & Cohen, 2015; Ziegele et al., 2020). Although there is optimism that social media has allowed for a greater diversity of voices in the information landscape, Freedman and Obar (2016) affirm that democratic media reform is not accomplished through the mere existence of such platforms. For social media to have a truly transformative impact on democratic engagement, there are several challenges to overcome surrounding access, training, and literacy in deriving the most optimal benefits from such digital tools (Freedman & Obar, 2016).

To understand how the capitalist framework has compromised the democratic role of journalism, it must be clarified what its idealistic function consists of. It is broadly understood amongst scholars and media professionals that journalism, specifically hard or civic news, is socially necessary to inform the citizenry about key events, institutions, and actors. In the words of Ojo (2020), “journalism’s constitutive missions, which include transmission of information, are central to the formation of public opinion and civic discourse in any given geographical space” (pp. 1179-1180). There is a distinct connection between democracy and journalism, since it is believed that having access to quality news coverage helps individuals develop well-informed public opinions (Gidengil, 2014; Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024; Joyce, 2013). This is further affirmed by Zelizer (2017), in writing that journalism should be a “unifier, an enabler of understanding and reasoned deliberation, a provider of common reference and informed decision-making, a warning light and promoter of reconciliation, a facilitator of conversation” (p. 65).

Journalism is not typically envisioned to promote a certain manner of interpretation to readers, but rather to provide the informational background to understand crucial and often complex issues.

As mentioned, there is an implicitly held expectation that the contents of news coverage entail accurate, balanced, and relevant information (Anderson 2019; Thomas, 2024; Wolfgang et al., 2021). These professional values are encompassed by the blanket term objectivity, which has been defined simply as “the belief that one can and should separate facts from values” (Schudson, 1978, p. 5). In practice, the notion of objectivity is quite complicated and has spawned many debates surrounding how objectivity ought to be measured or applied, whether objectivity is possible to achieve, and if objectivity is in fact desirable for journalism at all (S. Wu, 2022). These debates are especially pertinent for news items during election periods: such political ideas can involve very in-depth topics that signal different moral or practical considerations for different stakeholders (Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024; Väliverronen, 2022).

The idea of journalistic objectivity is considered highly important to democracy since it promotes the circulation of political information that is free of bias or private motivations (McChesney, 2016; Schudson, 2008). Joslyn (1984) asserts that political journalism offers “a needed corrective to the self-serving and strategically designed communication of candidates and their surrogate campaigners” (p. 100). Perhaps in response to the increasingly strategic information being produced to sway the press, conceptions of objectivity have historically evolved to include greater levels of interpretation and analysis by reporters (Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997; Steele & Barnhurst, 1996; Wolfgang et al., 2021). Schudson (1978) writes how objectivity as the foundation for journalism became increasingly challenged in the 1960s, since non-critical, value-free reporting “reproduced a vision of social reality which refused to examine the basic structure of power and privilege” (p. 160). This need for greater levels of critical interpretation by journalists

is further punctuated by the fact that issues of high public interest can be distorted by powerful interest groups (Glynn, 2018; McChesney, 2012).

A subsequent rise occurred in the prevalence of interpretative reporting, which preceded a spike in enthusiasm for investigative reporting. While interpretative reporters still aim to avoid explicit bias, this modified objectivity “seeks the background to a story, uncovers motives for actions, and tracks downside issues, (while) the straight reporter passively accepts the public record” (Schudson, 1978, p. 168). Interpretive reporting grew into professional and public favour due to increasing levels of dissatisfaction with traditional objectivity, becoming more prominent following World War Two (Wilson, 2013). The debates surrounding journalistic objectivity hold no clear solution, as there will always be ideological disagreements about how the news ought to be constructed to best serve society. However, Simons et al. (2017) warn of a situation where the economic interests of the media industry impede their capacity to perform a public service in offering political news.

Journalism scholarship has demonstrated that political reporting holds far greater responsibility than merely gathering information; journalists are depended upon to act as defenders of the public interest in holding elite actors and organizations accountable to their constituents (Schudson, 2008; Usher & Kim-Leffingwell, 2023). Although the mass media has always been guided by motives of financial gain, the concern is that economic imperatives of traditional journalism are becoming severely disconnected from informing the public about issues of civic (especially local) interest (Harte, et al., 2019; Simons et al., 2017). These concerns have been greatly exacerbated by an industry-wide financial crisis in journalism: relatively recent trends of media concentration, conglomeration, and sensationalism do not bode well for the democratic function of journalism (McChesney, 1997).

More specifically, various problematic trends have emerged in traditional journalism which include:

...an over-reliance on official sources, to collude with and/or amplify the dominant ideology to the benefit of elites, to distort public issues by reducing them to two-sided, zero sum contests, to adopt practices that undermine democratic public life, to frame politics as a game of insiders motivated only by electoral success... (Gasher et al., 2016, p. 30)

Thus, it is important to outline how market forces both within and external to journalism contribute to (but are not the sole cause) of the reality that citizens in Western democracies are politically uninformed. The exploration of such constraints allows for connections to be established for the perceived shortcomings of Canadian journalism as a democratic cornerstone and to devise appropriate solutions. For instance, the work of Donison and MacLennan (2021) demonstrates how podcasting has provided an apt venue for both independent and public broadcasters to feature the experiences of marginalized and racialized Canadians during the World Wars. These ideas are a continuation of the outlook that multicultural communication is an essential element of social cohesion; Sevigny (2002) states, “What is required for the development of a Canadian identity truly based on equality and justice is a free and open forum where all concepts can be aired, enjoyed and shared” (p. 3). While addressing the longstanding democratic issues of privatized media is important, it is equally important to conceive new spaces for voices to be heard and stories to be shared.

The text *Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good* by Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1997) presents a useful overview of tensions within the journalistic and

political realms that tend to be mutually reinforcing in a negative manner. The main premise of the book articulates how the pressures of economic and political competition in Western societies have led both journalists and politicians to become increasingly hostile towards one another, coming at the detriment of maintaining a democratic working relationship. The concept of a spiral of cynicism is coined to describe the observations of American political debates and reporting becoming increasingly disconnected from concrete issues, instead focusing on conflict, slander, criticism, attacks on personalities, and an obsession with electoral strategy (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). The authors do not attribute blame solely on either politicians or the press, noting, “It is impossible to know which came first – the conflict-driven sound-bite-oriented discourse of politicians or the conflict-saturated strategy-oriented structure of press coverage” (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 9). As a result, the work of Cappella and Jamieson (1997) crystalizes the problematic situation that arises based upon the rapid evolution of journalism and political dialogue shifting further into sensationalist or entertainment-oriented values, in conjunction with the imperatives of electoral success prioritized by political actors. This adversarial climate within the media landscape creates an outcome of newspaper coverage becoming sites of contestation.

Newspapers are considered a contested site of communication because the production of articles reflects a complex intersection of competing forces and values. Journalists find themselves under strained occupational imperatives, as they grapple with a commitment to upholding journalistic values of accuracy, fairness, objectivity, and balance within coverage (Clarke, 2013). These norms and values of professional journalism have been termed “media logics”, which dictates the dominantly observed journalistic frames of election coverage, especially those rooted in strategy and conflict (Falasca, 2014, pp. 583-584). This process is strained because newspapers find themselves under immense economic pressure, resulting in less resources and a heavier

workload for journalists; this outcome is historically traceable and directly stems from the economic consolidation of journalism (Clarke, 2013). It is important to note that media logics and journalistic procedures are constantly evolving, with political, social, and technological changes contributing to the content of political news (Martin, 2013; Paul & Terry, 2021; Trenz, 2024). For example, Tandoc Jr. and Oh (2017) reflect upon how technological affordances have made possible a rise in big data journalism, which can affect media routines through the agenda-setting process and a rise in analytical reporting. Other scholars such as Hrynyshyn (2020) have noted that online information platforms raise democratic concerns rooted in the types of extremist content recommended to users, which can ultimately “undermine attempts at informed and reasoned debate” (p. 138).

Broadly speaking, the media landscape is contested when considering how the democratic imperatives of journalists come into conflict with the efforts of politicians and other individuals to influence media coverage in their favour as sources (Belchior, 2020; Hujanen, 2016; Van Aelst et al., 2020). These democratic imperatives are conceptualized by S. Wu (2022) as journalistic roles; such roles include “journalism as the provider of public service, watchdog of the powerful in society, and disseminators of information, among others” (p. 5). An additional point of contestation can be found in the crossroads of journalistic treatment towards politicians as both democratic actors and celebrity figures. Penney (2022) notes that the media’s economic fragility has spurred “...journalism’s growing engagement with hot-button political issues that spark valued audience identification and affect, yet in ways that risk exploiting issues such as identity politics for short-term monetary gain and flattening the complexity of public discourse in the process” (p. 107). These considerations indicate potential reasons for concern that journalism is susceptible to straying from its democratic mandate of providing a public service that offers substantive,

unbiased political information. This concern has continued to accelerate in recent decades as efforts of public relations become more professionalized and advancements in digital technologies allows powerful actors to influence the media agenda with increased pervasiveness (Boydston & Lawrence, 2019; Martin, 2013; Paul & Terry, 2021). The rise of digital communication technologies has not just reshaped the process of journalistic production but also challenged the “monopoly status” of traditional media as “curators of information” (Toff, 2019, p. 877). This perspective is aligned with the arguments of scholars such as Glynn (2018), who present the notion of elite theory to state that “...policymaking, both nationally and locally, is dominated by powerful elites; relatively few individuals or small groups, such as business leaders, military leaders, and specific political leaders, who have connections to each other” (p. 98).

Conventional journalistic practices dictate normative expectations for aspects corresponding to the newsgathering process of political reporting, that is nevertheless shaped by the campaign discourse of politicians and other prominent sources as well. This is further complicated by additional factors that shape the content of political news such as editorial oversight, organizational imperatives, advertiser influence, policy requirements, and a lack of resources (McChesney, 2016). The work of Välvirronen (2022) observes that media industry executives implored journalists to adopt a more “audience-oriented and commercial approach” in the 2000s (p. 376). However, political journalism is an area that has not displayed this shift, whereby “the focus is on elites and citizens’ presence has remained marginal” (Välvirronen, 2022, p. 376). There is no definitive consensus of how journalists should effectively balance the reporting outcomes of elite-oriented approaches and citizen-oriented approaches (Wolfgang et al., 2021).

Also, the concrete relevance of official party platforms has likewise received thorough attention within scholarly research as informational resources that facilitate the conditions for

healthy public sphere deliberation among voters (Askari & Page, 2020; Belchior, 2020; Dantzer, 2022; Robson & Jarvis, 2020; Van Aelst et al., 2020). In the words of Belchior (2020), party platforms are “...core instruments for parties to state their political aims to the public, summarizing party policies, materializing ‘authoritative and representative’ statements of their stances at a particular point in time” (p. 17). In essence, party platforms are crucial to evaluating the democratic public sphere because they present the concrete policy stances of political parties that sets the stage for healthy public deliberation rooted in an understanding of the fundamental differences between the parties. This dynamic solidifies the importance of quantitatively measuring values that extend beyond the newsworthy topics themselves, using an interpretive lens that considers the framing, tone, and structure of articles as well. If one accepts that political journalism should serve as a marketplace of ideas, it is crucial that an adequate diversity of sources and perspectives are featured (Thomas, 2024; Trifiro & Zhang, 2021; Wolfgang et al., 2021). Since newspapers are recognized as “opinion leaders in media markets”, election journalism must be held highly accountability for facilitating well-informed publics (Wilczek & Thurman, 2022, p. 2272).

Public Opinion and Elections Scholarship

Studies of public opinion are important in revealing audience traits through their interpretation of such communication, concretely illustrating the democratic implications of media trends. An early landmark text in this field is *Public Opinion*, in which Walter Lippmann (1922) takes an oppositional stance regarding the efficacy of democratic systems due to the inability of individuals to formulate stable and well-founded public opinions about the vast range of political topics. He articulates how the shortcomings of public opinion rest upon the fact that individuals cannot directly experience most situations and therefore rely upon the “pictures in their heads” (Lippmann, 1922, p. 13). Since people are regularly at a distance (geographical and otherwise)

from situations that may impact them, there arises “...the problem of introducing (1) definiteness and distinction and consistency or stability of meaning into what is otherwise vague and wavering” (Lippmann, 1922, p. 81). It is emphasized that the reliability of majority rule is greatly compromised by the fact that public opinions are constantly in flux and often formed out of considerations not founded in social reality. The perspective of Lippmann (1922) laid the groundwork for a public sphere in suggesting that democratic activity is guided by the collective formation of individually held opinions, however flawed they might be.

The release of *Public Opinion* generated significant debate about the political capacities of citizens, with John Dewey (1927) writing *The Public and its Problems* as a work of rebuttal. While agreeing with Lippmann that it is impossible for individuals to develop expertise on all political issues, Dewey (1927) provides a far more optimistic outlook of democracy’s effectiveness. He offers the simple observation that “democracy is a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best” (p. 143). This text argues that the state should not be expected to serve as the source of social change or improvement: the conditions for such change must already exist, with governments acting as the formal mechanism to codify such progress (Dewey, 1927).

In divorcing democratic efficacy from the actions of states, Dewey gives importance to public interaction and the wider environment of political discussion. This culminates in his thesis: “The essential need, in other words, is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. That is *the* problem of the public” (Dewey, 1927, p. 208). This touches upon a central tenant of communication studies as well; it is media structures themselves which heavily dictate the “methods and conditions of debate” (Dewey, 1927, p. 208). For Dewey, the key to a stronger democracy is authentic, communal discussion amongst the public (and public officials) to define and articulate the most pressing needs and values of society.

The positions of Lippmann and Dewey are not as oppositional as one might initially believe; both adhere to the impossibility of the omni-competent citizen and affirm democracy can be effective in small groups. The point of departure stems from their perceived potential for individuals to develop stable and well-informed insights about civic issues, with most being beyond one's personal expertise or interest. While Lippmann is downright pessimistic about a working public sphere, Dewey accepts its potential on the condition of a reformulated society that mitigates the shortcomings of opinion formation. In his conclusion, Dewey (1927) offers the bleak warning that "Unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself" (p. 216). The democratic shortcomings of mainstream media can contribute to a widening gap in the avenues for public participation in the political process (Russell & Eissler, 2021; Savoie, 2019). This notion has been termed by Maley (2011) as the "democratic deficit", reflecting a gap between political representatives and the participatory capacities of citizens to meaningfully express their political desires (p. 4).

To better situate the landmark concepts discussed including agenda setting, the public sphere, and public opinion, it is essential to reflect upon how such theories are prevalent in studies of democratic elections. A few recurring areas of focus in Canadian elections research are Canada's unique national identity, material developments, and socio-cultural elements. Political communication scholarship has shown that Canada's public sphere is premised upon a nationalism that is reflective of the country's diverse regions and political priorities; thus, agenda issues and political ideologies will hold differing salience throughout the nation.

An array of scholarship has affirmed that the highly diverse needs and qualities of Canada's geographical regions lead to certain disparities in the electoral and governance processes (Béland & Lecours, 2023; Cochrane & Perrella, 2012; Gibson, 2019; Harrison, 1996; Savoie, 2019; Senese,

2000). An especially prominent source of political division arises from Quebec, where many political issues of a provincial nature nonetheless impact the campaigns and policies of federal parties. Debates surrounding Quebec separatism are essential to understanding Canada's national political landscape and cannot be ignored when analyzing approaches for the governance of Canada (Martel, 2000).

An analysis of Canadian federal elections found that from 2006-2021, "Quebec independence has remained stable and key in explaining election outcomes" (Daoust & Gareau-Paquette, 2023, p. 1). Visionaries of Canadian nationalism must astutely regard key social conditions, including "language, culture, history, media structures, communication networks" that are fundamentally unique in Quebec (McRoberts, 1993, p. 684). Beyond Canada's regional divisions, the urban-rural divide is arguably under-discussed when interrogating the electoral process as a factor of historical and present significance. According to Armstrong II et al. (2022), differences between urban and rural areas of the country are among "the most striking features" of Canada's federal elections (p. 85). Furthermore, the 1960s and 1993 to the present are identified as two out of the three periods of Canadian history in which urban and rural divisions have been especially prominent (Armstrong II et al., 2022).

Turning to material and technological factors of governance, Canadian elections are also impacted by practices of political microtargeting that contribute to the rise of the permanent campaign (Bennett & Gordon, 2021; Dommett et al, 2023). In addition to influencing the types of political information Canadians are exposed to, online microtargeting has diversified the collection of public opinion data. Notably, there is a rising frequency of online political surveys as opposed to the formerly dominant methods of telephone or in-person polling (Wilson, 2013). The findings of Breton et al. (2017) are resoundingly optimistic regarding online surveys; namely, online

surveys are more conducive to the inclusion of multimedia and allow for greater variance in the questions posed.

A recurring point of consideration and concern in Canadian politics is the evolution into a permanent campaign (Fletcher & Blais, 2012; Gidengil, 2014; Marland & Francoli, 2022; Marland et al., 2017; Moir, 2023; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024). The permanent campaign has particular ramifications for the egalitarian model of election spending legislation enacted in Canada, especially since online messages are “inexpensive, flexible, and can be deployed rapidly” (Fletcher & Blais, 2012, p. 152). Given the blurred lines of campaign periods and election advertising, there are newfound challenges to ensuring that inequalities inherent to a market society do not “extend into the electoral arena, where equality should be the guiding principle” (Fletcher & Blais, 2012, pp. 153-154). This demonstrates that changes in the media platform through which a communicative practice is exercised (i.e., election advertising) can create democratic and policy outcomes. Therefore, the democratic impact of communication is not solely dependent upon the discourse itself, but also the technological mode of delivery, given its various affordances and limitations (Hrynyshyn, 2020).

Such concerns of upholding equality within electoral spending legislation can also be directed at the behaviours and motivations of third-party actors during Canadian federal campaigns (Lawlor & Crandall, 2018). In addition to domestic priorities of electoral fairness, the impact of foreign electoral intervention must be closely observed, especially given the increased potential for globalized communication online. In clarifying that foreign electoral intervention can take both legal and illegal forms, Palmer (2023) offers a case study of the 1963 Canadian federal election, which was marked by highly strategized intervention from the United States. The historical precedent of external influence is also evident regarding Canadian media, as demonstrated by the

observations of MacLennan and Cooling (2023) with respect to the relationship between the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Their historical analysis, focusing on the early days of the CBC in the 1930s, illustrates the clear implications of executive decisions and lobbyist efforts in shaping the direction of public media (MacLennan & Cooling, 2023). Therefore, foreign influence upon Canadian society is not a new issue but continues to evolve in conjunction with the technological affordances of online platforms.

On a cultural level, Canadian elections continue to evolve in response to social changes and movements against traditional points of discrimination including gender, race, and sexuality. The scholarship of MacLennan (2005) provides a model of how Canadian media research benefits from adopting a historical lens to better understand the evolutionary nuances of culture, illustrating how Canadian radio programs of the 1920s and 1930s were regularly understood by listeners according to the dominant ideals of the American radio landscape. This further clarifies and complicates the positionality of Canadian media audiences that historically have not only been citizens of a sovereign state but also continuously sought agency according to their demographic qualities.

The historical research of MacLennan (2008) is valuable in demonstrating that media audiences conceptualize their identities according to various demographic and intersectional traits, exemplified by the changing radio listening habits of Canadian women during the depression period. This possesses high relevance to the notions of both democracy and agenda setting because it cements the understanding that media engagement is always a two-way dynamic, even in the case of platforms with more passive audiences such as newspapers and radio. As observed by MacLennan (2013) in studying Canadian audiences in the early days of radio, “the listeners had to learn to listen” (p. 311). In a modern interpretation of the audience influence upon newspapers, the

research of Blanchett et al. (2024) anchors the notion of journalistic role performance to encapsulate the challenging process through which reporters attempt to secure and maintain the engagement of their audiences.

Other Scholarship of Political Communication

Several complementary concepts have been explored within communications literature to examine concerns that both politicians and journalists are straying further from their idealized democratic functions. Among these concepts is the notion of mediatization, in expressing the extent to which political actors modify their behaviour in response to media-oriented objectives (Brants & Voltmer, 2011; Isotalus & Almonkari, 2014). Mediatization is relevant to governance because it has shown evidence of extending beyond campaign communications, impacting governance decisions and the development of policy as well (Isotalus & Almonkari, 2014). On a related note, the idea of infotainment expands upon platform considerations of professional media values by discussing how the formats and techniques of entertainment-focused genres are being increasingly applied to political news (Marinov & Saurette, 2023). Akin to concerns of political journalism straying into infotainment, there is also evidence to show that the conflict-oriented nature of certain media such as cable talk shows might be unduly influencing citizens to lose trust in political institutions and political leadership (Forgette & Morris, 2006). Francoli (2024) states that “...many governments around the world continue to face a crisis of legitimacy, characterized by low voter turnout and a widespread feeling of distrust in government institutions” (p. 659). This identified decline in trust of democratic institutions is not merely attributed to media influences but is also tied to related factors such as declining partisanship, increased voter volatility, and changes in the approach to campaigns by politicians (Bittner, 2018; Štetka & Mihelj, 2024; Van Aelst et al., 2020).

These ideas are valuable in developing a more nuanced interpretation of typical concerns surrounding the impact of digital and social media upon politics. The research of Francoli & Ward (2008) explores the question of whether blogging by politicians has the potential for “...enhancing democratic debate in an era where representative institutions have been looking increasingly distant from, and irrelevant to, citizens” (p. 21). The democratic upside of the Internet exists in its ability to foster interactive debate and meaningful discussion of policies between election representatives and the local populations whom they represent. Although online blogs hold the potential to promote conversational democracy where representatives can receive feedback on pressing issues, Francoli & Ward’s (2008) study found that blogging had not been adopted in a widespread manner, noting “Canadian parliamentarians have seen little pressure to blog but equally little assistance to help them do so” (p. 37). In recent years, the presence of online political information and communities of political discussion has continued to exponentially grow, yet challenges persist in the form of disinformation, hate speech, foreign electoral interference, and power imbalances in opportunities for expression (Albrecht, 2006; Bennett & Gorden, 2021; Dahlgren, 2013). It is a fractured and polarizing environment that contemporary politicians face when taking up the challenge of creating online spaces for conversational democracy and public interaction.

Clarke and Francoli (2014) illustrate an important avenue for future research by considering whether the digital age has encouraged governments to be more secretive and adopt communication practices guided by the idea of a permanent campaign. These authors point to the perspective of New Political Governance (NPG), which holds the digital age responsible as “...a partisan resource wedded to securing the political fortunes of the governing party and, thus, an institution that betrays entrenched principles of good governance in Westminster systems” (Clarke

& Francoli, 2017, p. 241). Although scholars such as Noveck (2009) theorize that digital technologies will enable the public service to be more participatory and open, the viewpoint of NPG can ensure that the analysis of political communication considers the well documented indications of a permanent campaign. For example, Aucoin (2012) highlights how the NPG perspective recognizes a merging of governance decisions and strategic campaigning, leading to politicization within the public sector as well. Esselment, et al. (2017), advance the framework of communication control to reflect changing practices signalled by the permanent campaign which include “...candidate screening, political advertising, tight media protocols, and direct marketing” (p. 300). The affordances of digital platforms extend the ability for parties to exert control over their communicative and campaigning practices, so it is apparent how the strategic mindset of a permanent campaign will influence a wide array of party operations.

Rather than viewing the Internet as creating a sudden disruption to the production of accurate and objective political information, a more grounded perspective ought to recognize the gradual shift towards sensationalist-friendly media platforms (Maley, 2023; Mari, 2022). The Internet alone has not placed the democratic function of journalism at risk; the issues facing Canada’s journalism industry reflects an institutional collapse, evident through an examination of key media infrastructures and policies (Pickard, 2020). The implications of mediatization extend beyond a mere sensationalizing of political topics; the pervasive influence of media logics onto the political realm can deepen certain inequalities as well. For instance, literature has documented how gender biases and stereotypes have been applied to journalistic coverage of female politicians (Aaldering & Van Der Pas, 2018; Trifiro & Zhang, 2021; Trimble, 2007). Given Canada’s rapid evolution into a diversified cultural identity, the issue of equal and meaningful representation of marginalized peoples is prominent within the political landscape. The research of Trifiro and

Zhang (2021) has observed how “...minority candidates, especially people of color, were able to harness and leverage their own social media platforms in order to assert their salience in voters’ minds” (p. 101).

This affirms the fact that developments in communication technologies and platforms for self-representation can provide newfound opportunities for minority candidates to overcome existing biases or representational barriers within traditional media. While the overall diversity of political candidates continues to increase, the study of Lapointe et al. (2024) challenges this apparent progress by investigating the notion of socially disadvantaged individuals being relegated as sacrificial lamb candidates. Their findings reveal that candidates who are women or belonging to LGBTQ2S+ communities are “significantly overrepresented in landslide defeats” and “underrepresented in wins” (Lapointe et al., 2024, p. 7). The implication is that Canada’s political parties might be seeking to construct an image of diversity whilst purposely encouraging the nomination of minority candidates in ridings where they do not perceive any chance of victory regardless. This critique can thereby be understood as not merely an issue of social justice, but also a reflection upon Canada’s electoral process inciting a lack of political attention within certain ridings.

In a similar vein, the analysis of Hale (2023) found that “there is ample reason to expect that racial attitudes affect Canadian voters” (p. 659). This observation is substantiated by analyzing dispositions of voters with negative attitudes toward racial minorities following Jagmeet Singh assuming the position of NDP leader. The author concludes that political parties are at risk of an “electoral penalty” if they are represented by a non-white leader (Hale, 2023, p. 655). These problematic realities cannot be ignored in striving to improve the democratic efficacy of Canadian elections and the scope of political communication overall.

Chapter Three: Contextualizing the Two Trudeau Elections

The 1972 and 2021 election years had various parallels and differences surrounding the economic development of Canadian society, governing imperatives through policy creation, social movements of political activism, and cultural intricacies that guided relations or tensions amidst the unique regional identities of the country. During any election campaign, Canadian society has unique economic, political, social, and cultural conditions which shapes the agenda of political debate and governing priorities of the Liberal Party (Clarkson, 2005). For the elections of 1972 and 2021, both Trudeaus adopted a political philosophy that was centred upon unifying the Canadian population in response to social and economic challenges.

For the 1972 election, social justice was prominent as signalled by rising movements in feminism, racial equality, and Indigenous rights; this was closely paralleled in 2021 by the visibility of the #MeToo movement, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the discovery of unmarked graves on the sites of former residential schools. There were also economic parallels between these two elections, with unemployment being the major agenda issue of the 1972 campaign and economic vitality being a main concern in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. Differences exist in the societal conditions for these election periods as well including the overall advancement of technology, the impact of globalization on the economy, disparities of wealth, and the cultural diversity of the nation. In terms of the campaigns themselves, the 2021 election differed from 1972 because of the newfound sources for distributing and accessing political information, including within online environments. Structural changes within the media industry, the increased professionalization of public relations, and the expanded opportunities for data collection by political parties are also contextual differences when comparing 2021 to 1972.

The 1972 and 2021 elections were each called by the incumbent Liberal Party, likely to maintain the momentum of their majority mandates from the previous elections. Although Justin Trudeau and the Liberals framed the 2021 election as arising from the need for Canadians to ‘have their say’ on governing priorities during the pandemic, opponents and critics were quick to label the snap election as a selfish and reckless attempt to gain a majority mandate. If the 1972 campaign was labelled as ‘the election about nothing’, then the 2021 contest could in contrast be seen as ‘the unnecessary election’ or ‘the election nobody wanted’ (The most pointless election, 2021; Webster, 1972a). Additionally, Pierre Elliott and Justin Trudeau each had unique personalities, governing philosophies, leadership styles, achievements, and controversies that surrounded them. A thorough understanding of the Trudeaus as politicians and individuals is important for gleaning the democratic significance of their communicative acts, given their elevated status as icon figures.

Context of the 1972 Canadian Federal Election

It is well established among cultural historians, political theorists, and media scholars that the period post-World War Two until the early 1970s was a highly transformative and influential time in Canada’s development as a nation (Bothwell et al., 1981; Bryden, 1997; Granatstein, 1986). In particular, the 1960s is identified as a decade in which many crucial events, policies, and issues emerged that solidified modern day Canada; this decade signalled the shift to “a more secularized and liberal state” (Blake et al., 2011, p. 332). From the conclusion of the war through the 1960s, the perspectives of Canadians evolved across several economic and cultural topics; this occurred alongside an increased understanding of global affairs, spurred in part by advancements in communication and transportation technologies (Ferguson & Roberts, 2005).

For the 1972 election, the governing focus was deeply rooted in solidifying Canada's national identity and fostering unity across the country's regions. Pierre Elliott Trudeau faced scrutiny and resistance arising from sentiments of discontent, particularly from Quebec separatists in protesting a failure to adequately acknowledge the French language and culture (Ferguson & Roberts, 2005). Perhaps the greatest election issue, however, was the extent of unemployment that persisted throughout the country; the concerns of citizens regarding employment and the taxation system were stoked by opposition leaders Robert Stanfield (Progressive Conservative Party), David Lewis (New Democratic Party), and R  al Caouette (Social Credit Party) in an effort to unseat the incumbent majority government of Trudeau's Liberals (Regenstreif, 1972a; Sellar, 1972). Beyond the prevalent agenda items of national unity and employment, the 1972 election was regarded by some commentators as a 'boring' contest or an election about nothing (Webster, 1972b). Although the Trudeaumania of 1968 had considerably worn off over the four years since the previously mandated election, there was a lingering impression that Canadians were merely complacent with the status quo of political affairs in the country (Fairbairn, 1972).

For Pierre Elliott Trudeau, these complex conditions of Canadian society undoubtedly guided his philosophy and leadership style upon entering politics. The elder Trudeau was born in Montreal, Quebec on October 18, 1919; he experienced a privileged upbringing, being educated at the prestigious Jean-de-Br  beuf preparatory school before studying law at the University of Montreal (English, 2007). Trudeau's early career included the practice of law in areas of labour and civil liberties, in addition to teaching within the faculty of law at the University of Montreal from 1961 to 1965 (Universit   de Montr  al, n.d.). This legal background prepared Trudeau for his tenure in politics, initially serving as justice minister within the Liberal government of Lester B. Pearson in the mid-1960s.

In this position, Trudeau was tasked with amending laws to account for the changing values amongst Canadians; most notably, Trudeau launched the Omnibus Bill in 1967 in seeking to overhaul certain areas of the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Among the proposed revisions, the Omnibus Bill sought to loosen abortion laws, improve access to contraceptive measures, and decriminalize select homosexual acts; in advocating for such legislation, Trudeau offered a revolutionary phrase: “There’s no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation” (Dummitt, 2020, p. 27). This response reflects how the political dynamics of Canadian society began to undergo a transformative shift in the 1960s, setting the stage for monumental human rights advancements in areas of women’s rights, labour opportunities sexual health, and sexual identity (Kampen, 2005). Nonetheless, the politics of abortion and birth control cannot be simplistically reduced to the motivations of policymakers. As demonstrated by the work of McLaren (1978), issues of family planning are the outcome of many elements beyond legislation including the imperatives of medical professionals, social norms surrounding sexuality, technological developments in birth control, religious or cultural values, and the beliefs or desires of women themselves.

The historical discussion of McLaren (1978) is especially valuable in illustrating that issues of abortion and birth control do not quickly surface and conclude; they are long fought battles that cannot be remedied through legislative acts alone. Furthermore, the work of McLaren & McLaren (1986) establishes important observations of how movements in birth control and abortion are connected to key differences in the birth rate between French and English Canada. These authors note how “...the most dramatic drop in fertility occurred in Quebec, where the birth rate was cut in half within the decade of the 1960s” (McLaren & McLaren, 1986, p. 126). They assert that religious and cultural distinctions between provinces such as Quebec and Ontario had little impact

on the divergent birth rates; rather, these differences were more prominently connected to education and income. These nuances are important in demonstrating that the legislative efforts of the Canadian federal government will be differentially received across the country's regions. This case also emphasizes that other elements of Canadian society, such as economic growth and opportunities for higher education, can induce shifts in the public opinions and policy priorities of Canadians.

This effort to amend the *Criminal Code* during Trudeau's early days of politics is indicative of the leader he became as prime minister: Pierre Elliott Trudeau was a man of principle through and through. This notion of staying true to one's principles would be tested regularly during Trudeau's reign as prime minister spanning three decades (from 1968-1979, 1980-1984), where his leadership would experience a full spectrum from the frenzied support of Trudeaumania in 1968 to the bitter opposition in later years across many issues of federal-provincial relations and national unity (Litt, 2016). Amidst the challenges and difficult decisions during his time in the Prime Minister's Office, Pierre Elliott Trudeau did not stray from his fundamental political philosophy, best summarized in his objective of creating a Just Society. The Just Society became Trudeau's lightning rod for tapping into the revolutionary spirit of those Canadians who supported his rise to prime minister; Trudeau himself defined the Just Society as "a society in which each individual Canadian was put in a position where he can develop himself to the utmost" (Litt, 2016, p. 240).

Upon assuming leadership of the Liberal Party in 1968, Trudeau released a policy paper titled *The Just Society*, focusing on areas including "urban development, public transit, affordable housing, participatory democracy, economic development plans, a consumers' code, a faster court system, greater rights for citizens in their dealings with government, and antipollution, anti-

inflation, and export development measures” (Litt, 2016, p. 241). This list of issues provides a cursory glance into the substantive political mind of Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the grand vision of a Canadian society he sought to build, moving beyond the fanfare and sensationalism of his celebrity status in the 1968 election. The cultural phenomenon of Trudeaumania during the 1968 federal election represents a defining moment in Canadian history, regarding the sparking of a broader interest in political affairs among the public and the emergence of a politician as a celebrity.

There already exists a selection of literature exploring the various implications and outcomes of this short-lived obsession with Pierre Elliott Trudeau during his initial campaign in 1968 (Litt, 2008, 2016; Marquis, 2020; Raymaker, 2017; Waples, 1983; Wright, 2016). While the Trudeaumania election of 1968 offers several intriguing instances of agenda setting and leader-centric politics, there lacks an element of tension signified during the subsequent re-election effort of Trudeau and the Liberal Party in 1972. I assert that observations of agenda setting efforts and media engagement are more pronounced, nuanced, and diverse when examining the 1972 election as opposed to the 1968 election. Given the purpose of this study is ultimately grounded measuring how communication is purposeful, impactful, and strategic, there exists greater potential for diverse findings in the re-election campaign of 1972.

The 1972 election ultimately occurred against the backdrop of a Canadian society amid transformation and crisis. First, Canadian society in the early 1970s can be considered transformative due to several recent developments that would come to define the nation. In 1956, the Conservative government led by Prime Minister John Diefenbaker passed the Employment Assistance Act; in the early 1960s, the Diefenbaker government followed suit by establishing other federal supports for regional economic inequality such as the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act (ARDA) in 1961 and the Fund for Rural Economic Development (FRED) in

1966 (Bothwell et al., 1981). Robert Stanfield, the Premier of Nova Scotia at the time, was also heavily involved in advancing this legislation, who would go on to become leader of the Progressive Conservatives and face off against Trudeau in the 1972 election (McMillan, 2016). These efforts of legislation action are indicative of the prominence that economic inequality would come to play in the 1972 election, especially surrounding provincial or regional disparities.

The principle of equalization between provinces was first established in 1957 and was subsequently revised in 1962 to incorporate the sharing of revenue from natural resources generated provincially. The principle of equalization was developed in response to the growing severity of economic disparities between provinces, amplifying the aforementioned inequalities between rural and urban areas (Auld & Eden, 1983). This foreshadowed perhaps the most fundamental issue that Trudeau would face upon becoming prime minister: inequality and conflict among the provinces. Also, the Canada Assistance Plan was finalized in 1966 (with unique provisions for Quebec), constituting the first national contributory pension plan (Coward, 2000). Another defining achievement of Canadian society in the 1960s was the adoption of Medicare; this notion of universal health insurance was first enacted in Saskatchewan by Premier Tommy Douglas in 1962 prior to being implemented nationally under Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1968 (Marchildon, 2016; Margoshes, 1999).

The collective significance of these influential steps in federal governance is that they provided Pierre Elliott Trudeau a vision and motivation for the achievement of his proclaimed Just Society. The formal recognition and governmental intervention for various needs across the citizenry demonstrates the transformative stage of Canada's national development. However, this transformation did not merely occur in an economic sense; this period is perhaps best known for an enhanced awareness and actions by citizens for several social issues (Palaeologu, 2009;

Rutherford, 2020). Thus, the Conservative government of Diefenbaker and Liberal governments of Pearson and later Trudeau found themselves grappling with how to fulfill the activist dispositions and desire for an autonomous identity among Canadians.

While the largely economic policies discussed above illustrate the transformative character of Canadian society in the 1960s and 1970s, it was the spirit of revolution in response to several pressing social issues that solidifies the notion of transformation. As previously discussed, Pierre Elliott Trudeau had grand aspirations as prime minister; he sought to overhaul several disparate areas of policy and foster a unified national identity that would become the autonomous blueprint for Canadian society moving forward. Trudeau's political goal of a just and inclusive Canada was rooted in policy reformation, the protection of fundamental rights, concerted efforts in equalization measures, and an expansion of social programs (Trudeau & Axworthy, 1989). However, Trudeau's governance and subsequent legacy is divisive to say the least (Clarkson, 2000). A fundamental insight from this period is that the notion of Canadian nationalism, as espoused by Pierre Elliott Trudeau, was relatively fragile given the differences throughout Canadian society. The work of Senese (2000) seeks to deconstruct and critique the notion of Canadian nationalism as fundamentally exclusionary, premised upon inequality, and acting as an "ideological camouflage for racism" (p. 115).

In a broad sense, there was a distinct tension that accompanied Trudeau's transformative impact: "As prime minister, he transformed Canada, but in doing so he alienated large segments of the Canadian population, nearly destroyed the Liberal party, and, many have argued, left the country less unified than he had found it" (Blake et al., 2011, p. 377). An especially vocal group was that of women, who shined a spotlight on social and political issues of gender inequality;

similar demands for equality were echoed by racialized and Indigenous Canadians (Campbell et al., 2022; Chartrand et al., 2006; Couture, 1998; Molony & Nelson, 2017).

Trudeau has been described as a “paradigmatic liberal”, in the sense of his robust willingness to stray from the conventional wisdom of his party to advance his philosophy grounded in freedom (Firmini, 2015, p. 156). The 1960s are known as signifying a distinct cultural transformation of Canadian society, emphasized by the political mobilization of marginalized groups such as women, the 2SLGBTQI+ community, Aboriginal Canadians, and recent immigrants (Anastakis, 2008). In 1960, Aboriginal Peoples were afforded the right to vote; this signalled the continuation of a governmental effort to assimilate Aboriginal Peoples within the emerging conception of a unified Canadian identity. This reached a culminating point in 1969, when the Trudeau government released the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy*, which was announced by Indian Affairs Minister (and future Liberal prime minister) Jean Chrétien. However, this policy received widespread disapproval from Aboriginal leaders and activist groups such as the National Indian Brotherhood; the legislation was subsequently dropped (Couture, 1998). Also in 1969, widespread resistance among Aboriginal Peoples began to build against the residential school system, in the effort to gain an “increase in control over both their communities and the education of their children” (Chartrand et al., 2006, p. 112). Nonetheless, it would not be until several decades later that the residential school system was formally deemed a genocide, as established by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* in their final report, released in 2016 [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC), 2016].

In addition to Aboriginal resistances, the 1960s were an especially transformative period for feminist movements; this decade witnessed the rise of “second wave feminism” in Canadian society (Campbell et al., 2022; Molony & Nelson, 2017). It was during this time that women

meaningfully emerged as influential participants in the democratic process; one such instance entailed how protests by the Abortion Caravan activist group led to the House of Commons being closed down for the first time in Canada's existence (Sangster, 2021). These protests were mobilized in response to the previously mentioned *Omnibus Bill* of the Trudeau government in 1969, as feminists took issue with the bill adopting a healthcare-oriented stance on abortion while failing to offer women actual autonomy. The following year in 1970, the Trudeau government released the findings of a *Royal Commission on the Status of Women*, which outlined the scope of inequality and discrimination faced by Canadian women (Bird, 1970). The recommendations of this report compelled the government to devise various mechanisms to advance women's rights, in addition to funding groups such as the *National Action Committee on the Status of Women* (Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1979).

An additional prominent social development during the 1960s included Canada's approach to immigration, which has been evaluated as "aggressively expansionist" (Reitz, 2001, p. 581). It is no coincidence that multiculturalism became one of Canada's "essential political factors" in the 1960s, which was evident in the development of its immigration policy (Couture, 1998, p. 92). In 1962, amendments were made to Canada's immigration policy that sought to both remove any overtly racist aspects that remained and attract a wider range of immigrants that fulfilled the economic needs of the nation. These changes were the precursor to the introduction of a formal points system for the selection of immigrants in 1967, just prior to Trudeau assuming his role as prime minister (Parai, 1975).

Beyond such a wide range of transformative elements, it is argued that Canadian society also experienced a state of crisis in the years leading to the 1972 election. The factors behind this crisis can be understood as resulting from two reasons: federal-provincial conflict and the influence

of the United States. It is commonly observed amongst historical scholarship that the 1960s and 1970s were an abrasive period in the effort of creating a unified sense of Canadian nationalism (Anastakis, 2008; Couture, 1998; Eberlee, 2023; Mills, 2010). This was marked by persistent conflicts that occurred surrounding federal-provincial relations; most prominently, the threat of Quebec separatism represented a direct crisis towards the nation (Ferguson & Roberts, 2005; Senese, 2000). The period known as the Quiet Revolution occurred in the 1960s, symbolized by profound economic and cultural developments in Quebec; it was also during this time that many within the province mobilized their desire for autonomous sovereignty from the rest of Canada (Durocher & Millette, 2020). Beyond the changes happening within Quebec itself, the Quiet Revolution is symbolic of the impending crisis in which Canadians would no longer remain complicit with a simplistic bilingual identity.

A couple of crucial events occurred in the 1960s prior to Trudeau becoming prime minister that signalled an attempt to solidify a distinctly Canadian identity. The iconic maple leaf was adopted as the new Canadian flag in 1964, while Expo 67 represented an extravagant celebration for Canada's 100th birthday in 1967 (Hayday, 2005; Miedema, 2005; Moyes & Palmer, 2022). Although the events of Expo 67 produced a positive image for Canada receiving global recognition, the issues of national identity and regional conflict would result in the nation being "shaken to its very core in the years that lay ahead" (Blake et al., 2011, p. 369). As this true crisis began to intensify in the late 1960s, Pierre Elliott Trudeau emerged as the youthful new prime minister responsible for managing the difficult situations to come (Litt, 2008).

After almost a decade of protests and increased levels of violence, the Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ) further intensified its movement to separate from Canada for an independent Quebec, using terrorist cells to take violent action. Leading up to the October Crisis of 1970, the

FLQ kidnapped and murdered Quebec's Minister of Labour Pierre Laporte, kidnapped British diplomat, James Cross, holding him captive for two months, were responsible for 200 bombings including bombing the Montreal Stock Exchange in 1969 with devastating damage and injuring 27, carried out the bombing of Mayor Jean Drapeau's home in 1969, facilitated ongoing mailbox bombings injuring unsuspecting pedestrians, various other bombings, rioted against McGill University, committed dozens of robberies to fund the terrorist FLQ cells, and orchestrated over 150 violent incidents leaving eight dead and many more injured (Pelletier, 1971; Wiseman, 2014).

To deal with the crisis, the Trudeau government invoked the *War Measures Act* as a measure of counterterrorism in response (Munroe, 2011). Several policies of this era sought to develop a nationalist identity that accounted for the Francophone population: the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* of 1963, the *Official Languages Act* of 1969, and the (unsuccessful) *Victoria Charter* of 1971 (Hayday, 2005; Kealey et al., 2012). The political discontent of Quebec has spanned a wide range of varying concerns across decades, but at its core reflects "profoundly different conceptions of political community that predominate in English Canada and Quebec" (McRoberts, 1993, p. 249).

This nature of regional discontent was also reflected in other areas of the nation; Western Canada became especially alienated by Trudeau's policy moves to nationalize the Canadian economy in the 1970s. The dissatisfaction of Western Canada is connected to Trudeau's attempted "era of economic nationalism", signalled by the creation of the Canada Development Agency in 1971, as well as the Foreign Investment Review Agency and Petro Canada, each in 1974 (Blake et al, 2011, p. 399). Broadly speaking, these policies were not effective in unifying the country but rather resulted in patchwork attempts to address federal-provincial conflicts; subsequently, other

regions of the Canada felt that Central Canada (i.e., Ontario and Quebec) remained the federal priority (Gibbins, 1980; Gibbins & Arrison 1995; Iguarta, 2007).

Furthermore, Canada developing its own economic and cultural identity on a global scale, especially against the pervasive influence of the United States, constituted a site of crisis for the government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. Not merely in Canada but throughout the world, the 1970s represented an economic crisis leveraged by geopolitical factors such as unstable global markets for oil caused by the Arab-Israeli War (Hellema, 2018). Although Pierre Elliott Trudeau himself admitted to not holding a high regard for foreign policy, issues of international governance were paramount during his first term as prime minister (Litt, 2016).

Such issues requiring international attention included Canada's diplomatic relations with China, Canada's participation in the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* (NATO), and the provision of aid for impoverished countries (Bothwell et al., 1981). By far the most pressing international concern was much closer to home however, as Canada experienced a complicated relationship with the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. Two consequential situations unfolding in the United States came to greatly affect Canada's search for a unique identity: racial tensions and the Vietnam War. It is asserted that the Vietnam War was the "most important factor in spurring nationalism in English Canada", with Canadians able to truly witness the war's destruction through the relatively newfound platform of television (Azzi, 2012, p. 216). Similar observations can be found regarding the American civil rights revolution of the 1960s; the rise of multiculturalism as a key element of Canadian identity arose concurrently in condemnation of racial violence south of the border (Anastakis, 2008; Granatstein, 1996).

While many Canadians perhaps sought to distance their identity from these aspects of American society, Canada nonetheless underwent a period of accelerating Americanization in an economic and cultural sense. One distinct policy measure to stem the influence of American culture upon Canada was the creation of the *Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission* (CRTC) in 1968, which served to regulate Canadian arts and media. Despite measures such as the CRTC, it was clear to the Canadian government that cooperation with the United States brought mutual benefit; this was most prominently reflected in the economically important *Auto Pact* of 1965 between the two nations (Anastakis, 2005).

Thus, the strained relationship between Canada and the United States compounded the challenges Trudeau faced not only in managing relationships with provinces but also international ones as well. Upon considering all the elements of transformation and crisis that shaped Canada in the 1960s and early 1970s, the difficulties inherent to Trudeau's mission of a Just Society become more evident. It also sheds light upon why the legacy of Pierre Elliott Trudeau is particularly polarizing; he was loved by many, hated by many, but ultimately remained a leader of principle.

Context of the 2021 Canadian Federal Election

Moving ahead to Justin Trudeau's tenure as prime minister in the twenty-first century, it is crucial to illustrate not only the similarities between the eras of the 1972 and 2021 elections but also clarify their important nuances. It is necessary to contextualize the political identity of Justin Trudeau, establishing the parallels and differences in his leadership, policymaking, and legacy. Akin to the 1972 contest, societal conditions in Canada prior to the 2021 election can also be described as both transformative and reflecting a situation of crisis. Interestingly, many of the

transformative elements and areas of political tension faced by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s remained pertinent into the twenty-first century.

There is a poetic symmetry to the fact that Justin Trudeau was born in Ottawa on Christmas Day, 1971 – less than one year prior to the first re-election contest of his father. In his youth, Justin Trudeau also studied at Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, the same private French language Jesuit school as his father. Trudeau then attended McGill University in Montreal to complete a B.A. in English in 1994, followed by B.Ed. at the University of British Columbia in 1998 (Wallenfeldt, 2022). Despite having a certain degree of publicity since birth, Trudeau meaningfully emerged in the national spotlight when delivering a eulogy at Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s funeral in 2000 (Hadfield, 2017). Trudeau formally entered federal politics when he was elected in 2008 as the Member of Parliament for the riding of Papineau in Montreal (Hadfield, 2017). Justin Trudeau’s political ascent was somewhat rapid, becoming Liberal party leader five years later in 2013; his first federal election opportunity at the helm came in 2015 where he was elected to a majority government to replace the incumbent Conservative Party led by Stephen Harper.

From the beginning of his tenure as Liberal leader, there was considerable doubt as to whether the younger Trudeau could come “anywhere close to matching the performance his father had delivered a half century earlier” (Clarke et al., 2017, p. 703). Such doubts were likely connected to Trudeau’s relative lack of political experience, as his previous occupations involved positions such as ski instructor and private school teacher (Dobrowolsky & Leal-lyoupe, 2022). The critics would be swiftly silenced however during the 2015 election, when Trudeau was well received in the eyes of Canadians.

The 2015 election was atypical in having an especially long campaign period; it also had a stronger sense of being “adeptly stage-managed” (Hadfield, 2017, p. 24). In fact, there is ample evidence to claim that the 2015 campaign represented a ‘Trudeaumania 2.0’ of sorts; the Liberal Party embraced this popularity by emphasizing Trudeau’s charisma and youthfulness, as the leader displayed qualities of “‘new masculinity’, social media savvy, and optimism” (Lalancette & Cormack, 2020, p. 158). In fact, Lalancette and Cormack (2020) frame the 2015 election as having a theme of celebrity, which was strategically adopted by both the Liberals and Conservatives in their campaign messages. The Conservative Party communications were overtly negative, in striving to depict Trudeau as lacking the substantive knowledge or ability to be qualified as the nation’s leader – encapsulated in their attack slogan against Trudeau: He’s just not ready. These advertisements were met with varying success however, with the initial Conservative attack ad against Trudeau being quickly pulled off the air due to many Canadians finding it distasteful (Wells, 2013).

This approach ultimately backfired for the Conservatives, and Trudeau’s meteoric rise to power as prime minister was further punctuated by the fact that he represented everything Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party were not. Trudeau illustrated in 2015 his ability as an “energetic, optimistic, and personal campaigner”, while portraying a “sunny ways” political brand that heavily contrasted with the negative and adversarial disposition of the Conservatives (Clarke et al., 2017, p. 706). Similar to his father’s rise to power during the Trudeaumania days of 1968, Justin Trudeau was able to win over the Canadian masses not merely through his youthful and personable image but also by a substantive commitment to progressive liberal policies. Trudeau’s campaign messages resonated with the modern values of younger, progressive Canadians; he developed a likable image as a “self-identified feminist, who embraces the terminology of equity, diversity,

and inclusion, and borrows from discourses of intersectionality to frame his politics” (Findlay, 2022, p. 41).

This itself was significant, as Trudeau has been noted as the first male Canadian prime minister to openly identify as being a feminist; he acted upon this claim once in office by establishing a gender-balanced cabinet (Dangoisse & Perdomo, 2021). Trudeau’s approach to feminism was a defining factor in the transformative nature of his rise to leadership; his discourse resonated heavily given the prominent place of women’s rights movements such as #MeToo within the public sphere (Dangoisse & Perdomo, 2021). Trudeau also embraced a series of other policy commitments that solidified his popularity among progressive voters, such as reviving the *Canadian Pension Plan*, holding an unwavering commitment to pro-choice values, decriminalizing marijuana, and affirming the needs of LGBTQ2 communities (Dobrowolsky & Leal-lyoupe, 2022). Like his father before him, Justin Trudeau sought to unify the country by focusing upon federalism and statehood, however in a manner more geared to reconciliation (rather than assimilation) with Quebec and Indigenous Peoples (Dobrowolsky & Leal-lyoupe, 2022).

The overall state of affairs in Canada from the beginning of Justin Trudeau’s tenure as prime minister in 2015 until the end of that decade was a generally stable period for the nation. In contrast to the jarring impact of the COVID-19 pandemic emerging in 2020, as well as the social reckonings spearheaded by the Black Lives Matter movement and advocates for the Residential School survivors, the earlier years of Trudeau’s leadership were much less tumultuous by comparison. The onset of the pandemic represented a clear turning point in the governing priorities of the Liberal Party; all resources and policy measures shifted to address the task of protecting the health of Canadians and healthcare system at large, while also ensuring that the public was economically supported in the face of lockdowns and other pandemic measures. This task proved

itself to be especially challenging due to the widely disparate viewpoints held by Canadians regarding the utility of public health measures such as lockdowns and vaccinations; for this reason, Justin Trudeau faced a much more polarized and politically charged electorate in the 2021 election compared to his previous two campaigns in 2015 and 2019 (C. Wu, 2025).

As noted, Canadian society from 2015 until 2020 reflected a state of overall equilibrium, in which the largest challenges facing the federal government encompassed the typical prominent agenda areas of Canadian federal governments. Among such political imperatives included the advancement of policy measures in the name of environmentalism, the provision of economic grants to promote job creation across the country, and the passing of legislation attuned to address contemporary shifts in the social climate, such as the legalization of marijuana in 2018. There were nonetheless some instances of controversy or civil unrest during this period, especially surrounding proposed projects to construct oil pipelines across the western provinces. The context of Canadian society during this period can be summarized as reflecting a populous that continued to diversify, benefitting from modest economic growth throughout the initial years of Justin Trudeau's Liberals. A closer examination of the 2021 Statistics Canada census also proves illuminative in shedding light upon some of the most prominent trends in the evolving makeup of Canada as a diverse nation. One such indicator of economic growth is the 9.8% increase in the median after-tax income of Canadian households from 2015 to 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2022e). Furthermore, the percentage of Canadians within the after-tax low-income measure as designated by Statistics Canada dropped from 14.4% in 2015 to 11.1% in 2020, which constitutes the largest five-year decrease in this metric since 1976 (Statistics Canada, 2022e).

Despite the promising trends surrounding income, the affordability of housing persisted as a critical issue in Canadian society throughout the Trudeau years. The 2021 census also found that

10.1% of Canadian households displayed a core housing need, in the form of either unaffordable housing (at least 30% of income spent on housing costs), inadequate housing (dwelling in need of major repairs), or unsuitable housing (insufficient bedrooms according to the National Occupancy Standard), with such rates being the highest among renters and for dwellings located in downtown neighbourhoods (Statistics Canada, 2021). The nature of labour in Canada has continued to evolve across virtually all industries; one notable change ushered by the 2020 pandemic was a rise in remote work. In 2021, 24.3% of the Canadian labour force worked from home, more than tripling from the rate of 7.4% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2022b); while this trend can be partially attributed to temporary measures in response to the pandemic, it is perceived that the lockdowns were a catalyst for a permanent re-imagining of remote or hybrid working arrangements gaining increased prominence in many industries.

With a longstanding reputation as a multicultural nation, immigration levels continued to increase under the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau, in addition to the intake of temporary foreign workers and international students. It was observed that over 1.3 million new immigrants were permanently admitted to Canada between 2016 and 2021, with a record number of new immigrants arriving during these years (Statistics Canada, 2022h). As a result, the identities of Canadian citizens continued to evolve as well, with nearly 20% of current Canadians being a citizen by naturalization; 80.7% of eligible immigrants to Canada had subsequently acquired citizenship by 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022h). This is particularly significant for understanding the political context in Canada since the language diversity continued to expand throughout these years. By 2021, 10 million Canadians could speak another language in addition to English or French; the top five most prominent other languages were Spanish, Mandarin, Punjabi, Arabic, and Hindi (Statistics Canada, 2025). Consequently, the share of Canadians who predominantly

speak a language at home besides the two official languages had also risen to 12.7% of the population, increasing from 9.7% in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2022f).

The proportion of English-French bilingual speakers in Canada stood at 18% in 2021, with nearly half (46.4%) of these individuals residing in Quebec; the prevalence of English-French bilingualism remained virtually unchanged from its margin of 17.7% in 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2022g). Thus, a slim majority of fluently French language speakers in Canada reside outside of Quebec, with these individuals concentrated in the largest metropolitan cities such as Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2022g). However, the prevalence of Indigenous language speakers continued to decline; in 2021, only 13.1% of the Indigenous population held conversational abilities in an Indigenous language, decreasing from the rate of 17.4% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2023). Many Indigenous languages experienced an especially rapid decline leading up to 2021, with languages such as Tlingit, Tse'khene (Sekani), Kaska (Nahani), Haida, and several others being spoken by less than 500 individuals (Statistics Canada, 2023). Despite the decline in Indigenous language, the Indigenous population in Canada did increase by 9.4% in 2021 when compared to 2016, with the First Nations population surpassing one million and the Métis population surpassing 600,000 (Statistics Canada, 2022c).

In addition to the cultural and linguistic diversity that abounded from 2015 until 2021, the makeup of Canadian families continued to evolve. In 2021, 16.4% of the 10,262,920 census families comprised a single parent household; of the 8,576,580 families with married or common-law heads of household, there was a near equal split of families with children (4,290,415) and families without children (4,286,165) (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Families as a demographic are particularly important for understanding the governing agenda under Justin Trudeau's leadership, since a major area of policy discussion and component of the Liberal Party budget comprised an

effort to establish \$10 per day childcare spaces for children five years and under. Broadly considered, it can be observed that political priorities of the Liberal government from 2015 until 2021 were rooted in issues that ultimately stem from affordability and the cost of living – whether it be the context of job creation, clean energy production, childcare, postsecondary education, old-age pensions, healthcare/dental coverage, or the living standards on Indigenous reservations and in Canada’s far north. The drastic shift however, surfaces in the fact that governing measures from March 2020 onwards were contextualized by the need to institute emergency supports and policy measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as a public health emergency not matched in scale for over a lifetime prior.

Similar to how the frenzy of Trudeaumania faded quickly, the sunny days of Justin Trudeau would face various challenges throughout his next decade of leadership. Trudeau managed to weather the storm by securing minority government victories in the subsequent elections of 2019 and 2021 but could not maintain the high public appeal he once enjoyed. This loss of public favour can be explained by two factors: various ethical transgressions by Trudeau and societal crises that divided the nation. A brief explanation of these events is necessary to contextualize the practices of issue framing and strategic rhetoric demonstrated by Trudeau in his engagement with journalists. During his tenure as prime minister, Trudeau was implicated in a series of scandals that threatened his political brand as a progressive, socially conscious, diversity affirming, and feminist leader.

One such scandal was the SNC Lavalin controversy, which drastically harmed the persona of Trudeau as a committed feminist. This involved the demotion of Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould, which triggered harsh criticism from political opposition and commentators, who called the legitimacy of the move into question. Wilson-Raybould accused the Liberal Party of attempting to interfere with her investigation of the Quebec company SNC Lavalin prior to her demotion.

This led to damaging speculation of Trudeau and his party as being engaged in a conflict of interest with SNC Lavalin, stretching into months of extensive political pressure and mass media attention. Jeffrey (2020) emphasizes the lack of a strategic Liberal response, as “the demotion of a cabinet minister was transformed into a full-blown political scandal” while Trudeau “attempted to straddle a divide between ‘doing politics differently’ and defending his government’s actions as legitimate and appropriate” (p. 29). This situation parallels other political issues that confronted Trudeau, such as his party funding the construction of a cross-country oil pipeline and their position of not intervening towards Quebec’s controversial Bill C-21, which sought to ban the wearing of religious symbols by public sector workers in their duties. In essence, Trudeau’s efforts at neutral ambiguity created discontent from those on both sides of these heated debates. It can be asserted that the SNC Lavalin saga was a knockout blow to Trudeau’s political brand as a beloved champion of inclusivity and diversity.

Perhaps the most jarring scandal to shake Trudeau’s image of cultural sensitivity came in the form of the blackface revelations, which surfaced on September 18, 2019, when *Time* magazine published a photo of Trudeau from 2001 in a blackface costume. It is not an understatement to conclude that the blackface scandal exploded as a main storyline within the 2019 campaign; the damaging and shocking nature of the photos even led to calls for Trudeau’s immediate resignation, although he did not do so (Warburton, 2019). The surfacing of the photos became the major talking point in political and journalistic discourse for several weeks afterwards, with no solution for Trudeau other than to apologize.

For opposing parties, the blackface photos represented a golden opportunity being dropped right into their laps: an irrevocably clear cache of evidence depicting Trudeau engaging in racist behaviours, flying in the face of his prime ministerial image as a progressive, inclusive, and anti-

discriminatory leader. Ultimately, these issues would not prevent Trudeau from securing a minority victory in both the 2019 and 2021 elections. A likely factor in the Liberal Party retaining leadership involves an inability of the Conservatives to capitalize and present themselves as an appealing alternative for Canadians (Ellis, 2020). The image and status of Justin Trudeau throughout his time as prime minister can be best described by the phrase bend but not break.

Even after the outrage of the blackface incident had subsided, the topics of racism and colonization were prominent on the Canadian news agenda in the early 2020s. Akin to Pierre Elliott Trudeau facing protests from feminist activists, Justin Trudeau faced revolutionary movements from Black Lives Matter and Indigenous activists. Such movements were global in scale, spawning from incidents of police brutality against racialized individuals and the discovery of unmarked graves on the grounds of former residential schools. These demonstrations signalled tense social dynamics that stemmed from fundamental political dispositions for especially evocative issues, sharply reinforcing the left-right divide in Canada. A crucial area of continued research is the application of agenda setting and other media effects to analyze social protest, with scholarship of the United States illustrating how media and visual discourse can influence the mobilization of people across the political spectrum (Bodroghkozy, 2023).

Nonetheless, overshadowing the missteps of Justin Trudeau and the Liberals was the largest global crisis of the twenty-first century: the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in abnormal conditions for the 2021 campaign by affecting the political discourse and practical aspects such as voting itself. The unique situation of the pandemic was disruptive to Canadian society across several aspects of public life, including many notable changes to the typical campaign process (Medeiros & Gravelle, 2023; Stephenson & Harell, 2023). The process of voting itself looked rather different in 2021, since in-person voting at polling

stations required citizens to adhere with physical distancing requirements and mask wearing. There were also many changes to the locations and availability of typical polling stations; these factors culminated to result in drastically longer wait times at some centres, in addition to other procedural challenges. As a result, this also led to an extremely sizable increase in the number of Canadians voting via mail. Beyond voting itself, other aspects of the campaign were shaped by the pandemic crisis; for instance, indoor rallies and campaigning events were not always possible, while some candidates decided to forego the long-established practice of speaking to Canadians door-to-door.

For the 2021 election, public concerns of national unity and unemployment were similarly present, however such issues existed within an entirely different context. This federal campaign was resoundingly seen as the ‘pandemic election’, whereby all political deliberation and governing efforts occurred within a backdrop of the country facing a public health crisis, life-altering in scale. The topic of pandemic management dominated the agenda of election issues because the political choices made to mitigate the public health threat of the virus had economic ramifications, in addition to raising questions of civil rights related to measures such as lockdowns. The 2021 election had a distinct sense of political polarization and hostility which likely stemmed in part from the reasons for the elections being called in the first place.

The pandemic situation in 2021 is relevant to the analysis because this election was especially unique when considering the information ecosystem that mediates the opinion formation of citizens. It is plausible to assert that mass media sources had an even larger than normal influence upon citizens becoming politically informed, since people had far fewer opportunities to interact with politicians and other political influencers on a face-to-face basis (Bild et al., 2022; Głuszek-Szafraniec & Norström, 2022). Broadly speaking, Canadians were less likely to be out in public whereby their political views could be influenced by spontaneous conversations, activist

demonstrations, and other manners of information distribution in the real world. Nonetheless, individuals were also spending more time online during the pandemic, meaning it was possible for them to encounter campaign information and engage in political deliberation on social media websites, forums, and comment sections, among other avenues (Gudiño et al., 2022).

A question worthy of further research is how the retention and influence of information upon public opinion differs when it is encountered online as opposed to in our physical environments (Trenz, 2024). This idea must be considered in conjunction with the wealth of existing research surrounding how political information can be especially pervasive due to microtargeting the political sensitivities of citizens (Marland et al., 2017; Zuboff, 2019). Although there remained to an extent the standard dynamic of journalists following political leaders on the campaign trail, there were also other types of campaigning communication mediated by technological forms that also shaped the journalistic process (Głuszek-Szafraniec & Norström, 2022).

It has become resoundingly clear that the pandemic represented far more than just a public health crisis; it was an upheaval upon the taken for granted ways of life within nearly all aspects of society and the values that underpin them. Perhaps similar only to times of war in its agenda setting impact, the pandemic dominated political, journalistic, and citizen discourse in 2020 and 2021. The 2021 election was overshadowed by the pandemic, in which crucial political issues surrounding the economy, healthcare, education, and international affairs were debated and contextualized in accordance with the crisis at hand.

The pandemic placed the Trudeau government into a position of enacting polarizing policies meant to balance imperatives of sustaining the nation's economic viability while reducing

the virus' spread. The pandemic led to increasingly strained relations between the federal and provincial governments as well as dividing citizens on values of individual liberty versus the limiting of personal rights to protect those most at risk. Trudeau and the Liberals faced heavy criticism for calling an early election, since the next required federal election was not scheduled until two years later in 2023. Given the fact that the election occurred during a period of stringent social distancing requirements, many aspects of the campaign and voting process became more difficult or costly.

In justifying the election decision, Trudeau frequently invoked the rhetoric that Canadians deserved the opportunity to 'weigh in' or 'have their say' regarding further decisions at the present juncture of the pandemic. The opposition leaders in turn accused Trudeau of making a selfish election call, with the contention that the decision was purely opportunistic by the Liberal Party in their desire to secure a majority government. This claim was based upon the fact that public opinion polls indicated that attaining a majority mandate was in reach for the Liberals, perhaps supported by the distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations and an improving situation regarding the pandemic over the past summer. This did not materialize for the Liberals, instead left with the status quo of a minority government, punctuated by sharp regional divisions in the voting patterns of Canadians. Ultimately, the legacy of Justin Trudeau will be strongly signified by the scandals he was implicated in, as well as his purposeful decision-making and leadership during the crisis of the pandemic.

Important Elements of Comparison

By offering complementary accounts of the Trudeaus' political careers and the social conditions surrounding the 1972 and 2021 elections, the content analyses are effectively

contextualized. It is apparent how many similarities exist between the Trudeau father and son, such as their progressive and youthful image, their desire to unify Canada, their struggles with appeasing the diverse regions of the nation, and their frenzied wave of popularity upon entering the prime minister's office. Nonetheless, the Trudeaus display certain differences as well including the nature of their experiences prior to entering politics, their perspectives on reconciliation, their approach to media engagement, and their implication in various scandals. Most resoundingly, the Trudeaus constitute an important site of comparison due to their celebrity status as iconic figures in Canadian political history. Politicians can possess qualities of charisma and captivation through their campaigning discourse; thus, an understanding of the frenzied fanfare upon which both Trudeaus were initially elected also informs an evaluation of their communicative impact (Litt, 2008; Mazzarella, 2017). The concepts of agenda setting and the public sphere are essential for developing the respective observations in this analysis because the depiction of these leaders as portrayed in election communication helps to reveal their transformative governing impact.

As key actors on the political agenda during the respective elections, Pierre Elliott and Justin Trudeau had unique approaches to campaign communications that reflect their personal governing philosophies and an understanding of journalistic conventions. This research is unique in focusing upon the re-election efforts of the Trudeaus in 1972 and 2021, rather than their initial elections in which they rode the wave of Trudeaumania. As the preceding explanation has demonstrated, the 1972 and 2021 elections had distinct elements of societal crisis, compounded by the lustre of adoration wearing thin for both prime ministers. While analysis of media engagement by politicians experiencing immense success is abundant, this research allows for insights of a more nuanced situation of waning popularity and crisis management.

One must consider occupational and economic aspects of journalism when quantitatively comparing the elections of 1972 and 2021. The field of professional journalism has undergone distinct changes in response to economic crises, technological developments, and societal trends (Freedman, 2019; Guo & Vu, 2018; Johnson, 2005; Pickard, 2020). This evolution of journalism as an industry has ultimately shaped how political reporting is conducted, which can be observed in the analysis of newspaper coverage (Kuhn & Neveu, 2002; Martin, 2013). In addition to industrial changes, there is also a steady evolution of the overarching values and ethical norms held by political reporters (Seib, 1994; Trenz, 2024). This situation evolves in conjunction with changes to the logics of political campaigning, thereby shaping the dynamic between political actors and journalists (Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024; Russell & Eissler, 2021; Thomas, 2024).

It is especially within the pages of newspapers that the Trudeaus present themselves and their ideas on a mass scale, to be judged by voters and scrutinized by journalists. It is newspapers and campaign party platforms that spark conversations among citizens, with newspapers revealing democratic triumphs and failures across the nation's regions (Aruguete, 2024; Joyce, 2013; Paul & Terry, 2021; Russell & Eissler, 2021). This discussion has sought to establish the crucial background information to interpret the observations and conclusions to follow. It also illustrates why the two Trudeaus are situated as apt for comparative analysis; this is evident not only within Pierre Elliott and Justin Trudeau themselves, but also within the unique conditions and parallel dynamics inherent to Canadian society during each era.

Chapter Four: Methodological Design and Sampling Strategy

Scholarship of elections has commonly employed content analysis to generate quantitative data arising from political communication. Media and communications research that is informed by the theory of agenda setting uses content analysis as a dominant method, since this allows agenda issues to be precisely tracked and compared. Content analysis provides a framework for researchers to study elections, journalism, and political figures in a manner that sets a precedent for future scholarship to build upon, supported by the high replicability and validity of such studies.

Content analysis is a scientific, quantitative, and empirically oriented approach that can be used to classify the content of communication in various ways. This method is premised upon foundational values of replicability, validity, and objectivity for the purpose of producing statistical data in response to a given research question or hypothesis (Berelson, 1971; Ethbridge, 2002; Riffe, 2019). Content analysis has been widely employed within scholarly research of communication sources including newspapers, television, and social media. Given the ability for content analysis to provide rigorous quantitative data of media qualities, this method has been used for many iterations of politically oriented studies.

A variety of scholarship from across the globe has utilized content analysis to analyze print journalism during elections. The focus of such research has spanned issues including media ethics (Amadu et al., 2022), the representation of female candidates (Kasadha & Kantono, 2020), the usage of photographs (Coleman & Wasike, 2004), press depictions of female politicians seeking leadership (Trimble, 2007), the framing of Africa by the Canadian press (Ojo, 2014), and coverage of the European Union agenda during the pre-election period (Urbániková & Volek, 2014). Content analysis offers the potential for studying the press using a tight scope; for instance, the

work of Zurbriggen & Sherman (2010) focuses upon the framing of race and gender within newspaper editorial cartoons during the 2008 U.S. presidential election.

Content analysis has also been commonly applied as a means of critically understanding the campaign communications of political actors and its impact on the democratic process. The work of Abdullah (2022) examines campaign speeches made by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton during the 2016 U.S. presidential election to establish how the language used connects to the values and policies of the respective politicians. Hatcher and Ginn (2023) also provide a content analysis of campaign speeches, yet with a research objective of understanding how public health topics (in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic) were presented by Donald Trump and Joe Biden during the 2020 U.S. presidential election. The campaign platforms of political parties have been comparatively analyzed using a content analysis; an example of this precedent is the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) which has developed a methodological framework and analyzed election party platforms for over 50 countries. Clarke and Francoli (2014) explain the thematic objectives of CMP as follows:

The CMP methodology emphasizes not simply the presence of particular themes or ideas in a policy text, but also the salience of particular themes and ideas in these texts, as measured by the percentage of the text allocated to those themes and ideas relative to others in the text. (p. 254)

The CMP framework is well-suited for the comparative analysis of party platforms because each platform differs in size and depth of information; tracking the percentage allocation of themes allows one to comparatively measure their prominence within the documents.

There is a strong precedent of research that explores political television, encompassing both broadcast journalism and party advertisements. These content analyses have also spanned varying research objectives including appeals to race in advertisements by U.S. politicians Barack Obama and John McCain (Erigha & Charles, 2012), the candidate-centred nature of broadcast election coverage (Schulz & Zeh, 2005), and the prevalence of negative attack advertisements (Torres et al., 2012).

Since the widespread adoption of the internet, there have also been several content analyses that have been used to develop comprehensive observations of the shift into online political communication and deliberation. For instance, the study of Pressgrove and Kim (2018) employed a content analysis to formally detect the presence of stewardship and credibility within the website home pages of political candidates. Other content analyses have been used for political communication on social media such as an exploration of the influence of Facebook groups during election periods (Woolley et al., 2010) and quantifying the use of populist discourse by politicians on social media (Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). Finally, content analysis has also proven to be an insightful method for establishing a comparative analysis across multiple election periods, as demonstrated by various scholarship (Schulz & Zeh, 2005; Trimble et al., 2013; Wagner et al., 2019).

Content analysis allows for the collection of comprehensive, quantitative data illustrated within the content of political communication. This is exemplified by several of the aforementioned studies, in codifying variables such as journalism ethics, stewardship, credibility, and framing tendencies. Content analysis is also ideal for incorporating a large sample of political communication within the research process, which is applicable when considering the large volume of media content that is produced during election campaigns. A unifying factor in much

of the scholarship is the ability to systematically analyze large datasets, whether they be newspaper coverage, televised content, or social media posts. Content analysis is optimal for engaging in a comparative study across distinct eras, serving as a useful means for developing observations in the evolution of communication.

Description of Methodology

To establish a comprehensive rationale for the methodology and its connection to the interpretive lenses of agenda setting and the public sphere, the research of Altheide & Schneider (2017) serves as a useful resource for properly developing a research plan that aligns with the investigative aims of this research. In essence, the work of Altheide & Schneider informs the methodological approach to this research through a philosophy that prioritizes the need for consistency between the sample, data collected, and process through which that data is interpreted. The content analysis that assesses the 1972 and 2021 elections is built from the starting point of agenda setting as an efficacious theory for the interpretation of political communication, premised upon the established notions of newspaper coverage and party platforms as being fundamental sources of political information during elections.

The variables for analysis are developed through communications research as reflecting the selective exposure of political topics as well as elements of the framing, tone, and structure in presenting such topics, in alignment with several studies in the field (Edy & Meirick, 2019; Gidengil, 2014; Kowalewski & McCombs, 2019; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Minooie, 2021; Van Aelst et al., 2020). The research of Francoli (2024) solidifies the importance of evaluating journalistic and political communication for its ability to not only provide information but also as avenues for collaborative civic involvement in the policymaking process. In examining civic

engagement efforts of the Canadian government, Francoli (2024) argues that “...improvements need to focus on increased institutionalization of engagement, improving the visibility of engagement opportunities, and building and sustaining relationships and trust with citizens” (p. 660). It is this perspective that guides the approach to assess the newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms based on their ability to promote opportunities for civic participation and engagement. Francoli (2024) further illustrates the connection between transparency and engagement, affirming that “improved information and data transparency are largely seen as necessary factors for better engagement and to allow citizens the best opportunity to hold government to account for its actions” (p. 660). The analysis of 1972 and 2021 Canadian elections will be similarly structured to assess the transparency and quality of information provided, in recognizing that meaningful political participation requires that citizens are comprehensively informed about election issues and the perspectives of political parties.

There are a wide range of communicative materials associated with Canadian federal elections; however, newspaper coverage and Liberal Party campaign platforms are isolated for analysis. These have been chosen not only for their suitability in understanding the agenda setting impact within political communication, but also due to their potential for comparison between election years. This is significant because the objective of this research is not merely to understand the isolated presence of agenda setting during Canadian election campaigns but to generate an idea of how the communication has evolved across time. The two generations of Trudeau prime ministers and two election campaigns of 1972 and 2021 are ideal subjects of analysis for several reasons. These two election periods fundamentally reflect periods of Canadian society defined by both crisis and transformation. The fact that each election was a re-election campaign for the Trudeaus results in more nuanced efforts of agenda setting since the public opinions of citizens

were richly informed by their established records of governance across a range of polarizing issues.

As political leaders, Pierre and Justin Trudeau possess certain similarities beyond their father-son relationship including their outstated goals of unifying the nation across its vast regional and cultural points of diversity. Although other Canadian prime ministers have faced periods of crisis or sought to unify the nation, the Trudeaus have been chosen in part due to the generational gap of 49 years between their analyzed campaigns. By 1972, the professional values of journalists had undergone transformations since the beginning of the twentieth century that more closely resembled the informing role of newspapers in 2021. This allows the comparative analysis to observe trends in the newspaper coverage in the context of changes to the business models of newspapers such as increased concentration of media ownership. The Trudeaus are also valuable for comparative analysis because of their similarities in personal background, progressive political philosophies, and apparent propensity for the public spotlight. These factors contribute towards an interesting analysis of their media representation because their concrete similarities serve to highlight developments in the political and journalistic landscape.

Newspaper coverage is a rich source of political communication during election periods, since it strives to encompass perspectives from a range of sources, spanning a wide array of politically relevant topics. The scholarship of Lippmann (1922) was formative in establishing that newspaper articles have a fundamental role in shaping the public opinions of citizens during election periods, especially for political topics that lie outside their direct knowledge and experiences. To measure qualities of the election coverage read by many Canadians across the country, the newspaper sample was chosen to have publications with high circulation rates in relation to each Canadian province.

Campaign party platforms have been released by Canada's major political parties preceding each federal election, outlining their policy stances and governing priorities. While Canada's political parties circulate their policy commitments and other campaigning messages in a variety of forms including door-to-door pamphlets and over social media, Belchior (2020) argues the official campaign platforms are most comprehensive in scope and provide the greatest levels of detail. In essence, campaign party platforms can be understood as the blueprint of election commitments by a party under a singular umbrella. These documents are apt for assessing agenda setting because they provide the clearest glimpse into the efforts of engagement and image-building that originate from the parties themselves (Askari & Page, 2020; Dantzler, 2022; Robson & Jarvis, 2020).

The 2021 Liberal Party campaign platform document has nearly ten times as many pages compared to the 1972 platform. This difference can likely be attributed at least partially to the fact the 1972 document was distributed solely via printed paper, requiring resource expenses in the form of ink, paper, and printing equipment. By contrast, the 2021 platform was distributed digitally via the Liberal Party website, meaning that no additional costs would be incurred regardless of the platform length. There are further technological intricacies when considering paper versus digital platforms, such as the ability for people to quickly scroll through or use search functions for online documents. These factors can influence how individuals read through the platform and retain the information itself (Nanz & Matthes, 2022).

It is especially valuable to study the campaign party platforms in tandem with newspaper election coverage, since there is an opportunity to compare journalistic representations and quotations of the Trudeaus in accordance with the content of the platforms. Party platforms can serve as an influential information source for the media agenda, which can by consequence

drastically alter the information landscape during the election campaign. One example from the 2021 federal election is how a platform pledge by the Conservative Party to repeal an assault weapons ban enacted by the Liberal Party generated significant amounts of media scrutiny and opposition from citizens at large. This led to Conservative leader Erin O'Toole walking back upon this platform commitment, which in itself led to further media coverage and raised questions about the credibility of O'Toole and his party. This example shows how party platforms and election journalism exists in a close relationship, whereby platforms have the ability to inform media discourse, further impacting the campaign communications of politicians (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Martin, 2013).

The Liberal Party internal party memo, titled "Suggestions for the Effective Promotion of the Liberal Party of Canada" (1960) provides an additional perspective for consideration, since it differs in its purpose and audience from the newspapers and platforms. The unique element of this memo is that it is intended for internal use by Liberal campaign managers and prime minister Lester B. Pearson, rather than a document produced for mass public consumption. Most importantly, this document provides a raw, unfiltered glimpse into priorities and motivations of the Liberal Party in their approach to campaign strategy. This memo is also valuable for study since it originates from the year 1960, meaning that the timeframe of research is widened and there is an opportunity to assess if the ideas discussed in the memo surface within the Liberal campaign platform released 12 years later in 1972.

The party memo illustrates the idealized election strategy of the Liberal Party, demonstrating their philosophy for producing political communication. The campaign party platform then constitutes the dominant source of party communications in seeking to mobilize political support from citizens and influence the media agenda in a manner beneficial to their

electoral success. The newspaper coverage then represents a source of political communication that does not arise directly from the Liberal Party, but in which aspects of the Liberal platform and leader discourses surface in tandem with other types of political discussions and actors. There is a clear logic to analyzing these formats of political communication in reverse order for the purpose of interpreting the information landscape during the election. It is this imperative that informs the decision to begin with the quantitative content analysis of the newspaper coverage, followed by the campaign party platforms, bolstered by a summary of the Liberal Party memo.

The quantitative methodology of content analysis is chosen as most insightful for assessing relevant qualities of the communication and offering a thorough comparison of the sampled election campaigns. However, qualitative reflection also has value when interpreting the observations to further exemplify crucial findings in comparative agenda setting. This will be accomplished by highlighting certain newspaper coverage that reflects the intricacies of each election period, while also qualitatively examining select examples of Trudeau quotes featured in the newspaper coverage that reflect their campaigning qualities. Summarizing the Liberal Party campaign platforms and internal memo from 1960 will add to the qualitative analysis of how the landscape of political information establishes the conditions for public sphere deliberation, which is essential for equitable and well-informed democratic citizenship (Graham, 2013; Glynn, 2018).

Sampling Process

In developing a sample of newspaper coverage, the objective is to analyze content produced by mainstream, widely read publications from each Canadian province. Additionally, *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* are included as newspapers that identify themselves as national in scope, albeit being based in Toronto. These are included in the analysis given their

prominent position in the news landscape. An Ottawa-based publication was also included for each election, given the city's relevance as the nation's capital and centre of federal bureaucracies. For the 2021 election, publications are added to represent the Canadian territories of Nunavut, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. Although there is a certain level of symmetry between the newspaper datasets of 1972 and 2021, the intention is not to create samples of exact parity. Rather, the sampling strategy is designed to comprehensively incorporate publications and articles reflective of Canada's dominant print media landscape, thus implying the articles were read by large numbers of Canadians. Given the infeasibility of obtaining and manually coding every Canadian newspaper for these election years, the publications selected for inclusion correspond to a sample of publisher ownership groups that produced newspapers in well-populated cities. An important component of the method was the act of closely reading each article in its entirety to more fully immerse myself as the researcher within the historical eras. This commitment to a thorough reading ensured that the quantitative findings could be interpreted through a broader lens of understanding the scope of election coverage. The determining factor for which prominent publications were ultimately utilized within the research was the result of a convenience sample, due to limitations in the accessibility of archives and travel during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sample allows for the newspaper coverage dataset to be regionally representative by featuring news content consumed by many citizens while still being stratified according to province, reflecting the regional differences of the nation. Upon surveying the landscape of Canadian print journalism for the year 2021, press ownership groups with newspapers in populous Canadian cities include Postmedia Network, TorStar Corporation, and SaltWire Network (Watson, 2024). Thus, publications under these ownership groups, among other large scale print publications based in heavily populated Canadian cities, guided the selection of newspapers sampled. The 1972

sample of newspaper articles similarly employed a convenience sample given the limited availability of microfilm archives for historic newspapers during the COVID-19 pandemic; the convenience sample for 1972 was also guided by utilizing publications within populous Canadian cities within each province. Although this entailed using many of the same newspapers from the 2021 sample, different newspapers were sometimes used based upon the availability of microfilm and whether the publication existed in 1972.

Breakdown of Sample and Inclusion Process

The sample information corresponding to the 1972 and 2021 elections is shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below, listing the publication name, province, ownership group, and total number of election articles. For each newspaper, all articles that fulfilled the study inclusion criteria were included in the content analysis within the determined period of five publication days in advance of (and including) the election date. The sample is limited to the five editions of each publication directly prior to each election since the recency of these articles is most likely to influence the public opinions of voters (Zaller, 1992). The content analysis includes 1,471 articles in total; this comprises 894 articles from 12 publications for the 1972 election and 577 articles from 15 publications for the 2021 election. All newspaper coverage was obtained either through online news databases or microfilm holdings of newspaper editions. For the 2021 publications, the coverage was accessed through the online databases *Canadian Major Dailies* and *Factiva*, available through the York University library website; other publications for the 2021 sample were obtained through a digital subscription with the newspaper or from the newspaper website itself. For the 1972 publications, the coverage was accessed via microfilm holdings within the microtext room at Scott Library, York University.

Table 4.1

Newspaper Coverage Sample Information, 1972 Election

Publication	Province	Ownership Company (in 1972)	Number of Election Articles
The Globe and Mail	National	FP Publications Ltd	89
The Toronto Star	Ontario	Toronto Star Ltd	100
The Ottawa Citizen	Ontario	Southam Inc	80
The Montreal Star	Quebec	FP Publications Ltd	79
The Vancouver Sun	British Columbia	FP Publications Ltd	54
The Calgary Herald	Alberta	Southam Inc	89
The Winnipeg Free Press	Manitoba	Sifton family	83
The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	Saskatchewan	Sifton family	60
The Chronicle Herald	Nova Scotia	Graham W. Dennis	117
The Telegraph Journal	New Brunswick	K.C. Irving	50
The Telegram	Newfoundland and Labrador	Thomson Newspapers	56
The Guardian	Prince Edward Island	Guardian Media Group	41

Table 4.2

Newspaper Coverage Sample Information, 2021 Election

Publication	Province	Ownership Company (in 2021)	Number of Election Articles
The Globe and Mail	National	Woodbridge Company	56
The National Post	National	Postmedia Network	47
The Toronto Star	Ontario	TorStar Corporation	65
The Ottawa Citizen	Ontario	Postmedia Network	39
The Montreal Gazette	Quebec	Postmedia Network	46
The Vancouver Sun	British Columbia	Postmedia Network	49
The Calgary Herald	Alberta	Postmedia Network	43
The Winnipeg Free Press	Manitoba	FP Canadian Newspapers	22
The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	Saskatchewan	Postmedia Network	41
The Chronicle Herald	Nova Scotia	SaltWire Network	23
The Telegraph Journal	New Brunswick	Postmedia Network	44
The Telegram	Newfoundland and Labrador	Saltwire Network	24
The Guardian	Prince Edward Island	Saltwire Network	34
The Whitehorse Star	Yukon	Michele Pierce	36
Northern News Services Limited Media	Canadian Territories	Northern News Services Limited Media	8

To determine whether each article/piece published was relevant to the federal election, various criteria guided the process of inclusion. If a newspaper piece contained a clear reference of any of the following aspects it was included in the study: federal political parties, federal political leaders or candidates, the electoral system, campaign events, or activities of civic engagement in response to the election. As a general qualifying element, the content needed to distinctly involve the election, or key organizations, actors, and processes related to the election to be included in the study. It must also be clarified that coverage which focused on election-relevant issues (for example, unemployment) were only included in the study if the content of the piece

was situated within the election itself, describing how the given issue might impact voter decisions or party policies. Although certain coverage might be civically informative, democratically valuable, and socially necessary, if it did not meet the criteria of directly informing citizens about the election as a democratic event it was excluded.

Regarding the content analysis of the Liberal Party campaign platforms, the sampling process is highly straightforward. The analysis focuses upon the formally released Liberal Party campaign platform documents corresponding to the 1972 and 2021 federal elections. The 1972 campaign platform was obtained via *Poltext*, an online database of Canadian political platforms provided by the Université Laval. This document is titled “Together... The Land Is Strong” and is the campaign platform provided by the Liberal Party to voters and the press prior to the 1972 election. The document has a front cover page featuring a side profile image of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, followed by 11 pages of text divided into four main sections. The 2021 campaign platform was obtained via the official website of the Liberal Party of Canada. This document is titled “Forward. For Everyone.” and is the officially released campaign platform provided by the Liberal Party to voters and the press. The 2021 platform was officially released on Wednesday September 1, 2021, meaning its contents became available just under three weeks prior to the election date of September 20, 2021 (Maloney, 2021). The document features a full-page cover image of Justin Trudeau speaking to dozens of individuals in a video call, displayed on a large screen. Although several forms of political communication can be reflective of a party’s policy stances, the official platform documents are determined to be the most optimal for analysis given their prominent role in shaping the media agenda (Belchior, 2020). This presents an opportunity to observe how qualities of political communication differ when the communication is addressed directly to voters from the Liberal Party, rather than through the mediating lens of journalists.

Areas of Newspaper Coverage Observation

The content analysis of newspaper coverage focuses on tracking the prevalent agenda issues during the elections, as well as the Trudeaus and their representation within the press. This analysis is divided into two subsections; first, the coverage is tracked according to its agenda items and framing; second, all direct quotations attributed to the Trudeaus are given an additional level of analysis to reveal nuances in their political messaging. A complete description of the analytical variables is provided within Section A and Section B of the appendix.

In addition to tracking basic identifying qualities of the coverage such as the date of publication and author, each article or piece is first tracked according to the agenda issue of focus (Variable 1.7a). The article agenda issue is codified according to twenty-one issue categories, largely derived from the work of Gidengil (2014), which include: agriculture/forestry/fishing, civil rights, crime/justice, economy, education, employment/labour, energy, environment, finance/commerce, foreign affairs/defence, health, immigration, social welfare, taxes/budget, transportation, language policy/rights, cost of living, reconciliation/Indigenous Peoples, N/A, and multiple. The coverage is also classified according to general topic areas (Variable 1.7b), to gain a broader sense of which aspects of the election process are given prominent attention by the newspapers. The six designated topics for this purpose are campaign trail, civic engagement, political polls, national identity/values, policy issue, and political scandal. To supplant the quantitative data of the article types, instances of editorial board endorsements within the coverage will also be identified and discussed to highlight comparative trends in publications providing readers with a voting recommendation for a specific party.

The newspaper coverage is classified according to its article type (Variable 1.6) for the purpose of tracking its format; this is important for measuring the extent of journalistic objectivity within the coverage. These categories are codified according to a specific protocol that is aligned with concretely identifiable differences in format, that have a longstanding precedent as constituting forms of journalistic content (Altheide & Schneider, 2017). The details of these differences in format between types of newspaper coverage can be found within the Appendix for further reference. This category is followed by the application of communication metrics for each article or piece that are designed to measure intricacies in the tone and framing of the coverage, according to four designated analytical values: formality, description, democratic knowledge, and democratic action. These four values have been purposely implemented because of their clear reproducibility and connections to theoretical elements of quantifying the tone and framing of communication.

For the initial two values, each article is ranked as being either high or low regarding the qualities of formality and description (Variable 1.8; coded, for instance, as HFHD - “high formality, high description”). This will be performed by assessing if the article levels of formality and description are high or low according to the content of the piece overall. While the formality quality is heavily based upon the language of the article, the description quality corresponds to the richness of detail provided to bolster the topic or issue at hand within each article. The Canadian Press Stylebook has been utilized in developing metrics for codification that properly align to how qualities of formality and description are prescriptively expected to surface within Canadian newsprint publications. These variables of formality and description are crucial tracking the tone of the newspaper coverage, with implications for the perceived legitimacy or authority of the articles as sources of political information.

For the latter two analytical values of democratic knowledge and democratic action, each article is ranked as being either high or low regarding the qualities of democratic knowledge and democratic action (Variable 1.9; coded, for instance, as HKHA - “high knowledge, high action”). Similar to the metrics of formality and description, the metrics of democratic knowledge and democratic action reveal a more nuanced depiction of how key political agenda issues are presented within the coverage of respective newspapers in their framing of issues.

The analysis of newspaper coverage is also designed to measure how the news articles or pieces represent the Liberal Party and Trudeau prime ministers. These metrics include whether the article or piece is dominantly Liberal focused (Variable 1.10) whether there is a direct quote from either of the Trudeaus (Variable 1.11), and whether there is a direct quote or paraphrase attributed to the Liberal Party (Variable 1.12). This information is relevant to assessing the impact of the coverage because it serves as an indication of the extent that the influence of the Liberal Party and the Trudeau leaders surface within the media agenda. Any mention made of either Trudeau leader (Variable 1.13) is also tracked for each article or piece, supplanted by an additional category that specifies whether the mention of Trudeau relates to their personality, image, or leadership style (Variable 1.14). To track nuances in how the Trudeaus are framed when being discussed within the coverage, it is recorded whether the Trudeaus are criticized (Variable 1.15) or praised (Variable 1.16) within a direct quote or by paraphrasing; and whether the Trudeaus are criticized (Variable 1.17) or praised (Variable 1.18) in an opinionated manner by the author of the piece. This provides a cursory glimpse into distribution of how the Trudeaus are framed either positively or negatively within the newspaper coverage.

To more clearly assess the representation of each Trudeau within the election coverage, the quotes attributed to each Trudeau are isolated for deeper analysis. The quotes are classified as

having a quotation theme (Variable 2.1) according to the categories of being either issue focused, party focused, or image/values focused. Each quotation is also assessed according to two additional metrics: whether the quote is adversarial against another candidate/party (Variable 2.2) and whether the quote reflects qualities of media engagement (Variable 2.3). These two variables are also intended to inform the analysis of the Trudeau quotations, especially in considering that assessing the presence of adversarial dialogue and a leader-centric focus can inform observations of framing. For Variable 2.2, quotations are coded on a Yes/No basis to assess whether their language offers clear evidence of the Trudeaus discussing other parties or candidates in a conflict-oriented manner. A quotation is considered to reflect media engagement (Variable 2.3) if its message is conveyed in a manner that demonstrates flair, imagery, emotion, strategic campaigning, or strong appeals for the mobilization of voters. For the 2021 Trudeau quotes, an additional category denotes whether the Justin Trudeau quote makes specific mention of the pandemic (Variable 2.4), which is also coded as a simple Yes/No. This variable is included to quantitatively track the salience of the pandemic within the dialogue of Justin Trudeau, given the pandemic's dominance as an agenda issue during the 2021 election.

Areas of Liberal Party Platform Observation

The official Liberal Party campaign platforms of the 1972 and 2021 federal elections are also observed through a content analysis that assesses qualities relevant to the framing, tone, and structure of the platform and its pledges. The content analysis framework is informed by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) as an established precedent for the analysis of party platforms. Although CMP typically applies the text units of a quasi-sentence for analysis, the Liberal platforms will instead be analyzed by using each page as a unit of measurement. This decision overcomes critiques of CMP raised by scholars such as Laver and Garry (2000) that the

subjective application of quasi sentences as text units raises irreconcilable concerns of intercoder reliability. Each platform is first summarized to grasp the dominant themes, messages, and tone that is conveyed by the Liberal Party. The summary will also develop insights that build upon communicative elements highlighted within the newspaper analysis, including adversarial comments, the usage of imagery/metaphors, and the presence of language intended to facilitate engagement in the democratic process.

For this analysis, the official Liberal Party platforms of 1972 and 2021 will be examined to quantitatively code the presence of qualities that align with framing, tone, and structure. The variables corresponding to each metric were purposely incorporated to assess unique communicative aspects of relevance to political campaign platforms on a page-by-page basis, organized under the headings of formality, description, democratic knowledge, and democratic action. The metric of formality allows for an understanding of the tone adopted within the platform, while description, democratic knowledge, and democratic action are conducive for quantitatively understanding how the framing of information contributes to the democratic impact of the platforms.

Formality levels of the Liberal platforms are measured by ranking the prevalence of advanced political terminology (Variable 3.1), as well as the prevalence of formal or professionalized language (Variable 3.2). The second value, description, is measured by ranking the depth of explanation (Variable 3.3) and the inclusion of timelines, figures, or statistics (Variable 3.4). Democratic knowledge is assessed by ranking the platform responsiveness to perceived voter interests (Variable 3.5) and the use of metaphorical language or imagery (Variable 3.6). Democratic action is measured based on the prevalence of second person language (Variable 3.7) and the use of language framing the reader as having agency (Variable 3.8). Each of these

variables are assigned a ranking of either low, medium, or high, in accordance with the codebook rules as described within Section C of the Appendix.

In addition to measuring variables corresponding to the four analytical categories mentioned above, the analysis incorporates a simple quantitative count of purposely selected words (Variable 3.9) determined as consequential in assessing the agenda focus of the party platforms. The ten words are as follows: Trudeau, Liberal, Stanfield, O'Toole, Conservative, Canadians, issue, policy, commitment, achieve. The purpose of this quantitative count is to further understand trends of repetition in the content of the platforms and evaluate their use comparatively between the elections. Overall, the purpose of the campaign platform content analysis is to provide further insights surrounding the communicative engagement of the Trudeaus and the Liberal Party, deepening the perspectives and observations of the wide-scale newspaper coverage analysis.

Intercoder Reliability Process

To ensure that the content analysis codification system is valid, reproducible, and rigorous, an extensive series of intercoder reliability tests were conducted prior to completing the final analysis. To ensure an impartial process was established to measure the intercoder reliability, a graduate student was hired to complete a series of blind coding sessions to quantitatively measure the accuracy of codebook parameters. The intercoder reliability sessions were valuable in refining the codebook definitions of each analysis category, ensuring that coding efforts are consistent and reproducible. Following the initial coding sessions and the completion of necessary revisions to the research codebook, a final test of intercoder reliability was performed to verify the analysis' validity. For the newspaper sample, 20 out of 1,471 (1.36%) articles were subject to intercoder reliability testing, while 3 out of the 128 (2.34%) of the Trudeau quotes also underwent testing.

Furthermore, 11 out of the 88 pages (12.5%) within the 1972 and 2021 official Liberal Party platforms underwent intercoder reliability testing.

All sample units were randomly selected for inclusion within the intercoder reliability testing and are considered representative, supported by the clear delineation of variable parameters. The application of Holsti's percentage of agreement for intercoder reliability revealed agreement levels between 90%-100% for all categories of analysis across the newspaper articles, Trudeau quotes, and campaign platforms. The full results of the intercoder reliability testing, as measured through Holsti's percentage of agreement method, can be found at the end of the Appendix. This process of establishing the intercoder reliability is essential for illustrating the significance of research observations and offers avenues for future scholarship using this analytical framework.

Scholarly Contribution to Election Studies

From a methodological standpoint, the goal of this study is to contribute to scholarship of Canadian elections by employing a comparative content analysis informed by the theory of agenda setting. This methodology is also intended to demonstrate the value of analyzing newspaper coverage and party platforms in tandem, since these are two influential information sources during election campaigns. The collection of data that illustrates the distribution of agenda topics is a principal objective in analyzing the newspaper coverage; however, the analysis goes further to consider the format, structure, tone, and framing of the coverage since these factors are important to assessing their influence as well. The analysis of Liberal Party campaign platforms provides further insight into the strategy of election outreach used by the party in an attempt to mobilize voter support.

Chapter Five: A Comparative Analysis of Election Journalism

The analysis of Canadian elections journalism provides an avenue to assess the content of newspapers as a contested site of political communication. By studying the newspapers in an analysis informed by agenda setting, arguments can be developed surrounding the democratic impact of the newspapers as important sources of political information. The research data gathered will directly inform the main arguments surrounding a trend towards opinionated newspaper coverage, an increased focus on political leadership, and an emergence of adversarial dialogue within the coverage. The analysis also demonstrates a parity of agenda issues featured within the coverage, indicating that the scope of topics discussed both focused on economic issues when comparing each election year of 1972 and 2021.

These arguments are observed alongside an observation of two dominant recurring themes that shape the observations: an acceleration of neoliberal values within Canada's journalistic and political spheres and an informational landscape in which journalistic and political communication is highly contested because of competing logics. While these arguments are introduced and developed in the context of the newspaper coverage, they will be further developed when analyzing the official campaign platforms of the Liberal Party also corresponding to the 1972 and 2021 federal elections. Together, these content analyses will contribute to a better understanding of how framing, tone, and structure, are detected in political communication, reflected in the actions of journalistic and political institutions. These qualities of communication have implications for the process of Canadian citizens becoming politically informed in a substantive matter that aligns with the public sphere ideals of a democratic society.

Rationale of Content Analysis

The election coverage is subjected to a quantitative analysis informed by the theory of agenda setting through an examination of both the range of topics discussed and the framing, tone, and structure of the coverage. The analysis of political agenda issues is also stratified by publication, to better grasp how various political issues are represented within newspapers across different regions of the country. One crucial area in which journalists exercise professional judgement is through their selection of quotations printed within coverage, since the published quotes of political actors allow them to directly convey ideas to readers. Furthermore, quotations are a fundamental means through which elements of subjectivity can exist within the standardized format of an objective news piece, meaning that the quotations found in newspaper articles can influence the framing or tone of the piece (Gunho, 2017; Lasky, 2017). These facts have informed the decision to craft an additional analysis solely for the quotations of each Trudeau prime minister in the coverage, allowing a deeper glimpse into their manner of campaign communication with the public.

In studying the communicative qualities of the Trudeau prime ministers, it is valuable to assess the quotes from these political leaders appearing in highly circulated print publications. The 1972 and 2021 elections represented pivotal moments in the political careers of Pierre Elliott and Justin Trudeau respectively, deepening the impact of their political actions. While both Trudeaus were initially elected on a wave of popular support as political celebrities (in 1968 and 2015 respectively), the 1972 and 2021 elections represented more turbulent and unpredictable campaigns. This implies that the electoral strategies of the Trudeaus were responsive to the fractured climate among the electorate and based on a heightened awareness of the divisive political issues that would influence the judgements of voters. Rather than coverage being

dominantly transfixed on the icon status of the Trudeaus as emerging political celebrities, the 1972 and 2021 elections meant that the focus shifted to issues of day-to-day governance. Since 1972 and 2021 were also re-elections for the Trudeaus, they possessed greater levels of experience in their interactions with journalists and had a deeper knowledge of how their words and actions might translate to journalistic coverage. Framing, tone, and structure are important qualities that illustrate outcomes through which elements of political discourse are thereby adopted by journalists within their reporting (Aaldering & Vliegenhart, 2016; Russell & Eissler, 2021).

It is important to observe the communicative practices of the Trudeau leaders as depicted within newspaper coverage as filtered by journalists, with the quotes of each Trudeau being an important component of their media representation. It is also crucial to consider the contextual differences of each election period, especially from cultural and political-economic perspectives. While it is not possible to develop a truly exhaustive list of contextual differences between each election period, there are some important nuances between each era surrounding social issues, international relations, and the dynamics between Canada's regions. A range of scholarship has made broad observations surrounding the political-economic development of Western democracies, especially regarding a neoliberal shift in recent decades (Albo & Fanelli, 2014; Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Gill, 2008; Brodie & Bakker, 2007; Maley, 2023). It is argued by Albo and Fanelli (2014) that neoliberalism became especially pervasive during the postwar period, driven by changes in areas such as policy creation, hiring practices, and university curricula. It is this overarching recognition of an acceleration of neoliberalism and the contested nature of journalistic and political communication that premises many of the research observations.

Findings: Newspaper Coverage Content Analysis

The content analysis begins by illustrating agenda setting as codified according to the political topic discussed within each article as well as the broader focus area of each article. This data is presented comparatively between the election periods of 1972 and 2019 to observe trends across time and is also stratified according to each of Canada's provinces to collect regional observations. The analysis will then proceed to examine variables of the framing, tone, and structure in which political agenda topics are discussed within the articles. These variables include the format of each article, levels of formality and description, levels of democratic knowledge or action detected in each article, and several other metrics intended to observe how the Liberal Party and Trudeau prime ministers are discussed within each article. A full operationalization of each content analysis variable can be accessed in the Appendix, in addition to offering detailed descriptions of the codification process.

Agenda Topics: Prevalence of Newsworthy Issues

Tables 5.1 to 5.5 depict the data collected for Variable 1.7b, which indicates the political agenda issue of focus for the coverage, outlining agenda setting effects in terms of topic selection. Table 5.1 below illustrates the distribution of article agenda issues for *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, and *The Montreal Star*.

Table 5.1

Variable 1.7b Agenda Issue, National, Ontario, and Quebec Newspapers, 1972 Election

	The Globe and Mail	The Toronto Star	The Ottawa Citizen	The Montreal Star
Variable 1.7b, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00
Agriculture / forestry / fishing	0.022	0.010	0	0.013
Civil rights	0.011	0.040	0.013	0.013
Crime / justice	0	0.010	0	0
Economy	0.045	0.020	0.075	0.013
Education	0	0	0	0
Employment / labour	0.034	0.040	0.038	0.038
Energy	0	0	0	0
Environment	0	0	0	0
Finance / commerce	0.022	0.010	0	0.013
Foreign affairs / defence	0.011	0.010	0	0
Health	0	0	0	0
Immigration	0	0	0.025	0.013
Social welfare	0.022	0.020	0.025	0.025
Taxes	0.034	0.030	0.013	0.025
Transportation	0	0.010	0	0.013
Language rights	0.067	0.010	0.025	0.025
Cost of living	0.022	0.010	0.025	0
Reconciliation / Indigenous Peoples	0.011	0	0	0
Other	0.067	0.030	0.050	0.089
Multiple	0.157	0.230	0.138	0.253
N/A	0.472	0.520	0.575	0.468

For all four of the publications in Table 5.1 corresponding to the 1972 election, the category N/A (no specific agenda issue of focus) was the most common category coded, more prevalent than any singular political issue. The second most common category was multiple, indicating that much of the coverage gave relatively equal focus to two or more agenda issues. For *The Globe and*

Mail, the three most prominent agenda issues were language rights (6.7%), the economy (4.5%), and taxes and employment/labour (both 3.4%). For *The Toronto Star*, the three most prominent agenda issues were civil rights and employment/labour (both 4%), as well as taxes (3%). For *The Ottawa Citizen*, the most prominent agenda issues were the economy (7.5%), employment/labour (3.4%), and immigration, social welfare, language rights, and cost of living (all at 2.5%). For *The Montreal Star*, the most prominent agenda issues were employment/labour (3.8%), social welfare, taxes, and language rights (all at 2.5%). Table 5.2 below illustrates the distribution of agenda issues for *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Calgary Herald*, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, and *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* during the 1972 election.

Table 5.2

Variable 1.7b Agenda Issue, B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan Newspapers, 1972 Election

	The Vancouver Sun	The Calgary Herald	The Winnipeg Free Press	The Saskatoon StarPhoenix
Variable 1.7b, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00
Agriculture / forestry / fishing	0.037	0.022	0.048	0.067
Civil rights	0	0.011	0.024	0
Crime / justice	0.019	0.022	0.012	0
Economy	0	0.045	0.012	0.017
Education	0		0	0
Employment / labour	0.056	0.045	0.048	0.033
Energy	0	0.011	0	0
Environment	0	0	0	0
Finance / commerce	0.056	0	0.012	0
Foreign affairs / defence	0.037	0	0.024	0.017
Health	0	0	0	0.017
Immigration	0	0.022	0.012	0
Social welfare	0.037	0.011	0.012	0.033
Taxes	0.037	0.056	0.108	0.067
Transportation	0	0	0	0
Language rights	0	0.022	0	0.033
Cost of living	0.019	0.022	0.024	0.017
Reconciliation / Indigenous Peoples	0	0	0	0
Other	0.056	0.034	0.084	0.083
Multiple	0.167	0.169	0.205	0.233
N/A	0.481	0.506	0.373	0.383

For all four of the publications in Table 5.2 corresponding to the 1972 election, the category N/A (no specific agenda issue of focus) was the most common category coded, more prevalent than any singular political issue. The second most common category was multiple, indicating that many articles gave relatively equal focus to two or more agenda issues. For *The Vancouver Sun*,

the most prominent agenda issues were finance/commerce and employment/labour (both at 5.6%) and agriculture/forestry/fishing, foreign affairs/defence, social welfare, and taxes (all at 3.7%). For *The Calgary Herald*, the three most prominent agenda issues were taxes (5.6%) and economy and employment/labour (both at 4.5%). For *The Winnipeg Free Press*, the three most prominent agenda issues were taxes (10.8%) and agriculture/forestry/fishing and employment/labour (both at 4.8%). For *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, the most prominent agenda issues were agriculture/forestry/fishing and taxes (both at 6.7%) and employment/labour, social welfare, and language rights (all at 3.3%). Table 5.3 below provides the data for the article agenda issue (Variable 1.7b) for *The Chronicle Herald*, *The Telegraph Journal*, *The Telegram*, and *The Guardian* during the 1972 election.

Table 5.3

Variable 1.7b Article Agenda Issue, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and P.E.I. Newspapers, 1972 Election

	The Chronicle Herald	The Telegraph Journal	The Telegram	The Guardian
Variable 1.7b, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00
Agriculture / forestry / fishing	0.034	0	0.071	0.050
Civil rights	0.026	0	0.071	0
Crime / justice	0	0	0	0
Economy	0.077	0.020	0.018	0.075
Education	0	0	0.036	0
Employment / labour	0.034	0.020	0.036	0.025
Energy	0.017	0	0	0
Environment	0	0	0	0
Finance / commerce	0.017	0.020	0	0
Foreign affairs / defence	0.043	0	0.018	0.050
Health	0	0	0	0
Immigration	0	0	0	0
Social welfare	0.034	0	0	0.050
Taxes	0.060	0.080	0.036	0.025
Transportation	0.026	0	0.054	0
Language rights	0.017	0.060	0	0
Cost of living	0.034	0	0.018	0.025
Reconciliation / Indigenous Peoples	0	0	0	0
Other	0.043	0.060	0	0.075
Multiple	0.120	0.240	0.196	0.050
N/A	0.427	0.500	0.446	0.575

For all four of the publications in Table 5.3 corresponding to the 1972 election, the category N/A (no specific agenda issue of focus) was the most common category coded, more prevalent than any singular political issue. The second most common category was multiple, indicating that much of the coverage gave relatively equal focus to two or more agenda issues. For *The Chronicle*

Herald, the three most prominent agenda issues were the economy (7.7%), taxes (6%), and foreign affairs/defence (4.3%). For *The Telegraph Journal*, the most prominent agenda issues were taxes (8%), language rights (6%), and economy, employment/labour, and finance/commerce (all at 2%). For *The Telegram*, the three most prominent agenda issues were agriculture/forestry/fishing and civil rights (both at 7.1%) as well as transportation (5.4%). For *The Guardian*, the most prominent agenda issues were the economy (7.5%) and agriculture/forestry/fishing, foreign affairs/defence, and social welfare (all at 5%). Table 5.4 below illustrates the article agenda issue (Variable 1.7b) for *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, *The Toronto Star*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, and *The Montreal Gazette* during the 2021 election.

Table 5.4

Variable 1.7b Agenda Issue, National, Ontario, and Quebec Newspapers, 2021 Election

	The Globe and Mail	The National Post	The Toronto Star	The Ottawa Citizen	The Montreal Gazette
Variable 1.7b, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00
Agriculture / forestry / fishing	0	0	0	0	0.022
Civil rights	0.036	0.064	0.108	0.103	0.065
Crime / justice	0.018	0	0.015	0	0
Economy	0.054	0.043	0.031	0.026	0.022
Education	0	0	0	0	0
Employment / labour	0	0.021	0.031	0.026	0.043
Energy	0.018	0.043	0	0	0
Environment	0.036	0	0.015	0	0.065
Finance / commerce	0	0.021	0.031	0.026	0.043
Foreign affairs / defence	0.018	0.021	0.015	0	0
Health	0.107	0.064	0.031	0.051	0.087
Immigration	0.018	0	0.015	0	0
Social welfare	0	0	0	0	0
Taxes	0.054	0.021	0.031	0	0
Transportation	0	0.021	0	0.077	0
Language rights	0	0.021	0	0	0.022
Cost of living	0.036	0.085	0.015	0.103	0.087
Reconciliation / Indigenous Peoples	0.089	0.043	0	0.026	0.022
Other	0.036	0.021	0.031	0.026	0.022
Multiple	0.054	0.085	0.108	0.103	0.087
N/A	0.429	0.426	0.523	0.436	0.413

For all five of the publications in Table 5.4 corresponding to the 2021 election, the category N/A (no specific agenda issue of focus) was the most common category coded, more prevalent than any singular political issue. The second most common category was multiple, indicating that much of the coverage gave relatively equal focus to two or more agenda issues. For *The Globe and*

Mail, the three most prominent agenda issues were health (10.7%), Reconciliation/Indigenous Peoples (8.9%), and economy and taxes (both at 5.4%). For *The National Post*, the three most prominent agenda issues were cost of living (8.5%) and civil rights and health (both at 6.4%). For *The Toronto Star*, the most prominent agenda issues were civil rights (10.8%) and economy, employment/labour, finance/commerce, health, and taxes (all at 3.1%). For *The Ottawa Citizen*, the three most prominent agenda issues were civil rights and cost of living (both at 10.3%) and transportation (7.7%). For *The Montreal Gazette*, the most prominent agenda issues were health and cost of living (both at 8.7%) and civil rights and environment (both at 6.5%). Table 5.5 below shows the article agenda issues for *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Calgary Herald*, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, and *The Chronicle Herald* during the 2021 election.

Table 5.5

Variable 1.7b Agenda Issue, B.C., Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia Newspapers, 2021 Election

	The Vancouver Sun	The Calgary Herald	The Winnipeg Free Press	The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	The Chronicle Herald
Variable 1.7b, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00
Agriculture / forestry / fishing	0	0.023	0.045	0	0
Civil rights	0.041	0.047	0.091	0.049	0
Crime / justice	0	0	0	0	0
Economy	0.020	0.023	0	0.024	0
Education	0	0	0	0	0
Employment / labour	0.041	0.023	0	0.024	0
Energy	0.020	0	0	0	0
Environment	0.020	0.023	0	0	0
Finance / commerce	0.041	0.023	0	0.049	0
Foreign affairs / defence	0	0.023	0	0	0
Health	0.061	0.116	0.227	0.171	0.217
Immigration	0.020	0	0	0	0.043
Social welfare	0	0	0	0	0
Taxes	0	0	0	0	0
Transportation	0.20	0	0	0	0
Language rights	0.041	0	0	0	0.043
Cost of living	0.082	0.093	0.045	0.073	0.087
Reconciliation / Indigenous Peoples	0.061	0.023	0.091	0.024	0.043
Other	0.020	0.047	0.182	0.024	0.087
Multiple	0.143	0.163	0.136	0.098	0.261
N/A	0.367	0.372	0.182	0.463	0.217

For *The Vancouver Sun*, the three most prominent agenda issues in the 2021 election were the cost of living (8.2%), and health and Reconciliation/Indigenous Peoples (both at 6.1%). For *The Calgary Herald*, the three most prominent agenda issues were health (11.6%), cost of living

(9.3%), and civil rights (4.7%). For *The Winnipeg Free Press*, the most prominent agenda issues were health (22.7%), as well as civil rights and Reconciliation/Indigenous Peoples at 9.1%. For *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, the three most prominent agenda issues were health (17.1%), cost of living (7.3%), and civil rights and commerce/finance (both at 4.9%). For *The Chronicle Herald*, the most prominent agenda issues were health (21.7%), cost of living (8.7%), and immigration, language rights, and Reconciliation/Indigenous Peoples (all at 4.7%). Table 5.6 below depicts the article agenda issues for *The Telegraph Journal*, *The Telegram*, *The Guardian*, *The Whitehorse Star*, and *NNSL Media* during the 2021 election.

Table 5.6

Variable 1.7b Agenda Issue, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I., Yukon, and Territories Newspapers, 2021 Election

	The Telegraph Journal	The Telegram	The Guardian	The Whitehorse Star	NNSL Media
Variable 1.7b, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00	N=1.00
Agriculture / forestry / fishing	0	0	0	0	0
Civil rights	0.023	0	0.118	0.056	0.125
Crime / justice	0.023	0	0	0	0
Economy	0.023	0	0	0.028	0
Education	0	0	0	0.028	0
Employment / labour	0	0	0	0	0
Energy	0	0.042	0	0	0
Environment	0	0.042	0.088	0.028	0.125
Finance / commerce	0.068	0.042	0.029	0	0
Foreign affairs / defence	0	0	0	0.028	0
Health	0.068	0.083	0.059	0.056	0
Immigration	0	0.042	0.029	0	0
Social welfare	0.045	0	0	0.028	0
Taxes	0.045	0	0.029	0.028	0
Transportation	0.023	0	0	0	0
Language rights	0	0.042	0	0	0
Cost of living	0.045	0.167	0.059	0.083	0.125
Reconciliation / Indigenous Peoples	0.023	0	0	0.028	0
Other	0.023	0	0.059	0.083	0
Multiple	0.318	0.250	0.294	0.361	0.250
N/A	0.273	0.292	0.235	0.167	0.375

For *The Telegraph Journal*, the most prominent agenda issues in the 2021 election were finance/commerce and health (both at 6.8%), as well as social welfare, cost of living, and taxes (all at 4.5%). For *The Telegram*, the most prominent agenda issues were cost of living (16.7%)

and health (8.3%), as well as energy, environment, finance/commerce, immigration, and language rights (all at 4.2%). For *The Guardian*, the most prominent agenda issues were civil rights (11.8%) and environment (8.8%), as well as health and cost of living (both at 5.9%). For *The Whitehorse Star*, the three most prominent agenda issues were cost of living (8.3%), as well as civil rights and health (both at 5.6%). For *NNSL Media*, the three most prominent agenda issues were civil rights, environment, and cost of living (all at 12.5%).

In continuing to analyze the coverage for agenda setting effects, it is also useful to gain a sense of the overall focus for each article; observations of the broader focus can deepen the existing data surrounding article topics and provide a more holistic understanding of selective topic exposure within the data sets. As shown in Table 5.7 below, for Variable 1.7a the articles were classified according to topics of campaign trail, policy issue, civic engagement, political polls, national identity/values, and political scandal.

Table 5.7

Variable 1.7a Article Focus, 1972 and 2021 Elections

Variable 1.7a (Article Focus)	1972 Articles	2021 Articles	Net Change
Variable 1.7a, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N/A
Campaign Trail	0.516	0.407	-0.109
Policy Issue	0.178	0.246	+0.068
Civic Engagement	0.158	0.130	-0.028
Political Polls	0.067	0.081	+0.014
National Identity/Values	0.052	0.081	+0.029
Political Scandal	0.029	0.054	+0.025

For the 1972 election, 51.6% of the sampled coverage focused upon the campaign trail itself, with subsequent attention given to the focus areas of policy issue (17.8%), civic engagement (15.8%), political polls (6.7%), national identity/values (5.2%), and political scandal (2.9%). For

the 2021 election, the campaign trail remained the most common focus area at 40.7%, followed by policy issue (24.6%), civic engagement (13%), political polls (8.1%), national values (8.1%), and political scandal (5.4%). Coverage focused upon the campaign trail reflected a 10.9% decrease when moving from 1972 to 2021, while a policy issue focus saw a 6.8% gain; all other focus areas had marginal net changes of less than 3%. The article focus category (Variable 1.7a) is stratified by publication for each election year in Table 5.8 and Table 5.9 below; the net change in article focus when comparing 1972 and 2021 elections is then displayed in Table 5.8.

Table 5.8

Variable 1.7a Article Focus, According to Publication, 1972 Election

Publication Name	Variable 1.7a, N Value	Campaign Trail	Policy Issue	Civic Engagement	Political Polls	National Identity / Values	Political Scandal
The Globe and Mail	N=1.00	0.472	0.146	0.169	0.079	0.079	0.056
The Toronto Star	N=1.00	0.510	0.130	0.150	0.100	0.070	0.040
The Ottawa Citizen	N=1.00	0.525	0.138	0.238	0.038	0.050	0.013
The Montreal Star	N=1.00	0.620	0.152	0.063	0.152	0.013	0
The Vancouver Sun	N=1.00	0.500	0.241	0.185	0.019	0.056	0
The Calgary Herald	N=1.00	0.539	0.180	0.180	0.034	0.034	0.034
The Winnipeg Free Press	N=1.00	0.530	0.169	0.157	0.084	0.024	0.036
The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	N=1.00	0.508	0.305	0.051	0.068	0.051	0.017
The Chronicle Herald	N=1.00	0.491	0.207	0.147	0.060	0.043	0.052
The Telegraph Journal	N=1.00	0.460	0.160	0.260	0.040	0.060	0.020
The Telegram	N=1.00	0.582	0.182	0.091	0.036	0.091	0.018
The Guardian	N=1.00	0.425	0.200	0.250	0.050	0.075	0

For 1972, the campaign trail focus category was the most prevalent article focus area for all publications; *The Montreal Star* exhibited the largest share of campaign trail coverage at 62%, while *The Guardian* was the lowest at 42.5%. The policy issue category was the second most prevalent focus area for most publications; *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* held the largest ratio of policy issue coverage at 30.5%, while *The Toronto Star* was the lowest at 13%. The civic

engagement category was the third most prevalent focus area for most publications; *The Telegraph Journal* displayed the largest share of civic engagement articles at 26%, while *The Saskatoon Star Phoenix* was the lowest at 5.1%.

For the category of political polls, *The Montreal Star* was the most prevalent at 15.2%, while *The Calgary Herald* was the lowest at 3.4%. The category of national identity/values comprised less than 10% of the total articles for any given publication; *The Telegram* had the most coverage with this focus at 9.1%, while *The Montreal Star* had the least at 1.3%. The category of political scandal was displayed by less than five percent of the coverage for each publication, with the exception of *The Globe and Mail* (5.6%) and *The Chronicle Herald* (5.2%); *The Montreal Star*, *The Vancouver Sun*, and *The Guardian* did not feature any coverage focused on political scandal.

Table 5.9

Variable 1.7a Article Focus, According to Publication, 2021 Election

Publication Name	Variable 1.7a, N Value	Campaign Trail	Policy Issue	Civic Engagement	Political Polls	National Identity / Values	Political Scandal
The Globe and Mail	N=1.00	0.321	0.393	0.089	0.018	0.071	0.107
The National Post	N=1.00	0.511	0.213	0.043	0.106	0.064	0.064
The Toronto Star	N=1.00	0.446	0.154	0.154	0.015	0.138	0.092
The Ottawa Citizen	N=1.00	0.385	0.205	0.205	0.103	0.051	0.051
The Montreal Gazette	N=1.00	0.385	0.385	0.128	0.154	0.065	0.043
The Vancouver Sun	N=1.00	0.408	0.204	0.102	0.163	0.061	0.061
The Calgary Herald	N=1.00	0.456	0.159	0.114	0.091	0.091	0.068
The Winnipeg Free Press	N=1.00	0.409	0.273	0.091	0.045	0.091	0.045
The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	N=1.00	0.463	0.195	0.073	0.098	0.146	0.024
The Chronicle Herald	N=1.00	0.391	0.261	0.130	0.087	0.043	0.087
The Telegraph Journal	N=1.00	0.432	0.227	0.159	0.091	0.068	0.023
The Telegram	N=1.00	0.292	0.333	0.125	0.125	0.083	0.042
The Guardian	N=1.00	0.235	0.324	0.206	0.118	0.118	0
The Whitehorse Star	N=1.00	0.556	0.222	0.194	0	0.028	0
NNSL Media	N=1.00	0.250	0.375	0.375	0	0	0

For 2021, the campaign trail category was the most prevalent focus area for 11 of the 15 publications; the campaign trail was most prominently featured within *The Whitehorse Star* (55.6%), *The National Post* (51.1%), and *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (46.3%), while the campaign trail was least abundant in *The Guardian* (23.5%), *NNSL Media* (25%), and *The Telegram* (29.2%). The category of policy issue was most highly detected in *The Globe and Mail* (39.3%), *The Montreal Gazette* (38.5%), and *NNSL Media* (37.5%), while being least detected in *The Toronto Star* (15.4%), *The Calgary Herald* (15.9%), and *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (19.5%). The category of civic engagement was most prevalent within *NNSL Media* (37.5%), *The Guardian* (20.6%), and *The Ottawa Citizen* (20.5%), while it was least prevalent for *The National Post* (4.3%), *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (7.3%), *The Globe and Mail* (8.9%).

For the remaining categories of political polls, national identity/values, and political scandal, none of the publications displayed a ratio of any category greater than 20%. For political polls, the highest ratio was *The Vancouver Sun* (16.3%), while *The Whitehorse Star* and *NNSL Media* did not have any articles with a focus upon political polls. The publication with the most coverage focused on national identity/values was *The Toronto Star* (13.8%) while *NNSL Media* did not have any articles with this focus area. The publication that most prevalently featured articles with a focus on political scandal was *The Toronto Star* (10.7%) while *The Guardian*, *The Whitehorse Star*, and *NNSL Media* did not feature any articles focused on scandal.

Table 5.10

Variable 1.7a Article Focus, Net Change, 1972 to 2021

Publication Name	Campaign Trail	Policy Issue	Civic Engagement	Political Polls	National Identity / Values	Political Scandal
The Globe and Mail	-0.151	+0.247	-0.080	-0.061	-0.008	+0.051
The Toronto Star	0.064	+0.024	+0.004	-0.085	+0.068	+0.052
The Ottawa Citizen	-0.140	+0.067	-0.033	+0.065	+0.001	+0.038
The Vancouver Sun	-0.092	-0.037	-0.083	+0.144	+0.005	+0.061
The Calgary Herald	-0.083	-0.021	-0.066	+0.057	+0.057	+0.034
The Winnipeg Free Press	-0.121	+0.104	-0.066	-0.039	+0.067	+0.009
The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	-0.045	-0.110	+0.022	+0.030	+0.095	+0.007
The Chronicle Herald	-0.100	+0.054	-0.017	+0.027	0	+0.025
The Telegraph Journal	-0.028	+0.067	-0.101	+0.051	+0.008	+0.003
The Telegram	-0.290	+0.151	+0.034	+0.089	-0.008	+0.024
The Guardian	-0.190	+0.124	-0.044	+0.068	+0.043	0

All the publications displayed a net decrease for the article focus category of campaign trail, with the exception of *The Toronto Star* experiencing a 6.4% increase. The publications that witnessed the largest decrease in a campaign trail focus from 1972 to 2021 were *The Telegram* (-29%), *The Guardian* (-19%), and *The Globe and Mail* (-15.1%). The majority of publications experienced an increase in the ratio of coverage having a policy issue focus, except for *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (-11%), *The Vancouver Sun* (-3.7%), and *The Calgary Herald* (-2.1%). The publications with the largest increases in the policy issue focus were *The Globe and Mail* (+24.7%), *The Telegram* (+15.1%), and *The Guardian* (+12.4%).

The publications had a range of marginal net increases and decreases for the civic engagement category, none exceeding a 10% shift; the largest increase was for *The Telegram* (+3.4%), while the largest decrease for *The Vancouver Sun* (-8.3%). The remaining categories also had a relatively equal distribution of net increases and decreases among publications. For the political polls category, the largest increase was for *The Vancouver Sun* (+14.4%), while the largest decrease was for *The Toronto Star* (-8.5%). For the national identity/values category, the largest increase was for *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (+9.5%), while the largest decreases were for *The Telegram* and *The Globe and Mail* (-0.8%). All the sampled publications displayed a net increase of coverage in the political scandal category except for *The Guardian*, which had no net change. The publications with a largest increase in the political scandal focus were *The Vancouver Sun* (+6.1%), *The Toronto Star* (+5.2%), and *The Globe and Mail* (+5.1%).

Analyzing the Structure of Coverage

To begin the observations rooted in measuring the framing, tone, and structure of each article, the type of each article or piece was measured as shown in Table 5.11 below. The quantitative observations surrounding article type are important for developing arguments surrounding the structure of communication, especially when considering how journalistic objectivity is prevalent to varying degrees in opinion versus news formats, for instance.

Table 5.11

Variable 1.6 Article Type, 1972 and 2021 Elections

Variable 1.6 (Article Type)	1972 Articles	2021 Articles	Net Change
Variable 1.6, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N/A
News	0.596	0.334	-0.262
Opinion	0.135	0.267	+0.132
Analysis	0.119	0.205	+0.086
Riding/Candidate Profile	0.070	0.052	-0.018
Letter to the Editor	0.059	0.042	-0.017
Op-Ed	0.017	0.090	+0.073
Other	0.004	0.010	+0.006

The article type (Variable 1.6) observations are especially useful for considering the distribution of news versus opinion formats, considering that opinion pieces are not rooted in detached objectivity. Although standard news pieces represented the most common article type for both elections, the 2021 election saw a 26.2% drop in news pieces accompanied by a subsequent rise in opinion pieces, analysis articles, and op-eds. This data indicates a uniform decrease in objective article formats alongside a rise in subjective or interpretive forms of journalism. The article types (Variable 1.6) of riding/candidate profile, letter to the editor, op-ed, and other all comprised less than 10% of the sample for both election years. This solidifies that news, opinion, and analysis types of journalism are dominant within election coverage, as these formats comprised 85% of the articles for 1972 and 80.6% of the articles for 2021. Tables 5.12 and 5.13 below stratify the article type (Variable 1.6) findings according to each publication for the 1972 and 2021 elections respectively.

Table 5.12

Variable 1.6 Article Type, According to Publication, 1972 Election

Publication Name	Variable 1.6, N Value	News	Opinion	Analysis	Riding / Candidate Profile	Letter to the Editor	O-Ed	Other
The Globe and Mail	N=1.00	0.607	0.146	0.124	0.056	0.022	0.034	0.011
The Toronto Star	N=1.00	0.590	0.270	0.070	0.030	0.020	0.010	0.010
The Ottawa Citizen	N=1.00	0.450	0.175	0.100	0.075	0.175	0.025	0
The Montreal Star	N=1.00	0.494	0.101	0.165	0.152	0.063	0.025	0
The Vancouver Sun	N=1.00	0.833	0.093	0.037	0	0	0.037	0
The Calgary Herald	N=1.00	0.562	0.146	0.124	0.057	0.101	0	0
The Winnipeg Free Press	N=1.00	0.711	0.084	0.169	0.036	0	0	0
The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	N=1.00	0.492	0.119	0.153	0.068	0.136	0.017	0.017
The Chronicle Herald	N=1.00	0.681	0.043	0.112	0.052	0.078	0.034	0
The Telegraph Journal	N=1.00	0.540	0.180	0.060	0.120	0.080	0.020	0
The Telegram	N=1.00	0.618	0.091	0.145	0.109	0.018	0	0.018
The Guardian	N=1.00	0.525	0.175	0.175	0.125	0	0	0

The publications that produced the highest percentage of hard news pieces for the 1972 election were *The Vancouver Sun* (83.3%), *The Winnipeg Free Press* (71.1%), and *The Chronicle Herald* (68.1%), while the publications that produced the lowest percentage of hard news pieces

were *The Ottawa Citizen* (45%), *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (49.2%), and *The Montreal Star* (49.4%). *The Toronto Star* displayed the highest rate of opinion pieces at 27%, far greater than *The Telegraph Journal* which had the next largest share of opinion pieces at 18%. Four of the sampled publications produced opinion pieces at a ratio of less than 10% of their total election articles: *The Chronicle Herald* (4.3%), *The Winnipeg Free Press* (8.4%), *The Telegram* (9.1%), and *The Vancouver Sun* (9.3%).

Although *The Ottawa Citizen* produced the lowest ratio of hard news pieces at 45%, they did publish the highest rate of letters to the editor at 17.5%. None of the newspapers published op-eds at a rate greater than 5% and four of the newspapers (*The Calgary Herald*, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Telegram*, and *The Guardian*) did not publish any op-eds at all pertaining to the election. Riding/candidate profile pieces had a moderate presence within the samples, most commonly appearing in *The Montreal Star* (15.2%), *The Guardian* (12.5%), and *The Telegraph Journal* (12%).

Table 5.13

Variable 1.6 Article Type, According to Publication, 2021 Election

Publication Name	Variable 1.6, N Value	News	Editorial	Analysis	Riding Profile	Letter to the Editor	Op-Ed	Other
The Globe and Mail	N=1.00	0.268	0.357	0.250	0	0	0.107	0.018
The National Post	N=1.00	0.234	0.468	0.191	0.064	0	0.043	0
The Toronto Star	N=1.00	0.323	0.323	0.185	0.015	0.015	0.138	0
The Ottawa Citizen	N=1.00	0.333	0.282	0.231	0.026	0.077	0.051	0
The Montreal Gazette	N=1.00	0.304	0.196	0.239	0.043	0.087	0.109	0.022
The Vancouver Sun	N=1.00	0.429	0.224	0.245	0.041	0	0.041	0
The Calgary Herald	N=1.00	0.233	0.326	0.233	0.070	0.070	0.070	0
The Winnipeg Free Press	N=1.00	0.409	0.182	0.045	0.091	0	0.273	0
The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	N=1.00	0.268	0.220	0.293	0.098	0	0.122	0
The Chronicle Herald	N=1.00	0.435	0.217	0.304	0	0.043	0	0
The Telegraph Journal	N=1.00	0.455	0.250	0.045	0	0.114	0.136	0
The Telegram	N=1.00	0.375	0.167	0.250	0.042	0.042	0.083	0
The Guardian	N=1.00	0.265	0.088	0.353	0.147	0.088	0.029	0
The Whitehorse Star	N=1.00	0.417	0.222	0	0.139	0.083	0.083	0.056
Northern News Services Limited Media	N=1.00	0.625	0.250	0	0.125	0	0	0

The publication that produced the highest ratio of hard news pieces for the 2021 election was *Northern News Services Limited Media* at 62.5% of their election coverage, however it is important to note the sample size of this publication at only eight articles (less than half of the next smallest publication sample). The newspapers that produced the next highest levels of hard news articles were *The Telegraph Journal* (45.5%) and *The Chronicle Herald* (43.5%). Therefore, *NNSL Media* constituted the only publication that provided a statistical majority of hard news pieces regarding their election coverage. The publications that produced the lowest ratio of hard news pieces were *The Calgary Herald* (23.3%), *The National Post* (23.4%), and *The Guardian* (26.5%). Inversely, the publications that featured the highest ratio of opinion pieces were *The National Post* (46.8%), *The Globe and Mail* (35.7%), and *The Calgary Herald* (32.6%).

The newspapers that published the lowest ratio of opinion pieces were *The Guardian* (8.8%), *The Telegram* (16.7%), and *The Winnipeg Free Press* (18.2%). Nine of the fifteen publications featured letters to the editor in their election coverage, with these letters comprising less than 10% of the total articles for each given newspaper. All of the publications provided op-eds corresponding to the election with the exception of *The Chronicle Herald* and *NNSL Media*; op-eds comprised less than 15% of the elections for these publications, with the exception of *The Winnipeg Free Press* (27.3%). The net change is measured for the article type (Variable 1.6) between the 1972 and 2021 elections in Table 5.14 below. Only the publications that were included within the samples for both election years are shown within this table.

Table 5.14

Variable 1.6 Article Type, Net Change, 1972 to 2021

Publication Name	News	Opinion	Analysis	Riding or Candidate Profile	Letter to the Editor	Op-Ed	Other
The Globe and Mail	-0.339	+0.211	+0.126	-0.056	-0.022	+0.073	+0.007
The Toronto Star	-0.267	+0.053	+0.115	-0.015	-0.005	+0.128	-0.010
The Ottawa Citizen	-0.117	+0.107	+0.131	-0.049	-0.098	+0.026	0
The Vancouver Sun	-0.404	+0.131	+0.208	+0.041	0	+0.004	0
The Calgary Herald	-0.329	+0.180	+0.109	+0.003	-0.031	+0.070	0
The Winnipeg Free Press	-0.302	+0.098	-0.124	+0.055	0	+0.273	0
The Saskatoon StarPhoenix	-0.224	+0.101	+0.140	+0.030	-0.136	+0.105	-0.017
The Chronicle Herald	-0.246	+0.174	+0.192	+0.052	-0.035	-0.034	0
The Telegraph Journal	-0.085	+0.070	-0.015	-0.120	+0.034	+0.116	0
The Telegram	-0.243	+0.076	+0.105	-0.067	+0.024	+0.083	-0.018
The Guardian	-0.260	-0.087	+0.178	+0.022	+0.088	+0.029	0

All the publications within the sample had a decrease in the ratio of hard news pieces in their election coverage when moving from 1972 to 2021. The publications that showed the largest decrease in their ratio of election pieces typified as hard news were *The Vancouver Sun* (-40.4%), *The Globe and Mail* (-33.9%), and *The Calgary Herald* (-32.9%). Inversely, all the publications displayed an increase in their ratio of opinion pieces except for *The Guardian*, which experienced an 8.7% decrease. The publications that had the largest increase in opinion pieces from 1972 to 2021 were *The Globe and Mail* (+21.1%), *The Calgary Herald* (+18%), and *The Chronicle Herald*

(+17.4%). All publications displayed an increase in analysis pieces except for *The Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Telegraph Journal*; the publications that displayed the largest net increases in analysis pieces were *The Vancouver Sun* (+20.8%), *The Chronicle Herald* (+19.2%), and *The Guardian* (+17.8%). The net changes for letters to the editor were diffuse, signified by a range of marginal increases and decreases; all of the publications displayed a net increase in op-eds except for *The Chronicle Herald*. *The Winnipeg Free Press* displayed the largest net increase in op-eds at +27.3%, while *The Toronto Star* (+12.8%), *The Telegraph Journal* (+11.6%), and *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (+10.5%) all displayed net increase above 10%.

Editorial Endorsements of Canadian Newspapers

It was also observed within the Canadian newspaper coverage during the 1972 and 2021 elections that the editorial board of various publications would offer their formal endorsement of a particular party in advance of the voting day. As a brief aside to the content analysis, it is valuable to identify all instances within the sample where newspapers provided an editorial endorsement of a particular party. The objective here is to briefly discuss the noted instances of such endorsements to gain a broader understanding of partisan interventions by the sampled newspapers. Although newspapers will frequently publish opinion pieces throughout the campaign that are praiseworthy or critical of various parties, such ‘endorsement’ pieces are distinct because they typically do not list an author (as they are assumed to originate broadly from the paper’s editorial board) and offer a direct recommendation to readers of how to cast their vote. An examination of editorial board endorsements offered by the publications sampled for the 1972 and 2021 elections offers some greater insight into these campaigns.

For the 1972 election, *The Toronto Star* published an editorial endorsement in support of Robert Stanfield's Progressive Conservatives; this was noteworthy as it was the first election campaign in the past fifty years that *The Toronto Star* did not endorse the Liberal Party. *The Globe and Mail* provided a somewhat muted or implicit endorsement of the Liberal Party, with their October 27 piece titled A familiar strain largely focused on detailing the Progressive Conservative Party shortcomings ("A familiar strain", 1972). The message of the editorial is succinctly captured in its closing words: "Of the Liberals this has to be said: they have been innovative. Of the Conservatives: they are imitative" (para. 14). *The Calgary Herald* provided an editorial board piece that favours the Progressive Conservatives but did not directly state that the Conservatives are the recommended party of choice by their newspaper. The *Calgary Herald* editorial condemns the incumbent Liberal government as "arrogant, error-prone and inadequate" ("The Conservatives", 1972, para. 1) while noting the perception that "Mr. Stanfield would in fact be a good, if not spectacular, prime minister" (para. 11).

Most publications sampled for the 1972 election did not offer a direct editorial board endorsement including *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Montreal Star*, *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, *The Chronicle Herald*, *The Telegraph Journal*, *The Telegram*, and *The Guardian*. However, *The Ottawa Citizen* and *The Guardian* did provide editorial board pieces that emphasized the democratic importance of all citizens casting their vote, while *The Winnipeg Free Press* provided an editorial board stance of overt discontent with the democratic process and quality of political debate during the campaign. There were also instances in which the editorial endorsements of other publications became the basis of a standalone piece within some of the sampled papers. For instance, the decision by *The Edmonton Journal* to endorse the Progressive Conservative Party resulted in corresponding coverage about this endorsement to

be featured within *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Calgary Herald*, *The Winnipeg Free Press*, and *The Chronicle Herald*. Similarly, the decision by *The Windsor Star* to endorse the NDP spawned articles reporting this decision by *The Montreal Star*, *The Calgary Herald*, and *The Chronicle Herald*. None of these publications, with the exception of *The Calgary Herald*, provided an editorial endorsement themselves despite their recognition of endorsements by other newspapers being newsworthy.

Analyzing the Framing and Tone of Coverage

The content analysis proceeds by examining variables intended to inform deeper insights regarding outcomes of tone and framing: these four variables are formality, description, democratic knowledge, and democratic action. To view detailed definitions of these variables and their conditions for coding, please consult the Appendix. The variables of formality and description are each relevant to this analysis because they provide a glimpse into the tone (regarding formality) and framing (regarding description), which can thereby impact the perceived legitimacy of articles and their subsequent discussion of election topics.

Table 5.15

Variable 1.8 Analytical Values of Formality and Description, 1972 and 2021 Elections

Variable 1.8 (Analytical Values of Formality and Description)	1972 Articles	2021 Articles	Net Change
Variable 1.8, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N/A
High Formality, High Description	0.813	0.943	+0.130
High Formality, Low Description	0.140	0.033	-0.107
Low Formality, High Description	0.022	0.019	-0.003
Low Formality, Low Description	0.025	0.005	-0.020

These metrics represent a clear trend where most coverage for both 1972 (81.3%) and 2021 (94.3%) displayed high levels of formality and description. The corresponding 10.7% net decrease in coverage with high formality and low description indicates that formality levels remained relatively stable, with an increase in the ratio of coverage in 2021 that displayed high description. Furthermore, the comparative trend from 1972 to 2021 shows a 13% increase in the rate of coverage that is both highly formal and highly descriptive. Only a small minority of the coverage displayed low levels of formality, regardless of description, for both the 1972 (4.7%) and 2021 (2.4%) elections.

The coverage was also assessed according to the presence of democratic knowledge and democratic action as complementing analytical values (Variable 1.9), shown in Table 5.16 below. The variables of democratic knowledge and democratic intent are situated to deepen agenda setting observations by tracking how the coverage is framed, as it specifically relates to the process of citizens becoming democratically informed for the purposes of voting in elections.

Table 5.16

Variable 1.9 Analytical Values of Democratic Knowledge and Democratic Action, 1972 and 2021 Elections

Variable 1.9 (Analytical Values of Democratic Knowledge and Democratic Action)	1972 Articles	2021 Articles	Net Change
Variable 1.9, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N/A
High Democratic Knowledge, Low Democratic Action	0.551	0.698	+0.147
Low Democratic Knowledge, Low Democratic Action	0.300	0.106	-0.194
Low Democratic Knowledge, High Democratic Action	0.111	0.085	-0.026
High Democratic Knowledge, High Democratic Action	0.038	0.111	+0.073

Most of the coverage had levels of high democratic knowledge and low democratic action for both 1972 (55.1%) and 2021 (69.8%). This reflects a 14.7% increase moving towards 2021, in conjunction with an 8.4% increase in coverage that had high democratic knowledge and high democratic action concurrently. Furthermore, there was a noticeable decrease in the prevalence of coverage that had low democratic knowledge, regardless of democratic action levels, moving from 41.1% in 1972 to 19.1% in 2021 (a 22% decrease). Coverage that had high levels of democratic action, regardless of democratic knowledge, increased by approximately one fourth between 1972 (14.9%) and 2021(19.6%). It is of further importance to assess the coverage particularly in connection to the Liberal Party and the Trudeaus, to consider how the electoral imperatives of political actors intersect with the professional imperatives of journalists. This data is displayed in

Table 5.17 below, encompassing Variables 1.10 to 1.14; there are no n values for this data since these metrics are coded as yes/no for each election year sampled.

Table 5.17

Liberal Party and Trudeau Variables, 1972 and 2021 Elections

Liberal/Trudeau Variables	1972 Articles	2021 Articles	Net Change
Variable 1.10 (Dominant Liberal Focus)	0.346	0.250	-0.096
Variable 1.11 (Direct Quote from Trudeau)	0.091	0.146	+0.055
Variable 1.12 (Direct Quote or Paraphrase from Liberal Party)	0.144	0.172	+0.028
Variable 1.13 (Trudeau Mention)	0.543	0.659	+0.116
Variable 1.14 (Trudeau Personality, Image, Leadership, Mention)	0.388	0.562	+0.174

As the incumbent governing party in both elections studied, it was observed that approximately one-third (34.6%) and one-quarter (25%) of the coverage focused dominantly on the Liberal Party (Variable 1.10) for the 1972 and 2021 elections respectively. This equates to a nearly 10% net decrease when comparing the 2021 election to 1972, meaning this party-oriented focus exhibits a downward trend. However, the share of coverage that included a quote from the respective Trudeau prime minister grew from 9.1% in 1972 to 14.6% in 2021. Sizable comparative increases were also observed surrounding the mention of Trudeau within coverage; 65.9% of the 2021 election articles made mention of Trudeau, while 56.2% of them specifically referenced his personality, image, or leadership style. Further insights are gained by measuring the press valance of the Trudeaus, measured through Variables 1.15 to 1.18; namely, whether the content focused

upon the Trudeaus had a positive or negative connotation, as shown in Table 5.18 below. These variables also do not contain an n value since they are only coded as yes/no outcomes.

Table 5.18

Press Valence Variables of Trudeau, 1972 and 2021 Elections

Trudeau Variables	1972 Articles	2021 Articles	Net Change
Variable 1.16 (Quote or Paraphrase Praising Trudeau)	0.066	0.097	+0.031
Variable 1.15 (Quote or Paraphrase Criticizing Trudeau)	0.201	0.281	+0.080
Variable 1.18 (Opinionizing Praising Trudeau)	0.028	0.024	-0.004
Variable 1.17 (Opinionizing Criticizing Trudeau)	0.065	0.175	+0.110

For Variable 1.15, which assessed whether coverage contained a quote or paraphrase criticizing Trudeau, an 8% increase was observed from 1972 (20.1%) to 2021 (28.1%). For Variable 1.16, which measured the opposite outcome of quotes or paraphrases that praised Trudeau, there was a 3.1% increase when comparing 1972 (6.6%) to 2021 (9.7%). For Variable 1.17, which measured the presence of opinionizing criticizing Trudeau, there was an 11% increase when comparing 1972 (6.5%) to 2021 (17.5%). For Variable 1.18, which measured the presence of opinionizing praising Trudeau, there was a marginal 0.4% decrease between 1972 (2.8%) and 2021 (2.4%).

Discussion: Newspaper Coverage Content Analysis

The analysis of election newspaper coverage reveals noteworthy trends in relation to its agenda setting impact. The findings for Variable 1.7b (article agenda issue) are crucial for assessing the role of Canadian newspapers in highlighting agenda topics during each election, which according to Belchior (2020) contributes to a broader process of agenda building among political stakeholders. When considering the distribution of agenda issues in the coverage, the findings tend to support the broad characterizations of each campaign within media discourses and are aligned with the focus areas of the Liberal Party campaign platforms themselves. This aligns with the rising consensus within literature that agenda setting is not merely media-oriented but arises from the joint establishment of key issues by media practitioners and political elites (Belchior, 2020; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Mohr & Furey, 2018; Van Aelst et al., 2020).

For the 1972 election, most of the publications focused upon economically oriented topics as prominent agenda issues; these issues included employment/labour, finance/commerce, the economy, and taxes. However, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* and *The Telegram* each had agriculture/forestry/fishing as their most prominent agenda issue, illustrating the regional nuances of which political topics are most important to voters. Also, *The Globe and Mail* was the only publication to have language rights as its most prominent issue; it is possible this increased attention to the state of bilingualism in Canada relates to the mandate of this publication as a national newspaper.

For the 2021 election, the focus shifted onto health as the most prominent agenda issue for seven of the 15 publications, given the media and political framing of the 2021 campaign as a pandemic election. However, economic concerns (especially the cost of living) and civil rights

(connected to vaccinations, lockdowns, and access to health services) also held a prominent role in the regional distribution of issues across the publications. While the 1972 election was dominated by obtrusive issues in the form of economic and employment concerns, the 2021 campaign was more diffusely signified by a range of issues that stemmed from or were exacerbated by the pandemic (particularly healthcare, the cost of living, and civil rights). The 2021 election also displayed less regional nuance in the distribution of agenda issues prioritized by publications; with the pandemic and cost of living being nationalized topics, media framing was less attuned to regional nuances broadly speaking. These considerations are compounded by changes within Canada's print media landscape in relation to the journalism crisis and media concentration/conglomeration, noted as a pressing concern by several scholars (Benson, 2018; Hayes & Lawless, 2021; McChesney, 2016; Paul & Terry, 2021; Trenz, 2024).

When considering the focus of articles (Variable 1.7a), it was observed how some of the 2021 civic engagement focused pieces surrounded the unique circumstances of voting and altered operations of polling stations due to pandemic restrictions. For example, articles by Kelly Egan of *The Ottawa Citizen* on September 18, 2021, and Stephanie Babych of *The Calgary Herald* on September 20, 2021, each utilized the pandemic as a frame for election day, giving focus to how pandemic restrictions would impact the act of voting itself (Egan, 2021; Babych, 2021). This focus on the pandemic within election coverage provides a point of intersection, where the pandemic as a global crisis provides the backdrop for interpreting newsworthy circumstances within the domestic nature of federal election campaigns. As demonstrated by the work of Cottle (2009), the reporting of global crises has the potential to foster a global civil society, revealing the potential of election coverage with a pandemic frame to promote both national and global citizenship.

Some pieces used this topic to provide opinions in critiquing Justin Trudeau (Variable 1.17), primarily regarding his decision to call an early election in the midst of the pandemic. For instance, the op-ed “Unforced errors squander election opportunities” by Deveryn Ross, published in *The Winnipeg Free Press* on September 18, 2021, adopted this focus while emphasizing how the Liberal Party was significantly delayed in releasing their campaign platform, despite initiating the election at their own discretion (Ross, 2021). Other articles, such as “Here’s what voters need to know for election day” by Arthur White-Crummey published in *The Saskatoon Star Phoenix* on September 20, 2021, is entirely non-partisan in providing information akin to a public service announcement (White-Crummey, 2021). In articles such as these, the organization *Elections Canada* had high prominence as a political source regarding updates and information about polling stations. While these articles have high democratic importance, they are not necessarily reflective of other areas of civic engagement such as citizen movements, community groups, and the fundamental value of voting.

The focus categories of political polls and political scandal saw rather marginal increases of less than 2% and 3% respectively. These observations run counter to the perspective that modern elections journalism has resulted in a disproportionate level of attention to polls at the expense of a focus on the issues itself (Toff, 2019). Considering that coverage primarily focused on polls constitutes less than 10% of the 2021 sample, this focus on the horserace did not dominate the coverage over other aspects such as the campaign trail and policy issues. In a similar vein, a mere 5.4% of 2021 articles fixated upon political scandal, solidifying that such topics of misconduct and political controversy were not prominent when considering the scope of coverage overall. Although political scandal was not prevalent as an focus area, this category reflects high media visibility throughout the campaign including topics of the SNC Lavalin scandal, the debate

question controversy of Bill 21 as implying Quebec racism, the Liberal Party suspending one of its candidates over a dropped sexual assault charge, the removal of NDP candidates upon the surfacing of antisemitic tweets, and a controversial book deal between Justin Trudeau's Canadian publisher and a Chinese state-owned publishing corporation, given the complicated precedent of free trade negotiations between the two nations. There are multi-faceted democratic implications for newspapers focusing on topics of scandal during election campaigns; in addition to influencing voter preferences, media attention can also lead to judicial inquiries or resignations that would not have occurred otherwise (Simons et al., 2017; Tiffen, 1999).

Furthermore, arguments are also developed that assess the framing, tone, and structure of articles. The observations for the article type (Variable 1.6) support the idea that political journalism continues to shift away from classic objectivity to other forms including analytical and interpretive reporting. There was a unanimous decrease in the prevalence of news coverage for all publications, including a decrease of more than 30% for *The Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Calgary Herald*, *The Vancouver Sun*, and *The Globe and Mail*. By consequence, all publications experienced an increase in the prevalence of opinion pieces except for *The Guardian*. Marginal decreases of less than 2% were observed for the article types of riding/candidate profiles and letters to the editor, the latter representing a means for reader engagement with newspapers. While quotations can be found in all types of news content, they tend to be especially prevalent in hard news pieces, given the expectation of journalistic objectivity (Gidengil, 2014; Wilson, 2013). Although journalistic objectivity is premised upon a value-neutral presentation of newsworthy circumstances, direct quotations contribute to journalistic framing which can "elevate the salience" of certain ideas or perspectives (S. Wu, 2022, p. 5).

These results raise important questions surrounding how these trends of a drop in objective news reports and subsequent rises in opinion and analytical pieces might impact the process of how citizens are democratically informed. Given the importance of objective facts towards establishing conditions of informed debate within deliberative public sphere environments, there are democratic implications inherent to downwards trends in classic journalistic objectivity (Edy & Meirick, 2019; Glynn, 2018). The central concern reflected in this observation is not only that voters will be less informed about key policy positions and governing priorities among the parties, but also that the quality of political deliberation among politicians and other elite actors will devolve away from substantive public interest discussion (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024; Paul & Terry, 2021; Štetka & Mihelj, 2024; Wilson, 2013).

The data pertaining to levels of formality and description (Variable 1.8) indicates how communication that is formal and descriptive is the dominant model of election journalism, with approximately 19 out of every 20 articles coded as such. One can surmise that the increases in formality and description of election coverage are at least partially in response to the disruptive impact of digital technologies upon the landscape of political information. For instance, Birks (2021) contends that journalistic norms, especially in political journalism, are continuously evolving in response to the “post-truth’ shift” in political discourses (p. 62). Given that the monopolistic status of journalists and economic model of traditional journalism is increasingly under threat, election reporting maintains high levels of formality and description to differentiate the professional nature of their craft (McChesney, 2016). However, the dominant tendencies of highly formal and descriptive articles are not merely reflective of journalism’s positionality as an industry. The accelerating trends of high formality and high description are a continuation in the process of privatization within the public sphere, as identified by Habermas (1989). The evaluation

of these communicative trends allows one to materialize the ways in which democratic information is subject to a gatekeeping process whereby journalistic and political elites establish the standards of acceptability for mainstream political discourse (Rooney & Creech, 2019).

This data supports a theme observed throughout the comparative analysis that relates to an acceleration of neoliberal values that surface in the editorialized structure of election articles and the strategic dispositions of the Liberal Party campaign platforms. The values of formality and description are not value-neutral, as the journalistic model for reporting on elections is not readily accessible for all readers; certain knowledges, fluences, and worldviews allow individuals to be better positioned to understand and apply the content for their democratic agency (Dahlgren, 2013). These elements of mainstream journalism fall short in their public service capacity of creating an equal ground for public conversation and deliberation (Dewey, 1927).

The data regarding the democratic action and democratic knowledge rankings (Variable 1.9) illustrates how high levels of democratic knowledge are becoming increasingly dominant for Canadian newspapers in their election coverage, with high democratic knowledge categories rising from 58.9% in 1972 to 78.3% in 2021. These publications are thus recognizing that citizens must be receptive to the content of newspapers (i.e., the content helps fulfill democratic needs) to remain viable in the ever-expanding landscape of political information sources. The purpose of democratic knowledge as an analytical value is to rigorously evaluate the substantive presence of information within newspaper content that can directly contribute to making well-informed voting decisions.

Regarding democratic action, however, there is little evidence to indicate newspapers are willing to embrace the opportunity to facilitate the democratic participation of citizens more directly. The categories indicating high democratic action cumulatively hold a 19.6% share of the

sample in 2021, only rising 4.7% when comparing the same metrics in 1972. It can be inferred that the rapidly increasing tendencies to ensure content is highly formal and descriptive, as discussed in the previous section, has not resulted in a corresponding effort to connect and engage readers in an elevated manner. An insight that arises from the high democratic knowledge alongside low democratic action is that newspapers continue to exist as an institution that strives to be an informant of democratic topics, yet journalists nonetheless view themselves as detached from wielding direct political influence (Geiss, 2023). This idea relates to the phrase often associated with agenda setting, in which the media seems to not tell us how to think (or act) but merely primes us for what issues to think about or actions to take (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This point is consequential when striving to evaluate the function and efficacy of democratic elections in Canada, as research indicates that one ought to consider the prescriptive role of newspapers in connection to the ideal of informed democratic citizenship or voting practices (Soderlund et al., 2005).

It is also observed how the 2021 coverage is less likely to focus dominantly on the Liberal Party, but far more likely to mention Trudeau within articles, including in the form of direct quotes. These trends might indicate that election articles are becoming more leader-focused rather than party-focused; it can also imply that Justin Trudeau engaged in practices of media engagement and public relations that resulted in his inclusion on the press agenda at an elevated rate compared to his father Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1972. Ultimately, this analysis is designed to measure the final product of journalistic information provision, meaning that it cannot be conclusively affirmed there are fundamental differences in the political outreach of each Trudeau. Nonetheless, the outcome of increased references to Justin Trudeau would imply a change in the interpretive process of news

production, which has been recognized as important by political media scholarship (Belchior, 2020; Glynn, 2018; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020).

While the increases of quotes/paraphrasing criticizing Trudeau (Variable 1.15) and opinionizing criticizing Trudeau (Variable 1.17) might indicate that Justin Trudeau simply governed in a manner that invited more criticism compared to Pierre Elliott Trudeau, it could also reflect scholarly observations of how modern election journalism has evolved to become more critical of political leaders (Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024; Štetka & Mihelj, 2024). Nonetheless, there was also a slight increase of approximately 3% in the frequency of coverage that offered quotes or paraphrasing that praised Trudeau (Variable 1.16), supporting the theory that campaigning practices of Justin Trudeau has generated higher rates of press exposure for himself. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that the 2021 coverage is more leader-centric compared to 1972, which is an important argument to be revisited in the analysis of Trudeau quotes and Liberal Party campaign platforms.

Findings: Trudeau Quotes Content Analysis

Next, the content analysis specifically focuses on the direct quotes within the coverage that are attributed to each Trudeau prime minister. This is accomplished by tracking the quotation theme, the adversarial extent of the quote, and whether the quote displays qualities of media engagement. A full listing and description of the variables for the Trudeau quotations can be found within the Appendix. This section of the analysis is intended to directly build upon the observations of the newspaper coverage by revealing agenda setting details as detected within the Trudeau quotations selected for publication; notably, comparative increases were found in a leader-centric focus and adversarial dialogue within the articles.

For each direct quote arising from the Trudeaus, a quotation theme (Variable 2.1) was designated according to the categories of issue focused, image/values focused, and party focused, as shown in Table 5.19 below for the 1972 and 2021 elections.

Table 5.19

Variable 2.1 Trudeau Quotation Theme, 1972 and 2021 Elections

Variable 2.1 (Quotation Theme)	1972 Articles	2021 Articles	Net Change
Variable 2.1, N Value	N=1.00	N=1.00	N/A
Issue Focused	0.429	0.392	-0.037
Image/Values Focused	0.299	0.353	+0.054
Party Focused	0.272	0.255	-0.017

For the 1972 election, the most common quotation theme (Variable 2.1) was issue focused at 42.9%, followed by an image/values focus (29.9%) and a party focus (27.2%). For the 2021 election, a similar pattern emerged in which issued focused quotes held the largest share at 39.2%, followed by an image/values focus (35.3%) and a party focus (25.5%). When comparing the 1972 and 2021 elections, there was a 5.4% increase in the ratio of quotations with an image/values focus, alongside decreases of 3.7% in issue focused quotes and a 1.7% decrease in party focused quotes.

The Trudeau quotes were subject to additional analysis as indicated through Variables 2.2 to 2.4 in Table 5.20 below; these metrics entailed whether the quotation was adversarial in nature, whether it reflected media engagement and whether it made mention of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5.20

Various Trudeau Quote Variables, 1972 and 2021 Elections

Trudeau Quote Variable	1972 Quotes	2021 Quotes	Net Change
Adversarial Quote	0.156	0.412	+0.256
Media Engagement	0.571	0.627	+0.056
Pandemic Mention	N/A	0.373	N/A

To further investigate the conflict-oriented extent of Trudeau quotes, each quotation was broadly classified in terms of whether it reflects an adversarial statement (Variable 2.42). The observations indicate a drastic net increase of 25.6% in the frequency of quotes of an adversarial nature, solidifying that Justin Trudeau's published quotes were much more adversarial in comparison to those of his father. An additional metric entails whether the quote reflects qualities of media engagement (Variable 2.3), with quotes that included strong emotional appeals, imagery, or metaphorical language being coded as depicting media engagement. A slight increase of 5.6% was observed in the prevalence of media engagement, with a clear majority of quotes displaying engagement by both Pierre Elliott and Justin Trudeau. As a closing point of observation unique to the 2021 election, it was found that 37.3% of direct quotes from Justin Trudeau made mention of the pandemic either directly or implicitly.

Discussion: Trudeau Quotes Content Analysis

The analysis of Trudeau quotations has informed several arguments that arise in connection to political agenda setting, further demonstrating the impact of newspaper coverage during election campaigns as sources of information for voters. While the findings for Variable 1.15 (quote/paraphrase criticizing Trudeau) and Variable 1.17 (opinionizing criticizing Trudeau) might indicate that Justin Trudeau simply governed in a manner that invited more criticism compared to

Pierre Elliott Trudeau, it could also illustrate how modern elections journalism has evolved to become more critical of political leaders, which has been established in preceding scholarship (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024; Štetka & Mihelj, 2024). Nonetheless, there was also a slight increase of about 3% in the frequency of articles that offered quotes or paraphrasing that praised Trudeau (Variable 1.16), supporting the argument that purposeful media engagement practices of Justin Trudeau have generated higher rates of press exposure for himself.

Justin Trudeau's efforts at press influence were especially focused on demonstrating the capacity for clear communication during the pandemic, maintaining the trust of citizens heavily divided over regional and ideological issues, and a strategic approach to securing the support of a citizenry that had experienced frequent hardship and sacrifice throughout the course of the pandemic.

This effort is embodied in Justin Trudeau's quote:

The reality is that this pandemic highlighted that we need to do more on health care. From the very beginning, we made a simple promise that we'd have your back and that involved investing about eight out of every 10 dollars in support for Canadians in this pandemic, coming from the federal government, including historic and record transfers (to provinces) in health care to make sure we could support people through this. (Campbell, 2021, para. 3)

This quote connects to a largely economic theme in offering justifications of governing success that are correspondingly observed within the 2021 Liberal Party campaign platform. The language of 'we'd have your backs' emphasizes how the messaging of Justin Trudeau is intended to invoke feelings of governmental support among citizens, signifying communicative practices

reflective of democratic knowledge as a metric. This quote is particularly noteworthy as the language has clear parallels to the tone established in the campaign platform, demonstrating how platforms ideas are reproduced by politicians on the campaign trail and surface within the pages of newspapers (Belchior, 2020; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024).

Relative to the high detail witnessed in many of Justin Trudeau's quotes, Pierre Elliott Trudeau by contrast often spoke with great simplicity yet still conveyed a strong impression of political prowess. This is reflected in quotes by Pierre Elliott Trudeau such as "This election campaign has been different because Canadians are thinking - thinking about the kind of Canada they want" ("Canada considers verdict", 1972, para. 10); "We had this short period of time to prove that all Canadians care about Canada and about one another. Canada's new age is here and now" (Lynch, 1972, para. 12); and "Go out and be the judge" (Lavoie, 1972, para. 3). The unifying element of these quotations is that they allow space for agency and engagement on the part of Canadian citizens, which connects to the variables of democratic knowledge and democratic action as supporting outcomes of public sphere deliberation. These types of messages maintain a sense of authenticity, while affording Canadians democratic freedom, rather than striving to mobilize compliance through tightly controlled messages that dictate values for Canadians.

An examination of Justin Trudeau's quotes illustrates a pattern of language intending to attack and discredit Conservative Party leader Erin O'Toole, especially for his stance on vaccination requirements.

This is evident in the following comment:

O'Toole has made the choice to have a 'big tent' party that is big enough to hold all sorts of anti-vaxxers within it. He can't even convince his own candidates to get vaccinated.

How is he going to convince Canadians who are hesitant to get vaccinated if he doesn't require his candidates to get vaccinated?... You don't have a plan for jobs and the economy if you don't have a plan for climate change, and O'Toole doesn't. (Waugh, 2021, para. 6)

This quote exemplifies many negative qualities, including criticism, blame, and condemnation, while not offering any information about positive governing aspects of himself (Trudeau) as a leader or the Liberal Party. It is evident within this quote that Justin Trudeau is making a concerted effort to equate anti-vaxxers (a group that faces disapproval from most Canadians) with the Conservative Party as a whole. The wedge issue of COVID-19 vaccination, bolstered by Trudeau's reference to the fact that some Conservative candidates remain unwilling to be vaccinated, is used to prime a transition into an unsubstantiated critique of the Conservative Party's proposed climate policies. It is worth noting that Justin Trudeau links his critique of the Conservative climate plan to the issue of jobs and the economy, demonstrating a recognition that economic issues are more likely to inform the voting decisions of Canadians as opposed to climate policy alone. This further reflects the notion of democratic knowledge, since effective campaigning not only requires an awareness of making newsworthy comments but also ensuring the scope of conversation will adequately resonate with the concerns of voters – in other words, it will assimilate within the public agenda (Belchior, 2020; Edy & Meirick, 2019; Kim, 2018; Martin, 2013; Minooie, 2021).

In a stark contrast, only one quotation of Pierre Elliott Trudeau mentions the names of his competitors (Stanfield and Lewis) in an adversarial manner; in fact, Pierre Elliott Trudeau affirms a distaste for adversarial politics in stating “I have said throughout this campaign that I wanted to talk with Canadians... not join battle with Mr. Stanfield, Mr. Lewis, and Mr. Caouette” (Thomas, 1972, para. 1, 3). Pierre Elliott Trudeau goes even further in condemning the sensationalist nature

of election debates and adversarial conflicts: “During election time, surely it's not too much to stop the fights, stop the entertainment, stop giving a show of boxers fighting with each other so people can be amused” (Webster, 1972b, para. 6). Even the headline of the piece in which this quote was printed seems to reflect a media orientation of adversarial political discourse - “Trudeau ends campaign on anti-climatic note”. The reporter, Norman Webster, implies that the campaigning activities of politicians need to be climatic or exciting, while Trudeau firmly states his focus on issues and principles. This further solidifies the gap between political rhetoric and journalistic principles; scholars have widely observed how the changing nature of political discourse in newspapers is a conjoined outcome between political actors and media practitioners (Belchior, 2020; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Falasca, 2014; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024). These quotes emphasize to voters that Trudeau is committed to upholding the democratic integrity of the electoral process, rooted in conversation and dialogue rather than conflict. This would appear to contrast, at least to a certain extent, with the need for uncovering conflict within political coverage as a journalistic professional value.

The fact that only 15.6% of quotes from Pierre Elliott Trudeau were classified as adversarial supports the premise of his previously discussed quotes that condemn the adversarial nature of election campaigns. Even when speaking in an adversarial tone, Pierre Elliott Trudeau felt at liberty to inject some humour into his messages; for example, “If the opposition had shown half the skill of the Tiger-Cats, I’d be a bit worried. Robert Stanfield is a quarterback who calls endless pass plays while his candidates insist on trying to run with the ball. David Lewis is a quarterback with a split end called the Waffle which refused to join the huddle” (Tierney, 1972a, para. 18-19). This type of messaging offers an added element of media rhetoric and is a captivating way to provide democratic knowledge to readers, in connecting with voters through a joke relating

to a salient topic, the Hamilton Tiger Cats team of the Canadian Football League. Since this speech was given at a Hamilton rally, complete with cheerleaders alongside the stage, Trudeau's efforts to utilize football jargon to criticize his competitors reflect a successful effort of strategic campaigning by ensuring the message is well received among the football passionate locals. Pierre Elliott Trudeau's reference to the "split end called the Waffle" is a clever jab at the lack of cohesion across Canada's political left, being split into various parties including the Waffle Party (Tierney, 1972a, para. 19).

However, these insights must also be interpreted in consideration of the fact that the Trudeau quotes depicted by the press are a result of journalist selection and judgment; this in essence is the agenda setting process as a joint endeavour. While it is apparent that Justin Trudeau may have provided more campaign messages of an adversarial nature it is also plausible that journalistic trends may have also increased the likelihood of adversarial or polarizing quotes being reproduced within the pages of newspapers. This is the reason why journalistic quotes are tracked alongside other qualities in the production of coverage, contributing to research that investigates how the evolution of political and media discourses has occurred in tandem (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Falasca, 2014; Hayes & Lawless, 2021).

An important argument advanced from this content analysis is that the prime minister quotations from 2021 have shifted to a more adversarial tone as compared to 1972. This argument raises concerns in light of growing political polarization and disenfranchisement within the public sphere, as observed by scholarship of democracy (Savoie, 2019; Štatka & Mihelj, 2024). The media engagement levels are noteworthy as they illustrate that both generations of Trudeaus advanced discourses to secure the attention of journalists and citizens. The element of change in

this case is that Justin Trudeau signalled a shift of engagement grounded in conflict, rather than captivation.

This resulted in many of the quotations of Justin Trudeau being both adversarial in disposition and reflecting fundamental qualities of media engagement; for example,

Instead of coming clean with Canadians, Erin O’Toole is using coded language, weasel words to try to make his position on military-style assault weapons sound reasonable. It’s not. You can’t promise one day in your platform to repeal our assault weapon ban and then the next day, pretend that you’re going to lead consultations in partnership with the gun lobby. That’s not leadership, that’s bowing to the fringe politics that want to take back Canada. (Huras, 2021, para. 28-29)

There are many implications to unpack within this quote; by stating that Erin O’Toole refuses to come clean and uses weasel words, Justin Trudeau is implying that the Conservative leader is a dishonest person. Furthermore, the focus on assault weapons constitutes a wedge issue that is especially emotional and sensitive; it has been argued such topics hold especially strong influence in shaping the opinion formation of citizens (Joyce, 2013; Poljak & Van Aeslt, 2024). By depicting Erin O’Toole as a leader who wishes to repeal the Liberal ban on assault weapons, Justin Trudeau can implicitly portray his opponent as someone who is not empathetic to preventing mass weapon violence, even without stating this directly. Upon reading the article it is evident that O’Toole had already faced pressing questions from journalists regarding mass weapon violence and his party’s position, confirming these implications were already established without Trudeau having to say so himself. This reflects a principal dynamic of agenda setting, whereby the discourse

of politicians is an ingredient journalists use to create the final product of their articles (Tuchman, 1978; Wagner & Everitt, 2019).

More specifically, this example represents the process of agenda building, whereby newsmaker decisions in issue focus synthesize with aspects of issue framing, tone, and structure to create a transformative impact upon the public agenda (i.e., agenda building) (Aruguete, 2024; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Joyce, 2013; Kim et al., 2017; Kowalewski & McCombs, 2019; Martin, 2013; Mohr & Furey, 2018; Vu et al., 2020). The strategic effectiveness of this adversarial comment is enhanced by the fact that mass firearm violence had risen within the Canadian media agenda in recent years, and gun control was a prominent topic on the media agenda during the 2021 election. This demonstrates that political influence is exercised most effectively by politicians who maintain a strong awareness of the media agenda and an understanding of which political topics will resonate most strongly with their targeted demographics. This example of the adversarial comment towards gun control illustrates a synergy of crucial arguments advanced throughout this research: the comparative rise in the 2021 sample of political communication that is both leader-centric and adversarial, reflective of strategic shifts in practices of political campaigning.

One final theme evident in several quotations of Justin Trudeau is the reduction of his opposition (mainly Erin O'Toole and the Conservative Party) to representing a fringe minority group, who do not have viewpoints that align with best interests of Canadians as a whole. Through the framing of an "us versus them" mentality, Justin Trudeau can capitalize on the fear and uncertainty associated with the pandemic and other topics such as firearm violence to produce wedge issues that mobilize support for his party. These strategies of communication were also

found to occur abundantly in the 2021 Liberal Party campaign platform, signified by democratic knowledge being provided to readers framed by leader-centric and adversarial qualities.

The recurring mention of the pandemic within the 2021 quotes solidifies that it had a prominent place within the campaign discourse of Trudeau and reaffirms that the social context of an unfolding crisis influenced the political agenda during the 2021 campaign. It also reinforces the fact that the pandemic was a highly newsworthy topic for journalists and thus political communication that connected to the pandemic displayed more deliberate agenda setting efforts in fulfilling media logics.

The observations of newspaper coverage and Trudeau quotations further demonstrate the relationship between journalists and politicians in jointly setting the agenda during election campaigns. The analysis of four analytical values (formality, description, democratic knowledge, and democratic action) in conjunction with other identifiable qualities of the newspaper coverage allows for a deepened understanding of how the production of political journalism is a contested process (Pilon, 2013). Using these interpretive lenses, one can not only identify trends in the presence of communicative qualities most consequential to democracy but properly extrapolate how the observations connect to the institutional dynamics of the journalistic and political realms. The application of mass communication's deliberative potential, bolstered by an understanding of agenda setting, allows for the preceding observations to be evaluated against consensual understandings of democratic efficacy. Ultimately, this constitutes a crucial juncture in assessing the overall health of Canada's democratic system and allows for further discussion of how policy amendments among other intervening measures can uphold the idealistic expectations of democratic elections (Albo & Fanelli, 2014; Maley, 2023; Savoie, 2019).

The content analysis observations provide concrete substantiation for arguments about the institutional qualities of political communication when considering the fundamental differences between 1972 and 2021. For instance, the 2021 sample contained far fewer articles classified as news pieces, with a subsequent rise in opinionated and analytical journalistic styles. This development is important to consider, as the democratic impact of a given piece will differ depending on its level of subjectivity. If the structure of coverage is a highly objective news piece, it is plausible for readers to retain facts or information that constitutes the lead and key takeaways from the article (Ngai, 2022). On the other hand, political reports that are more subjective or opinionated can presumably influence the formation of a readers' own public opinion on the topic of discussion; the impact upon public opinion can differ depending on the political dispositions and existing knowledge of readers themselves (Aruguete, 2024; Brosius et al., (2019); Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024; Minooie, 2021; Paul & Terry, 2021; Valenzuela, 2013; Zaller, 1992). These observations signal the need for additional research that investigates the differential audience impact of consuming political news that exists in varying journalistic formats, including news, editorial, and analytical styles (Ngai, 2022).

When considering the consistently high levels of formality and description (Variable 1.8) as indicating framing and tone within the coverage across both election years, it is inferred that the shift to more subjective political reporting did not correspond to a drop in a highly professionalized tone. The comparative changes in these variables are important because they solidify the fact that although styles of coverage may shift in response to increasing engagement with consumers or other market interests, Canadian print journalism maintained an elevated level of tone and detail. Communications scholarship has identified how the formal tone of journalism can be rooted in an effort to uphold their professional status amidst a decentralized and fragmented information

landscape (Anderson, 2019; Clarke, 2013; Joyce, 2013; Thomas, 2024). These arguments continue to surface when considering the observations of high democratic knowledge and low democratic action (Variable 1.9) for both election years. The high levels of democratic knowledge indicate that print journalism has remained keenly aware of their traditional role in providing readers with information that relates to the key issues, actors, organizations, and contextual factors that come to signify an election period (Falasca, 2014; Martin, 2013). By contrast, the low levels of democratic action observed for articles of both election years demonstrates that the traditional media remains largely detached from compelling citizens to take action as participants in the democratic process.

These observations further affirm the complex relationship that political journalism maintains with democracy, as newspapers are regarded as an essential source of political information without directly advocating for political action (Clarke, 2013; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; S. Wu, 2022). In order to properly understand the perceived existence of journalism as a political institution, one must consider how their detached, sober outlook exists to contrast the evocative and hyper-partisan discourse of party politicians (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Clarke, 2013). The role of print journalism during elections, as illustrated by the quantitative observations, once again reveals the impact of agenda setting through both the media exposure of political issues and the way those issues are framed. The analytical framework implemented throughout the content analysis serves to make tangible established scholarly observations of how political journalism is positioned as an information source that covertly establishes the agenda of discussion during election campaigns without any direct accountability for political outcomes (Chernov & McCombs, 2019; Gidengil, 2014; Joyce, 2013; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Soroka, 2002). The

opportunity to analyze communicative variables of journalistic and political discourse in conjunction clarifies the dynamic of tension between these realms (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997).

An opportunity for isolated observation of the collision between media and political logics is found in the analysis of Trudeau quotes within the coverage, allowing relevant findings to emerge. Most notably, a comparison of the quotations illustrated a distinct rise in discourse that reflects an adversarial outlook (Variable 2.2) by Justin Trudeau against his political opponents, specifically Erin O’Toole and the Conservative Party. This adversarial imperative was not present in the quotes of Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1972, further illustrated by a particular excerpt of the elder Trudeau affirming a distaste for political conflict (Thomas, 1972, para. 1, 3). By contrast, the quotations of Justin Trudeau routinely display adversarial elements that were strategically designed to question the competency, morals, or governing intentions of Erin O’Toole and the Conservatives, as they represented the most pertinent obstacle to the Liberal Party’s re-election prospects. The argumentative significance of these observations rests in the fact that journalistic and political logics have collectively resulted in a sphere of political information that is more adversarial and strategy oriented (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Savoie, 2019; Schudson, 2008).

The analysis of how journalism and political discourse have evolved alongside the acceleration of neoliberalism demonstrates how these two spheres provide mutual reinforcement for a public sphere that is more argumentative and strategic (Albo & Fanelli, 2014; Maley, 2023; Pilon, 2017; Savoie, 2019). Since political and journalistic institutions are increasingly skeptical of one another, an outcome arises of whereby the election imperatives of politicians benefit from adversarial communication and the industrial imperatives of newspapers benefit from the sensationalizing of issues (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Leduc & Pammett, 2014; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024). This study of Canadian election campaigns serves to demonstrate how this shift in

political communication has conjointly permeated the political and journalistic realms, which is recognized by communications scholarship as together constituting the dominant means through which citizens become democratically informed during election periods (Aruguete, 2024; Belchior, 2020; Edy & Meirick, 2019; Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024; Joyce, 2013; Martin, 2013; Minooie, 2021; Thomas, 2024).

The analysis of press coverage has offered a glimpse into differences and patterns of communication between the elections of 1972 and 2021, illustrating journalistic shifts that raise democratic implications. In addition to assessing communicative trends within the articles as a whole, an isolated focus on direct quotes of the Trudeaus has allowed for insights of how strategic campaigning rhetoric surfaces in their campaigning discourse. The findings of this chapter effectively set the stage for the subsequent inquiry into the campaign platforms of the Liberal Party, also corresponding to the 1972 and 2021 elections. There is value in jointly developing agenda setting observations for both press coverage and party campaign platforms to better understand the relationship between these two fundamental types of political communication. The content analysis of Liberal Party campaign platforms ought to be interpreted through a consideration of the prominent observations of the newspaper coverage. It is therefore necessary to observe the campaign platforms to determine whether there is a continuation of agenda setting trends related to framing that is more leader-centric and adversarial in nature.

Chapter Six: A Systematic Critical Analysis of Party Platform Commitments

A range of scholarship has noted how the officially released campaign platforms of political parties are among the most prominent and influential forms of partisan textual discourse that seek to convey a political brand to voters during election periods (Askari & Page, 2020; Belchior, 2020; Dantzler, 2022; Robson & Jarvis, 2020). Through a comparison of the 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party campaign platforms, it is possible to comparatively observe crucial differences between the two documents according to their framing, tone, and structure. Prior to the content analysis, a summary will be provided of each platform to illustrate their noteworthy features, both structurally and in terms of content. The summary will illustrate and exemplify areas of the Liberal Party platforms that relate to framing and tone, in addition to assessing elements that correspond with metrics of the newspaper coverage such as adversarial remarks. While the content analysis will quantify these metrics, the summary illustrates how the structure and content of the platforms intersect to impart certain values, frames, and messages upon readers.

To properly interpret the summary and content analysis of the Liberal Party platforms, it is important to establish how they exist in relation to the observations of newspaper coverage. The analysis of newspaper coverage has demonstrated how journalistic and political logics routinely collide to produce an agenda of political topics that shape the public opinion formation of citizens during election periods (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020). The evaluation of agenda setting qualities within the newspaper coverage has validated the existing perspective that the institution of print journalism is maintained through a commitment to certain qualities of communication, such as high formality and description (Thomas, 2024). These agenda setting outcomes within the coverage can be linked to professional journalistic norms and financial

industrial imperatives of the media industry; financial factors are especially prevalent when considering the precarious economic status of newspapers in the twenty-first century (McChesney, 2016; Trenz, 2024). However, the nature of political reporting is ultimately affected as well by politicians and other elite figures who constitute the most common sources of direct quotations within articles (Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024). The quantitative content analysis of the preceding chapter reveals how the quotations of Justin Trudeau in 2021 articles reflect an adversarial and leader-centric shift, punctuated by a rise in opinionated formats of the newspaper coverage. By contrast, the quotations of Pierre Elliott Trudeau constitute a different type of media engagement; namely, a transparent approach premised upon direct and substantive dialogue, without a clear regard for media or political image management.

The analysis of Liberal Party platforms should correspondingly observe whether these documents contain elements of political communication that define the dynamics of contested institutions detected within the newspaper coverage. Agenda setting is valuable as a lens for understanding whether the party platforms also adopt language that appeals to the media logics through which professional journalists evaluate political discourse as aligning with the agenda of newsworthy topics (Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024). This comparative analysis provides an opportunity to observe intricacies in the manner that platforms present political information to coincide with the imperatives of journalists: a compelling narrative, emotion, a sense of conflict, identifiable sides, different perspectives, and legitimized facts or knowledge. Of equal importance, the party platforms ought to be evaluated for how they demonstrate political logics such as a desire for electoral success, an effort to resonate with the needs or values of voters, and packaging disjointed sections of respective political issues into a coherent message that readers will easily understand and mobilize their support for.

These political logics are grounded in agenda setting because political platforms are developed with the intention of establishing an agenda of key election topics presented to voters as most important. In addition to establishing the agenda of topics, the platforms also utilize strategic rhetoric that emerges in the framing, tone, and structure of pledges to compel readers to view their political party as most capable of governing the country, influencing their opinion formation and voting decisions. It is prudent to begin with a summary of each Liberal Party platform prior to the content analysis to understand their distinct qualities as a form of communication that concurrently bypasses the mediating lens of journalists (in appealing directly to voters) while also appealing to media logics for the purposes of garnering advantageous mass media exposure.

Summary of the 1972 Liberal Party Platform

Turning first to the 1972 platform, its front cover page features a side profile photo of Pierre Elliott Trudeau accompanied by the party slogan: “Together... The Land Is Strong”. The photo represents the only image or graphic included in the entire platform, with the remainder of the document being text only. The party slogan represents a simple but powerful descriptor that shifts the focus away from the Liberal Party and instead upon the country itself. This type of language develops a broadly nationalist framing in striving to create an image of strength for the country, with the intention of readers associating that positive connotation to the Liberal Party by extension. This image is also the only reference to Pierre Elliott Trudeau within the platform, and the entire document is written from a de-personified perspective. The rest of the cover page is blank aside from the phrase “the work the next Parliament must do for Canadians”, implying that the Liberal Party adopts the position that they are working in service of Canadians (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 1).

From a framing perspective, this statement would appear to designate Canadian citizens as having a passive role in being served by their government.

The platform then offers an introductory letter that is written from a detached perspective and is non-partisan, emphasizing broad themes of national unity and progress for the benefit of all. Three different words/phrases are underlined in the letter for further emphasis: “...Canadians are invited to think carefully about their country as a complete unit”, (2) “...we see and feel the vitality of the land...”, and (3) “This election campaign is an opportunity for all Canadians to help chart the course...” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 2). It is noteworthy to observe these three passages are the only instances throughout the platform in which text is underlined for further emphasis. These passages are indicative of an effort throughout the introductory letter to promote a key theme of unity among all Canadians, with the underlying ideal that Liberal Party initiatives will generate progress for the benefit of all. The branding efforts of reinforcing positive imagery are also continued here, in mentioning the vitality of the land that was first referenced in the cover page slogan.

The letter concludes by outlining the four main sections of the platform, divided according to the ideas of national integrity, economic growth, personal fulfillment, and social justice. Despite the lack of second-person language, a participatory frame can be found within the statement, “The Liberal Government invites all Canadians to work together for these four objectives...” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 2); such a statement can be subsequently seen as promoting agency but also imparting responsibility upon voters. While primarily maintaining a universalist frame, the letter does begin to make appeals to specific groups of Canadians including farmers, families, and businessmen. The focus of this section is distinctly economic, with the Liberal Party claiming success for the increased wealth of these demographics while noting that certain issues “remain to

be solved” (p. 2). Of the platform’s four objectives, only the element of economic growth is discussed directly within the opening letter.

Following the letter, the platform outlines each of its four chapters by providing a general overview of its significance, bolstered by numerical points of greater detail. Section A, titled “Working Together for National Integrity”, is focused on governmental affairs that typically extend beyond the experiences of everyday citizenship. Similar to the introductory letter, the language and tone within Section A is distanced and impersonal. More specifically, the chapter does not make appeals to citizens themselves but rather discusses Canada as a disembodied nation. This is evident in phrases such as “Canada is bordered on three sides by mighty oceans”; “As society becomes more complex and as communications improve...”; and “The world is increasingly moving to federal systems...” (Liberal Party, 1972, pp. 3-4). This type of language further establishes the theme of a detached tone throughout the platform; this corresponds to high levels of formality but fails to engage readers on a personalized level. The imagery of strength is further evident in the use of words such as “mighty oceans”, which serves to mobilize support through positive descriptive language.

This chapter refers to the Canadian Radio and Television Commission of 1969 as well as outlining broad pledges to pursue various legislative action: to introduce a Citizenship Act and pass legislation intended to limit election expenditures by parties. Many future measures/actions are proposed such as reintroducing “the foreign take-over review”, developing “new initiatives” for relations between the federal and provincial government, and conceiving a Citizenship Act to “ensure that all residents of Canada, no matter what their national origin, will receive equality of treatment in terms of gaining the advantage of Canadian citizenship” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 4).

In the plank surrounding federal/provincial relations, the platform makes a somewhat infrequent mention of success over the past four years in respect to advancements in cooperation between levels of government. Also notable is the use of descriptive language to convey this positive tone, with words such as “viability”, “flexibility”, and “unprecedented” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 4). Certain sections indicate the beginning of an economic theme that continues throughout most of the platform; for instance, when discussing an ocean and sea bed policy the country’s oceans are described as “a source of immense wealth” (p. 4). Overall, the planks of this chapter can be interpreted as being a haphazard mix of policy areas; it is unclear why they might be grouped together as corresponding to national integrity. By grouping a variety of diverse policy areas within the same section of the platform, the Liberal Party is striving for their message to resonate with a broad range of citizens depending upon their personal policy areas of interest.

The second chapter is focused on economic growth, with the platform taking the unorthodox approach of framing economic development as a “social goal” (p. 5). The chapter’s opening passage links education to economic prosperity and adopts an upper-middle-class orientation, promising “full employment for more skilled better educated people” (p. 5). This is accompanied by generic statements concerning the value of renewable resources, industrial resources, and science and technology.

In contrast to the 2021 Liberal platform, it is apparent how the 1972 platform approaches economic pledges in a vague manner, lacking substantive detail. There is a noticeable absence of concrete timelines or quantifiable outcomes regarding the economy, instead focusing on more idealistic aspirations. For example, this is evident in the statement “The Canadian government has led the world in the search for balance between life-giving economic growth and a life-giving clean environment. It is not a question of choice. It’s essential we learn how to achieve both” (Liberal

Party, 1972, p. 6). Sentiments of this nature are especially prevalent within this section of the platform; although these planks might be useful in informing citizens about broad values, they provide little clarity on specifics of prospective government actions. This section contains low levels of description, which can indirectly have implications for the extent that citizens are receptive or engaged with the content as well.

While the platform may succeed in concisely presenting a series of relevant election issues, there is often a lack of details or context that would guide next steps for readers in becoming more deeply informed. This trend largely continues in the section dedicated to improving the incomes of farmers; it begins by offering the goal of raising the average farmer income levels to match other sectors of the economy (it is unclear which other sectors they are referring to). The farming section does provide some greater detail compared to other economic pledges in identifying specific areas of the farming industry that require support such as grain and oilseed, poultry, and livestock. Despite having unique paragraphs dedicated to certain types of farming, little tangible details are offered. For example, the section on poultry states in its entirety: “We have assisted the poultry industry to improve incomes and will further assist in achieving the new marketing system requested by the producer organization” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 7). These types of platform pledges have limited democratic efficacy because they are vague in their stated objectives (i.e., “improve incomes”, “achieving the new marketing system”) as well as the expected level of Liberal Party action (i.e., “will further assist”) (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 7). There is limited context to interpret this information based on the platform alone; this reinforces the need for journalists to critically evaluate platforms and ask important follow-up questions. It also underscores the value of voters being able to directly interact with leaders and candidates, so they can engage in dialogue that is reflective of their own perspectives and needs. This solidifies the importance of measuring

aspects beyond the types of agenda topics that receive attention; various scholarship has described how a fundamental aspect of evaluating political communication includes whether it facilitates citizen participation in the democratic process, which can be revealed through subtle elements of tone and framing (Kim, 2018; Martin, 2013; Paul & Terry, 2021; Valenzuela, 2013).

The platform's third chapter is titled "Working Together for Personal Fulfillment", with personal fulfillment being defined in terms of education for the mind through arts/humanities/cultural institutions as well as care for the body through sports, fitness programs, and recreational facilities. This framing represents a recurring structure of information within the platform, in which the Liberals designate a certain value that they feel is desirable for all Canadians to justify the suitability of the platform pledges that follow. When concurrently reflecting upon both the 1972 and 2021 platforms, it is apparent how this underlying model continues to be applied; the main difference is that the 2021 platform provides a vastly increased level of depth in its information.

The first pledge of the third chapter corresponds to the quality of life for Canadians living in urban environments. A statistic is used to bolster the pledge, highlighting that 60% of Canadians reside in cities, while also pinpointing housing, rapid transit, anti-pollution measures, and neighbourhood preservation as areas of focus. This pledge is clearly designed to cater to city dwellers, punctuated by the use of a statistic within the platform. The distinct attention on urban living is likely intended to balance the heavy focus on farmers in the previous chapter, although there remains a lack of any measurable goals stated. However, this pledge also offers one of the few times in which the Liberals highlight a past governing accomplishment, in referencing their creation of a Ministry of State for Urban Affairs and Housing during the previous term. The use of statistics also represents an effort of communicative influence, deepening the level of

description; while statistics can lead to a stronger explanation of policy positions, it is important for voters to critically evaluate statistics and the meanings imbued upon them.

The Liberals reflecting on their past governing success is repeated in the pledge surrounding national parks, where the party proclaims that “eleven of our 28 parks have been created in the last four years; others, including canal and marine parks, are planned” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 8). The platform also acknowledges a governmental shortcoming in discussing how theatres and other cultural institutions are inaccessible to the vast majority of Canadians who do not live close to such places. The section promises to “take steps to provide easy access... for all Canadians in every part of the country” (p. 9) yet does not offer any further detail of what those steps might entail.

The fourth and final chapter of the platform, “Working Together for Social Justice”, is dedicated to upholding personal dignity, with the Liberals affirming they will “recognize the interdependence of all people, all groups in our society” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 9). The fourth chapter introduction also makes the first mention of citizens needing to take an active role, writing, “When citizens and governments work together for social justice, their concern is for the most vulnerable groups in our society – those who suffer the most from a lack of the spirit of community” (p. 10). This sentence is one of the most contentious within the entire platform; it gives the impression that society’s most vulnerable groups are merely disadvantaged by a lack of community spirit. While such a statement may have a strong rhetorical impact, it is certainly open to criticism on the grounds that it ignores established factors of economic inequalities, racial discrimination, and a society dominated by patriarchal institutions as identified root causes of why some Canadians are disadvantaged (Glynn, 2018; Trifiro & Zhang, 2021). The fact that citizens must ‘work together’ with the government in order to advance social justice also inadvertently absolves

the Liberals from complete responsibility on the matter, a departure from other platform sections. While this notion of working together can encourage readers to take participatory political action, it rings hollow since no subsequent guidance or concrete opportunities are provided for citizens to become involved.

The planks within the fourth chapter make some appeals to specific demographics of Canadians such as retirees, women, and Indigenous citizens; the sections offer a series of pledges ranging from specific to vague. In discussing retired Canadians, distinct measures are proposed such as the “New Horizons for the Aged Program” and the formation of an all-party Parliamentary Committee for assisting the provinces and private sector to “ensure all Canadians are adequately provided with income throughout their retirement years” (Liberal Party, 1972, pp. 10-11). At the same time, the pledges for Indigenous citizens are especially broad; for example, “The government will take the initiatives necessary to ensure that each group will develop at a pace and in a direction of its choosing” (p. 12). While this section acknowledges that these individuals have particular needs that deserve to be addressed, there are no specifics about the nature of such problems or steps that the Liberals will take to give Indigenous citizens greater autonomy. This pledge gives the impression that Indigenous citizens are merely being mentioned on a token basis, since no distinct actions are proposed in the same manner as for other groups, such as farmers, city residents, or retirees.

When discussing the accessibility of legal services in Canada, the Liberals affirm “the ideal of being fully fair to the ordinary citizen as well as to the rich” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 12). This heavily contrasts the 2021 Liberal platform, which identifies the ultrarich as a group that the government needs to “get tough on” in order to even the playing field for everyday citizens. It is apparent in the 1972 platform that the Liberals did not feel it necessary to single out an identifiable

segment of the population such as the ultrarich to strengthen the resonance of their appeals. Instead, the platform strives to include all Canadian citizens as their target audience, possibly limiting the feasibility of their claims in some instances (such as in the accessibility of legal services). It is worthwhile to consider the limitations of agenda setting when a lack of demographic targeting exists; viewing Canadians in such broad strokes does not align with modern conceptions of identity and intersectionality.

The platform ends with a very short conclusion that appears to reaffirm the necessity of unity and the potential for achieving a prosperous future together. The final sentence reads, “Together, let us protect it, nourish it, grow great on it” in reference to the recurring theme of the Canadian land being strong (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 13). The rhetoric of “Let us” is quite prevalent throughout the 2021 platform in signalling governmental action for pertinent issues. As was the case in the introductory section of the platform, there is no mention of party leader Pierre Elliott Trudeau; this further distinguishes the tone of the platform as being party-centric rather than leader-centric. The repeated idea of togetherness itself can represent an effort of signalling towards personal values in striving to reinforce an image of collective achievement (Valenzuela, 2013).

Summary of the 2021 Liberal Party Platform

The 2021 Liberal Party campaign platform, titled “Forward. For Everyone.”, is divided into eight chapters as follows: (1) Finishing the Fight Against COVID-19, (2) Build a Better Canada, for Everyone, (3) A More Resilient Economy, (4) An Equal Canada, For Everyone, (5) A Cleaner, Greener Future, (6) Moving Forward on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, (7) A Stronger Canada, and (8) A Plan for Fairness and Growth. After the platform’s cover pages, which feature photos of Justin Trudeau, there is an introductory letter addressed from Trudeau to the

Canadian public. This letter frames the hypothetical audience for the entirety of the platform; it is addressed to *all* Canadians, even when specific groups/issues are the focus of attention. This letter sets the overall tone for the platform as well; more specifically, it establishes the contextual setting of the campaign as transitioning beyond a period of crisis. The running theme of the platform, “Forward. For Everyone.” is a clear reference to the COVID-19 pandemic; this crisis prompted unprecedented action from the Liberal government during the past governing period and shaped their political commitments within the platform. This framing of “For Everyone” can be connected to the theme of togetherness that is abundant within the 1972 campaign platform, again illustrating an effort to attract the broadest range of voters possible.

A striking point of difference from the 1972 platform, the introductory letter from Justin Trudeau adopts a rather personalized approach: “You did your part. You stayed true to who we are as Canadians. And so did we” (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). This passage illustrates the relatively informal tone of the letter, which involves an effort to be conversational, genuine, and accessible to readers. The first two sentences set the stage for a recurring notion throughout the platform: to strike a positive tone in personally commending Canadians for their efforts to mitigate the pandemic devastation. The second paragraph of the letter introduces some of these adaptive measures taken by citizens; they include wearing a face mask, supporting essential workers, and receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition to applauding Canadians, the complementary platform theme is to emphasize how the Liberal Party was supportive and dedicated to their constituents: “When this crisis hit, we knew we had to continue having your back. From the Canada Emergency Response Benefit to rolling out vaccines, that’s exactly what we did” (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). This opening paragraph reflects the beginning of a significant change from the

1972 platform: the 2021 document makes a stronger effort to implement strategies connected to tone and framing for the purposes of deepening voter support and mobilization.

This letter contains two large paragraphs, each having a distinct purpose. The first paragraph provides an overview of Liberal initiatives implemented to benefit Canadians since the party assumed power in 2015. It is pertinent to note the dominantly economic framing of this paragraph, with phrases such as “putting more money in the pockets of families”, “invested in our communities”, and “transform our economy” (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). While it is obvious that political parties will strive to brand themselves as successful throughout their platforms, it is worth asking – how is success defined? For the 2021 Liberal platform, successful governance is clearly defined as political management that enables the economy to exist at its strongest. This is observed as a recurring perspective throughout this summary; even for policies not directly tied to the economy (for example, healthcare and immigration), the economic angle is heavily emphasized in policy justification. As such, the economic focus of the 2021 platform represents a theme that is continued from the 1972 platform; however, in the 2021 document the efforts to develop a strategic tone and persuasive framing is accelerated.

An additional observation worth noting is how this paragraph begins to identify certain demographics of the Canadian population as receiving attention in party initiatives: families, seniors, children, and immigrants. This is also a recurring practice throughout the platform, as the pledges are framed to strike a delicate balance between advocating for ‘all’ Canadians, while still identifying groups in need. This is seemingly accomplished by ensuring to never give the impression that commitments designed to prioritize marginalized demographics will come at the expense of more privileged groups. These concerted efforts of demographic identification reflect an increased effort to achieve meaningful reception by audiences; in other words, an outcome

where readers resonate more strongly with policy pledges, resulting in a stronger level of influence when forming their political opinions. For example, a paragraph states, “We welcomed 1,613,000 new Canadians whose hard work and passion for a brighter future make our communities stronger” (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). It is seemingly important for the Liberal Party to remind readers that immigrants will strengthen their neighbourhoods through hard work – this would appear to have economic undertones, although it could be interpreted to have a social dimension as well. This sentence strives to distance itself from stereotypical beliefs that immigrants will steal jobs, engage in deviant behaviours, or tarnish the culture of communities. Also, the use of the word ‘welcome’ is noteworthy, chosen in favour of a more formal word such as ‘accepted’. It can be theorized here that the word ‘welcomed’ is meant to remind voters who were born in Canada that there is an element of good-will necessary to fully accept immigrants; this serves to reinforce how the Liberal Party is committed to maintaining a positive reputation of Canada as morally conscious.

There is a binary that the Liberal Party is not hesitant to identify in their platform: the imperative of supporting the middle class while becoming tougher on the ultra-wealthy. This distinction is applied throughout the platform, particularly surrounding economic policies, with the indicator of middle class being used as the symbol of prosperous life in Canada. The conditions for membership to the middle class are never rigidly defined, although it is mentioned within the platform how middle-class Canadians access (or are seeking to access) certain social goods: stable employment with a livable wage, homeownership, health/dental/social services, and a fulfilling education. On the contrary, wealthy Canadians are identified as those individuals who earn in the top one percent income bracket and should subsequently be responsible for contributing higher rates of taxation.

By upholding a vague definition of middle-class characteristics, it increases the likelihood that a much wider range of readers will personally identify within it, allowing the Liberals' pledges to resonate positively for a larger group. This aligns with the recurring framing strategy of positive affirmations in the second person, as discussed above (i.e., "You did your part. You stayed true to who we are as Canadians. And so did we") (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). The platform discourse is designed to establish solidarity between the Liberal Party and the hypothetical middle-class Canadian, inducing the reader to feel as if Trudeau and other party representatives share that identity, and thus have the same expectations, desires, and concerns as most citizens.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that wealthy Canadians are directly identified throughout the platform as needing to contribute more for the benefit of all other Canadians, especially through taxation. This wealthy demographic is referenced by terms such as "millionaires" and "wealthiest 1%" (Liberal Party, 2021, pp. 14, 32); the purpose in limiting public accountability to such a slim stratum of Canadians is to ensure that as few readers as possible feel disenfranchised when reading these statements. While this strategy does not constitute agenda setting in the literal selection of topics, it can be asserted that such rhetoric nonetheless invokes a type of agenda targeting by establishing which citizens are the "us" in the platform's outreach. When the platform frequently invokes the second person language of you, it is excluding these ultra wealthy individuals from their targeted audience. This is immediately apparent within the introductory letter, as it states, "From day one, our Liberal Government has stood up for the middle class and people working hard to join it. We raised taxes on the wealthiest one percent, so we could lower them for everyone else" (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). It is clear the Liberal Party is strategically positioning themselves as serving the interests of all Canadians, *except* the richest individuals, presumably to strengthen the perceived validity of messages targeted to middle class Canadians.

This illustrates how agenda setting takes on significant importance through framing efforts that strive to mobilize support among the party's base of voters by establishing solidarity without pinpointing any single agenda issue.

The overall strategy of the Liberal platform is to establish a frame of discourse that caters their directives for most, but not all readers. If an attempt was made to pander initiatives to literally every Canadian, there could be a heightened risk of the claims appearing disingenuous. This exact issue was observed in the 1972 Liberal platform, witnessed in sections such as the pledge surrounding the accessibility of legal services needing to be equally available for the rich and the poor. In other words, there needs to be some way for the Liberal Party to meaningfully stand their ground against economic inequality; additionally, a road map must be provided for how the expensive initiatives throughout the platform would be funded. This notion of foresight also connects to the framework of the public sphere, since watchdog journalism and political accountability imply that journalists would not allow the platform to be disseminated without considerable scrutiny. The elite economic class of the 1% represents the strategically beneficial group to target, since they are low in number; if the platform is going to have an "us" it must also have a "them". These wealthy individuals provide the Liberal Party an opportunity to establish a simplistic binary and deepen the authenticity of solidarity appeals to their audience – "the middle class and people working hard to join it" (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface).

While the first paragraph of the introductory letter is focused on past achievements, the second outlines a list of future ambitions. These pledges provide a glimpse into the main agenda themes of the platform, which range from fairly broad ("fight climate change") to relatively specific ("\$10 a day child care"). In addition to providing a teaser of the platform contents, there is a noteworthy strategy of repetition being used: each sentence begins with the word "let's"

(Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). It is likely that this decision was guided by an effort to establish further solidarity with the reader, making them feel like they are part of the cause. This demonstrates that subtle changes in language can impact outcomes of democratic action, shaping the participatory perceptions of media consumers.

The decision to use the words ‘let us’ compared to, for instance, ‘our party will’ might better induce a feeling of togetherness; in the context of frequent second person appeals previously discussed, ‘let us’ refers to not just ‘us’ the Liberal Party, but ‘all of us’ as Canadians. This strategy of discourse is further revealed in the sentence immediately prior to the paragraph: “So, as we finish the fight against COVID-19, let’s build back better, together” (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). This sentence also demonstrates a theme of transition that is reflected throughout the platform, a transition out of social crisis into more positive circumstances. By constantly repeating let’s, the paragraph builds a sense of momentum that further compels readers to support each pledge as an active participant. It is through this imagery of togetherness and forwardness that the Liberal appeals depend upon securing support; there is a natural opportunity to capitalize on the fact that all Canadians wish to move forward from the pandemic catastrophe, so all Liberal pledges are framed as moving Canada forward.

Alongside the frame of ‘moving forward’, another simple binary emerges: if the Liberal plan brings society forward, then the viewpoints or policies of the opposition can be described as moving Canada backwards. This is evident in the sentence that states, “We can’t afford to move backward. Not in the fight against COVID-19 or the climate crisis. Not on healthcare or childcare. Not for seniors, workers, or families” (Liberal Party, 2021, Preface). This is again repeated in the final lines of the letter, driving home the point to readers: “Forward or backward. This is our choice. I believe in moving forward. For everyone” (Preface). This use of metaphorical language stands

out as clear, decisive, and simple; it urges compliance to all Liberal pledges, as any level of opposition represents the inherently negative value of moving backward. Therefore, this effort in the platform to establish imagery of the Liberals representing ‘forward’ and those in disagreement representing ‘backwards’ signifies highly strategic framing tactics.

The forwards/backwards framing strategy is an effective means to prime readers for agreement with the more complex (and possibly contentious) pledges that specify financial commitments, timelines, and qualifying factors for benefits. Within this binary, there does not appear to be much space for asking questions or raising concerns about the nuances of certain perspectives. Rather, the letter clearly affirms that the Liberals are the authoritative experts in how Canadians ought to move forward from the crisis. This appears contradictory to the idea of togetherness; however, this disconnect is navigated by how the role of citizens is framed. The Liberal Party distinguishes Canadians as having value by putting in the work that makes their platform vision a reality – for example, by accepting vaccinations and supporting local businesses. The significant point here is that citizens are situated within the platform as having a role of compliance, rather than agency. Despite the platform conveying a sense of co-operation between the Liberal Party and Canadians, there is never any explicit mention of these differing roles. While it is not reasonable (nor intended) within a representative democracy for citizens to have an equal role as policymakers, it is concerning that citizens are not acknowledged as having an influential voice in the platform’s creation. In essence, a key element of representative democracy is the expectation that those public officials make decisions on behalf of citizen interests by listening to and considering their concerns (MacDermid, 2009; Maley, 2023; Savoie, 2019; Schudson, 2008).

It can be asserted that the positionality of Canadians as framed by the Liberal Party reflects an effort to maximize positive branding and discourage critical responses. However, an alternative,

less obvious interpretation might involve the shift to a ‘soundbite culture’ that has influenced the nature of political communication. This again signals how the public sphere and agenda setting are useful concepts to evaluate the relationship between strategic political messaging and its intersection with the evolving values of journalists. While the soundbite culture is typically discussed in the context of broadcast media, it can certainly have an impact upon the composition of textual discourse as well. By providing a positive message continually reinforced with clear binaries, there is a simple takeaway for voters who do not care to read the platform in detail – move forward to good times with the Liberals, move backwards with the other parties. This framing strategy provides a clear narrative for journalists to reproduce as the essence of the platform: a firm commitment by the Liberals to move Canada beyond the pandemic crisis and support the middle class while doing so. By emphasizing a straightforward and non-controversial message there is a reduced likelihood of media coverage scrutinizing smaller details of the platform, especially considering the conventions of journalist objectivity and lessened financial resources of media outlets for comprehensive reporting.

The first chapter of the campaign platform is titled “Finishing the Fight Against COVID-19”; this immediate focus on the pandemic sets a narrative theme of emerging from crisis, which resurfaces throughout the document. The high level of prominence given to the pandemic as an agenda item is fitting, given its dominance over public policy and the media agenda throughout the two years prior. While the general tone throughout the platform is highly positive, the tone of this section is noticeably more sombre in reflecting a context of crisis. This is shown in the statement, “Colder weather is just around the corner. Canadians have a choice: continue taking action to finish the fight against COVID-19 now or risk a fall and winter with more lockdowns and the tragedy of more lives lost” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 2). This tone is overtly threatening,

with the recent memories of destructive lockdowns and lives lost serving as a measure in favour of compliance with the Liberal Party. This statement could further be interpreted as an attack against the Conservative Party; as revealed at different points in the platform, the Conservatives are criticized as failing to support various pandemic response measures.

It can also be observed how an implicit attempt might be made towards shifting responsibility for pandemic outcomes onto Canadians. If the pandemic were to worsen during the upcoming winter and necessitate stricter measures (which it did), culpability can be squared upon those who did not ‘take action’ (i.e., vaccine refusers, businesses that disregard capacity limits, etc.). The Liberal Party is navigating a tightrope of sorts here, in acknowledging that unprecedented hardships have fallen upon Canadians under their governance, despite their self-purported success in ‘having Canadian’s backs’ during the pandemic.

These poor circumstances are further mentioned in stating that Canadians have made “many sacrifices” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 2) in the wake of the COVID pandemic; it is unexpected there is no accompanying statement to affirm that these sacrifices have been crucial in saving lives or reducing strain on the healthcare system. The paragraph ends by stating: “Canadians deserve a government that will get us through this crisis, not take us backward” (p. 2). This is self-evident as an immediate effort to establish the previously mentioned binary between the negativity of moving backwards (associated with the pandemic catastrophe) and the positivity of moving forwards (associated with exiting the pandemic under Liberal leadership).

The chapter moves into its main body content structured by various headings relating to broader pandemic response initiatives (for example, “A Vaccine Strategy to Save Lives”), further divided into detailed subheadings (for example, “Proof of Vaccination”). Each of the headings and subheadings provide contextual paragraphs that outline the philosophical or ideological

justifications for the Liberal position in that area, sometimes mentioning previous policy initiatives as well. Also included for each subheading is boldface text that states a variation of the phrase “A re-elected Liberal government will:”, followed by a series of bullet points to outline re-election pledges that vary in specificity. For instance, these pledges might involve a specific monetary commitment for a support fund [for example “Immediately invest \$6 billion... to support the elimination of health system waitlists” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 3)] or a less tangible intention [for example “Work with partners to ensure timely access to perinatal mental health services” (p. 5)].

In addition to the re-election pledges, some subheadings include a section outlining key actions that have already been taken by the Liberals in that area since 2015 (when the Liberal Party assumed power). This list is also provided as bullet points and is even more strongly focused on monetary allocations [for example, “\$50 million for support to those at risk of COVID-19 related trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 5)] or specific initiatives [for example, “Launched the Wellness Together portal, which has been accessed by more than 1.2 million users” (p. 5)]. The increased use of statistics and overall specificity prevalent within the 2021 platform indicates higher levels of description which ultimately promotes the informing potential of the platform.

The first chapter (and all subsequent chapters) conclude with a short section titled “Gender and Diversity Impact Summary”. The purpose here appears to be offering a contextualization of how Canadians of a marginalized gender, race, economic class, social status, or (dis)ability are disproportionately impacted by the social needs of which that chapter’s platform pledges are focused. The intention here is to spotlight for readers the most pertinent issues being addressed within the chapter, while also demonstrating their awareness that a one-size fits all approach to policy has the potential to leave vulnerable groups behind. Nonetheless, an effort is still made to

affirm that prioritizing marginalized groups will not come at the expense of ‘all Canadians’; for instance, “Our plan to make significant investment in mental health will directly benefit all Canadians and provide a heightened benefit to those who faced barriers due to cost or availability” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 7). This statement uses the language of a heightened benefit for certain demographics, while maintaining the ideal that everyone is being prioritized, nonetheless.

In support of the indication that ‘governance through crisis’ is the main theme of the platform, there is a final page in the first chapter to summarize key initiatives of the Liberal Party’s pandemic response. This information is also presented in point-form and is divided into two sections: “Protecting Your Health and Safety” and “Support for the Economy”. This distinction is interesting because debates surrounding pandemic measures were often framed as involving the degree to which protecting health-related outcomes and the healthcare system ought to be privileged against preserving the economy. Throughout the emergency phase of the pandemic, the Liberal Party faced persistent critique about virtually all of their measures, from the procurement of vaccines to the adoption of rules surrounding air travel.

The backlash faced by the Liberal Party is not an inherent reflection of their performance; as an unprecedented crisis, the pandemic resulted in a need for difficult political decisions about a wide range of issues for which citizens and organizations held deep-seated convictions. The lack of a precedence in most policy endeavours likely added to the scrutiny faced by the Liberals, as well as the salience of pandemic consequences for healthcare, employment, travel, education, and personal liberty. This connects to established observations of agenda setting research in which policy issues that are highly salient and obtrusive will often result in public opinions founded upon the lived experiences of citizens (Edy & Meirick, 2019; Guo & Vu, 2018; Roessler, 1999; Soroka, 2002). Furthermore, many tensions arose through the necessity for joint management of the

pandemic between the Liberal Party and provincial governments, with (typically Conservative) premiers leveraging direct criticism against the leadership of Justin Trudeau. Given this contextual understanding, the addition of the one-page insert provides a means for the Liberals to solidify a positive outlook of their management of the pandemic.

The chapter structure discussed above is consistently replicated across each of the campaign platform sections, allowing readers to anticipate how information will be presented as they read about various issues. This can be considered efficacious from a political branding perspective, since the platform's clarity promotes interest and engagement. Moreover, the platform maintains synergy across its structure, tone, and focus; in executing these elements cohesively, the document guides readers in a narrative that reflects why the Liberal Party deserves voter support. An additional consideration is the sparing use of photographs within the platform; there is a singular photo (typically featuring Trudeau) used as the background overlay for each chapter cover page and no further images are used in the body sections. This decision to exclude photographs helps to maintain the structural symmetry of the platform throughout and allows the imagery or values invoked by the text to speak for itself.

The first chapter includes many appeal statements, which allows the Liberal Party to acknowledge demographics of Canadians with varying specificity or pressing areas of policy development. For example, within the section "A Health Care System, For Everyone", there is an introductory sentence of "Canadians are proud to have a public health care system that is a model to the world" (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 3). This passage is significant because it is not describing a perspective of the Liberal Party in particular, but rather a general sentiment about how Canadians purportedly feel. This statement also does not make any specific reference to the condition of Canada's health care system under the recent years of Liberal leadership and focuses on an

international context (i.e., the position of Canadian health care throughout the world). At the end of this same paragraph, there is the added appeal of “We cannot take our public health care system for granted” (p. 3). Both these statements in tandem are quite interesting, as they appear to be building off each other in emphasizing to Canadians that their nation’s system is among the best in the world, and worthy of celebration.

When considering the broader context of a pandemic crisis that stretched Canada’s health system to the brink, even to the point of triaging patients in some provinces, these statements are efforts of deflection. It is plausible that the Liberal Party chose this type of language to condition readers for reflecting upon Canada’s history of strong health care, rather than raising deeper questions or critiques of how the recent crisis has signalled certain deficiencies (such as in long-term care facilities or domestic vaccine production).

In addition to making appeal statements that encourage a positive frame of interpretation by readers, a complementary strategy throughout the platform is to attack the position of opponents (typically the Conservative Party and their leader Erin O’Toole). A distinct example of this strategy can be found in the section “Standing up for Universal Public Health Care”; this paragraph begins by rehashing the health care appeal – “Canadians cherish their universal, publicly funded health care system” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 4). This is immediately followed by the attack plank: “Erin O’Toole says he wants to bring ‘innovation’ to this system by allowing those with money to access their own system of for-profit, private care. A two-tier system would worsen access and health outcomes for all of us” (p. 4). As a result, the Liberals are striving to deafen any potential critiques about Canada’s public health system as it currently exists, by contrasting it against the potential problems associated with a two-tier system that prioritizes the wealthy.

This attack plank was strategically chosen as it not only deflects criticism of the current health care system but also reinforces the platform theme of the Liberals standing up for the middle class and holding the rich accountable. In an election campaign, a political party does not need to be perfect in the minds of voters; it simply must appear as the most desirable (or least problematic) option on the ballot. This fact further explains the frequent use of attack planks within the platform as an effective means to undercut their most imposing competitor. Scholarship illustrates how another reason for the desirability of attack planks is that they garner attention; not only from voters who read the platform, but also within mass media coverage given its predisposition of presenting conflict among politicians or negative discourse overall (Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Marinov & Saurette, 2023; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024; Van Aelst et al., 2020).

While both attack and appeal statements are useful for mobilizing support, subtle decisions in the word choice of action phrases can shape the descriptive framing of past political initiatives or future commitments. Most notably, the language of ‘moving forward’ is used repetitively across the platform to positively associate Liberal initiatives within the forward/backwards binary. The first instance of such language involves the Liberal efforts to implement universal pharmacare, representing a difficult issue due to the need for collaboration with Canada’s diverse provinces. This is found in the statement, “Signed the first provincial-territorial agreement to accelerate the implementation of national universal pharmacare as we continue to move forward with new partners and funded a \$500 million a year national strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 3). The use of action phrases such as this one tend to follow a pattern of using positive connotation action verbs that can remain vague in detail regarding past progress in an area or in loosely establishing a benchmark of accountability for future progress.

Although some pledges are ambiguous, there are many times throughout the platform where the Liberal Party does describe tangible actions of the past or concrete re-election pledges (this tends to occur with investment/spending promises). Nonetheless, the use of vague action phrases appears common when the Liberals must demonstrate achievement of more complex or longer-term goals, such as in establishing universal pharmacare or fostering Indigenous reconciliation. In the above passage, the phrases “accelerate the implementation” and “continue to move forward with new partners” represent the usage of action-oriented imagery without a need for more explicit substantiation (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 3). It is more difficult for voters or journalists to hold the Liberal Party accountable when this type of language is used, particularly when no timelines for measurable outcomes are provided.

The inclusion of statistics is a commonly employed means for emphasizing the severity of a societal issue, which legitimizes the Liberal decision for political action such as funding within that area. In the first chapter of the platform, statistics are provided for topics including mental illness and/or addiction, child hunger, worker paid sick leave, and food insecurity. Common amongst all these topics is that they are relatively sensitive issues which profoundly impact the livelihood of those affected; furthermore, the prevalence of these issues may not be easily visible to the everyday Canadian citizen. It is noteworthy that statistics are typically used to acknowledge the severity of a problem, rather than simply as a branding tactic to demonstrate achievement under Liberal leadership.

This is democratically promising since political parties have a responsibility to continuously identify and address persisting social issues. This is a more appealing task for non-incumbent parties as they can blame societal shortcomings on the previous government, feeding into the attack culture of Western democracies (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Poljak & Van Aelst,

2024). Given the context of the Liberal Party holding power for six years prior to the 2021 election, including statistics of this nature is an admission that Canada remains an imperfect country under their direction. Such perspectives are commendable in advancing the facilitation of a public sphere in which political parties are committed to understanding the needs of their entire population rather than appealing solely to dominant perspectives.

The use of statistics is especially apparent in the “Gender and Diversity Impact Summary” found at each chapter’s conclusion. Similar to the main body chapters, statistics provided in this section appear to be presented in good faith of the Liberal Party engaging in introspection about how their platform policies must exercise deliberate care in meeting the needs of marginalized Canadians. These statistics are straightforward for readers to understand, do not appear to be misleading in their context, and are relatively sparing in use – meaning readers are less likely to be overwhelmed by numerical data.

Building upon the observation that the platform does not solely engage in attacks, appeals, or self-promotion, there are a variety of other statements where the Liberal Party begins to acknowledge deficiencies under their leadership or reflect on continuing issues. For example, an entire plank of the first chapter is dedicated to eliminating a backlog in health care access; it is stated that “Too many Canadians had their care deferred during the pandemic, resulting in a significant backlog of surgeries, procedures, and diagnostics” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 3). While this passage acknowledges a critical problem, the pandemic crisis provides an added justification for inadequacies of the health care system. However, the following sentence adds, “But waitlists from before the pandemic persist as well” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 3); this shifts away from putting blame solely onto the pandemic and directly acknowledges the depth of this issue. To further the integrity of this passage, it would be optimal for greater specificity to be provided about the extent

of this issue. Rather than the quantifier of “Too many Canadians” that lacks any true information, this would have been apt opportunity for greater detail (such as statistics) to outline the backlog’s extent. This would encourage the measurement of accountability in how the backlog issue has progressed over time and ensure that suitable responses are being implemented. However, it is apparent how this supposition, while appealing in a democratic sense does not bode as intuitive for the practical purpose of a party platform as discourse meant to aid branding and re-election. The Liberal Party evidently wishes to flag healthcare as a key agenda item, but do not feel there is strategic merit to delving deeper into the extent of the problem.

The theme of reflectiveness is continued within other passages of the chapter, such as in the following: “We recognize that, when this passes, we have a responsibility to review the federal response to COVID-19 and ensure that the lessons we have learned underpin our pandemic preparedness in the future” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 6). This statement represents the start of a holistic democratic necessity; it overcomes the existing critique of political pledges being only concerned with immediate outcomes for the purpose of electoral success, rather than the ‘bigger picture’ of political needs. In this case, it is essential the Liberal Party does engage in rigorous assessment and future planning, since if properly conducted this should reduce the disruption of future health crises.

The lingering critique is that much greater specificity should ideally be communicated to voters; it is difficult for citizens or media to analyze the merits of this review process if it remains vague. A basic journalistic framework known as the Five W’s would be useful in establishing greater context: what is the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘why’ (and how) behind this review? For instance, it is worthy to ask whether the review will solely be conducted by representatives of the Liberal Party or if non-partisan reviewers will be involved as well. It is important to disclose

whether the review will be entirely internal, since citizens may have questions surrounding the objectivity of the process if this is the case.

In developing a summary that is cognizant of the context surrounding the platform, it is important to remain aware of the timing for this election. As mentioned previously, the 2021 campaign was a snap election called by the Liberal Party. It is clear the timing was a deliberately mediated decision and it remains likely that the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic (and vaccination program) was the consequential factor in holding the election. It has already been analyzed why this timing of ‘past the emergency phase, but not fully through the pandemic’ can have strategic merit in the election campaign, and it resurfaces as significant within this passage. The Liberals benefited from maximizing the benefits of declaring victory over the pandemic in areas such as vaccination rollout but also could also maintain a veil from accountability in emphasizing that efforts must remain focused on ‘finishing the fight’.

More to the point, the Liberal Party can produce an affirmatively worded platform pledge to engage in a pandemic response review but also do not put themselves under any pressure in terms of the scope or timeframe. One can ascertain from this passage that there is no actual commitment to doing a review; instead, they are merely recognizing they ought to be responsible for one. This is further emphasized in the following sentence: “But there are things we can do now to keep Canadians safe as we finish the fight” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 6). This would appear to be de-emphasizing the need for planning and executing this review in the imminent future; instead, the idea of a review is simply being signalled to voters at this point. It is unclear whether/how voters can stay informed about the progress of this review and it is quite possible that the pandemic will become a distant consideration in the minds of voters by the next election cycle. So, while it

would be unwarranted to criticize the Liberal Party for including this point as mere rhetoric, some important questions are raised upon a deeper inquiry of the message and its context.

The second chapter of the platform is titled, “Build a Better Canada, for Everyone”; it focuses upon a range of economic-related issues - most notably housing and other basic living expenses. While the first chapter focused on the pandemic as a crisis which impacted Canadians of all demographics, this second chapter takes a noticeable shift into more targeted pandering. There is a fundamental theme being further developed that middle (and lower) class Canadians are being prioritized as deserving of governmental support, while stricter equalizing measures must be placed upon the wealthiest class. Within the first two sentences, there are direct appeals toward the middle class, families, and seniors, representing the target demographics of the chapter (along with post-secondary students) (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 10).

The second chapter’s introductory section also reflects upon the financial strains caused by the pandemic, acknowledging vast inequalities of wealth at both an individual and corporate level. After indicating how they “had Canadians’ backs” from their first day in office (through middle class tax cuts, seniors’ benefits, etc.), the Liberal Party states, “But when COVID-19 hit, it laid bare many of the inequalities in our society” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 10). The word choice here is interesting on a couple of levels; first, there is a clear message that the Liberal supports were sufficient, but the unexpected crisis induced problems that could not be reasonably anticipated. This can be interpreted as the pandemic being used as a justification for any areas of insufficient governmental support either before or during the crisis. However, the phrase “it laid bare many of the inequalities in our society” does constitute an acknowledgment that life in Canada was far from perfect even prior to the pandemic (p. 10).

While the chapter has many positive sentiments, it is far from the sunny ways tone of which Trudeau's Liberals were initially elected to a majority government in 2015. A more sombre reflection of the recent years is a recognition of the fact that most Canadians have been enduring a difficult period in their lives, whether that is for physical/mental health, economic, familial, or socially related reasons. Beyond this need to strike a correct tone with readers, constructing a narrative of having experienced a difficult couple of years provides an excellent context for the chapter theme of building back a better Canada. This language invokes a great deal of imagery, as it refers to both a literal act of building infrastructure (ex. a pledge to build 1.4 million homes over the upcoming four years) and of bringing a more promising future overall to fruition (Liberal Party, 2021).

Given the fact that this chapter features more specified targets, it is unsurprising that a high number of appeal statements were observed. For instance, this is seen in the passage "By helping our young people unlock homeownership, we will grow the middle class and keep moving Canada forward for everyone" (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 10). It is noteworthy that even in appealing to younger Canadians as needing supports in owning a home, the platform emphasizes they will "keep moving Canada forward for everyone" (p. 10).

Despite specifically identifying younger people (as well as other groups including women fleeing violence, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples) as most in need of housing support, a commitment of supporting 'all Canadians' is maintained: "Our plan refuses to pit urban against rural, millennial against boomer, buyer against renter, or those in the middle class against those working hard to join it" (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 10). Each of these statements have undertones of a hesitancy to give significant attention to particular demographics, due to an awareness that other readers might feel disenfranchised. This further affirms the reality that

political platforms must always cater to wide audiences, while still overcoming the challenge of securing support from key demographics (with youth being a demographic upon which electoral success hinges).

To perhaps aid in this difficult balancing act, this section also intensifies its attack planks against the Conservative Party in areas of housing and childcare. In discussing homelessness, the Liberal's describe a commitment to "...ensuring 130,000 units are revitalized from a state [of] critical disrepair-an element completely ignored in the Conservative plan..." (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 13). In this case, the strategy of interweaving an attack within a description of their own plan strengthens the mutually reinforcing goals of critiquing the Conservative platform while strengthening their own. Based on the context of the 2019 election two years prior, the Conservative Party is the only pressing threat to Liberal success (aside from the Bloc Québécois in Quebec ridings), explaining why Conservatives are the recurring target of attacks. By subtly incorporating this attack within their plan description, the Liberals also benefit from appearing less malicious and are shielded from the accusations that they are merely attacking the Conservatives without offering ideas of substance themselves.

This strategy of attack is continued in the section surrounding childcare, with the Liberal Party heavily emphasizing their progress of reaching provincial agreements to halve day care costs within the next year and a reduction to \$10 a day within five years. The discussion is reinforced with perhaps the heaviest attacks against the Conservatives found in the entire platform: "Erin O'Toole has refused to commit to a reduction in child care fees, refused to commit to new child care spaces, and refused to commit to hiring new early childhood educators" (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 14). Repetition is present here, with the phrase "refused to commit" appearing three times in the same sentence alongside what are framed as key actions in improving childcare accessibility (p.

14). The paragraph has been structured to have a persuasive impact on readers, given that is preceded by the statement “But Erin O’Toole’s Conservatives want to rip up these agreements” (p. 14). The word choice of “rip up” is clearly intended to bring an emotional connotation, in attempting to fuel a reader response of disdain against the Conservative Party (p. 14).

This imperative is continued in the final passage of this subsection, which states: “Conservatives want to roll back progress for families. We cannot let Canadian women and children get left behind” (Liberal Party, p. 15). In conjunction, this framing is designed to emphasize the platform message of Liberal policies helping Canadians advance forward (especially women and children), while the Conservative Party makes an active effort to stall this progress and even move backwards. The choice of childcare as an area in which heavy attacks are focused is quite interesting; it is less of an all-encompassing issue, only appealing to parents (or anticipating parents) of young children, meaning it may not resonate with a large group of readers. However, childcare is also a highly evocative issue, with the Liberal Party presuming that Canadians hold a shared cultural understanding of its importance, regardless of whether they currently have children. An effort to present the Conservatives as uncaring or ‘moving backwards’ on childcare seems to invoke a larger scale critique of their morality. If the Conservative Party can be shown as not prioritizing the well-being of children and families, can they be trusted to look out for the best interests of other Canadians in need of support? Such is the rhetorical question that the Liberal Party hopes readers will ask themselves in conjunction with this policy issue.

Beyond the focus on attacks and appeals, this chapter also navigates addressing severe problems that impact Canadians, such as the unaffordability of housing in many regions of the country. A key question based on the close reading observations is whether/how the Liberal Party might accept accountability for persisting problems under their leadership. This can be observed

in the passage which states, “Overly complex, backlogged, and under-resourced municipal zoning and permitting systems are slowing the pace of building much-needed homes” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 12). The statement appears under the subheading “Help Cities Accelerate Housing Construction” (p. 12); here the Liberals are ascribing blame upon municipal levels of government while also presenting themselves as stepping in to help the situation.

It would be unfair to criticize the Liberal Party as refusing to take concrete action on this problem; the housing section provides a particularly high level of detail surrounding proposed initiatives that strive to outline specific solutions. Examples include the commitment of \$600 million to convert unused office spaces into rental housing and the adoption of a Multigenerational Home Renovation tax credit to support co-habitation beyond the immediate nuclear family (Liberal Party, 2021). There is also a pledge of accountability in promising to “Appoint a new Federal Housing Advocate within the first 100-days of a new mandate to ensure the federal government’s work of eliminating chronic homelessness, as well as other housing commitments, are fulfilled” (p. 13). This pledge is democratically promising, although it could be improved by reflecting on how transparency will be upheld; for instance, is there a centralized database where citizens or journalists can view the progress of all mandates and reports of the advocate?

The third chapter, titled “A More Resilient Economy” is particularly important within the 2021 platform, since the COVID-19 pandemic was just as much an economic crisis as a health one. As noted in the chapter’s first sentence, the pandemic “...caused the greatest economic contraction since the Great Depression” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 20). Despite the context of such recent economic devastation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the framing of this chapter is particularly future facing (rather than reflective), and the tone strives to focus on positive connotation action verbs that relate to moving forward. This chapter also features a line graph to illustrate the creation

of 867,600 new jobs between August 2020 and July 2021, emphasizing they are close to achieving a year-long goal to create 1 million new jobs. This is supplemented by the statistic that Canada has regained 92% of the jobs that were lost throughout the pandemic, providing a comparison of the United States only recovering 75% of their jobs lost.

Perhaps the most pressing question one might ask surrounds the types of jobs being created; are they temporary precarious work contracts or full-time, secure positions? The Liberal platform would be better served in fulfilling its public sphere function if it could provide such clarifying details that foster well informed debate. While not offering a direct answer to this question, the Liberal Party appears to be aware of this concern in pledging that “the jobs that are created are good, well-paying jobs” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 20). Although this ambiguity is concerning, the chapter provides many planks that appear directly targeted for individuals facing employment precarity. While maintaining an overall positive outlook, there is also a recurrence of language that features a highly empathetic tone. For instance: “Losing a job at any time is hard. But transitioning out of a job you’ve had for years can be especially difficult because of the time and effort it takes to start a new career” (p. 21). This passage is among the most personal in the entire platform and introduces the pledge of an EI Career Insurance Benefit for workers who had been laid off after holding the same job for more than five years. The chapter also features various other personal appeals for pandemic-impacted groups/issues, including Canadian small businesses, the cultural sectors, the economic needs of rural communities, and the digital economy.

The fourth through seventh chapters of the platform take a step away from the focus on crisis to explore less obtrusive topics of equality, environmental protection, reconciliation, and racism. The same general strategies are used in appealing to key demographics (alongside everybody else), launching attacks (typically) against the Conservative Party, utilizing action

words relating to forward progress, and occasionally providing statistics. The fourth chapter, in discussing linguistic duality, offers a unique attack plank: “Contrary to what the Bloc Québécois thinks, we know that protection of Canada’s French language and francophone communities does not stop at Quebec’s borders” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 33). This presents a rare instance in which the Liberal Party does not focus their attack upon the Conservative Party and/or Erin O’Toole; it is a recognition of the Bloc Québécois as their most potent adversary in Quebec. On the surface, it would appear this statement is appealing to a relatively small target audience: French Canadians who are not living in Quebec.

As previously discussed with the childcare attack against the Conservative Party, critical inference reveals a deeper significance to the purpose of this claim. Through this attack, the Liberal Party is seeking to illustrate that the Bloc Québécois does not care about comprehensively enshrining the French language as a principle but are instead seeking to please voters in the sole province that they enter candidates. In contrast, the Liberal Party uses this section to discuss their proposed reform document, “English and French: Towards a substantive equality of official languages in Canada”, pledging to implement the reform measures within 100 days of re-election.

The Liberals are taking a calculated risk in choosing not to make appeals directly to the Francophone community of Quebec; perhaps they hold a certain acceptance that it would be difficult to sway the minds of deep-seated Bloc supporters. Instead, they have decided to take advantage of their ability to independently enact federal legislation (an opportunity the Bloc Québécois does not have) in the hopes that some Francophone Quebecers will be swayed by this nationalized approach. The decision to preach language duality rather than heavily appeal to French Canadians might lead to greater support from Anglophones in Quebec, as well as non-French speaking immigrants within the province.

The fifth chapter, focusing on environmental protection, applies a framework of language that not only promotes a shift to more sustainable practices, but also the economic opportunities that a ‘greener future’ might bring. In the preceding election of 2019, the topic of climate change had a remarkably high level of prominence; unsurprisingly, the pandemic’s emergence caused it to take a relative back seat. Therefore, it makes sense that the 2021 platform adopts a framing strategy for environmental pledges that is strongly focused on economic aspects. As noted in the introductory paragraph, the Liberal climate change plan “...seizes the opportunities of the green economy and positions Canada for long-term economic growth, in every province and territory” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 41). It can be inferred here that the Liberal Party recognizes that pledges focused on the inherent bigger picture value of preserving the planet will not resonate deeply with pandemic weary Canadians. It is these subtleties of framing, in which the environmental pledges are presented from an economic perspective, that contribute to how public sphere discussions surrounding the environment might follow suit in having an economically oriented frame as well.

The underlying justification behind the policy commitments of this chapter is that taking steps for a greener future does not only mitigate environmental issues but benefits Canadians economically. This is repeated within various appeal statements such as, “The more energy efficient we can make our homes and buildings, the lower our monthly bills are and the less we pollute”; “...the growth in clean energy jobs will more than offset the declines in fossil fuel sectors” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 44); “...people are paying more for appliances they are using for less time” (p. 50); “Reducing food waste in Canada can help save consumers money, improve food security, support efficiency in the agriculture and food sector, and significantly cut our pollution” (p. 50). Perhaps the key insight of the climate change chapter is that it adopts a primarily economic justification for proposed measures, while the environment itself often feels secondary. This is by

no means surprising and is not inherently problematic if this economic framing is employed as a means to an end rooted in the public good; a potential concern raised by climate activists might involve questions of how the Liberal Party will approach environmental problems that are not economically convenient.

A second critique of the climate pledges is that they tend to lack short term details or measures that guarantee immediate changes will unfold. When specific benchmarks are discussed, they almost exclusively involve futuristic goals that extend beyond the next election period (i.e., the year 2030 or beyond) but lack periodic milestones in getting there. For example, the platform provides the pledge to ban thermal coal exports from Canada by 2030 yet remains completely vague beyond a single line statement (Liberal Party, 2021). If the Liberal Party could establish a better process of how the ban will be achieved and compensated for, this would lend greater credibility to the pledge while also enabling increased accountability. However, these critiques are not limited to the Liberal platform of 2021 and merely reflect the shortcomings and ambiguities of government responses to climate change at large. The lack of weight behind many of the climate pledges is well reflected in the following passage: “Work with all Canadians and the Net-Zero Advisory Body to identify ways to further accelerate climate action that will put us on trajectory to achieve net-zero emissions as soon as possible and no later than 2050” (p. 41). This type of language appears to be playing it safe in acknowledging a commitment to the issue without making any claims that will invite criticism of failure.

A problematic element of climate change policy is the combination of setting extremely ambitious objectives [even in the words of the Liberal Party, such as “...measures to achieve an ambitious 40-45% reduction in emissions by 2030” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 41)] alongside a rather distant time frame for achievement. This is the opposite of typical platforms commitments that are

often geared for short term impacts and benefits to secure maximum support within the present election cycle. Since climate change is usually a lower priority issue for voters compared to the economy, healthcare, and education, it can be inferred that the futuristic outlook of the environment is meant to assure voters that it will not impose on concerns that have a more everyday impact. This itself reflects a democratically consequential factor of agenda setting: while some political topics are strategically framed as requiring short term results, others are contextualized as only fixable in the long term, making it difficult to hold the Liberal Party accountable.

While the concept of sacrifice was commonly mentioned within the earlier sections discussing crisis recovery, there is no mention of sacrifice in this ‘greener future’ chapter. It appears the Liberal Party has adopted an understanding of Canadians as having no remaining willingness to contemplate further inconveniences for the sake of environmental protection, leading to a depiction of the green future as entirely positive. When immediate measures are imposed (such as with the carbon tax) they are framed as being targeted against large corporations that shoulder the responsibility of climate action; this serves to deepen the Liberal image of getting tough on large corporations for the benefit of working-class Canadians.

For the sixth chapter, titled “Moving Forward on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples”, understanding the context surrounding reconciliation in Canada as an agenda issue prior to the 2021 election is especially crucial. In the summer of 2021, revelations of mass unmarked graves at government-run residential schools led to widespread uprising across the country. The incident resulted in reflection about the dark history of abuse against Indigenous children in Canada, with Trudeau’s federal government (and the Catholic church) facing heavy scrutiny to make meaningful reparations. The residential school discoveries, in conjunction with ongoing water advisories at

several First Nations reserves, led to reconciliation becoming a key election agenda item in media coverage and during the leaders' debates.

Reconciliation is a complex political issue that ultimately is personal to the individuals/groups impacted and it is difficult for settler Canadian researchers to assess the validity of affirmative actions. Despite this, the chapter can be analyzed from the standpoint of striving to understand reconciliation from a wide scope, raising issues that speak to economic, political, cultural, educational, and health related priorities of Indigenous populations. There are many instances where the tone and word choice of the chapter reflect a genuine acceptance of responsibility, without attempts to avert blame or minimize severity. This is exemplified in the statement, "As Liberals, we agree that First Nations children who suffered harms under the First Nations Child and Family Services program deserve fair and just compensation" (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 56). While the sentiments for reparations appear honest, the chapter could still be criticized as depending upon heavy rhetoric of action words yet lacking true substance. For example, page 59 of the platform uses the word 'continue' or 'continuing' a total of 14 times; these words appear in the context of phrases such as "Continue to work...", "Continue to develop...", "...continuing to invest.", "Continuing to move forward...", and "Continuing to support..." (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 59). These words are not inherently problematic, but they also do not signal concrete progress or yardsticks for accountability. Readers of the platform are left to judge for themselves whether some of the more open-ended initiatives for reconciliation will be approached in good faith and genuinely prioritized by the Liberal Party.

As a positive sign, there are 18 instances of words/phrases on page 59 that suggest the Liberal Party will act in partnership with Indigenous populations. Some of these phrases include "work in partnership with...", "Co-developing...", "in close collaboration with...", and

“permanent bilateral process” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 59). This type of language certainly indicates an effort is being made, although the pledges would be even more credible if procedures or codes were developed to ensure that collaborative efforts are not a one-sided endeavour.

The tendency of ambiguous pledges that lack necessary nuance surfaces through the repetition within the subsections “Supporting Inuit Priorities” and “Supporting Métis Nation Priorities” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 59). While repetition is sometimes used as a strategy of persuasion in political messaging, that is clearly not the case in this instance. Instead, the repetitive framework of pledges is reused (word-for-word) across several paragraphs, with only minor changes applied such as the name of the First Nation or policy title under discussion (p. 59). The reusing of commitments represents a lack of effort to develop an approach that fulfills the nuances of different First Nations; this defeats the purpose of making appeals to specific populations or provinces, since they ultimately give readers the impression of a one-size-fits-all approach regardless.

Another feature within the 2021 Liberal Party platform is a line graph, used to visualize quantitative data across time (such as with projected greenhouse gas emissions in the climate change chapter) (Liberal Party, 2021). A line graph is provided in the reconciliation chapter to comparatively illustrate the Liberal and Conservative actual/projected spending; while it is not directly false, it can be criticized as somewhat misleading. As is typical with line graphs intended to persuade viewers, the y axis does not begin at zero; by starting at 10 billion dollars instead, it leaves one with an initial impression that the Conservatives spent/will spend virtually no money for Indigenous priorities. This is compounded by the fact that the actual Liberal spending from 2015 to 2022 cannot be equally judged with the hypothetical projected Conservative spending from 2015 to 2022. In other words, it is entirely plausible that the Conservative Party might have

adjusted their spending in response to developments that occurred between 2015 and 2022, such as the residential school discoveries (just as the Liberal Party undoubtedly did). This fact is brought into stark contrast when taking a close look at the Liberal spending in 2015 upon forming government: they initially spent approximately \$12B, the same amount as the Conservatives before dissolving their government.

The seventh chapter is titled “A Stronger Canada”, focusing on a range of social or democratic issues including racism, criminal justice, foreign policy, and the Canadian military. Compared to the rest of the platform, this chapter approaches a broader set of issues, rather than outlining policies under a singular umbrella theme (such as climate change or reconciliation). While a recurring theme throughout the platform is to structure commitments as benefitting all Canadians, this chapter tends to be more specific in identifying specific groups as deserving support (for example Black Canadians, veterans, sexual assault victims, etc.). The pledges involve typical actions such as funding allocations and legislative pursuits, yet the tone of this chapter feels much more qualitative compared to the others. Despite covering broadly diverse issues, the discourse is framed in a manner that emphasizes the Liberal Party as holding a genuine concern for remedying persisting injustices. Equally as important, the objective of this chapter is for the Liberals to emphasize some of the inconsistencies or critiques that the Conservative Party have exhibited surrounding evocative issues.

Perhaps the most pertinent of these issues is gun control, which reached a newfound level of public discussion after the worst mass shooting in Canadian history occurred in Nova Scotia on April 18th and 19th 2020. In this shooting, the attacker used assault rifle weapons to murder 22 individuals; on May 1st, 2020, the Liberal Party responded by enacting a ban on 1,500 varieties of assault-style weapons in Canada. The topic of gun control/violence remained a key agenda item in

the 2021 election and represented a critical stumbling block in the Conservative Party campaign. In their platform, the Conservatives indicated their intention to repeal the 2020 ban, which was heavily criticized by opposing parties and anti-violence advocates. In the face of such heavy scrutiny, Conservative leader Erin O'Toole ultimately spoke against his party's commitment, indicating they would not reverse the ban. However, this change of position was not announced until September 5th, coming after the Liberal Party released their own platform on September 1st.

Given this context, it is unsurprising that the Liberals chose to begin this seventh chapter by discussing the importance of gun control in preventing the tragedies of mass shootings. The section begins by explaining the rising incidences of "American-style gun violence" in Canada, also adding that much of the violence reflects hate crimes rooted in "...Islamophobia, antisemitism, homophobia, transphobia, and anti-Black, anti-Asian, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Arab racism" (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 62). By framing the rise in violence as having a disproportionate level of harm against marginalized minorities, the Liberals can reinforce an image of inclusivity and establish gun control as an aspect of equality. This is further developed in the platform through the statement "Leadership must begin by acknowledging the realities of racism and prejudice, something not all parties are prepared to do" (pp. 62-63). This is an apparent jab directed at the Conservative Party and is phrased in a manner that challenges their leadership capacity.

To bolster their affirmative stances on gun control and preventing violent crime, the Liberals launch some of their strongest attacks: "Conservatives vowed to repeal this ban with the support of the gun lobby, which would resume the proliferation of assault-style firearms in Canada" (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 62). This attack is followed by the statement that "even stronger action is needed to get weapons designed for mass casualties off our streets and out of our communities" (p. 62). The framing of these passages is clearly designed to present the Conservatives as pandering

to gun enthusiasts at the expense of Canadian communities, whom the Liberals unabashedly vow to protect.

After providing a list of re-election pledges, the platform section concludes by doubling-down on its criticism: “Conservatives do not support these reasonable and important measures and will weaken protections that currently keep Canadians safe” (p. 62). Throughout this section, the Liberals are successful in establishing gun control as a wedge issue where the Conservatives are framed as insensitive towards the tragic consequences of gun violence. Clearly the criticism levied was not unfounded; Erin O’Toole deciding to walk back on his party’s platform pledge in the heat of the campaign is an atypical decision. The entire situation was undeniably damaging to the Conservative reputation; the gun control section of the Liberal platform is arguably one of its strongest in advancing discourse aimed at securing support. This section demonstrates how agenda building allows the Liberal Party platform to be effective in its aim of mobilizing support: first, gun control is established as an important issue; second, gun control is framed as an issue where the Conservative Party is swayed by interest groups while the Liberal Party is prioritizing the safety of everyday Canadians.

In keeping with the strong economic focus of the platform, the eighth and final chapter titled “A Plan for Fairness and Growth” is dedicated to outlining how the Liberal budget will invest in “...people, innovation, and communities in order to position Canada as a leader in clean growth, and to be a healthier, fairer, and more prosperous society” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 72). While much of the platform reflects on the difficulties resulting from the pandemic, this short concluding chapter is exclusively forward-facing. It establishes a tone of finality in reflecting on key highlights of the Liberal policy commitments, in addition to the dominant themes established throughout such as moving Canada forward, rebuilding from crisis, prioritizing the middle-class, and holding the

wealthy accountable. The chapter has a more anecdotal tone than the others, with a general absence of attack phrases or statistics.

There is one last effort by the Liberals to launch an attack at their closest competitor: “Our plan is fair because, as we make these important and necessary investments, we are asking those who have done well through COVID-19, like Canada’s largest and most profitable financial companies, to pay more. Erin O’Toole won’t do this” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 72). This statement ties together the imagery of the Liberals being committed to helping everyday Canadians move forward, while the Conservatives fail to crack down on upper class advantages. As mentioned previously, this also helps to alleviate concerns surrounding the self-acknowledged “unprecedented amount of spending” by the party since the pandemic began (p. 72). The statement does not specifically identify wealthy Canadians as needing to pay more but simply the “most profitable financial companies” (p. 72). The Liberal Party was willing to single out the wealthiest 1% of Canadians in earlier chapters, but the discourse here is designed to prevent any potential reader from feeling alienated.

This chapter is much shorter than the others but includes a chart of the Liberal Fiscal and Costing Plan from 2021-26 that is sectioned according to the platform fiscal projection, new revenues, and new investments. The platform concludes by providing a “Disability Statement” that does not depend on attacks, threats, or statistics; the statement is designed to simply depict the Liberal Party as firmly committed to supporting the full integration of disabled Canadians within society (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 79). The introductory passage does feature a broadly economic appeal: “Disability inclusion benefits everyone. When Canadians with disabilities have equal opportunities to contribute to their communities... we build a stronger economy-and a stronger country” (p. 79).

A critique can be raised that even in offering a statement prioritizing those with disabilities, the language is primarily appealing to all Canadians as to why efforts of inclusion are in their own best interest. A legitimate counterargument might involve stating that by illustrating the widespread benefit of disability inclusion, the Liberal Party will be better able to garner support for legislative and funding initiatives. While the overall section appears genuine in tone, an additional recognition of disability inclusion as an unquestionable moral necessity might have been further appreciated by advocates.

The Liberals demonstrate substantive thought behind the philosophy of their commitments; for example, “We have moved to a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion and are moving away from the medical and charity models to a social model of disability and a focus on poverty reduction” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 79). This statement is commendable since it signifies that inclusion policies are being developed with a broader ideological mission in mind, rather than to immediately appease voters. It indicates that the Liberal Party is engaging with research of disability studies, implying a willingness to listen to the experts about how disability inclusion can be best achieved. One final time, the closing sentence of the platform mentions key themes developed throughout: “Only a re-elected Liberal government will build on the foundational work to date to support persons with disabilities in the post-pandemic recovery, by continuing to build a better Canada, for everyone” (p. 80). While focusing on support for individuals with disabilities, the sentence reinforces the takeaway which they hope to impart on readers: the Liberal Party has provided for the needs of all Canadians during the past period of unprecedented crisis and are the party capable of leading the country forward to a better future.

Findings: 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party Platform Content Analysis

The close reading of the 1972 and 2021 platforms has not only provided a summary of the platform content but also demonstrated crucial aspects of the text that illustrate how agenda setting is utilized to build a Liberal platform intended to maximize and mobilize Liberal Party support. In highlighting notable examples of attacks, appeals, policy planks, imagery, statistics, second-person language, and other efforts to mobilize the support of readers, cursory observations were developed of how communication theory can explain the strategic messaging found within each platform. To provide quantitative support for such observations, a content analysis was employed for each platform to measure agenda setting effects through the framing and tone of pledges. The analysis seeks to build upon the summary of each platform and establish connections of how these elements are displayed in the partisan political communication of the campaign platforms. The content analysis of the 1972 and 2021 is structured upon four variables that have been derived from communications literature to measure agenda setting effects; namely, these variables are formality, description, democratic knowledge, and democratic action. The first variable, formality is measured according to the prevalence of advanced political terminology and the use of formal/professionalized language on a page-by-page basis, as shown in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1

Formality Metrics, 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party Platforms

Advanced Political Terminology	1972 Platform (percentage of total pages)	2021 Platform (percentage of total pages)	Net Change
Low/None Prevalence	0.334	0.121	-0.213
Medium Prevalence	0.334	0.394	+0.060
High Prevalence	0.334	0.485	+0.151
Formal / Professionalized Language	1972 Platform (percentage of total pages)	2021 Platform (percentage of total pages)	Net Change
Low/None Prevalence	0	0.030	+0.030
Medium Prevalence	0.750	0.545	-0.205
High Prevalence	0.250	0.424	+0.174

The 1972 platform displayed an equal distribution of low/none, medium, and high levels of advanced political terminology; for the 2021 platform, nearly half (48.5%) of the pages had high levels of advanced political terminology while a clear minority (12.1%) had low/no levels of such language. For the category of formal/professionalized language, the 1972 platform contained three quarters medium levels (75%) and one quarter high levels (25%); the 2021 platform had a rise in high levels of formal language (42.4%), with a corresponding drop in medium levels (54.5%). As such, both metrics demonstrate a trend of increased formality within the 2021 platform; this is supported by the qualitative observations of in-depth policy discussions and formally politicized terms being evident at much greater frequency in the 2021 document. The second value of description was measured according to the depth of explanation and inclusion of timelines, figures, or statistics, as shown in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2

Description Metrics, 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party Platforms

Depth of Explanation	1972 Platform (percentage of total pages)	2021 Platform (percentage of total pages)	Net Change
Low/None Prevalence	0.250	0.091	-0.159
Medium Prevalence	0.333	0.318	-0.015
High Prevalence	0.417	0.591	+0.174
Timelines, Figures or Statistics	1972 Platform (percentage of total pages)	2021 Platform (percentage of total pages)	Net Change
Low/None Prevalence	0.917	0.212	-0.705
Medium Prevalence	0.083	0.273	+0.190
High Prevalence	0	0.515	+0.515

When comparing the depth of explanation metric, there is an approximately one-third increase in the percentage of pages with a high level of depth of explanation in 2021 compared to 1972. The usage of timelines, figures, or statistics is the metric with the greatest difference between the two platforms. While concrete numerical information was nearly non-existent in the 1972 platform, it was abundant in the 2021 platform with a medium or high prevalence on nearly 80% of the document pages. The levels of description were unquestionably higher in the 2021 platform in comparison to 1972, especially in the sense of providing quantitative explanation and ideological justification for policy perspectives. The third value of reception was measured according to the consideration of perceived voter interests and the usage of metaphorical language or imagery, as shown in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3

Democratic Knowledge Metrics, 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party Platforms

Perceived Voter Interests	1972 Platform (percentage of total pages)	2021 Platform (percentage of total pages)	Net Change
Low/None Prevalence	0.333	0.015	-0.318
Medium Prevalence	0.500	0.121	-0.379
High Prevalence	0.167	0.864	+0.697
Metaphorical Language/Imagery	1972 Platform (percentage of total pages)	2021 Platform (percentage of total pages)	Net Change
Low/None Prevalence	0.833	0.848	+0.015
Medium Prevalence	0.167	0.136	-0.031
High Prevalence	0	0.015	+0.015

For the consideration of perceived voter interests, the 1972 platform most prominently displayed medium (50%) levels of attention, followed by low (33.3%) and high (16.7%) perceptions of voter interest. The 2021 platform experienced a dramatic change in this metric, with over 90% of the document pages demonstrating a medium or high prevalence of consideration for the interests of voters. This is consistent with the close reading of the 2021 platform, since deliberate efforts were made to explain the benefits or advantages of various policy commitments to Canadians – often providing context of the impact upon certain demographics as well.

The metric of metaphorical language/imagery remained consistent for both political platforms, with low/no prevalence for approximately 85% of pages. This consistency illustrates that the Liberal Party has not adopted highly metaphorical language as a means for promoting receptivity with their platforms. The drastic shift to the consideration of perceived voter interests reflects a fundamental historical shift in the perspective of Liberals surrounding the importance of fostering democratic knowledge among citizens. This provides initial evidence that practices of voter mobilization have accelerated in respect to partisan political communication and the situating

of the reader. The fourth value of democratic action was measured according to the usage of second person language and levels of democratic agency offered by the text, as shown in Table 6.4 below.

Table 6.4

Democratic Action Metrics, 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party Platforms

Second Person Language	1972 Platform (percentage of total pages)	2021 Platform (percentage of total pages)	Net Change
Low/None Prevalence	1	0.910	-0.090
Medium Prevalence	0	0.061	+0.061
High Prevalence	0	0.030	+0.030
Democratic Agency	1972 Platform (percentage of total pages)	2021 Platform (percentage of total pages)	Net Change
Low/None Prevalence	0.583	0.712	+0.129
Medium Prevalence	0.250	0.182	-0.068
High Prevalence	0.167	0.106	-0.061

The metric of second person language was absent from the 1972 platform; it remained infrequent in the 2021 platform, with over 90% of pages having a low/no prevalence. This indicates that second person language may be considered too informal for inclusion in official campaign platforms, with a notable exception being the introductory letter of the 2021 platform. The metric of democratic agency experienced a 7.9% decrease from 1972 to 2021, with 28.8% of pages in the 2021 platform having a medium or high prevalence as opposed to 36.7% in 1972. This observation implies that the Liberals presented a more tightly controlled message, with less opportunities for voters to have a voice in policy perspectives. This trend in democratic agency is also noteworthy as it represents the only metric that witnessed a decrease of prevalence levels when comparing 2021 to 1972. A final element of this analysis is a simple quantitative count of words deemed consequential to the platforms' impact, as displayed in Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5

Instances of Terms, 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party Platforms

Term	1972 Platform (average instances per page)	2021 Platform (average instances per page)	Net Change
Trudeau	0	0.015	+0.015
Liberal	0.833	2.727	+1.894
Stanfield	0	0	0
O’Toole	0	0.106	+0.106
Conservative	0	0.364	+0.364
Canadians	1.917	3.182	+1.265
Issue	0	0.242	+0.242
Policy	1.083	0.439	-0.644
Commitment	0	0.833	+0.833
Achieve	0.333	0.288	-0.045

The 2021 platform implemented most of these terms at a higher frequency in comparison to 1972, with “policy” and “achieve” being notable exceptions. Usage of the word “Liberal” rose from 0.833 instances per page in 1972 to 2.727 instances per page in 2021, indicating that the emphasis on a Liberal identity or brand is more overtly advanced in the 2021 document. It must be noted, however, that many instances of the word Liberal were part of a recurring prompt throughout the platform: “A re-elected Liberal government will...”. An especially notable change is the emergence of the 2021 platform adopting the terms “Conservative” (0.364 instances per page) and “O’Toole” [(the Conservative Party leader) 0.106 instances per page]. These observations support the discussion within the close reading summary that the 2021 platform adopted an adversarial approach that was not detected in the 1972 document.

The term “Canadians” also witnessed a near 50% increase from 1972 to 2021, which can be linked to the high prevalence of perceived voter interest. In other words, the descriptor of Canadians was potentially employed to demonstrate an awareness of voter needs, sometimes with qualifying words to acknowledge certain demographics (ex., “urban Canadians”, “racialized

Canadians”). As mentioned above, the words “policy” and “achieve” were the only outliers in representing lesser usage in the 2021 platform; a drop of 64.4% for “policy” and a 4.5% drop for “achieve”. However, it must be noted that this is not evidence for less discussion in the 2021 platform surrounding policies or achievements. The 2021 platform utilized several terms of similar meaning to convey both policy stances (ex. position, legislation, program, initiative) and governing achievements (ex. accomplished, succeeded, developed, implemented). The quantitative analysis of crucial terms tends to support the observations as reflected within the eight metrics discussed, illustrating additional qualities such as the adversarial elements of the 2021 platform.

Discussion: 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party Platform Content Analysis

The content analysis of the 1972 and 2021 platforms is aligned with the close readings of each document surrounding the argument that framing effects were much more pronounced in the 2021 platform, implemented for the purpose of mobilizing voter support. The analysis indicates increased levels of formality and description in the 2021 platform based on the metrics analyzed. An increase is also observed for the value of democratic knowledge, while lower levels are detected for the value of democratic action. Considered collectively, the comparative levels of these four values indicate greater levels of detail, specificity, and persuasiveness, alongside lower levels of reader involvement as signifiers of strategic communicative outreach. The campaign platform observations pertaining to formality are in general alignment with the content analysis of election coverage. Both types of political communication display a more formal tone for the 2021 election compared to 1972; while one cannot conclusively affirm these trends are directly connected, this nonetheless indicates a relationship between political and journalistic communication. I argue the trend of higher formality in the 2021 platform is reflective of the increasingly complex and bureaucratized nature of Canadian politics, which is a natural extension

of scholarly observations relating to the growth in size and complexity of Canada's regions themselves (Pilon, 2017; Savoie, 2019).

Furthermore, the shift to higher levels of description in 2021 parallels the observations of newspaper coverage, lending further evidence to advanced efforts of framing that bolster the presentation of political topics. I argue that this relationship is largely reciprocal; political parties have recognized that journalists will be more receptive to providing exposure to campaign platforms that are descriptive and supported by data, while journalists recognize the efforts of parties to be more detailed in their policy commitments. The increased description in the 2021 platform signals a positive outcome regarding democratic efficacy, since it implies that citizens have greater levels of information to develop their public opinions and journalists have more information to produce stories, base questions upon, and measure accountability against.

The striking increase in the levels of perceived voter interests for the 2021 platform can be explained in part by the broad difference in the sheer amount of information available within each platform. The 2021 platform is over five times larger compared to the 1972 document (in page length), with the 2021 platform providing thorough reflection upon the merits, expected resourcefulness, and ideological reasoning for various policy stances; this high extent of information is simply not present for the 1972 platform. I argue this increased consideration of voter interests has a positive influence upon the public sphere impact of the 2021 platform, since readers can better understand the Liberal Party mindset when developing their public opinions. When considering the metric of perceived voter interest, the benefit for the democratic efficacy of the platform is especially apparent; this is signified by the premise that political parties should not just provide voters with information but also demonstrate why particular ideas or actions are in the public interest.

These findings for the value of democratic action are also in alignment with the observations for the newspaper coverage; namely, a recognition of the importance of the democratic system (evidenced by the democratic knowledge category) but without an apparent willingness to directly engage with or facilitate the democratic participation of readers. I argue that the lack of second person language and minimal potential for democratic agency detected within the platforms affirms that the institutional character of political parties is grounded in a top-down approach to political communication. This supports a fundamental observation, illustrated by studies of the permanent campaign, that political logics are premised upon a communicative approach that provides voters with information to mobilize support but limits space for the expression of agency (Edy & Meirick, 2019; Glynn, 2018; Häussler, 2018). The 2021 platform is a carefully woven depiction of the Liberal brand, identity, and image, yet there are no places within the platform for the direct voices and stories of Canadians. This lack of agency given to voters is an important area where the democratic efficacy of the platform could be improved, quantitatively illustrated through the value of democratic action.

The observations and arguments developed from the platform summaries and quantitative analysis serve to compare the political and ideological positioning of the Liberal Party during each election, as expressed within their platform. Both the 1972 and 2021 Liberal platforms possess many similarities in their efforts of branding and language utilized; they strive to establish the Liberals as a “large tent” party that embodies the dominant values of vitality and prosperity. However, a comparative analysis between the framing efforts of platform messaging and commitments reveals important nuances. For the 1972 platform, the dominant framing orientation is geared for broad unification that focuses upon ideas of collective achievement among Canadians and innovative thinking. The platform commitments are not individualized or targeted but instead

premised upon the idea that societal progress is broadly enjoyed by all Canadians. This is reflected in statements such as "...Canadians are invited to think carefully about their country as a complete unit. Work now in progress in all parts of Canada strengthens each region and is work therefore that is valuable for the future of all Canadians" (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 2). An extension of this focus upon national unification is the observation that platform commitments are contextualized according to the imagery of patriotism and the strength of Canadian sovereignty.

This is true regarding the economic aspects of the platform, apparent within statements such as their approach to industrial growth that is "designed to ensure the provision of the jobs that Canadians will need and the maintenance of Canada's strong trade position" (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 6). This is also reflected in social policies discussed within the platform, framing individualism as rooted in community; "This individual dignity in a strong spirit of community creates Canada's stable society" (p. 9). The platform is also heavily forward thinking, striving to establish optimism for the future in favour of deep reflection on past accomplishments; for instance, "We have the will to manage our own affairs. This ability and this will together propel us into a future full of promises for all Canadians" (p. 12). The preceding statement neatly encapsulates the ideological positioning displayed by the Liberals throughout their 1972 platform: a perspective that views Canadians as a singular unit, living in a society on the cusp of economic and social innovation.

For the 2021 platform, there is a clear ideological shift in the party communication that is dominated by the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as a crisis that the nation must move beyond. This context naturally lends itself to a framing strategy that emphasizes the values of resilience and support for Canadians; as previously discussed in this analysis, the pandemic represents far more than just a health issue – it also has economic, cultural, and civil dimensions. This is reflected in statements such as: "When this crisis hit, we knew we had to continue having your back. From

the Canada Emergency Response Benefit to rolling out vaccines, that’s exactly what we did” (Liberal Party, 2021, i). Similar to the 1972, the 2021 platform makes a concerted effort to establish unity among readers of the document; for instance, by discussing the importance of togetherness in navigating the pandemic, which is referred to as “the crisis of a century” (Liberal Party, 2021, i). There is a parity between the platforms in the sense that a distinct economic connotation exists within the language throughout, even for the commitments that are not directly economic in nature. The 1972 platform contains a section dedicated to social justice, in which nearly all of the dialogue and proposed measures are economic in nature; for instance, family assistance allowances, the Canada Pension Plan, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement for the aged receiving Old Age Security are among the policies listed (Liberal Party, 1972). In a similar vein, the 2021 platform often employs economically focused frames; in the section dedicated to environmental issues, the economic benefits of green initiatives are heavily emphasized, described to readers as the opportunity for a “circular economy” (Liberal Party, 2021, p. 49).

Fundamental Insights of the 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party Platforms

There are several fundamental insights that can be ascertained when comparatively analyzing the 1972 and 2021 platform messages that are crucial to understanding their broader significance upon the democratic process. First, the 2021 platform is a stark departure from the 1972 platform since its pledges reflect much more finite and targeted objectives. While the 1972 platform is largely limited to abstract ideals and broad areas of policy attention, the 2021 platform repeatedly provides details in the form of funding commitments, statistics, and other types of data. Second, the 2021 platform strives to frame its policies according to the nuanced needs of various demographics within the Canadian population; this is especially prevalent within the Gender and Diversity Impact Summary that can be found at the conclusion of each chapter. While the 1972

platform does provide a few examples of targeted appeals (for example, farmers), the 2021 platform provides an exponentially greater level of detail in their effort to identify highly specific groups. This is evident in the dedication of platform pledges to segments of the population including small business owners, scientists/researchers, Canadians with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ2 community. The levels of refined targeted attention within the platform stands in stark contrast to the broad nature of the 1972 platform, such as in its section dedicated to social justice that speaks only of “people with problems” (Liberal Party, 1972, p. 11).

Third, the 2021 platform uses adversarial attacks and language within its pledges that are directly targeted against the Conservative Party; by contrast, the 1972 platform makes no adversarial statements or any type of acknowledgement of the other parties. A noteworthy comparative insight is that the ideological branding of the Liberal Party in their 2021 platform is that their identity is partially composed of how they contrast with the Conservatives; this is heavily reflected in their imagery of ‘moving forwards’ for Canadians while the Conservatives are ‘moving backwards’. This relates to the scholarly observation that political parties construct their identities based on the flaws or undesirable traits of their opponents (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024; Štetka & Mihelj, 2024; Van Aelst et al., 2020).

There are also detectable areas of correlation between the Liberal Party platforms and the newspaper coverage for the respective election years when considering the agenda issues of focus. The 1972 Liberal platform has an overarchingly economic disposition, with a nationalized vision of economic growth and prosperity serving as the context for most of their platform commitments as divided between national integrity, personal fulfillment, and social justice. The effort by the Liberals to centre the campaign upon economic authority is upheld within the newspaper election coverage, as taxes, employment, and the economy are the top three agenda issues within the 1972

articles. There are parallels to be observed in the focus areas of national unity, the economy, and employment within the Liberal platform that also constitute the dominant themes of the journalistic coverage. The agenda items of education, First Nations rights, and health received relatively limited or indirect attention in the final section of the 1972 platform; these three issues were also the least prevalent as agenda topics in the newspaper coverage.

Despite the considerable overlap in agenda issues between the platforms and coverage, this does not necessarily indicate that the newspaper reporting was favourable to the Liberals or adopted a beneficial lens of discussion. However, it does serve as prevailing evidence for the notion of agenda building, signified by the conjoined influence of journalistic and political discourse (Belchior, 2020; Gidengil, 2014; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Kim, 2018; Mohr & Furey, 2018; Poljak & Van Aelst, 2024). For instance, unemployment was sometimes framed within the newspaper coverage as a persisting issue that had plagued the country for the past several years, such as in the opinion piece Unemployment seen as Canada's main problem by Peter Regenstreif of the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Regenstreif, 1972a) and the piece Liberals haunted by Trudeau image by Nick Hills of *The Calgary Herald* (Hills, 1972). However, other pieces did discuss this topic in a manner favourable to the Liberal Party, such as the *Toronto Star* article PM insists Liberals are the best friends labor has ever had ("PM insists Liberals", 1972) or the piece titled Liberals the party of labor, Trudeau says by Norman Webster of *The Globe and Mail* (Webster, 1972a). These types of objective election reports demonstrate that both the issue focus and salience established by the Liberal Party in their platform were reproduced to an extent within Canadian newspapers, especially given Pierre Elliott Trudeau's status as a leading newsworthy figure of the election. Although the Liberal Party platform of 1972 was written from a detached party perspective, it was

the charisma and media engagement of Pierre Elliott Trudeau that proved crucial in translating campaign objectives into media attention.

For other platform focus areas, notably the section on national unity, it is less straightforward to assess the extent through which the Liberal platform shaped the media agenda. The topic of separatism was particularly volatile for the Liberals, since the actions of protesters and other leading voices in Quebec dissident of the Liberal government emerged as having a newsworthy impact. The articles Separatists taunt PM at Chicoutimi rally (“Separatists taunt PM”, 1972) and Trudeau must go: Baptiste society (“Trudeau must go”, 1972) demonstrate how Trudeau faced heavy criticism from swaths of the Francophone community. Nonetheless, objective news articles and opinion pieces that painted an overtly positive image of Trudeau were abundant, including the pieces Trudeau effective in chilly B.C. (Desbarats, 1972a), Youth overwhelmingly favors Trudeau as Prime Minister (Regenstreif, 1972b), Trudeau’s campaign: A work of art (Desbarats, 1972b), Trudeau’s appeal strong in Quebec (Hamilton & Pinard, 1972), Trudeau finally enters dialogue – it’s a winner (Tierney, 1972b) and Trudeaumania still alive as Marchand seeks re-election (“Trudeaumania still alive”, 1972).

Despite the adversarial dialogues of NDP leader David Lewis labelling Trudeau as the ‘corporate candyman’ and Progressive Conservative leader Robert Stanfield calling Trudeau ‘poor, puzzled Pierre’ gaining marginal media traction, these attacks never prevailed as dominant storylines throughout the coverage. Even the articles which seemingly would paint Pierre Elliott Trudeau in a negative light nonetheless appear to embed his governing authority and solidify his status as the dominant political actor; for instance, the articles PM cites boredom for debate video (“PM cites boredom”, 1972), If Trudeau’s bad, might Stanfield be worse? (McArthur, 1972), PM

won't disclose campaign donors ("PM won't disclose", 1972), and Trudeau ridicules press, asks it be off the record (Hunter, 1972).

The overarching insight remains that Pierre Elliott Trudeau as an icon figure in the election represents the most palpable means through which the Liberal platform values could be translated into media traction. The influence of Pierre Elliott Trudeau is further cemented when noting that 84 out of 894 election articles (9.4%) contained the word "Trudeau" within its headline; thus, Trudeau is not merely a frequently cited source, but himself constitutes the 'lead' or overarching basis of nearly 10% of the election articles. The leader-centric nature of the 1972 newspaper coverage is affirmed when considering that 223 out of the 894 article headlines (24.9%) contained the surnames of one of the four major leaders: Trudeau, Stanfield, Lewis, and Caouette. The argument stands that while the direct influence of the platform documents themselves on the newspaper coverage is inconclusive, the words and actions of the party leaders represent the fundamental means through which the platform issues achieve media exposure. It is surprising that Pierre Elliott Trudeau is not mentioned within the 1972 Liberal platform, considering his charisma and authority served as a lightning rod for newspaper exposure.

The 2021 Liberal Party platform contains many key differences from 1972 as noted throughout the close reading and content analysis; namely, a vastly increased level of detail, more overt efforts of political branding, and a high presence of adversarial comments towards the Conservative Party. When considering differences between the agenda issues themselves, the 2021 platform is distinct in the pledges being grounded and contextualized by the theme of emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. The agenda item of health became a fundamental theme upon which the 2021 platform was built, with its introductory letter and entire first chapter being dominantly focused upon the Liberal Party response to the global pandemic. This was mirrored in

the 2021 election newspaper coverage as well, with health being the most prevalent article focus area at 51 out of the 577 articles (8.8%). A further 16.1% of the sampled coverage gave equal focus to multiple agenda issues, with many of these pieces discussing healthcare as well. In their platform, the Liberals emphasized health aspects including vaccines, mental health, and protective healthcare measures in schools; these themes can be detected within much of the coverage, including the pieces Conspiracy theories fuel a growing fringe; How COVID misinformation is affecting federal campaign (Karadeglija, 2021), Improving mental healthcare is a more urgent issue than ever (Anderssen, 2021), and Parents ‘flipping out’ school will be voting station; Most students attending Francojeunesse elementary have not been vaccinated (Miller, 2021).

The language of the 2021 Liberal Party platform surrounding the pandemic response also has strong economic overtones, which are particularly encapsulated within the second and third chapters of the document. As mentioned within the platform summary and analysis, the need for an economic recovery is framed by the Liberal Party as ‘building back better’, with the pandemic crisis utilized to justify the economic hardship experienced throughout the country. The metaphor of ‘bringing Canadians forward’ is heavily used within the platform and contrasted by the implication that Erin O’Toole and the Conservatives are ‘taking Canadians backward’. Agenda items related to the economy are also visible within the newspaper coverage including the cost of living (7.3%), finance/commerce (2.8%), the economy (2.4%), and taxes (1.7%). While the salience of key issues may be detectable within the newspaper coverage, this does not mean that journalists covering the 2021 election readily adopted the discourse and framing found within the Liberal platform.

A fundamental argument supported by this analysis entails that the agenda issues of focus remained largely consistent between election years and across the newspaper coverage and

platforms; there was consistently an economic outlook or slant in determining the newsworthy political issues. Several news articles or columns provided an especially critical response to the economic issues at stake within the election, including the pieces Economic recovery plans, anyone?; Parties haven't even 'scratched the surface' (Snyder, 2021), There is a cost of living crisis; Rivals blame government mismanagement (Snyder & Bharti, 2021), Trudeau's track record of failure; Canadians have leading level of consumer debt (Francis, 2021), Housing solutions elude parties; 75 years after wartime boom, federal response to crisis is lagging: expert (Scott, 2021), Trudeau under fire over high inflation as election race tightens: In brief (Reuters/Postmedia News, 2021), and Federal parties' plans to solve housing crisis won't cut it: researchers (Griffiths, 2021). While not all the news reports and opinion pieces adopt this overtly critical tone, an overview of the 2021 election coverage solidifies the fact that journalists continue to not passively accept the framing efforts found within the Liberal Party platform.

When assessing the 1972 election coverage, there was a palpable impression that Pierre Elliott Trudeau held a certain mastery in his press interactions, whereby the positions and attitudes he expressed formed a strong basis for the direction of the news reports. When turning to the 2021 election, the impact of Justin Trudeau's press influence would appear far more diffuse; further research might uncover a variety of potential reasons for this shift, including the more adversarial nature of political discourse, the more critical nature of political reporting, the rise of editorialized journalism with clear partisan tones, and contextual factors related to the fact that Justin Trudeau was heavily falling out of favour with the Canadian public and media by the time of the 2021 election. Nonetheless, Justin Trudeau remained a heavily newsworthy figure in the election coverage; the word 'Trudeau' appeared in the headline of 84 out of the 577 articles, comprising 14.6% of the sample. This represents a roughly one-third increase from the 9.4% ratio in which

the Trudeau name was mentioned in headlines of the 1972 articles, further supporting a leader-centric shift. Clearly the loss of political influence is not due to a lack of media attention, but rather a shift in the process of mediation and gatekeeping by the journalists themselves. These findings are consistent with the analysis provided by the in-depth analysis of Trudeau quotes conducted within the previous chapter.

This cursory exploration of potential correlation between the focus areas of the Liberal Party platforms and the prevalent agenda items of the newspaper coverage has revealed a general trend of issue salience and agenda setting agreement between the platforms and subsequent media coverage. It is argued that this salience is largely beneficial and explanatory in better understanding the minority government victories achieved by the Liberal Party in each respective election. However, an important nuance must be emphasized when evaluating the differing process through which platform issues gained media exposure as agenda items during each election. For the 1972 campaign, the words and actions of Pierre Elliott Trudeau on the campaign trail were influential in shaping the headlines and direction of articles. By contrast, the words and actions of Justin Trudeau during the 2021 election were subjected to a much more rigorous process of journalistic gatekeeping, perhaps rooted in structural evolutions of journalistic practice and the political arena. While it is affirmed that the 2021 Liberal Party platform remained important in shaping the agenda setting of media coverage, this mediation is not a straightforward or linear process. These observations regarding the correlations between the Liberal platforms and newspaper coverage further affirm the importance of studying these two forms of political communication in tandem.

When considering the public sphere impact of the platforms, they each have their respective shortcomings. For the 1972 platform, it largely fails to provide tangible, concrete premises of action that voters could apply to hold the party accountable while in power. The

vagueness of this platform also reinforces the importance of critical journalism and other mechanisms for citizens to further access information about candidates and parties. As a static document, political platforms should not be responsible for giving voters a complete window into the values and policies of parties. Rather, platforms must provide a solid foundation and starting point for which other elements of the democratic process can build upon such as the reporting of journalists and campaign activities (Belchior, 2020). With this recognition of nuance in mind, it is nonetheless affirmed that the 1972 platform does not provide a sufficient level of detail or awareness of voter needs; this is reflected in the descriptiveness and receptivity of the platform.

For the 2021 platform, it does overcome such issues of vagueness in offering a wealth of detail, context, and concrete initiatives, as observed within its framing, tone, and structure. However, the platform largely functions to mobilize readers in support of prescribed Liberal values, speaking in a top-down manner to recognize their own perception of what measures and beliefs are best for Canadians. This is punctuated by an adversarial spirit, where the document seeks to bolster (or entirely develop) its own position through critique of political opponents, especially the Conservative Party and its leader Erin O'Toole. When evaluating the document against the benchmark of democratic efficacy, it can be recognized that political parties ought to consider and serve the needs of their constituents (Maley, 2011). The diminished opportunities for democratic action within the platform solidify the fact that the 2021 platform is not welcoming or facilitating the empowerment of voters. Instead, the language is developed in a strategic manner to control the values associated with certain policy positions and narrow the range of democratic issues to the topics or questions that align with the Liberal governing philosophy. If the spirit of democratic goodwill evident in the 1972 platform could be combined with the informative, detail-extensive nature of the 2021 platform, there would be potential for political discourse that aligns

exceptionally close to the ideal democratic communication that remains the benchmark of this analysis.

Chapter Seven: Examining the Liberal Party Mindset in 1960

The elections newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms each indicate a shift in the public facing communication as relating to the Trudeau re-election campaigns of 1972 and 2021. The observed comparative trends included a more adversarial and leader-centric focus in the newspaper coverage and campaign platforms, offering evidence of the Liberal Party adopting a more deliberately strategic approach in the 2021 campaign. While studying public facing communication is important for understanding agenda setting and the information available to voters, one is more limited in discerning the motivations or rationale behind the communication. To further contextualize the Liberal Party as a political organization, the forthcoming section summarizes an internal Liberal Party memo that details the campaign blueprint for the 1962 federal election.

While the observations of the internal campaign memo cannot be interpreted as the organizational strategy of the Liberal Party for the 1972 election, the document is valuable for revealing a snapshot into the mindset of the Liberals approximately 12 years prior to the 1972 campaign. The situation pertaining to the memo differs from the Trudeau re-election campaigns for analysis, since the Liberal Party held the role of official opposition leading up to the 1962 campaign. The 1958 Canadian federal election resulted in a dominant victory for the Progressive Conservatives, securing them the strongest majority government in Canadian history at 78.5% of seats in the House of Commons (Heard, 2020). This meant that the campaign strategy discussed within the Liberal Party memo was developed from the perspective of trying to overtake a formidable opponent, rather than merely holding their position as governing party. This opposition role was a relatively unfamiliar one for the Liberals since they held the status of governing party for much of the twentieth century up to that point, under longstanding prime ministers Wilfrid

Laurier, William Lyon Mackenzie King, and Louis St. Laurent. The internal memo served as a precursor to an eventual turnaround in Liberal fortunes; despite falling to the Progressive Conservatives in the 1962 election, the Liberals soon regained power in 1963 and continued their dominance as Canada's governing party for a large share of the remainder of the century (Heard, 2020).

Findings: 1960 Liberal Party Campaign Document Summary

The document "Suggestions for the Effective Promotion of the Liberal Party of Canada" (1960) was created internally by the Liberal Party to guide the actions of leader Lester B. Pearson and his campaign managers. Since it was produced twelve years prior to the 1972 election, it allows for the analysis scope to be further expanded in understanding the governing imperatives of the Liberals prior to Pierre Elliott Trudeau assuming leadership.

This internal memo was accessed through the fonds of Richard O'Hagan, held within the Clara Thomas Archives at York University. Richard O'Hagan began his career as a journalist for the *Toronto Telegram*, before joining the Liberal Party as a media relations advisor in the 1960s (Ballingall, 2018). O'Hagan was memorialized in a *Toronto Star* feature as "an affable and sharp-minded media relations professional who played a key role in the coterie of political advisors to two Liberal prime ministers" (Ballingall, 2018, Caption) while noting he "helped establish the archetype for the modern press secretary" (Ballingall, 2018, para. 1).

As stated above, this memo was created for internal use only by the Liberal Party, meaning that it allows for an insightful glimpse into the mindset and motivations which underlie their organizational re-election strategy. As opposed to other types of political communication such as partisan political platforms and political newspaper coverage, the rhetoric within this document adopts a tone that is more authentic and unfiltered in revealing the true dispositions of the party.

Summarizing this text is useful to rigorously assess how the Liberal campaign plan compares to the idealistic expectations of political parties during an election, revealing insights that could not be gained from studying public-facing communication solely. If platforms and other party branding material are shrouded in a façade of public relations jargon, then this analysis will pull back the curtain on key considerations that guide political strategy.

The memo summary provides an overview of initial observations before establishing various conclusions that can be drawn from the document. The analysis will also reflect on some of the observations in relation to the 1972 Liberal platform, assessing how some of the strategic ideals were reflected in campaign communications released 12 years later. The structure of this election communications blueprint can be broken down into five sections: (1) an overview of the Liberal platform ideals and principles; (2) a list of pre-campaign proposals and media engagement strategies; (3) election campaign strategies and voter outreach tactics; (4) the ‘negative’ campaign; and (5) organization proposals and a procedure for campaign execution.

As noted by its title, “Suggestions for a Liberal Promotional Campaign”, the document affirms within its first sentence that it is solely geared to the goal of promotion. Thus, political success is implicitly defined as generating the most positive perception amongst the greatest number of voters possible. This framing is significant because it represents the first of many instances where the document solidifies that the sole concern driving the election strategy is securing the greatest number of votes. This idea will be continually revisited throughout the forthcoming summary, with great emphasis placed on how the ‘horserace’ perspective of electoral strategy impacts various democratic ideals.

The first section conveys the importance of developing a strong party platform, describing it as “the foundation of the campaign – the ‘point of departure’” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 1). This

platform-centric viewpoint further solidifies the notion that formal platforms are crucial products of partisan political communication during elections. Some initial details are also provided regarding what the platform ought to convey: the goal is to establish general principles rather than develop specific or regional policies.

A clear hierarchy is noted in which of these broad principles are most important, paving the way for more detailed issues and policy stances; in essence, principles are not just important to the Liberal Party, but they *are* the Liberal Party itself. In describing the importance of party principles, religious ideology is repeatedly invoked in stating how principles are a “bible” for party members, a “modern Ten Commandments” or a “Sermon on the Mount” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 1). Used interchangeably with the term platform is “statement of principles”; this statement of principles is seen as driving the Liberal image as “a document capable of easy translation into election manifestos, campaign literature, slogans, speeches, newspaper layouts, radio-TV announcements and all other means of getting it across to the Canadian public” (p. 1). This statement indicates that political parties view their platforms as a foundational springboard for generating advantageous media coverage and controlling the agenda of political discourse in a favourable manner for their election imperatives, which has been echoed in political communication research (Belchior, 2020; Brants & Voltmer, 2011; Soroka, 2002).

These statements already begin to convey how there is a discernable logic to the production of party communications, and that all types of campaigning outreach are viewed in conjunction as a type of ecosystem. When considering that most of the pledges in the 1972 platform were extremely broad, the memo provides further context that helps to reveal this was a calculated choice. It affirms that the platform, or ‘statement of principles’, “should deal with broad national issues, almost exclusively”, while adding that it “should not be cluttered with qualifications and

regional or provincial pledges” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 1). The justification for focusing solely on broad issues is explained as setting the stage for a strong national campaign that can be produced from all ends of the country across all communication mediums; this allows for constant repetition, which the memo describes as the “essential ingredient” for successful promotion (p. 2). This observation somewhat contrasts with the fact that the 1972 platform contained relatively few instances of repetition in comparison to the 2021 platform.

As a means for arriving at this crucially important statement of principles, the document engages in a ‘realistic appraisal’ of the Liberal Party position and identity. Again, much of the material here reveals the cold, calculated electoral strategy that is adopted by the memo such as in the statement “the main task is to gain acceptance of the party’s platform by a majority of the Canadian people, thus assuring the party’s election” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 2). The notion of realism is deemed especially important in undertaking the party appraisal, emphasized by the use of language such as “brutally frank”, “completely objective”, “no room for comforting self-delusion or optimistic imaginings”, and “view dispassionately” (p. 2). The tone of this writing gives the impression that the Liberal Party is attempting to be firm with themselves, in driving home the point that their appraisal must be entirely honest in recognizing both the party strengths and weaknesses.

When comparing insights from the analysis of the 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party platforms, one of the main observations was that the 1972 platform was far less ‘leader-centric’, making scant mention of Pierre Elliot Trudeau. This raised the question of whether the Liberal Party historically did not believe the perception of their leader was important to electoral success, before shifting to a platform centred strongly around Justin Trudeau in 2021. However, analysis of this party appraisal demonstrates that as far back as 1960, it was clearly understood by the Liberals that the

public image of their leader at the time, Lester B. Pearson, was tremendously crucial for gaining the support of voters. The section titled “Pearson Image” is, as promised, brutally frank in stating “he continues to lack strong personality appeal so important to mass media” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 2), further referencing the scholarly perspective that opportunistic mass media attention is the key to election success (Chernov & McCombs, 2019; Gidengil, 2014; Joyce, 2013; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Minooie, 2021; Wilson, 2013).

The subsection simply titled “Liberal Principles” engages in an exercise of self-evaluation that is particularly cognizant of how the party is situated on the political spectrum (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 3). The document expresses how Liberal re-election prospects are compromised because the party does not have a strong base of support within any voter demographics on the political fringes (i.e., proponents of capitalistic enterprise, supporters of socialism/welfare state) but are also failing to generate appeal as a moderate party between the two sides. The statement “Liberal principles are becoming more and more blurred” is interesting because it indicates that party principles (i.e., the party platform and overall identity) are situated within the left/right political spectrum as its frame of understanding (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 3). Politicians and their campaign staff clearly utilize the political spectrum in their outreach as the guiding compass for developing strategies and policies that will appeal to voters. It provides an indication that even in 1960, political parties were keen to segment voters in certain demographics according to known preferences (such as whether an individual supports socialism or not). This lends further evidence to support the idea that modern day data-driven campaigns are a natural extension of a pre-existing outlook that permeated within parties.

Following the overview of Liberal principles, there is a section of equal length dedicated to identifying the shortcomings within the Conservative Party (‘Tories’); such extensive attention

on Tory flaws reveals that adversarial framing is seen by the Liberals as crucial for electoral success. The section outlines various areas of focus where the Conservatives have underperformed, including on issues of unemployment and foreign defence, as well as the poor image of leader/Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. There is repeated evidence that electoral success is seen as highly dependent on the public perception of party leaders as individuals, such as in the statement “Potentially, the greatest Tory asset is, at the same time, the party’s major liability – Prime Minister Diefenbaker!” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 4). This is emphasized by the document stating that the Conservatives will not be judged by voters as a party, but rather the election will be an appraisal of Diefenbaker himself.

Given the context of this document being released in 1960 and Diefenbaker having served as Prime Minister since 1957, the Liberals were faced with the task of dethroning their opposition. This might help to explain the especially strong emphasis on exposing the flaws in their opponent; this differs from election years such as 1972 and 2021 when the Liberals entered the campaign already holding power. While it is apparent that attacks on the character of opponents are commonplace regardless of whether a party is in the incumbent position, scholarship has indicated there is a larger target on the backs of the incumbent governing party (Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Van Aelst et al., 2020). It would logically follow that voters are more likely to harshly judge the shortcomings of the incumbent, while the opposition has the advantage of calling out mistakes from the sidelines.

The document’s appraisal of Diefenbaker evokes similar themes to the political climate facing Justin Trudeau in his re-election bids: “Undoubtedly, the Prime Minister’s personal popularity has declined. His campaign ‘vision’ has lost its lustre and he has failed to surround himself with strong men to bolster the party’s image” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 4). In a similar case

to Trudeau's Liberals in 2021, Diefenbaker was in fact able to secure an election victory in 1962, despite waning levels of popularity. In their summary of the principles section, it is affirmed that the objective for the Liberals is to provide a "strong alternative" to the current Conservative government, with the strategy for accomplishing that requiring an equally balanced "positive" and "negative" campaign (p. 5).

The second section of the Liberal Party memo surrounds pre-campaign proposals, identifying the specific strategies and tactics necessary to implement their principles. The word choices continue to be fascinating regarding how objectives are framed: "There's no point in mincing words. This is a selling job, and it is as well to call it that" (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 6). This phrase appears to give the impression that the Liberals are almost sheepish about their conviction that the election is a sales campaign; it perhaps implies that there is a self-imposed culture over elections that dictate them as such. Throughout this section, it is clear that media (specifically mass media) are the crucial means through which the Liberals must sell themselves to the public. When discussing the role of media within the campaign, the metaphor of war/conflict is utilized: "The media, used successfully, represent the 'heavy artillery'. They soften up the ground, create the proper atmosphere, put the electors in a receptive mood" (p. 6).

There is extensive space in the document dedicated to the media strategy, cementing the belief that mass media mobilization is the essential tool for establishing their message amongst the public. More importantly, there are repeated indications that calculated tactics are applied by the party to shape the scope of coverage about themselves (and their opponents) in a manner conducive to their electoral success. This is evident when examining the subsections, which include titles of Make News, Canadian Press Role, Create Good Stories, and Main Story Lines; in short, the objective is to become well-versed to the working needs of journalists across the country and

subsequently provide them the information or resources that will lead to the creation of stories that are deemed desirable to Liberal interests. As the document states, “A legitimate news story is worth a dozen propaganda releases” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 7); the Liberals depend on the mass media landscape, not to advance the circulation of democratic information but to distribute meticulously crafted perspectives that will sway the perceptions of voters.

The third section of the document, titled “Campaign Strategy”, outlines down to the wire priorities for campaign management once the election has been formally called. This section is also significant in both echoing certain tenants of public opinion research and identifying various facets of partisan campaigning that have continued to be amplified in the present era. For instance, an introductory statement explains “The voter reactions to political activity, and campaign issues, are in direct ratio to the extent that they are involved, or affected, personally” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 10). This statement signals the fact that parties ought to be primarily concerned with developing policies or responding to issues that have the strongest tangible impact to large groups of voters. It also reveals that despite the platform itself not having regional appeals, other elements of campaign outreach will be designed to maximize support from desirable target demographics.

This section also discusses how modern governments (modern at the time) have become complex enough to exceed the understanding and awareness of the everyday citizen; this point has been explored within political science literature (Glynn, 2018; Häussler, 2018; Johnson, 2005). These statements within the document help to reveal the thought process that the Liberal Party adopted when deciding which political issues to feature and give prominence to within their platforms. For instance, issues such as housing affordability or employment will be given much greater priority compared to less salient issues for the everyday Canadian, such as foreign defence

measures (despite their importance as a political topic); this demonstrates how nuances of issue types can impact campaign communications (Gidengil, 2014; Joyce, 2013; Soroka, 2002).

The document indicates how the Liberal Party would like to better win over the “little people” and identifies some of the target demographics including housewives, farmers, fishermen, and factory workers (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 11). It is of further importance to note that a highly statistical approach is taken for the campaign strategy; this is evident in the document asking questions such as “What’s the minimum number of seats, in the province of Quebec, for example, that the party must carry?” (p. 12). This helps to affirm that regional differences are likely only addressed when necessary for seats that can be within reach of winning, while areas that the Liberals tend to perform poorly are presumably ignored. It also demonstrates that Canadian elections have a longstanding history of being seen as a numbers game and although the scope of personal data has accelerated tremendously in modern times, the underlying philosophy of voter segmentation is by no means new. It can be logically inferred that the agenda setting approach in the Liberal Party platforms, in both topic selection and framing, is informed by a scientific outlook that prioritizes political issues that generate the greatest quantity of presumed voter support.

This strategic philosophy is continued within the section titled “Comprehensive, Accurate Research” which remains relatively broad but does provide specific focal points for research such as new voters (either by coming of age or recent immigrants), a study of close-contest ridings, the economic qualities of different regions, and tariff implications, among others (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 12). The stated objective of such research is to gather “the fullest possible information, figures, and statistics and have these translated into facts that will ensure a high degree of public awareness, understanding and acceptance” (p. 12). This statement seems to imply that an informed public aligns itself with the party goal of maximizing electoral success; on the same token, it can be

inferred that the party is only concerned with engaging the publics who will be consequential in their ability to win ridings.

Taken together, the document summarizes the ‘positive campaign’ as being driven by three main ideals: (1) to explain issues in the simplest manner possible, (2) to conduct effective research to maximize campaign success, and (3) to extensively capitalize on the potential of mass media for all levels of party communications (Liberal Party, 1960). It is also thoroughly explained how an extensive level of preparation must be dedicated towards the ‘negative campaign’, which consists solely of attacking the suitability of the Conservatives as the current governing party. The general strategy for the attack campaign is for the Liberals to closely review each of the Conservative pledges, to show how their platform from the previous election remains unfulfilled.

Interestingly, there is no specific mention of attacking the character or competence of Conservative leader John Diefenbaker; instead, the focus is on revealing factual shortcomings in policy related promises. The risks of a character-based attack appear to have been considered, reflected in how the campaigns should be performed “subtly, in order to avoid arousing public sympathy for the PM” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 14). Nonetheless, the attack campaign is clearly meant to be strong and forceful; the document states, “This cannot be a hit-or-miss affair. It must be, and can be, a devastating attack showing clearly, and factually, how much of the Tory platform remains neglected, how many promises remain unfulfilled, etc.” (p. 13). This section clearly implies that in the eyes of the Liberal Party it is equally as important to reveal the flaws of opponents as it is to demonstrate one’s own governing capabilities. This statement proves itself especially interesting since the 1972 Liberal platform does not have any instances of adversarial dialogue against other parties; the newspaper quotes of Pierre Elliott Trudeau are largely not adversarial either. This raises the question of whether the 1972 campaign was purposely

orchestrated to be less adversarial by the Liberal Party (compared to 2021 for instance) or if such adversarial dialogue simply did not arise within the platform or quotes of Pierre Elliott Trudeau in particular.

The fifth and final section of the Liberal Party memo is dedicated to organizational proposals, largely surrounding various bureaucratic measures taken to ensure the successful execution of campaign strategy. Although this section gives limited attention to party values and election strategy, it remains worthy of brief examination. In addition to outlining the importance of establishing a permanent campaign strategy board within the party, specific smaller committees are proposed which include (1) A Research and Information Committee, (2) A Press-Radio-TV Committee, and (3) A Direct Mail Committee (Liberal Party, 1960). The nature of these committees reinforces the belief that a successful campaign is based on conducting thorough research and effectively utilizing mass media channels to communicate party principles.

It is unclear why a separate committee is dedicated to direct mail; perhaps this is because the communication strategy would differ for citizen mailing. While media-oriented communications or press releases are crafted specifically to meet the demands and expectations of journalists, the content of direct-to-mail materials can employ more overtly persuasive language as it does not face the expectations of objectivity needed to pass through the gatekeeping filter of mass media. This further establishes that agenda setting efforts by political parties can differ based upon the type of media being used for campaign outreach. The document also clarifies that these three committees are concerned strictly with promotion; it is added that many other committees are needed for aspects of the campaign outside the bounds of this particular document.

While the idea of highly professionalized public relations officers was not widespread in 1960, there is an interesting statement within the section “Full Time Man” – it says, “It would be

desirable, in some respects, if a full-time man could be found with the imagination and the ability to follow through on the creative forceful campaign ideas, and, at the same time, devise some of his own” (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 16). The assertions in this section further illustrate the Liberal Party belief that campaign strategy does not arise naturally but must be meticulously planned by a specialized professional. In addition to the necessity of dedicated paid staff, the document frequently mentions how it is crucial for campaign success to have a well-organized team of party volunteers, mobilized across the country. The section briefly mentions a few aspects of relevance including the need to enlist an advertising agency, determine an appropriate financial plan, and facilitate co-operation amongst key party figures (especially leader Pearson) to follow the campaign plan closely.

The document concludes by affirming that there are two crucial elements to the campaign: the creation of an effective platform and the execution of communicating that platform to voters in a manner that generates party support. The conclusion also reiterates that “enthusiasm, even dedication” is the essential quality to achieve a successful campaign (Liberal Party, 1960, p. 17). The final sentence of the document, underlined for emphasis, states the following: “However, as with all promotion, the ‘product’ comes first. It can’t be sold unless it’s good. At least, it won’t stay sold. This the Tories are discovering to their sorrow. This the Liberals can make the most of – and win!!” (p. 17). This statement is especially informative because it implies the belief that substance trumps style – or at least affirms that clever campaign communications cannot compensate for a lacklustre platform and policy initiatives. It also implies the Liberal Party believes Canadian voters make their choices based on informed policy decisions, rather than being swayed by media coverage or the persuasive rhetoric of politicians. Such an outlook of the political arena feels distant from the modern communicative landscape in which there are growing signs

that the voting decisions of citizens can be drastically influenced by disinformation campaigns, intensified by the use of algorithmic targeting in conjunction with the personal data and habits of individuals (Hrynyshyn, 2020; Zuboff, 2019).

Discussion: 1960 Liberal Party Campaign Document Summary

Having summarized the document, it is important to outline how these observations can be interpreted within the greater context of this research into party communications. These insights cannot be assumed as indicative of all Canadian politics during this era, but the document provides a clear window into the political management practices of the Liberal Party in 1960.

First, the memo provides further support to the notion that official party platforms are the foundation for all other political communication, setting the tone for an election campaign. The document constructs a specific notion of political platforms as needing to convey key, deep-rooted principles that illustrate to voters the party identity. It is also affirmed that platforms should take a nationalized tone, with provincial or region specific issues best left for other avenues of campaign communication. These key ideas appear to have been closely considered in the development of the 1972 Liberal platform, in its focus on broad principles and nationalized issues.

A second conclusion of crucial importance is that the document affirms a viewpoint of elections as highly strategic endeavours, in which the sole purpose is to obtain the votes necessary to win ridings of importance. Contrary to the impression one might gain from reading the 1972 platform, the Liberals view elections primarily as a numbers game, establishing the context for how campaign communications ought to be developed. Although the analytical value of democratic knowledge was not highly prevalent in the 1972 platform, it is evident that the party sought to purposively influence desired segments of the population. This may lend further validity

to the perspective that the first-past-the-post system of democracy is harmful to Canada, stoking feelings of political disenfranchisement among certain regions of the country that feel neglected.

Third, it is reinforced by the party that an attack-oriented style of campaigning is useful, even necessary, for electoral success. There is a deep fixation throughout the document on tarnishing the reputation of the Conservative Party – not in an effort to demonstrate how Liberal policies are superior, but to convince voters of their unsuitability as the incumbent party. This further implies that the Liberals do not care about how they get their votes; it is irrelevant whether citizens vote Liberal to express overt support or merely because the Conservatives are construed as a completely undesirable option. It also reflects a self-awareness on the part of the Liberals that they, along with the Conservatives, are the only two major parties in the election race. It is apparent why the Liberal strategy is neatly divided as half dedicated to crafting a positive image of themselves and half as attacking the Conservatives. This is an especially noteworthy observation, since the data gathered from the 1972 platform did not indicate any extent of an adversarial tone in the material. The Liberal Party memo serves valuable in illustrating that an adversarial philosophy remained central to the strategic campaigning of the Liberals, despite such values not surfacing overtly in the 1972 platform.

Lastly, the document emphasizes that mass media and communications are central to the success of campaigning efforts. Furthermore, the Liberals crystalize their viewpoint of mass media and the work of journalists as a resourceful tool that must be maximized for the aims of electoral success. This is evident by the fact that much of the document strategizes ways to influence or generate media coverage in a manner that is beneficial to the party's electoral interests. To observe this perspective within the document is important for the goal of understanding the dynamic between political parties and media outlets comparatively across the two election years. While it

is often noted that journalists tend to be highly critical and skeptical in their treatment of politicians, the concentrated media influence efforts described in the document serves to necessitate such an approach by reporters. It also lends additional weight to the belief that the traditional conception of objective journalism is important for voters to access during elections, as a check and balance against the strategic communicative efforts of parties themselves (Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Joyce, 2013; McChesney, 2016; Schudson, 2008; Thomas, 2024).

If there is a single overarching takeaway from a critical reading of the document, it is that election campaigns are dominantly seen as efforts of persuasive image building, selective audience targeting, and tactically designed attacks upon one's opponents; such objectives are pursued through purposeful choices that relate to agenda setting. When considering concerns about the heavily adversarial and data-driven nature of contemporary elections, this document provides conclusive evidence that such ideals permeated the political landscape as far back as 1960. Although there have been immense advancements in digital communication technologies that have accelerated non-democratic ideals, the underlying strategic disposition of political parties has held a longstanding existence.

A comparative analysis of the Liberal Party platforms, bolstered by examining the internal party memo, demonstrates how efforts of strategic and adversarial communication are largely accelerating. An area of lingering uncertainty regards whether opportunities of audience engagement are diminishing in the interests of creating heavily controlled messages intended to best mobilize voter support (Aruguete, 2024; Trenz, 2024; Vu et al., 2020).

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

The Canadian elections of 1972 and 2021 were political campaigns defined by transformative social conditions, regional tensions, and the influence of Pierre Elliott and Justin Trudeau as respective prime ministers. The research focus is centred upon newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms produced during these election campaigns, given the baseline role of newspapers and party platforms in democratically informing the public. The 1972 and 2021 elections were examined by employing a comparative analysis that illustrated the media exposure of Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Justin Trudeau as two generations of Canadian prime ministers, as well as journalistic and political communication more broadly corresponding to each election. The comparative analysis was designed to identify trends in the agenda issues presented within the newspaper coverage for each election and develop observations related to the format, framing, structure, and tone of the coverage and Liberal Party campaign platforms.

Fundamental Arguments

The research observations demonstrate how certain qualities of communication are significant in evaluating the democratic outcomes of information produced by journalistic and media institutions. Agenda setting theory is an anchoring concept of the analysis, measuring both the exposure of political topics as newsworthy as well as the framing, tone, and structure in presenting those topics. A content analysis of election newspaper coverage illustrated that agenda setting remained consistent when comparing the reporting of mainstream publications during the 1972 and 2021 elections; the most prominent political issues reflected economic items such as the cost of living and employment. A key difference in 2021 is that the COVID-19 pandemic dominated journalistic agenda setting, serving as the contextual lens for the presentation of

economic and social issues. Upon summarizing the 1972 and 2021 Liberal Party platforms, similar agenda setting trends were observed in which the agenda issues were heavily rooted in economic topics; even non-economic topics like the environment were framed with economic overtones.

The content analysis also measured agenda setting effects assessed through the framing, tone, and structure of the newspaper coverage. Some notable observations were established when comparatively analyzing metrics of agenda setting between the 1972 and 2021 newspaper coverage. First, the structure of election newspaper content shifted to a definitively higher proportion of opinion and op-ed pieces in 2021. This is noteworthy when considering the articles' impact because opinion pieces do not ascribe to the same standards of journalistic objectivity surrounding a detached and balanced overview of competing perspectives, which is prioritized in hard news pieces. Second, the 2021 newspaper coverage was observed to be more leader-centric in their coverage compared to the 1972 election. This leader-centric focus was assessed specifically relating to the media exposure afforded to each Trudeau prime minister within the election coverage, finding a greater proportion of 2021 election articles incorporated Justin Trudeau through quotations and opinionated analysis. Third, the 2021 newspaper coverage was more adversarial compared to 1972; this was evident in both the lines of argumentation expressed in opinion pieces and in the quotes of Justin Trudeau. This observation also constitutes an important shift in agenda setting, since readers are informed about political issues not merely through the merits of each parties' ideas but also heavily in the context of why oppositional parties or politicians are incompetent.

These arguments of a leader-centric and adversarial shift within the newspaper coverage are substantiated when evaluating the Liberal Party campaign platforms as well. While the 1972 Liberal platform makes no mention of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau or any of the other

party leaders, the 2021 platform begins with a personal letter written from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that establishes a humanizing frame for the platform. The 2021 platform also begins each chapter with a photo of Justin Trudeau in a setting relevant to the agenda topic for that chapter, while the 1972 platform only contained a single photo of Pierre Elliott Trudeau on the front page. The 1972 Liberal platform did not contain any adversarial dialogue, which sharply contrasts with the frequently abounding adversarial statements of the 2021 platform. This is also relevant when considering how the 2021 platform represents an attempt by the Liberal Party to construct their identity by fostering negativity about other political parties and their leaders. Classifying and tracking agenda setting metrics allows one to comprehensively measure the impact of communication through an understanding of relevant qualities in the production of specific political information formats. Given the research purpose of observing communication relating to Canadian federal elections, the observations provide the necessary rigour to develop authoritative insights of the democratic impact of the newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms.

Significance of Findings

The greater significance of this research is that it serves to demonstrate how two dominant forms of political communication (newspapers and party platforms) have comparatively displayed various qualities rooted in their function as democratically necessary information. The findings of this study contribute to evaluating the content of political communication, illustrating their existence as resources for broadening citizen knowledge of political matters, ultimately guiding their voting decisions in a substantive manner. This research is aptly situated within other works that seek to prescriptively assess whether the governing system of democracy effectively serves the needs and interests of mass populations (Allan, 2014; Albo & Fanelli, 2014; MacDermid, 2009; Maley, 2011; Pilon, 2013).

There are two dominant themes that emerge studying these elections that underlie the specific findings of how the newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms set the agenda. The first dominant theme is that the comparative data across the 1972 and 2021 election years is shaped by an accelerating shift to a neoliberal society. This shift into neoliberal social, political, and economic values is well documented by a range of scholarship that serves to support many of the observed trends in the political discourse (Albo, 2018; Albo & Fanelli, 2014; Bakker, 2011; Bakker & Gill, 2008; Brodie & Bakker, 2007; Harmes, 2019; Maley, 2023). A common theme among this scholarship is that a shift to neoliberal policies in recent decades has resulted in the widening of a democratic deficit or disconnect in the process of everyday citizens voting for representative governments to serve their interests in an equitable manner. This concern will likely grow in pertinence as the financial struggles of newspapers continue to impact political reporting, especially at local levels.

The second dominant theme is that the dynamics of political communication and Canadian political society at large is under heavy contestation. The work of Pilon (2013) is based upon the recurring observation that democracy is a “fundamentally contested concept”, whereby there is an impasse in bridging connections between the procedural aspects of democracy and the historical political accomplishments founded in the name of democracy (p. 32). This is expanded upon by MacDermid (2009) in noting that representative politics faces a universal difficulty of “ensuring that elected decision-makers reflect the democratic will of constituents and not the specific interests of small, influential groups” (p. 8). This issue is connected to the previously discussed theme of a neoliberal shift in governing policies and social life, since larger disparities of power based upon wealth can impact the efficacy of the democratic process, especially during election campaigns (Glynn, 2018; Russell & Eissler, 2021).

To begin answering these deeper questions surrounding the implications of a neoliberal societal shift and a widening democratic deficit, the interpretive lens of this research provides an entry point for analysis squared upon political communication. An analysis based upon agenda setting and the public sphere is especially valuable because it creates an avenue for quantifying the qualities of political communication that arise from structural and institutional considerations of the communicative source guided by the necessity of equitable public deliberation that is informed by professional journalistic sources and good faith political discourse. Given that the institutional imperatives of journalistic and political organizations do not always align with idealistic democratic values, these two theories provide the grounds for assessing whether political communication is efficacious in the development of well-informed citizen voters (Albo & Fanelli, 2014; Clarke, 2013; Falasca, 2014; Soroka, 2002; Strömbäck & Nord, 2006; Sundstrom, 2023). This analysis has focused upon newspaper coverage and Liberal Party platforms because they jointly reflect two of the most foundational sources of political information, noted within communications scholarship as establishing the agenda of political topics during election periods (Belchior, 2020; Fletcher & Blais, 2012; Helfer & Van Aelst, 2020; Soroka, 2002).

The communication produced by mainstream journalistic and political sources is important to analyze in tandem because journalistic and political logics are tightly interwoven. The relationship between journalists and politicians is somewhat complicated; each views the other through a lens of skepticism, alongside an acceptance of their mutual dependence on one another (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). The opportunity to compare 1972 and 2021 as distinct eras of Canadian society provides a firm grounding to understand the nuanced implications of the modern landscape, such as a rise in adversarial political dialogue and a higher rate of editorial pieces produced by newspapers.

Avenues for Future Research

This research premised upon an interpretive lens of agenda setting and the public sphere, in focusing upon qualities in the production of mainstream political communication, can be applied to develop insights alongside scholarship of public political deliberation. Since these theories are applied to reveal how mainstream political communication has varying democratic impacts, contextualized by the institutional qualities of media outlets and political parties, they illuminate the efficacy of informational resources through which citizens develop their democratic knowledge. However, citizens do not become politically informed and formulate public opinions in a vacuum; their perspectives are shaped by deliberative discussions with those around them (Häussler, 2018; Joyce, 2013; Saunders, 2020; Trenz, 2024). Analyzing journalistic and political communication is of utmost importance because of their agenda setting role in guiding how the deliberations of citizens flow across a variety of platforms and sources.

There is distinct merit to analyzing mainstream political communication and political deliberation in tandem to establish preliminary connections to how such institutionalized communication might shape the public opinions of citizens. Such connections can be developed across several levels; for instance, observing the types of links to news content shared by users engaging in online political deliberation would be an important means to understanding how the professional practice of political journalism is translated upon audiences. As noted by Jakob (2020), the sharing of links in online deliberative discourse often represents a crucial way that members of the public strive to justify and support their public opinions. It is important that the analysis of political deliberation can benefit from both manual and computational methods of analysis; while manual coding better allows for the nuanced contextual interpretation that comes with human judgment, computer-based coding can more efficiently handle large datasets. While there are a

relatively smaller number of political parties or print newspapers across Canada, there can be several thousand or even millions of political conversations occurring on social media that can be deemed as political deliberation.

Scholarship of political communication can continue to be informed by established theories such as agenda setting while also measuring the agenda impact of interactive political deliberation that abounds online. My co-authored research project alongside scholars at Toronto Metropolitan University, York University, Mount Royal University, and Edinburgh Napier University successfully proposes and executes a newfound computational mixed methods framework for the analysis of online political deliberation (Duncan et al., 2024). This article utilizes the software of Google Perspective and Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) to assess the quality of online deliberation in relation to the convey protests that occurred during February 2022 in Ottawa. As previously mentioned, computational methods allow for extremely large datasets to be analyzed; in the case of our project, the sample consisted of 2,812,707 tweets and 529,335 Reddit comments (Duncan et al., 2024). In addition to the fact that analyzing millions of tweets and comments manually would be incredibly laborious, literature has noted that computational methods can mitigate the potential biases or inconsistencies exhibited by manual coders (Gaur & Kuman, 2018; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mackieson et al., 2019). The theory of agenda setting can be applied to existing mixed methods frameworks such as the one proposed by Duncan et al. (2024) to better characterize the democratic impact of large communication datasets that could not be manually coded.

Akin to this study of Canadian elections being premised on agenda setting, our computational framework calculates the measurement of values including rationality, interactivity, equality, civility, and cognitive complexity (Duncan et al., 2024). These values are distinct from

agenda setting in mainstream communication because they are specifically geared to the unique aspects of interactive deliberation; our operationalization of these values into computationally measurable categories was inspired by the research of Friess and Eilders (2015). In essence, democratically efficacious online political deliberation requires that participants can exchange justified perspectives and substantial rational information in a respectful manner (Jaidka et al., 2019; Rowe, 2015; Stromer-Galley, 2007; Stroud et al., 2015). An important future research objective is to synergize the established research frameworks of agenda setting and efficacious online deliberation for the purposes of an expansive study that captures how the democratic efficacy of political communication produced by parties and journalists shapes deliberative qualities that surface in the discussions of citizens.

In conclusion, this dissertation has established and implemented a study informed by agenda setting and the public sphere to establish arguments about the democratic qualities of journalistic and political communication. By adopting a framework that considers crucial variables in the production of political communication, it is possible to not only track the agenda topics of discussion but also measure trends in framing, tone, and structure. This study also intends to demonstrate the value of comparison in communication studies, with the research analyzing the 1972 and 2021 elections as especially influential periods of Canadian society. By highlighting the media engagement of Canadian prime ministers Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Justin Trudeau, this research has further illustrated the value of comparing Canadian prime ministers as a means of better understanding communicative trends in election campaigns.

This study offers clear avenues for future research to expand upon the suitability of this framework for understanding Canada's political communication landscape. By analyzing additional Canadian federal elections according to similar variables, it is possible to develop a

more vivid picture of how Canada's political communication has evolved to be more adversarial and leader-centric. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to apply these theoretical perspectives and their corresponding variables to other types of political communication, such as television or radio broadcasts. The analysis of these two Trudeau elections provides a unique context for identifying the impact of journalistic and political communication, contributing to scholarly knowledge of election campaigns as important exercises in Canadian society.

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- The Whitehorse Star.* (2021, September 10-20).
- The Winnipeg Free Press.* (1972, October 25-30; 2021, September 15-20).

Appendix

Analytical Values: Operationalization of Terms

Analytical Value #1: Formality

Formality Definition: The value of formality constitutes the tone and stylistic elements of political communication. Communication exhibits formality when it displays qualities of impersonal language, lacks jargon or slang, uses non-conversational language, uses language common to academic discourse, and discusses political concepts or processes.

Analytical Value #2: Description

Description Definition: The value of description constitutes the extent of detail provided within the substance of political communication. Communication is descriptive when it provides explanations for ideas, offers contextual background, discusses the implications of political positions, identifies relevant nuances, and provides information in the form of statistics, figures, and timelines.

Analytical Value #3: Democratic Knowledge

Democratic Knowledge Definition: The value of democratic knowledge constitutes the ability of political communication to equip audiences for well-informed democratic citizenship, particularly in their formation of public opinions and acts of democratic voting. Communication possesses democratic knowledge when it provides accurate, comprehensive information about political issues, actors, and organizations of relevance for the voting decisions of citizens. The notion of democratic knowledge can be either partisan or non-partisan in nature but ultimately is reflective

of the need for citizens to understand factors that shape democratic society and the process of elections.

Analytical Value #4: Democratic Action

Democratic Action Definition: The value of democratic action constitutes the potential of political communication to compel audiences to engage in acts of democratic participation, including the act of voting. Communication embodies the value of democratic action when it provides practical information about the process of voting or abstract reflection upon the importance of voting. The value of democratic action is also present in communication that offers information about other avenues of democratic participation including campaign activities, social movements, civic affairs, and other opportunities for political education or deliberation.

List of Content Analysis Variables (explanations below):

Variable 1.1 Article Number

Variable 1.2 Publication Name

Variable 1.3 Article Title

Variable 1.4 Date of Publication

Variable 1.5 Author

Variable 1.6 Article Type

Variable 1.7a Article Focus

Variable 1.7b Article Agenda Issue

Variable 1.8 Formality and Description Ranking, Newspaper Articles

Variable 1.9 Democratic Knowledge and Democratic Action Ranking, Newspaper Articles

Variable 1.10 Dominant Liberal Focus

Variable 1.11 Direct Quote from Trudeau

Variable 1.12 Direct Quote or Paraphrase from Liberal Party

Variable 1.13 Trudeau Mention

Variable 1.14 Trudeau Personality, Image, or Leadership Mention

Variable 1.15 Quote or Paraphrase Criticizing Trudeau

Variable 1.16 Quote or Paraphrase Praising Trudeau

Variable 1.17 Opinionizing Criticizing Trudeau

Variable 1.18 Opinionizing Praising Trudeau

Variable 2.1 Quotation Theme

Variable 2.2 Adversarial Against Another Candidate/Party

Variable 2.3 Quote Reflects Media Engagement

Variable 2.4 Quote Mentions Pandemic

Variable 3.1 Political Terminology

Variable 3.2 Formal or Professionalized Language

Variable 3.3 Depth of Explanation

Variable 3.4 Timelines, Figures, or Statistics

Variable 3.5 Perceived Voter Interests

Variable 3.6 Metaphorical Language or Imagery

Variable 3.7 Second Person Language

Variable 3.8 Democratic Agency

Variable 3.9 Instances of Selected Words

Research Codebook: Section A (Newspaper Content Analysis)

Variable 1.1 (Article Number): An Arabic numeral assigned to each article beginning with 1; the numerals proceed chronologically according to date of publication and order of appearance within each respective issue. The article number count reverts to 1 and restarts for each respective publication.

Variable 1.2 (Publication Name): The designated name of each newspaper, in correspondence with the publication names listed in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

Variable 1.3 (Article Title): The designated title of each article, exactly as it appears in the newspapers; subtitles are included in addition to the main headline.

Variable 1.4 (Date of Publication): The date corresponding to the publication of each article, listed in date/month/year format.

Variable 1.5 (Author): The listed author for each article, comprising either the name of an individual or an organization such as a news wire service. If there is no author information provided, then “N/A” is inputted for this section.

Variable 1.6 (Article Type): The article type is identified according to six purposely selected categories: “news”, “opinion”, “op-ed”, “analysis”, “riding/candidate profile”, “letter to the editor”, and “other”. These categories were carefully chosen to align with the most prevalent formats of print journalism, to determine the scope of how election information was presented. Each article type is operationalized in detail below.

1.6 Article Type - News: The main feature indicating the “news” article type is an adherence to professional standards of journalistic objectivity; this is frequently signified by a focus on discussing facts, rather than opinions, perspectives, or speculation. Another defining element of news articles is an absence of the author’s own voice within the article, which surfaces in first-person language such as the word “I”. As a result, news articles are written from a distanced perspective where the author has no presence in the article besides a detached role of conveying facts, events, and quotations of relevant sources.

1.6 Article Type - Opinion While news articles are identified by an adherence to objectivity, opinion pieces are best recognized by the absence of objectivity. Opinion pieces typically involve the journalist inserting their own voice directly into the piece, sometimes employing first-person language such as “I”. Opinion pieces are often written in response to a newsworthy event, issue, situation, individual, or organization of democratic importance; typically, the topic of an opinion piece is polarizing or controversial and the journalist adopts a particular stance.

1.6 Article Type - Op-Ed: In terms of content and form, op-eds are quite similar to opinion pieces, with the author expressing a subjective perspective of a topic of political relevance. The dominant quality that makes an op-ed unique from a typical opinion piece is the identity of the author; while an opinion column is written by a columnist employed by or affiliated with the newspaper, an op-

ed is a guest contribution written by an outside individual. While opinion pieces and op-eds are substantially the same, it is the fact that guest authors can invoke different perspectives from permanent opinion writers that results in the op-ed possessing relevance as a distinct article type. An opinionated article will only be classified as an op-ed if there is a conclusive indication that the piece has been written by a guest author who is not employed by the print publication. In the case of opinionated articles where no author information is provided, the article will be classified as an opinion piece.

1.6 Article Type - Analysis: Analysis articles or “feature” pieces, represent a type of journalistic form that falls between the rigid objectivity of news articles and the unbridled subjectivity of opinion pieces. Analytical pieces are typically identified as such by a heading within the publication although this may not always be the case. In cases where articles dominantly adopt the language and structure of a classically objective news article, yet with minor instances of analytical or interpretive excerpts, the article will be codified as a news article. In other words, an article must have a consistent and recurring disposition towards an analytical or interpretive format to be classified as analysis rather than news. Analysis articles possess many identifying elements including a focus on broader context, explanatory factors, and the potential implications of a certain outcome. While news articles are typically squared upon immediate or up-to-the-minute developments in the political sphere, analytical journalism usually has a longer time frame, in exploring how an issue or chain of events has developed over several days, weeks, or months. Analysis articles can also be described as “interpretive” pieces, since they feature elements of subjective interpretation, without the argumentative effort to convince readers of a particular viewpoint as in the case of opinion pieces.

1.6 Article Type - Riding/Candidate Profile: This form of journalism is exclusive to the coverage of elections, with the content focused upon providing a factual overview of a certain riding or candidate(s). This article type is also commonly identified within the publication by a heading such as “Riding Profile” or “Candidate Profile” and often several riding or candidate profiles are grouped together within the same section. While some standard news articles might be focused on a single riding or candidate, this does not automatically entail that they are profile pieces. A candidate or riding profile is not based upon a newsworthy event or situation but rather serves to provide a broad overview of information that is deemed useful in raising the civic awareness of voters.

1.6 Article Type - Letter to the Editor: A letter to the editor refers to the section of the newspaper where select reader letters are published that express their thoughts on political affairs or offer a response to previous articles appearing in the newspaper. The letters to the editor are easily identifiable since they are always grouped together and appropriately labelled as such. Letters to the editor are distinct from op-eds since letters to the editor are short snippets rather than full length articles. Also, the author by-line is not provided at the top of the piece as is the case with op-eds and other articles but instead listed underneath akin to a letter (typically including the citizen’s name and city of residence).

1.6 Article Type - Other: The vast majority of newspaper articles correspond to one of the six categories outlined above; in some rare cases, outlier articles are classified as “other”. These “other” articles can take various forms including public service announcements, memoirs, paid advertisements, or special edition formats.

Variable 1.7a (Article Focus): The article focus is designed to gain a clear understanding of the specific domain of politics that each article corresponds to. This section is divided into the categories of “policy issue”, “campaign trail”, “civic engagement”, “political polls”, “national identity/values”, and “political scandal”. These categories were selected to comprehensively cover the range of areas in which election articles correspond. While it is inevitable that articles will reflect elements of multiple themes, the article focus is coded according to the most dominantly visible category within the article. Furthermore, the category of “campaign trail” is subjected to diminished priority when in conflict with the other areas; for example, if a politician is on the campaign trail but speaking in-depth about a certain policy issue or national values, then the article would be coded as “policy issue” or “national identity/values” rather than “campaign trail”.

1.7a Article Focus - Policy Issue or Governance: Articles are coded as having a “Policy Issue or Governance” focus if their content is dominantly in relation to a certain issue(s) of political policy, corresponding to legislative rights, directives of governance, or public debates. The political topics that best align with the notion of policy issues are the types of political pledges or stances that can be found within the campaign platforms of parties. This category is also fulfilled if the article is dominantly focused upon a topic related to general governance, even if there is no correlation to a specific area of policy.

1.7a Article Focus - Campaign Trail: Articles are coded as having a “Campaign Trail” focus if their content dominantly corresponds to the campaigning activities of party politicians or the activities of other actors/groups that display clear evidence of impacting the ongoing campaign. Various topics align with the category of “Campaign Trail”, including the rallies of leaders/candidates, the door-to-door campaigning of politicians, the electoral strategy of a party, and general events that influence political discourse during the campaign.

1.7a Article Focus - Civic Engagement: Articles are coded as having a “Civic Engagement” focus if their content is grounded in the activities, perspectives, or imperatives of everyday citizens, rather than elite political actors. This focus can be observed in articles squared upon social movements, non-governmental organizations, “streetier” interviews, and campaign volunteerism. Furthermore, articles are coded with a focus of “Civic Engagement” if they are primarily focused upon voting itself as a civic action; for example, news articles that discuss the operations of polling stations (not to be confused with political polls/surveys) or editorials that reflect upon the societal importance of voting in elections.

1.7a Article Focus - Political Polls: Articles are coded as having a “Political Polls” focus if their content is based on the reporting and discussion of citizen opinion surveys (i.e., political polls). These types of articles typically use the results of polls to gain a sense of how the election race is unfolding, speculating upon the successes or failures of certain candidates/parties. Political polls can also be reported upon to describe public opinion of the electorate for a polarizing political issue or set of issues. If the article is dominantly premised upon the results of the polls, for instance, referencing the poll results in its headline or leading sentence, then the article focus shall be coded as “Political Polls”. Although it is common for articles premised upon political polls to intersect with other focus areas, the main factors in a classification of “Political Polls” is if the article basis originates from poll results and/or if poll results are a recurring point of reference of discussion throughout the article. However, if the article is dominantly dedicated to exploring a particular political issue and its significance for the election, with a minor focus on the poll results themselves, the article shall be coded as “Policy Issue”. A further point of clarification is that the notion of political polls for the purposes of this category only refers to public opinion polls of the citizenry;

thus, article topics surrounding polling stations (for voting) or the notion of citizens going to the polls on election day are not applicable.

1.7a Article Focus - National Identity/Values: Articles are coded as having a “National Identity/Values” focus if their content is dominantly connected to broader aspects of identity or values at a national level. More specifically, this category is intended for articles that explore the overall health of Canada’s democracy, political disenfranchisement, the efficacy of the electoral system, and the ability for politicians or political institutions to serve the needs of the citizenry. These articles are deemed as requiring a distinct category of analysis since they adopt a much broader or “big picture” scope than articles about isolated events on the campaign trail or singular issues of policy.

1.7a Article Focus - Political Scandal: Articles are coded as having a “Political Scandal” focus if their content surrounds occurrences or allegations of political misconduct, criminal activities, unethical behaviour, or an abuse of power. These articles often describe the circumstances of a single individual, such as a politician, but can also be centred upon an organization or institution. In modern election articles, inappropriate or insensitive comments made by politicians on social media have also become a prominent source of articles which shall be coded with a “Political Scandal” focus.

1.7b Agenda Issue: Articles are coded according to the political agenda issue that is most dominantly prevalent within its contents; if largely equal weight/emphasis is provided to multiple issues, then the article is coded as “Multiple”. Consequently, if the article does not correspond to a finite political issue then it is coded as “N/A”. This category is not concerned with events that occur on the election trail or broad topics of democracy and/or national unity; it is instead focused

on the discussion of election issue that can be concretely connected to legislation or policy. Nonetheless, if campaign trail events or the personalities of leaders are framed in relation to a coherent political issue, then the article will be coded as reflecting that (dominant) issue. Furthermore, article content about the practical process of voting itself is not deemed to constitute an election agenda issue, unless it is explicitly framed as a civil rights issue/topic. The following 19 additional categories are used to denote the potential political issues of focus: 1) agriculture/forestry/fishing, 2) civil rights, 3) crime/justice, 4) economy, 5) education, 6) employment/labour, 7) energy, 8) environment, 9) finance/commerce, 10) foreign affairs/defence, 11) health, 12) immigration, 13) social welfare, 14) taxes, 15) transportation, 16) language policy/rights, 17) cost of living, 18) reconciliation/Indigenous Peoples, and 19) other.

Variable 1.8 (Formality and Description Ranking, Newspaper Articles): Articles are coded as having either high or low levels for the analytical values of formality and description. These values are deemed as beneficial to rank in tandem under a single category, in order to better understand the relationship between levels of formality and description.

1.8 Formality and Description Ranking, Newspaper Articles - Formality: The newspaper articles are coded as having low levels of formality if they contain a minimum of three sentences that display clear evidence of slang, jargon, conversational or colloquial language, incomplete sentences, or grammatically incorrect clauses/language. In the absence of these variables that correspond to low formality, all other articles are coded as having high levels of formality.

1.8 Formality and Description Ranking - Description: The newspaper articles are coded as having high levels of description if they contain a minimum of five sentences that display clear evidence of providing contextual background (i.e., looking beyond the immediate article topic),

exploring the implications of a situation, the use of statistics, poll data, or other factual figures, or examining the nuanced perspectives of a topic. In the absence of these variables that correspond to high description, all other articles are coded as having low levels of description.

Variable 1.9 (Democratic Knowledge and Democratic Action Ranking, Newspaper Articles):

Articles are coded as having either high or low levels of democratic knowledge and democratic action. These two analytical values are also deemed as beneficial to assess in tandem under the same category, in order to better understand the relationship between intent and action from a democratic perspective.

1.9 Democratic Knowledge and Democratic Action Ranking, Newspaper Articles -

Democratic Knowledge: The newspaper articles are coded as having high levels of democratic knowledge if they contain a minimum of five sentences that display clear evidence of the following: an identification/reflection of election issues rooted in policy or governance, an effort to illustrate the significance of platform pledges, a critical interpretation of comments made by political sources, a nuanced exploration of political topics, or an overview of shortcomings in the election campaign. All other articles that do not contain a minimum of five sentences that fulfill these criteria are subsequent coded as having low levels of democratic knowledge.

1.9 Democratic Knowledge and Democratic Action Ranking, Newspaper Articles -

Democratic Action: The newspaper articles are coded as having high levels of democratic action if they content a minimum of three sentences that provide any of the following information: details surrounding the practical process or ideological considerations of voting, activities that allow for civic participation, upcoming political rallies, non-governmental organizations of democratic relevance, or interactive opportunities for political education.

Variable 1.10 (Dominant Liberal Focus): Articles are coded as having a “Dominant Liberal Focus” if the content is focused distinctly upon the Liberal Party to a greater extent than any other political party discussed. This codification rule similarly applies if the article focus is upon particular candidates, rather than the parties themselves. However, if the Liberal Party is given a relatively equal level of attention to another party but the Liberals feature prominent within the headline or lead of the article, this is considered sufficient to be dominantly Liberal focused as well. If the Liberal Party is given a seemingly equal level of focus to another party but the Liberals are consistently mentioned throughout the duration of the article, this is also sufficient for coding the article as dominantly Liberal focused. The content of the article does not have to directly provide Liberal perspectives to be considered having a dominant Liberal focus; for example, if the majority of the article is comprised of analyzing or responding to the Liberal Party or its campaigning, this will also be sufficient for constituting a dominant Liberal focus. If none of the other political parties are mentioned in the article besides the Liberal Party, then it is coded as having a “Dominant Liberal Focus”, even if the Liberals are only mentioned in a small number of sentences. It must also be noted that discussion focused upon either of the Trudeaus is also deemed to contribute to a Liberal focus for the purposes of this category.

Variable 1.11 (Direct Quote from Trudeau): Articles are coded as having a “Direct Quote from Trudeau” if they contain at least one direct quotation attributed to either Justin Trudeau or Pierre Elliott Trudeau. In order to qualify for codification, the article must contain a direct quote, rather than a comment that has been paraphrased by the journalist. Also, the direct quote must constitute a full clause; a paraphrased statement with a few words or a phrase within quotes does not qualify as a direct quote. There is no quantitative dimension to this rating; articles are coded as “Yes” if they contain one or more quotes, and “No” if they do not contain any Trudeau quotes.

Variable 1.12 (Direct Quote or Paraphrase from the Liberal Party): For this category, articles are coded as “Yes” if they contain one or more quotes or paraphrased comments arising from an individual formally affiliated with the Liberal Party. Examples of individuals formally affiliated with the Liberal Party includes Liberal candidates, Liberal spokespeople, Liberal staff/campaign managers, and Liberal campaign volunteers. An important distinction is that citizens who merely identify themselves as Liberals voters or having a Liberal preference are not considered to be formally affiliated with the party. Furthermore, quotes or paraphrases arising from the Trudeaus are not under the scope of this category, since the intention is to observe the media visibility of other Liberal Party sources, aside from the prime minister. This category does not have a quantitative dimension; articles are coded “Yes” if there are one or more quotes/paraphrases within the article and “No” if there are zero Liberal quotes/paraphrases.

Variable 1.13 (Trudeau Mention): Articles are coded “Yes” for this category if there is any mention of the Trudeaus as individuals, either directly by name or through their title (i.e., “the prime minister”). Any reference to the Trudeaus, in any context, is considered sufficient to fulfill the requirements of this category. For example, even the brief phrase of “the Trudeau government” constitutes a “Trudeau Mention” according to the requirements of this category. If the article mentions the Liberal Party, leadership of the country, or uses broad phrases such as “prominent politicians”, this is not considered adequate as a “Trudeau Mention”; it must be clear that the Trudeaus are being referenced.

Variable 1.14 (Trudeau Personality, Image, or Leadership Mention): This category is designed to identify a particular type of Trudeau mention within the articles, specifically commenting upon their personality, image, or leadership. A mention is deemed to fulfill the requirements of personality if it addresses the defining qualities of either Trudeau as an individual

including their emotional dispositions, deeply held values (as an individual, not their values for a policy issue), and any of their personal traits/preferences. The image component of this category is fulfilled by any mention of the Trudeaus in regard to their physical characteristics or outward impression as political figures. The notion of “outward impression” has a certain degree of overlap with the component of personality (hence the reason for their grouping as a single metric) but is grounded in the intangible qualities of their influence as politicians (for example, charisma, captivating nature, abrasiveness, free-spiritedness). The third component, leadership, corresponds to any mention of the Trudeaus that directly addresses their capacity, competency, strategy, influence, impact, or legacy as political leaders. It is emphasized that the article must specifically mention an element rooted in leadership as a value; a discussion of policies enacted by the Trudeaus in their position of leadership is not sufficient to fulfill the requirements of this category. However, sentences that use the phrase “Trudeau government” as a personifying descriptor for the purpose of making an evaluative statement about either Trudeau will be deemed sufficient for a coding of “Yes”. Only a single mention of the Trudeaus grounded in either personality, image, or leadership is sufficient to result in a “Yes” codification; this category is codified as “No” even if there are no mentions of the Trudeau’s entirely or merely no mentions within the personality, image, or leadership areas.

Variable 1.15 (Direct Quote or Paraphrase Criticizing Trudeau): This category is defined as measuring any source comments, either directly quoted or paraphrased, that are intended to criticize the Trudeaus. This category is codified as either “Yes” if there are one or more such comments, or “No” if there are zero criticizing comments. For a quote or paraphrase to fulfill this metric, it is essential that one of the Trudeaus is explicitly identified as a target of critique. Any extent of critique is sufficient for a coding of “Yes” and any area of Trudeau critique fulfills the category,

political or otherwise. However, the quote or paraphrase must clearly display an element of negative judgment or evaluation; if it remains unclear whether Trudeau is the culpable figure in the expression of disapproval or discontent, then this category remains unfulfilled and is coded as “No” (presuming there are no other Trudeau criticizing quotes in the respective article).

Variable 1.16 (Direct Quote or Paraphrase Praising Trudeau): This category is defined as measuring any source comments, either directly quoted or paraphrased, that are intended to praise the Trudeaus. This category is codified as either “Yes” if there are one more such comments, or “No” if there are zero praising comments. For a quote or paraphrase to fulfill this metric, it is essential that one of the Trudeaus is explicitly identified as the main target of praise. Any extent of praise is sufficient for a coding of “Yes” and any area of Trudeau praise fulfills the category, political or otherwise. However, the quote or paraphrase must clearly display an element of positive praise or evaluation; if it remains unclear whether Trudeau is the praiseworthy figure in the statement, then this category remains unfulfilled and is coded as “No” (presuming there are no other Trudeau praising quotes in the respective article).

Variable 1.17 (Opinionizing Criticizing Trudeau): This category is defined as measuring any author opinionizing that is intended to criticize the Trudeaus. For the purpose of this category, author opinionizing constitutes any content that is the subjective interpretation of the article author, distinct from source quotations, the paraphrasing of source quotations, and the objective interpretation of facts. Ultimately, article content is deemed to be opinionizing when it clearly displays an element of author interpretation or evaluation; in other words, when the author is colouring the article with their opinion. Any extent of critique is sufficient for a coding of “Yes” and any area of Trudeau critique fulfills the category, political or otherwise. However, the opinionated comment must clearly display an element of negative judgement or evaluation; if it

remains unclear whether Trudeau is the culpable figure in the expression of disapproval or discontent, then this category remains unfulfilled and is coded as “No” (presuming there are no other Trudeau criticizing opinionizing comments in the respective article). The corresponding article type does not need to be in the “Opinion” category to fulfill this requirement; the criticizing comment merely needs to fulfill the requirements of opinionizing mentioned above. This category is codified as either “Yes” if there are one or more opinionizing comments, or as “No” if there are zero opinionizing comments.

Variable 1.18 (Opinionizing Praising Trudeau): This category is defined as measuring any author opinionizing that is intended to praise the Trudeaus. For the purpose of this category, author opinionizing constitutes any content that is the subjective interpretation of the article author, distinct from source quotations, the paraphrasing of source quotations, and the objective interpretation of facts. Ultimately, article content is deemed to be opinionizing when it clearly displays an element of author interpretation or evaluation; in other words, when the author is colouring the article with their opinion. Any extent of praise is sufficient for a coding of “Yes” and any area of Trudeau praise fulfills the category, political or otherwise. However, the opinionizing comment must clearly display an element of positive praise or evaluation; if it remains unclear whether Trudeau is the praiseworthy figure in this statement, then this category remains unfulfilled and is coded as “No” (presuming there are no other Trudeau praising comments in the respective article). The corresponding article type does not need to be in the “Opinion” category to fulfill this requirement; the praiseworthy comment merely needs to fulfill the requirements of opinionizing mentioned above. This category is codified as either “Yes” if there are one or more praise comments, or as “No” if there are zero praise comments.

Variable 1.19 (Article Agenda Issues): This category is designed to measure the range of agenda issues that represent the focal point of any given article. The issues for codification are derived from the work of Gidengil (2014) as follows: agriculture/forestry/fishing, civil rights, crime/justice, economy, education, employment/labour, energy, environment, ethics, finance/commerce, foreign affairs/defence, health, immigration, social welfare, taxes, trade (international), and transportation. The codification value of “other” is also included for any articles that do not correspond to the listed issues. The agenda issue is assigned according to the respective issue that constitutes the largest quantitative portion of each respective article.

Notes: This is an entirely open-ended category, in which the researcher is able to record any additional information of relevance regarding the article’s content or its relationship to the codification categories. The purpose of the notes category is to offer a space for any qualitative observations that might serve useful in advancing the quantitative observations. This category is not mandatory to complete for each article and is simply left blank if deemed unapplicable.

Research Codebook: Section B (Trudeau Quotes)

Trudeau Quotes Analysis: All direct quotes attributed to either Pierre Elliott Trudeau or Justin Trudeau are isolated and subject to further analysis, for the purpose of understanding the nature of Trudeau quotes chosen to be featured by the newspapers.

Trudeau Quote: The direct quotation from Trudeau is recorded exactly as it appears within the article. If the same article features multiple distinct quotes from Trudeau, each quote is inputted separately. If a quote spans across multiple sentences but is clearly from the same comment or response by Trudeau, then this is inputted as a singular quote. If an identical quote is featured

within multiple articles or publications, it is only recorded for analysis upon the first instance it appears and subsequently omitted beyond that.

Variable 2.1 (Quotation Theme): The Trudeau quotations are each coded according to three purposely selected themes of “Issue Focused”, “Party Focused”, or “Image/Values Focused”. The quotation is coded as “Issue Focused” if the language dominantly reflects a political issue of discussion during the election campaign. The quotation is coded as “Party Focused” if the language dominantly reflects an orientation towards the Liberal Party as an organization. The quotation is coded as “Image/Values Focused” if the language is dominantly centred upon the images or values of Trudeau as a political leader or values expressed by Trudeau in relation to other individuals or groups. Unsurprisingly, there is certain potential for overlap between these categories as it is possible for a single quotation to encompass multiple, or even all three of these themes. Therefore, the coding process for this category involves the necessity of determining the quotation theme that aligns with the quantitative majority of the quote. For instance, if a Trudeau quote discusses a political issue but the contextual framing of the Liberal Party is prevalent throughout the quote, it must be determined whether more words are focused upon the political issue or the Liberal Party as an organization.

Variable 2.2 (Adversarial Against Another Candidate/Party): Quotations are coded on a Yes/No basis to assess whether their language offers clear evidence of Trudeau discussing other parties or candidates in a conflict-oriented manner. This category is only fulfilled if it is conclusively apparent that the adversarial language of the quote is directed against an opposing candidate or party, in the context of their suitability for election. If quote does not identify a specific candidate or party to which the adversarial language is addressed, this category is nonetheless coded as “Yes”.

Variable 2.3 (Quote Reflects Media Engagement): Quotations are coded on a Yes/No basis to assess whether their language reflects an effort of media engagement by Trudeau. A quotation will be considered to reflect media engagement if its message is conveyed in a manner that demonstrates flair, imagery, emotion, strategic campaigning, or strong appeals for the mobilization of voters. The language of media engagement must be prevalent throughout the overall statement, representing at least 20 percent of the quotation. The necessary language to fulfill this category can take various forms, including evocative, sensationalist, humanistic, personalized, or even logic-oriented statements.

Variable 2.4 (Quote Mentions Pandemic): Quotations are coded on a Yes/No basis to assess whether they involve any reference to the COVID-19 pandemic; this category is only applied to the analysis of Trudeau quotes arising from the 2021 newspaper articles. Any mention of the pandemic is sufficient for a coding of yes, whether it be a direct and explicit reference or an implicit reference. Nonetheless, it must be clearly discernible within the quotation itself that the COVID-19 pandemic or its resulting impact upon Canadian society is a point of mention.

Research Codebook: Section C (Party Campaign Platforms)

Page Number of Platform: This category provides a listing of each page number as indicated on the platform itself, serving as the unit of analysis for all other codification metrics.

Variable 3.1 (Political Terminology): Each platform page is codified as either “Low/None”, “Medium”, or “High” regarding the prevalence of language that entails political terminology. This category is fulfilled by language that references specific governmental processes, bureaucratic systems, or titles in relation to the election campaign or Canadian governance. The names of policies, acts, or governmental programs are also deemed to constitute instances of political

terminology. Additional types of language not inherently related to governance or politics, such as economic, social, or cultural terminology, are not deemed to constitute political terminology for the purposes of this category. The platform page is codified as “Low/None” if there are either one or zero instances of a phrase constituting political terminology; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are two to four phrases; a codification of “High” is applied if there are five or more such phrases.

Variable 3.2 (Formal or Professionalized Language): Each platform page is codified as either “Low/None”, “Medium”, or “High” regarding the prevalence of language that is of a formal or professional nature, not specifically related to politics. The presence of formal language is measured through the absence of colloquialisms, slang, or personally reflective writing. Thus, formal language is characterized by a detached tone that is common to scholarly discourse. The platform page is codified as “Low/None” if there are five or more colloquial or personal phrases; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are two to four phrases; a codification of “High” is applied if there one or zero such phrases. The presence of professionalized language is measured through the detection of terminology that corresponds to occupational or bureaucratized knowledge. The platform page is codified as “Low/None” if there are either one or zero instances of a phrases adopting professional language; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are two to four phrases; a codification of “High” is applied if there five or more such phrases. If there is a conflict between the subcategories of formal and professional language the categories simply average out; for example, a “Low” score of formal language and a “High” score of professionalized language results in an overall codification of “Medium” for this category.

Variable 3.3 (Depth of Explanation): Each platform page is coded as either “Low/None”, “Medium”, or “High” according to the extent of language that constitutes explanation. Explanation

is signalled by phrases that provide any of the following functions: establish contextual background, demonstrate the significance of contributing factors, reflect upon the implications of a situation, or demonstrate the nuances of a topic. The platform page is coded as “Low/None” if there are zero to two explanatory phrases; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are three to five phrases; a codification of “High” is applied if there are more than five explanatory phrases.

Variable 3.4 (Timelines, Figures, or Statistics): Each platform page is coded as either “Low”, “Medium”, or “High” according to the prevalence of timelines, figures, or statistics. These three types of specialized information are all afforded equal weight in the quantitative assessment of this category. The platform page is coded as “Low/None” if there are one or zero instances of timelines, figures, or statistics; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are two to four instances; a codification of “High” is applied if there are five or more such instances.

Variable 3.5 (Perceived Voter Interests): Each platform page is coded as either “Low”, “Medium”, or “High” according to the extent that the interests or needs of voters within a specifically identifiable group or community are being appealed to. This perception of voter interests can be displayed by the Liberal Party indicating in their platform that they are addressing or aware of the needs of citizens within such concretely identifiable groups (for example, women or the elderly). The platform page is coded as “Low/None” if there are one or zero instances of voter interest statements; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are two to four instances; a codification of “High” is applied if there are five or more such instances.

Variable 3.6 (Metaphorical Language or Imagery): Each platform page is coded as either “Low”, “Medium”, or “High” according to their frequency of metaphorical language or imagery utilized. In terms of metaphorical language, this category requires that political processes, values,

ideas, or individuals be represented through symbolic language. This category also assesses the presence of imagery within the language of the platform; this imagery does not need to be directly connected to a political idea or topic. In order for descriptive language to be considered being imagery, the language of the platform must contain narrative storytelling elements or paint a specific and vivid picture in the minds of readers. The platform page is coded as “Low/None” if there are one or zero phrases of metaphorical language or imagery; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are two to four phrases; a codification of “High” is applied if there are five or more such phrases.

Variable 3.7 (Second Person Language): Each platform page is coded as either “Low”, “Medium”, or “High” according to their frequency of second person language, that strives to speak directly to the reader. This category is fulfilled specifically by the words “you” or “your”, in demonstrating that the platform is trying to connect with voters by speaking to them personally. The platform page is coded as “Low/None” if there are one or zero uses of the word “you” or “your”; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are two to four uses; a codification of “High” is applied if there are five or more uses of these words.

Variable 3.8 (Democratic Agency): Each platform page is coded as either “Low”, “Medium”, or “High” according to the frequency of language directly indicating the platform has considered the advocacy of citizens or citizen advisory groups. The mention of government commissions, task forces, research groups, partnerships, and coalitions are also sufficient in fulfilling the requirements of this category, as such commissions are considered to arise from the interests of citizens. The platform page is coded as “Low/None” if there are one or zero phrases that reflect this conception of democratic agency; a codification of “Medium” is applied if there are two to four phrases; a codification of “High” is applied if there are five or more such phrases.

Variable 3.9 (Instances of Selected Words): For each platform page, a simple quantitative count of ten purposely selected words is performed. The ten selected words are as follows: Trudeau, Liberal, Stanfield, O’Toole, Conservative, Canadians, Issue, Policy, Commitment, and Achieve. The frequency of each word is listed as an Arabic Numeral for the corresponding platform page. The words “Issue”, “Commitment”, and “Achieve” are only tracked if being used in a political context; for example, the phrases “issue a statement” or “issue of the newspaper” would not count for the word “Issue”. Alternative forms of these words are included within the count, assuming that they are in a political context; for example, “achieves”, “achieving”, and “achieved” are all eligible to be recorded in the “Achieve” category.

Notes: This is an entirely open-ended category, in which the researcher is able to record any additional information of relevance regarding the platform’s content or its relationship to the codification categories. The purpose of the notes category is to offer a space for any qualitative observations that might serve useful in advancing the quantitative observations. This category is not mandatory to complete for each article and is simply left blank if deemed unapplicable.

Intercoder Reliability Testing Scores

Newspaper Coverage

Analysis Category	Agreement Percentage
Article Type	95.00%
Article Focus	95.00%
Formality and Description Ranking	100.00%
Democratic Knowledge and Democratic Action Ranking	100.00%
Dominant Liberal Focus	100.00%
Direct Quote from Trudeau	100.00%
Direct Quote or Paraphrase from the Liberal Party	100.00%
Trudeau Mention	100.00%
Trudeau Personality, Image, or Leadership Mention	100.00%
Direct Quote or Paraphrase Criticizing Trudeau	100.00%
Direct Quote or Paraphrase Praising Trudeau	95.00%
Opinionizing Criticizing Trudeau	100.00%
Opinionizing Praising Trudeau	100.00%

20 out of 1,471 (1.36%) articles were subject to intercoder reliability testing

Trudeau Quotes

Analysis Category	Agreement Percentage
Quotation Theme	100.00%
Positive Leadership Qualities	90.00%
Negative Leadership Qualities	98.33%
Adversarial Towards Another Candidate or Party	100.00%
Quote Reflects Media Engagement	100.00%
Quote Mentions Pandemic	100.00%

3 out of 128 Trudeau quotes were subject to intercoder reliability testing

Campaign Platforms Analysis

Analysis Category	Agreement Percentage
Political Terminology	100.00%
Formal or Professionalized Language	100.00%
Depth of Explanation	100.00%
Timelines, Figures, or Statistics	100.00%
Perceived Voter Interests	100.00%
Metaphorical Language or Imagery	100.00%
Second Person Language	100.00%
Democratic Agency	100.00%
Instances of Selected Words	100.00%

11 out of 88 (12.5%) pages of the Liberal Party platforms were subject to intercoder reliability testing