

**Media Coverage of the Federal Election of 2008 and the
Two Solitudes at the Public Broadcaster**

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Journalism

Carleton University

Ottawa, Canada

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-83178-6
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ISBN: 978-0-494-83178-6

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Canada

Abstract

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation began as a nation-building project with a mandate to foster a “national consciousness and identity.” Its founders hoped the CBC would play a role in creating that “we feeling” among members of Canada’s *two solitudes*. Since then, however, the Corporation has been accused of failing in that mandate, contributing instead to linguistic cleavage. This thesis considers whether the Corporation is still failing today, by comparing media coverage of the 2008 election campaign through the nightly national newscasts of the French and English services. This thesis offers the historical and social context, and finally, considers whether the CBC lives up to its challenging mandate.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the people who supported this work, in particular, those who generously gave their time and contributed ideas for the advancement of public service journalism. I would also like to thank my thesis advisor, Chris Waddell whose encouragement and enduring patience led to the successful completion of this work. Finally, I'd like to thank my family who believed in me throughout.

Amanda Pfeffer.

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Preface

The motivation for this thesis emerged following 18 years working as an English journalist in the newsrooms of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I was attracted to public broadcasting as a journalism student at Concordia University; it appealed to my ideals about journalism and its democratic role as a public service helping Canadian citizens make better choices about the communities in which they live. I'm not alone. I've had the chance to work with journalists both at the French and English services who I admire for their unbending dedication to public broadcasting and the people of Canada; really.

I began my career in the Montreal local television newsroom in 1993 and since that time working for the CBC has given me a unique and often exciting opportunity to tell stories for and about Canadians from coast to coast. I've reported for newsrooms in Montreal, Vancouver, Fredericton, Ottawa and Quebec City. I've had the chance to cover municipal, provincial and federal elections; I have covered political stories on Parliament Hill, the National Assembly and the New Brunswick legislature (the only bilingual legislature besides Parliament, by the way.) As a Montrealer, it was easy to identify with my French-speaking colleagues working outside Quebec. Covering news, particularly political news, is very different if you are reporting as a member of the majority- versus the minority-language group in a region. As a symbol of this power imbalance, the first questions asked at a media scrum in the National Assembly are always in French. On Parliament Hill, it is rarely the case; in Vancouver, almost never. It affects how fast sources call you back, or who the sources choose when they leak a

story. It affects how easy it is to get someone accountable to speak to your community members in their own language.

I grew up in Montreal as part of the English minority during a period of tension and political uncertainty. I started school under the newly elected Parti Québécois when students needed to apply for eligibility certificates to attend English public school. On the eve of the 1980 Quebec referendum on sovereignty, I remember our little 12-year-old hands put to work making the black and white NO buttons – factory assembly style -- on the cafeteria tables during class time. With so much at stake, not unlike our French-speaking neighbours, political debate flourished in households of English Quebecers about what it means to be Canadian and about the future of Canada. Our discussions – as you can imagine – were very different from those taking place in the homes of the Francophone families down the street.

It was both my own identity as a member of the English minority in Quebec and my identification with my French colleagues at the CBC that made me sensitive to examples of linguistic cleavage in news coverage – particularly during political discourse.

It has always struck me standing beside my French colleagues – whether in the New Brunswick legislature or the National Assembly or the Centre Block on Parliament Hill – that the questions we ask are not the same; our stories are focused on different issues. While we share our idealistic views about working for the public broadcaster, it does not result in shared narratives. In fact, we share more content with our same-language private media competitors than with each other. The cultural environments of

the communities we serve seem to shape the stories we tell. This thesis tries to examine not just how Canada's two media systems differ, but why. In this way, I hope this discussion contributes to the larger debate focused on developing opportunities for mutual understanding and ultimately bringing Canada's *two solitudes* a little closer together.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In September 2008, the Conservative leader and Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper asked the Governor General to dissolve the 39th Parliament and hold an election the following month. Canadians don't often tell pollsters they look forward to elections, but it's fair to say the public appetite for this particular vote could hardly be lower.¹ It would be the third federal election in just four years. Canadians had already elected two consecutive minority governments. In a bid to secure more political stability, the Conservative government had even come up with a law fixing election dates; the first was not due for another year.

Yet, Stephen Harper initiated this election despite his own legislation. To be fair, the fixed election date legislation did not extinguish that right.² His explanation was that the current minority Parliament was "dysfunctional." Stephen Harper sought "a more stable" government and ultimately, a majority of seats in Parliament.³ Just a few days into the campaign, on September 13, 2008, a *Toronto Star*-Angus Reid poll suggested Canadians were ready to give the Conservatives what they wanted.⁴

¹ Voter turn-out on election day reached an historic low of 58.8% "Voter Turnout at Federal Elections and Referendums," Elections Canada, accessed June 11, 2011,

<http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&du=turn&document=index&lang=e>

² The non-profit group *Democracy Watch* took the issue to court and lost at the Federal Court and Federal Court of Appeal (the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear the case). The group argued the 2008 election initiated by the Prime Minister contravened the spirit of the new fixed date election legislation. The courts found the legislation was sufficiently "vague" and thus did not restrict the Prime Minister from initiating the timing of an election. "Top court won't hear fixed election date case," CBC, January 20, 2011, accessed June 8, 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2011/01/20/fixed-election-scoc.html>

³ This is not to say that minorities are necessarily bad for citizens. Peter Russell wrote a book following the Conservatives' first minority mandate, arguing for how minority Parliaments can make for good government. Peter H. Russell, *Two Cheers for Minority Government: The Evolution of Canadian Parliamentary Democracy* (Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications, 2008).

⁴ "What would PM do with majority?" *The Toronto Star*, September 13, 2008, accessed June 5, 2011, http://www.angus-reid.com/wp-content/uploads/archived-pdf/star_majority.pdf

But campaigns are unpredictable things.

Thirty-six days and \$300 million later, the Conservatives came up short in 2008, and once again, Canadians elected a minority government. The Conservative Party needed 10 more seats to attain a majority, and as this thesis will show, party strategists had hoped those seats would come from Quebec. The party had invested enormous amounts of public funds and political capital during the previous mandate trying to win support in Quebec.⁵ *Toronto Star* columnist Chantal Hébert had even penned a book called *French Kiss: Stephen Harper's Blind Date with Quebec* about the effort (and success) of the federal Conservatives to woo Quebec support.⁶

But by election day, Quebecers didn't come through for the Conservatives. "Quebec (gave) us the one-finger salute,"⁷ suggested an editorial in the *Victoria Times Colonist*. Despite all the courting by the Conservative government, two thirds of Quebec seats -- 49 out of 75 -- went to the Bloc Québécois: a regionalist party with a constitution calling for the secession of Quebec from Canada. The Conservatives hung onto the 10 seats they had gained in Quebec the previous election: "It was enough for them to save the furniture," wrote former Conservative speech writer and strategist L.

⁵ Among the "outreach" work done by the Conservatives to endear Quebec voters, the Conservatives produced a motion passed in the House of Commons on November 27, 2006 declaring "the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada." The Conservative government also gave Quebec a greater role as part of the Canadian delegation to UNESCO. Perhaps more significantly, however, the Harper government addressed the Quebec assertion that the federal government had been short changing the province, calling it a "fiscal imbalance" in transfer payments. The Conservatives added \$3.6 billion in new income to the provincial government.

⁶ Chantal Hébert, *French Kiss: Stephen Harper's Blind Date with Quebec* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2007)

⁷ "Harper must manage rising anti-Quebec backlash: How many times have we heard the question: What does Quebec want?" *Victoria Times Colonist*, October 22, 2008, accessed July 20, 2011, <http://www.canada.com/victoriatimescolonist/columnists/story.html?id=53fc2f65-0b46-4159-badb-a160afc677c0>

Ian MacDonald⁸ in the days following the election: “There, but for Quebec, went a majority. And Stephen Harper, who can do the math on the back of an envelope, knows it.”⁹ He further explained:

“Harper, who loves tactics, got played by Gilles Duceppe, the Bloc Québécois and the Quebec media. What had been a referendum on Harper delivering the goods for Quebec and the Bloc having had its day in Ottawa was transformed within days into a referendum on Harper not sharing Quebec values and the Bloc defending them. Harper’s Quebec ballot question got flipped to a ballot question on identity that Duceppe couldn’t lose.”¹⁰

As MacDonald suggests, something happened during the 36 days of the 2008 campaign that changed the fortunes of the Conservatives in (the mostly French-speaking) Quebec, despite growing support in the rest of (the mostly English-speaking) Canada.

The clues lie in the mediated discourse – the news coverage – that unfolded before English and French audiences. This thesis looks for those clues through an analysis of coverage by the national evening newscasts of the public broadcaster – *Le Téléjournal* and *The National* – over the 36 days of the campaign.

There are compelling reasons to watch the campaign coverage of 2008 through the lens of the public broadcaster. For one thing, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is one of the few national networks in the world operating two separate language services under the same roof. For another – and perhaps most significant for the purposes of this thesis – the public broadcaster operates under a legislated mandate

⁸ MacDonald was chief speech writer for Prime Minister Brian Mulroney from 1985-1988

⁹ L. Ian MacDonald, “The wooing of Quebec will recommence at dawn,” *The National Post*, October 16, 2008.

¹⁰ MacDonald, “The wooing ”

to “foster shared national consciousness and identity;”¹¹ in other words, a mandate that asks its programmers to help bridge the *two solitudes* in Canada.

This thesis will show, however, there were significant divergences along linguistic lines taking place during the political coverage of the 2008 election campaign. That these divergences existed at the public broadcaster underscores the significance of the *two solitudes* within Canada’s dual media system. Linguistic cleavage has been a consistent theme during coverage of Canadian federal politics, and so this thesis will also consider the social and historical context leading up to the campaign – a context linked to the story of Canada.

One Broadcaster – Two Services

There are several compelling reasons, as mentioned, to undertake this analysis of coverage through the French and English news programs of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The French- and English-language services¹² are owned and paid for by the people of Canada. From its inception, the CBC’s founders hoped a public broadcasting service would be a unifying force for Canadians,¹³ and in a very deliberate way, contribute to a sense of nationhood. Indeed, while the *Broadcasting Act* today demands public broadcasting provide services that meet the respective needs of both

¹¹ “Program Policies – CBC/Radio-Canada Mandate,” CBC/Radio-Canada, accessed November 12, 2008, <http://www.cbc-radio-canada.ca/docs/policies/program/mandate.shtml>

¹² The French service in this thesis will be referred to as both Radio-Canada and SRC (Société Radio-Canada)

¹³ Sir John Aird, “Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting,” in *Documents of Canadian Broadcasting*, ed. Roger Bird (Ottawa, Carleton University Press, 1988) 44. The report says “In a country of the vast geographical dimensions of Canada, broadcasting will undoubtedly become a force in fostering national spirit and interpreting national consciousness.”

the English and French communities,¹⁴ it also commits the CBC “to contribute to shared national consciousness and identity.”

The political discourse during federal election campaigns provides an opportunity to examine how well the public broadcaster lives up to the expectations of its challenging mandate. There have been accusations in the past the CBC has failed to keep its commitment at critical times during some of Canada’s most divisive crises. Accusations of media bias during coverage of the Meech Lake Accord constitutional negotiations led the corporation to adopt new rigorous monitoring of political campaign coverage as described in the CBC’s *Journalistic Standards and Practices*:¹⁵

“Particular care must be given to information programs during election or referendum campaigns. These series require close and meticulous attention to overall political balance. Quantitative checks are normally employed for guidance during election or referendum campaigns. Such quantitative checks must be supplemented by the exercise of qualitative judgments so that imbalance does not occur through the manipulation of events.”¹⁶

Therefore, there exists within the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation two services covering the same story, often sharing the same resources,¹⁷ using the same

¹⁴ “Program Policies ” The mandate says “programming by the Corporation should be in English and in French, reflecting the different needs and circumstances of each official language community, including the particular needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities ”

¹⁵ Accusations of bias in the French service coverage during the Meech Lake constitutional negotiations, and the new rules are described in Kathryn-Jane Hazel, “The Media and Nationalism in Quebec A Complex Relationship,” *Journalism Studies* 2, no 1, (2001) 104, also David Taras, “The Mass Media and Political Crisis Reporting Canada’s Constitutional Struggles,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 18, no 2, Toronto (Spring, 1993) 131

¹⁶ “CBC Journalistic Standards and Practices,” CBC/Radio-Canada, accessed November 22, 2008, <http://www.cbc-radio-canada.ca/docs/policies/journalistic/xml/policies.asp>

¹⁷ Sharing resources has always taken place to some extent, but the trend has accelerated with shrinking budgets, and improved technology over the last decade. The newsrooms of the CBC and Radio-Canada will make formal and informal arrangements to share resources both while gathering in the field as well as post-gathering. For example, reporters will sometimes gather stories together with one team (a reporter and camera operator) covering off one interview and another covering something else, asking questions for

rules of coverage, and guided by the same mandate “to contribute to a shared national consciousness and identity.” Yet, consistently, they produce very different content. This thesis will show that despite all that the two services share, how they differ is profound and it relates to their roles as agenda-setters.

“Agenda setting” describes how news organizations manipulate news outputs in the selection of news. In this way, theorists suggest the media does not necessarily tell audiences how to think, but “what to think about.”¹⁸ Significant to this thesis, news rooms also operate within a defined cultural context or environment.¹⁹ In Canada, the public broadcaster’s two language services, though they may even share the same physical space,²⁰ operate newsrooms in *separate* cultural environments. These environments shape journalists’ frames of reference in determining “what is news” for their respective audiences. This results in coverage dynamics that diverge particularly during political campaigns. This inquiry will demonstrate how coverage of the federal election campaign of 2008 by the French and English services did not “contribute to shared national consciousness and identity,” but rather, helped contribute to Canada’s *two solitudes*.

each other, and sharing images. This also takes place after interviews and images are shot, where program personnel, including radio and internet reporters and writers, will search through field tapes through the shared digital server system. Consider that this level of sharing suggests that differences in reporting by journalists occur despite sometimes having full knowledge of the other service reporter’s angle or approach.

¹⁸ Paul W. Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics, Society, and the Media*, (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2001)

¹⁹ Walter Soderlund, Walter Romanow, Donald Briggs and Ronald Wagenberg, *Media & Elections in Canada* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd, 1984) 29

²⁰ Many of CBC/SRC locations have integrated, along with radio and television personnel, French and English newsrooms. In Ottawa, for instance, the English and French radio and television newsrooms have moved to share the same physical space.

What impact this dual coverage actually has on election outcomes is difficult to gauge and would require further examination of how audiences make their electoral choices. This is not the focus of this thesis. But certainly the outcome of this particular election does reflect the continuing entrenchment of Canada's dual society, where the media – even those mandated to build bridges -- seem unable to play a role as a social integrator.

Elections and TV News

Canadians still report receiving most of their election information from television news.²¹ The two programs featured in this analysis: *Le Téléjournal*, and *The National* are significant contributors to that process. Polling data from the 2006 campaign suggested more English speakers (38 per cent) relied on the CBC's *The National* for news than other sources. *The National* was also “the single most relied” on newscast. French Canadians were more likely to cite Radio-Canada's *Le Téléjournal* as the single most relied upon election news source compared to any other.²²

There have been more than 100 studies examining the divergences in news coverage of French and English media over the last 40 years alone. There have been some recurring findings. Previous research of Canadian political campaigns has found divergences are most pronounced in the coverage of constitutional issues, or issues with

²¹Waddell, Christopher and Christopher Dornan, “The Media and the Campaign,” in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2006*, ed. Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2006) 225. “it was no surprise that television networks scored well, as that is how the majority of Canadians get their news.”

²²Waddell and Dornan, “The Media,” 228-229

constitutional consequences,²³ as well as issues related to culture and identity.²⁴

Canadian media researcher Fred Fletcher found: “French reports pay more attention to constitutional and language issues while the English news gives greater coverage to economic issues.”²⁵

Through a comparative analysis of these two nightly newscasts, this thesis will show how very similar dynamics took place during the 2008 campaign. One key issue of divergence – which made this campaign so compelling for the purposes of this thesis – came over the \$45 million in cuts to spending by the Conservative federal government on arts and cultural programs. Despite attempts by artists to raise the issue’s profile in English Canada, the story of cuts to arts and culture spending was not well covered by English media during the campaign, including coverage that appeared each night on *The National*. In francophone Quebec, however, the spending cuts became one of the central themes in campaign coverage, taking on a dynamic that many would later suggest hurt the Conservative’s opportunity to win more seats in Quebec, and as a result, the party’s chances to win a majority government.²⁶ This single theme led newscasts in French, and went mostly unexplored in English. This thesis will show how a divergence over this particular issue is hardly surprising given the historical context.

The Role of Public Broadcasting

²³ As defined by Arthur Siegel, in his 1977 research for the CRTC, referred to extensively in chapter 3

²⁴ Frederick L. Fletcher, “Media and Political Identity: Canada and Quebec in the Era of Globalization,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 23, no 3 (1998) 363

²⁵ Fletcher, “Media and Political Identity,” 363.

²⁶ Toronto Star correspondent and political commentator, Chantal Hébert listed it as “the turning point” in Harper’s drive for a majority government on *The National’s* “At Issue” panel, in the final week of the campaign

To put the Canadian broadcasting environment into perspective, it is useful to discuss how democracies have used broadcasting policy and public broadcasting in nation building. As media scholar Marc Raboy explains, broadcasting policy is shaped by “a complex interaction between different sets of actors,” and contested by actors within the economic, social and political spheres.²⁷ How that contest shaped public broadcasting in this country is particular to the Canadian context, and explains how the CBC came to be the way it is today.

Historically, one of the key functions of public broadcasting has been to take on the project of nation building. The CBC mandate commits the broadcaster to promote a shared “national consciousness and identity,” and until 1991, the mandate went further, asking the CBC to foster a sense of “national unity.” This policy can be seen in other states with vast and ethnically diverse territories such as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act, for instance, includes a mandate to “() (broadcast) programs that contribute to a sense of national identity ()” The New Zealand broadcasting policy requires “programmes which engender a sense of citizenship and national identity.” The South African Broadcasting Policy states programming should provide a public service “necessary for the maintenance of national identity, universal access, equality, unity and diversity.”²⁸

²⁷ Marc Raboy, “The Role of the Public in Broadcasting Policy-making and Regulation: Lesson for Europe from Canada,” *European Journal of Communication* 9, no. 1 (1994): 9.

²⁸ “Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983,” Australian Broadcasting Corporation, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2008C00174>, “Broadcasting policy in New Zealand,” New Zealand Government, 19, accessed July 25, 2011, <http://www.med.govt.nz/upload/12863/bpinnz.pdf>, “The SABC Mandate,” SABC, accessed July 25, 2011, http://www.sabc.co.za/wps/wcm/connect/41afdd8044341da1a564e7c4173d8502/BC_Act_revised.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=41afdd8044341da1a564e7c4173d8502

Media scholar David Young suggests public broadcasting usually comes out of state cultural policies as a form of “technological nationalism” Young describes “technological nationalism” as a state’s effort to “ascribe to technology the capacity to create a nation by enhancing communication”²⁹ Moreover, Young says states use cultural policy and projects such as the development of a public broadcasting service in order to “secure the political hegemony of a state,” by imposing unity on its various peoples

In modern industrialized Western countries, where communication between members of society is difficult, communications takes on the role of building a common culture In the case of many European countries, public broadcasting policies that developed in the name of “national unity” typically had the effect of suppressing cultural diversity among indigenous groups, according to media scholar Jan Drijvers³⁰ Drijvers describes how states used a public broadcasting monopoly to bind ethnic groups together within the same geographic borders Several European countries such as the United Kingdom and Belgium experienced resistance from decentralist or secessionist groups “as nationhood and statehood in Europe do not invariably coincide, the growing salience of the national question offers an inherent challenge to the existing state system” writes Philip Schlesinger in his work on public broadcasting³¹ It is a fair

²⁹David Young, “Discourses on Communication Technologies in Canadian and European Broadcasting Policy Debates” *European Journal of Communication* 18, (2003) 215

³⁰Jan Drijvers, “Community Broadcasting A Manifesto for the Media Policy of Small European Countries,” *Media Culture and Society* 14, no 2, 195

³¹ Young, “Discourses,” 221

comparison to Canada, which Lord Durham once described in 1839 as “two nations warring within the bosom of a single state.”

The political systems themselves have enormous impact in shaping broadcasting systems. A comparison of how the political systems of the UK, Canada and Belgium affected policy in public broadcasting is revealing, as the three have a lot in common: they are all constitutional monarchies, and all struggle with the aspirations of national minorities. A brief look at how the three dealt with issues of national unity through the public broadcaster provides some revealing context in understanding the Canadian service.

Media scholar Elylt Wynne Jones compared the Canadian to the British experience in a thesis called *Ethnic Nationalism in Quebec and Wales: the Case of Public Broadcasting Conflict*.³² The UK model of public broadcasting was developed in 1923 by a parliamentary committee, which recommended a monopoly system controlled by a single authority. Its first administrator John Reith believed a national service was a tool for social and national integration. Lord Reith once told an interviewer: “It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need -- not what they want... But few know what they want, and very few know what they need.”³³ He believed in strong central control and during his tenure

³² Elylt Wynne Jones, “Ethnic Nationalism in Quebec and Wales: The Case of Public Broadcasting Conflict,” (Masters Thesis, McGill University, 1988), 91, accessed June 5, 2011, http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/8881/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=61858

³³ Paul W. Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics, Society, and the Media*, (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2001) 52

dissuaded any interest in fostering regional programming, with the understanding that the BBC could not encourage nationalism in Scotland or Wales³⁴

Jones describes growing tension from the Welsh nationalist movement by the 1950s demanding a system in its own language. However, it was not until the 1980s that Wales finally received its separate language television network. The researcher explains that Britain, as a unitary state with no federal devolution to regions followed an “assimilationist policy’ toward its minorities

“This assimilationist bent was also apparent in the creation and evolution of the British Broadcasting Corporation () We can conclude that the BBC was serving an integrative role in British national life – this appears clear from its centralized structure ”³⁵

Along with that strong central organization, it had Parliamentary support to secure long-term financing through annual licence fees,³⁶ and faced no competition from the private sector until 1955

Belgium has a constitutional monarchy modelled after the UK, but has a federal form of government more comparable perhaps to Canada. Like Canada, it also shares the struggle of bi-cultural nationalism, with two major ethnic groups, the Dutch-speaking people of Flanders in the north, and the French-speaking people of Wallonia living in the South (there is a small third German minority in the South). However,

³⁴ Jones, ‘ Ethnic Nationalism, ’ 53

³⁵ Jones, “Ethnic Nationalism,” 91

³⁶ Licensing fees are charged annually to UK households or organizations which use equipment to receive live broadcasts. The fees are set by the British Government and passed by Parliament. It supplements this funding through commercial sales (advertising, program sales, publishing, etc) through BBC Worldwide Ltd

unlike Canada, the nature of its electoral system – a system of proportional representation – has led to political crisis and the threat of national disintegration. This state of affairs was preceded by the devolution of federal policies, including communication policy. The devolution process began by the end of the 1960s, helped along by the electoral system, as described by political researchers H. Klingermann, Richard Hoffenbert and Ian Budget:

“proportional representation allowed the (regional autonomist) parties to gain parliamentary representation quickly. This put pressure on the established parties to respond to their separate ethnic constituencies. () No party was able to recover sufficiently from the linguistic breach to act again as a really unified political force.”³⁷

Today no party represents the interests of the country as a whole. In fact, a Flemish citizen cannot vote for a French party nor its candidates, and vice versa. Coinciding with this process, national policy began to devolve, and one by one, national institutions devolved to regional governments, including the national public broadcasting system. The national public broadcaster has been replaced with three systems, one for each national group: Flanders, the French, and the German. There is no longer any pretence that public broadcasting will bring Belgians together. Drijvers argues the push for devolution of the national broadcaster, though cultural and regional

³⁷ H. D. Klingermann, Richard Hoffenbert, and Ian Budget, *Parties, Policies and Democracy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 223.

arguments were used, came from a “quest for absolute control over the broadcasting medium by the dominant political parties on either side of Belgium’s cultural barrier.”³⁸

Canada has a federal system like Belgium, but it does not have an electoral system that features proportional representation. In Canada, the national parties vie for control of government by winning a plurality of seats – and hopefully, a majority. This has fostered a “brokerage party system” where national parties “broker” regional differences from within, in order to shape policy that will win those regions at election time. Political scientist R. Kenneth Carty explains:

“ (...) Conventional wisdom says the classic Canadian party acts as a broker, presenting policy packages that accommodate the competing claims of different regions, communities and groups. In a word, national parties are to succeed by aggregating, rather than articulating interests. This of course, sets them off from the cleavage-based parties of most other democracies whose very *raison d’être* is to articulate the claims of their distinctive clienteles.”³⁹

In this way, the electoral system influenced the nature of federal government power over regional interests. The state still wields ultimate control over communications policy despite attempts by generations of Quebec governments to claim jurisdiction over broadcasting policy.⁴⁰

The broadcasting system in Canada is distinct from the Belgian and UK systems. The federal Belgian government with its electoral process of proportional representation led to the devolution of its national broadcasting system so it no longer

³⁸ Drijvers, “Community Broadcasting,” 196

³⁹ Roland Kenneth Carty, “The Politics of Tecumseh Corners: Canadian Political Parties as Franchise Organizations” (Presidential address to the Canadian Political Science Association, Toronto, 2002)

⁴⁰ Even during the 2008 campaign, Premier Jean Charest called for the CRTC to be devolved to provincial jurisdiction (to be discussed in chapter six)

serves national interests. The strong centralized UK government produced a well financed broadcasting monopoly. The Canadian central government has maintained control over broadcasting policy but its efforts at “technological nationalism” have been tempered by what Marc Raboy described already above as “a complex interaction between different sets of actors,” making its system unique.

Canada’s Unique Public Broadcaster

Since the founding of the public broadcaster, Canadian legislators hoped it could resolve internal and external threats through “technological nationalism,” according to David Young. American programming (during the early period, commercial radio broadcasting) posed an external threat. The national public broadcasting monopolies of Europe did not experience this external threat until the 1980s.⁴¹ The challenge of national unity posed an internal threat.⁴² The original Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting in 1928 outlines the dual problem: “The destiny of Canada depends upon our ability and willingness to control and utilize our own internal communications for Canadian purposes.”

R. B. Bennett spoke of both as well, in his speech at the introduction of the broadcasting bill to form the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1936:

“This country must be assured of complete Canadian control of broadcasting from Canadian sources. Without such control, broadcasting can never be the

⁴¹ Young, “Discourses,” 217

⁴² Young, “Discourses,” 216

agency by which national consciousness may be fostered and sustained and national unity still further strengthened "⁴³

But as Young points out, Canada experienced challenges to its efforts at state-imposed "technological nationalism" from two sources from the already existing private sector broadcasting industry and secondly, from Quebec nationalism Those tensions led to the development of Canada's mixed public/private system, as well as two separate language services

The challenge of the private sector is described by Mary Vipond, in an article called "British or American? Canada's 'mixed' broadcasting system in the 1930s "⁴⁴ When European countries were developing public broadcasting systems as monopolies in their markets, Canada chose a different path Vipond describes how Canada's broadcasting system developed as a mix of public and private elements She says tension between the state's goal to develop a 'public utility' preoccupied with "creating and fostering national unity and identity" and the already existing interests of established commercial radio broadcasting during the 1930s led to a compromise a hybrid system which featured both the publicly-funded 'utility' model from the UK, as well as a system resembling U S commercial broadcasting Canadians had already been exposed to American commercial content, and there existed "a deep strain of liberalism

⁴³ John D Jackson and Paul Millan, "English language radio drama, A comparison of regional production units" *Canadian Journal of Communications* 15, no 1

⁴⁴ Mary Vipond, "British or American? Canada's 'mixed' broadcasting system in the 1930s" *The Radio Journal International Studies in Broadcast and Audio Media* 2 no 2, (2004)

in Canadian society (which) fostered suspicion of activist government and particularly of placing cultural institutions in state hands ”⁴⁵

The inability of the federal Canadian state to assert “hegemony” through its communications policy is also evidenced by its first experiment with a truly bilingual system, making the way eventually for two separate systems. In a second article by Vipond called “One Network or Two? French-Language Programming on the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, 1932-36,”⁴⁶ she writes the founding managers of the CRBC – the first public broadcasting project -- tried at first “to make real, via the radio network, a vision of a pan-Canadian linguistic duality ()”⁴⁷ The CRBC’s original vice-chairman, Thomas Maher, a francophone forestry engineer from Quebec City, told a Toronto newspaper

“The better the two main racial sections of Canada came to know each other through exchange or radio entertainment and otherwise, the less misunderstanding there would be between them and the more they would appreciate each other’s point of view. National radio should be a great agency for promoting understanding and a realization that French and Anglo-Saxon in Canada are alike Canadians. It should assist in welding them more closely together in Canadian citizenship.”⁴⁸

But ultimately, the experiment failed. The back-lash against bilingual programming was based in the basic arguments central to the “struggle over the

⁴⁵ Vipond, “British or American,” 91

⁴⁶ Mary Vipond, ‘One Network or Two? French Language Programming on the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, 1932-36’, *The Canadian Historical Review* 89, no. 3, (September 2008) 319-343

⁴⁷ Vipond, “One Network,” 321

⁴⁸ Vipond, “One Network,” 328

meaning of Canada ”⁴⁹ Prime Minister R B Bennett received hundreds of letters from angry English Canadians insisting the new public broadcaster was trying to redefine Canada as a bilingual country, proof that “Quebec governs Canada,” which many found “offensive ” More importantly, Vipond writes, the bilingual CRBC led to threats by English Canadians they would no longer listen, and turn to American programming – exactly what the CRBC was designed to counter ⁵⁰ One editorial in the *Toronto Telegram* wrote

“One of the great benefits claimed for a nationalized radio was the unification of the country and the building up of national sentiment Under the bilingual auspices of the Radio Commission it is provoking racial controversies and is becoming an agency of discord ”⁵¹

The political pressure was seen in the slowly dwindling French and bilingual content, from a high of 50 per cent in May 1933 when the broadcaster first went to air, to 26 per cent by October and down to 5 per cent by the fall of 1934, where it remained until the experiment was jettisoned altogether in 1936 (then replaced by the two separate services) Vipond writes about the demise of the CRBC bilingual project “Struggling to establish its own legitimacy in a mixed broadcasting system, and coping with many other almost overwhelming difficulties, the CRBC simply did not have the strength to stand up to the virulence of the anti-French protesters or the political fears of the Conservative government ”⁵² Vipond suggests it was an “authoritative experiment,” in its efforts to program how Canadians imagined their country

⁴⁹ Vipond “One Network,” 331

⁵⁰ Vipond “One Network,” 332

⁵¹ Vipond, “One Network,” 333

⁵² Vipond, “One Network,” 338

Moreover, she writes the authority of the public broadcaster was weakened by the failure.

This experiment did, however, lead to the creation of a separate francophone service, which would have been unfeasible just four years earlier for lack of funding and political will. During the period of the bilingual system's tenure, substantial funds went to building a broadcasting infrastructure in Quebec where private infrastructure previously had not existed.⁵³

With the founding of the revamped service – the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation -- the first head of the board of directors, Leonard Brockington offered a renewed commitment to the mandate, stating:

“If Canadian radio makes no lasting contribution to a better understanding between the so-called French Canadian and the so-called English Canadian, between the East and the West, then we have faltered in our stewardship.”⁵⁴

Politicians and others frequently measure the CBC's performance based on its ability to stand by this part of its core mandate to foster Canadian unity, or, as the mandate has evolved in its present form: to foster “a shared national consciousness,” particularly at times of national political crisis.

The historical evidence on that score, and the central theme of this thesis, suggests that the CBC has contributed instead to fostering two separate national consciousnesses, one in French, and the other in English, and continues to do so today as demonstrated by coverage of the 2008 election campaign.

⁵³ Vipond, “One Network,” 333.

⁵⁴ Jones, “Ethnic,” 69.

But as already seen, tension from the private sector and Quebec nationalism have challenged the state's ability to effectively build policy around "technological nationalism" or authoritatively impose a "we feeling" through its public broadcaster without undermining the CBC's credibility with audiences. This is the challenge discussed in our conclusion.

This Thesis:

Although there have been a number of studies looking at the differences between the French and English content of the CBC, there has been little discussion comparing the services since the end of the Chrétien era. Although there have been some analyses looking at the issue of fairness and balance during election coverage, there has not been an exploration of how coverage generally diverged between the two. Media scholar Fred Fletcher, in an article called "Media and Political Identity: Canada and Quebec in the Era of Globalization," suggests more research is warranted discussing the "dominant values, symbols, and myths in domestic English and French programs," as well as "dominant frames and historical referents in political reporting in the two languages."⁵⁵ The 2008 federal election campaign turned out to be a perfect opportunity to explore these issues. This election highlighted some of the dynamics in Canada's on-going bi-cultural separateness. The voting result – for the third time in a row – delivered a minority government and political division along Canada's linguistic fault line. As for the CBC, the *two solitudes* continue to exist at the public broadcaster

⁵⁵ Fletcher, "Media and Political Identity," 372

despite efforts since the CBC's inception to increase mutual understanding between the two.

The main focus of this thesis will be a comparative analysis of the nightly newscasts of *Le Téléjournal* and *The National* throughout the campaign. It will include qualitative analysis through interviews with journalists, people within the parties and analysts (political columnist and pollsters). There will be some limited quantitative assessment of the 2008 federal election campaign, but this will not involve a formal media content analysis per se. This thesis will examine how newsrooms framed stories at key moments during the campaign. It will examine the overall treatment of issues such as "culture," "Quebec," and the "economy." It will also explore how two individual senior journalists saw the campaign unfold, by examining their daily correspondence with the researcher over the 36 days. This correspondence will be loosely compared to find periods of divergence and how they reflect the decision making processes of their respective newsrooms.

This thesis is also an effort to understand not only what happened during this particular campaign, but the historical context. Since the CBC was founded as a nation-building project, inevitably, the thesis must wind through the story of Canada itself and its struggle with dual nationalism.

In chapters two, three, and four, this thesis will examine how the CBC grew to be the way it is today by considering the social and historical foundations of the *two solitudes*. Chapter two will examine Canada's unique challenge with national unity, and

what the founders of the CBC hoped would be achieved through public broadcasting as a nation building project. Chapter three will look at how the two services grew to be separate with separate challenges, and their record dealing with the national unity debate. It will also consider specifically the issue of culture which became so significant during this particular campaign. Chapter four will discuss how journalists within these organizations see their role.

In chapter five this thesis will examine the election campaign of 2008, and where significant divergences appeared in coverage by the two programs. It will also examine the daily correspondence from two senior journalists from each newsroom on how they perceived the campaign leads of the day.

Chapter six analyzes some of the very specific dynamics that took place in 2008. *It will consider how a seemingly minor \$45 million dollar cut to arts and culture became such a salient issue for Quebeckers.* It will look at the role of politicians such as the Premier of Quebec and whether political actors or the media lead the news agenda. It will also examine the treatment of the parties by each program.

Finally in chapter seven this thesis will discuss what these findings mean for the future of the public broadcaster, its mandate, and how Canadians relate to each other.

Chapter 2: Canada and the Challenge of Nationalism

“The destiny of Canada depends upon our ability and willingness to control and utilize our own internal communications for Canadian purposes ” – Aird Report, 1928

Canada has always faced a challenge creating a sense of unified national identity. Canada’s communication systems have historically had a very specific role “to be the adhesive that would allow Canadians to defy all handicaps in search of the projected national destiny ”⁵⁶ According to Canadian media theorists such as Arthur Siegel and Mary Vipond, Confederation was only the first step toward nation-building, but not the achievement of nationhood Vipond writes

“The root of the problem lies in the fact that Canada was created in 1867 as a political and economic entity for pragmatic and imperial rather than nationalist reasons. Only after the formation of the Canadian state out of several different colonies was the attempt to create a Canadian nation begun.”⁵⁷

It had long been hoped that the challenge of creating the “we feeling” among the many disparate regions and the two linguistic groups would be resolved through mass communications Arthur Siegel writes

“Canada, a product of negotiation and reasoning, has had no war of independence or revolution to help unify the nation Because of this background, the Canadian mass media carry an especially heavy burden in fostering a sense of nationhood ”⁵⁸

Academics Walter Soderlund, Walter Romanow, Donald Briggs and Ronald Wagenberg in their 1984 analysis of Canadian media and elections, suggest

“Political integration is a much sought after goal for the leaders of central governments in states such as Canada, which have strong regional traditions.

⁵⁶ Robert Fortner cited in Arthur Siegel, *Politics and the Media in Canada*, 2nd Ed (Toronto McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd, 1996), 95

⁵⁷ Mary Vipond, *The Mass Media in Canada* 3rd Ed (Toronto James Lorimer & Co Ltd, 2000), 3

⁵⁸ Siegel, *Politics and the Media* 29

Nation-building is the term used to describe the variety of policies undertaken by governments to achieve this end.”

Whether it was the Canadian Pacific Railway, the telegraph system, or the national broadcaster, Canadian federal governments made substantial investment⁵⁹ in what private industry had neither the means nor the will to commit: nation-building through national communications networks.

But broadcasting (an agricultural term which literally meant the wide dissemination of seeds) began a whole new era of dreaming for Canadian nationalists. Unlike newspapers, broadcasting would be seen as a national resource. The nation-building theme found a home in the first Broadcasting Act. Its authors hoped a national broadcaster would resolve the challenge of what Mackenzie King observed as “too much geography,” and foster better understanding between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. In 1928, the nine-page report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (the Aird Report) stated: “In a country of the vast geographical dimensions

⁵⁹ In the case of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the project at conception was part of a nation-building project developed by the Macdonald government, as part of his commitment to link British Columbia to the rest of the country. It was originally funded through private investors with substantial land and monetary grants and loans from the federal government. When scandal broke, and the money ran out, the subsequent Liberal government nationalized the project and built vast sections with public money. In 1880 CPR was finally incorporated after the federal government handed over land and loans to a new set of financiers. Later the Canadian National Railway (CNR) became a publicly owned crown corporation in the post WWI era. See “Our History,” CPR, accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.cpr.ca/en/about-cp/our-past-present-and-future/Pages/our-history.aspx>, for CNR. See “Canadian National Railways,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=a1ARTA0001316>. As for the telegraph system, it came under federal control along with the telephone system under legislation in 1880 as a “nation building project.” See Winseck, Dwayne, “A Social History of Canadian Telecommunications,” *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 20, no. 2 (1995).

of Canada, broadcasting will undoubtedly become a force in fostering national spirit and interpreting national consciousness.”⁶⁰

Chapter one discussed efforts by states to exert “technological nationalism” through public broadcasting. This chapter will consider why this happens through a discussion of the role of communications in nation-building and the challenge of defining national identity in Canada.

Theories of Nationalism and the Canadian Reality

Most theoretical discussions on the creation of nations and nationalism include the critical role played by mass communications. Canadian communications researchers frequently refer to American social scientist Karl Deutsch⁶¹ who suggested “nationalities are marked off from each other by the flow of information.” Deutsch wrote that a strong relationship exists between the area covered by a communication system and the boundaries of a state: “A larger group of persons linked by (...) complementary habits and facilities of communication we may call a people.”⁶²

One of the founders of modernist nationalist theory, Ernest Gellner suggested nations are themselves a product of modern society, created through the process of

⁶⁰ Sir John Aird, “Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting,” in *Documents of Canadian Broadcasting*, ed Roger Bird, (Ottawa Carleton University Press, 1988), 44

⁶¹ While Karl Deutsch grew up and studied in Europe (mainly Czechoslovakia), his main theses on nationalism were developed as an academic in the United States

⁶² Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1966), 96.

industrialization, and held together by mass communications as the glue that holds a more volatile society together

“Communications becomes important because of complexity, interdependence and mobility of productive life, within which far more numerous, complex, precise and context-free messages need to be transmitted than had ever been the case before”⁶³

Benedict Anderson went further in his seminal work on nations called *Imagined Communities*. He suggested the nation is an “imagined political community.” Anderson charts the rise of nationalism from previous cultural systems prior to industrialization. He suggests print capitalism helped create common written languages and enabled populations (particularly the new middle class) to “imagine” the political community in which they lived, to imagine a nation through shared information via the mass media. Since no individual can actually know all the people within a state, the “nation” is invented or “constructed” by portraying a certain understanding of what it means, for example, to be Canadian.⁶⁴

But Canada’s “shared imagining” is complicated first by the nature of the relationship between the “two founding nations” since the time of Confederation, and further by the complexity of the modern context, which includes the aspirations of First Nations as well as a burgeoning multicultural population. In this context, Chaim Gans’ theory of nationalism provides an illustrative typology that may apply to the Canadian reality. Gans describes two types of nationalism: “statist nationalism” and a “cultural

⁶³ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 74

⁶⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 2006), 12-46

nationalism.” Each of these forms of nationalisms uses the state to achieve different aims. In “statist nationalism” the state seeks to create a unified national culture around shared civic values (in the case of Canada, for instance, liberal democratic values.) “Cultural nationalism” uses the state to protect the cultural identity of a national group. In many ways cultural nationalism, where the group shares a common history, language and culture and has a moral interest in sustaining that culture through future generations, can perhaps describe the brand of nationalism that arose in Quebec.⁶⁵

Support for this can be found in the report on the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional Problems, called the Tremblay Commission. The five volume report handed in to Parliament in 1956 was considered an in depth examination of French Canadian society. It suggested:

“The 1867 Constitution made the Province of Quebec, which was already historically its national focus, the French-Canadian centre *par excellence*, and the accredited guardian of French-Canadian civilization. Insofar as its own population was concerned, that was a direct responsibility. It also applied indirectly, insofar as it constituted the cultural focus of the French minorities of the other provinces and to the extent that its influence was exerted on over-all Canadian policy.”⁶⁶

Others would argue, however, that modern Quebec embraces a new civic (statist) nationalism. Charles Taylor charts the modernization of Quebec and the role of its intelligentsia through industrialization following the basic theory of Ernest Gellner. In a collection of essays called *Reconciling the Solitudes* Taylor examines the role of the rising Quebec intelligentsia during the industrialization and modernization of Quebec; a

⁶⁵ Chaim Gans, *The Limits of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3-8

⁶⁶ David Kwavnick, *The Tremblay Report* (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 1973), 45

Quebec he writes, that had become a larger, more mobile population “The basis for the new nationalism () was not the defence of anything existing, it was the creation of something new Its aim was not to defend the traditional way of life but to build a modern French society on this continent ”⁶⁷ This nationalism, however, according to Taylor, does not exclusively seek a separate state “Independence could be the symbol even if not always the actual goal of the new nationalism ”

This thesis is focused on the challenge facing the public broadcaster if, as Arthur Siegel wrote “Canadian mass media carry an especially heavy burden in fostering a sense of nationhood ” Communications scholar Alfred Schutz suggested successful communications is possible only between persons, social groups, or nations that share a substantially similar system of “relevances ” In fact he theorized “the greater the differences the fewer the chances for successful communication ”⁶⁸ This poses significant challenges for Canada and its public broadcaster The corporation exists as two separate entities serving two communities within a single state, with two systems of “relevances,” and in this way, two “imagined” notions of nationhood

If the public broadcaster’s role from inception was to help create a “shared imagining” of the Canadian nation, then many theories on nationalism establish the fundamental problem facing our “two founding nations” scenario John S Mill suggests “free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different

⁶⁷ Charles Taylor, ‘Nationalism and the Political Intelligentsia A Case Study,’ in *Reconciling the Solitudes* ed Charles Taylor and Guy Laforest (Montreal McGill-Queens Press,1993), 5-6

⁶⁸ Alfred Schutz, ‘On multiple realities,’ in *Collected Papers The Problem of Social Realities* ed Alfred Schutz and Herman Leo van Breda, (The Hague Nijhoff , 1962), 220

nationalities ”⁶⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau had similar logic, believing cultural unity is necessary in order to achieve constitutional loyalty From the beginning, however, the founders of the public broadcaster hoped its mandate would bring Canadians together

The Role of the Public Broadcaster – French versus English

Prime Minister R B Bennett spoke of the need for public control of the airwaves “Without such control, broadcasting can never be the agency by which national consciousness may be fostered and sustained and national unity still further strengthened ”⁷⁰

In 1932, the first version of the public broadcasting service – the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Corporation (CRBC) was bilingual, alternating between French- and English-language programs As described in the introduction, it didn’t last It was in fact, complaints from outraged English audiences that spurred a decision to create Radio-Canada, the French service, which first went to air in 1936 ⁷¹

Structurally, from that time forward, the two services operated separately The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Societe Radio-Canada produced very few programs in both languages, not many programs were translated Functionally, the CBC and SRC were supposed to live by the same mandate to foster national unity and

⁶⁹ Gans *The Limits* 18

⁷⁰ John D Jackson and Paul Millan, “English language radio drama, A comparison of regional production units,” *Canadian Journal of Communications* 15, no 1 Bennett made the statement during a speech following the passage of the new Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act in 1936

⁷¹ Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics Society and the Media* 65

cultural exchange. In reality, their cultural environments shaped their operations, creating very different outputs.

Their objectives differed as well. From the beginning, the English service had a preoccupation with the influence of American programming. It was in a constant fight for audiences already attracted to high quality, resource rich U.S. shows.⁷² The English service of the public broadcaster was a Canadian sovereignty project, as evidenced by the statements made in the early Aird Report:

“At present, the majority of programs heard are from sources outside Canada. It has been emphasized to us that the continued reception of these has a tendency to mold the minds of young people in the home to ideals and opinions that are not Canadian.”⁷³

At that time, the preoccupation was over radio, but still today, the battle continues for Canadian audiences for English television programming. The 2009 CRTC Communications Monitoring Report suggests overall viewing of Canadian English television programming is at 43.3 per cent compared to 64.1 per cent in the French language. As for the strength of Radio-Canada specifically, it still holds 18 per cent of the francophone market compared to the CBC with 8 per cent of the English speaking market.⁷⁴

⁷² This dynamic continues today, with English ratings for news falling as viewing choice rises exponentially. English Canadians get a majority of their programming from American sources. CBC Corporate Communications suggests *The National* has gone from 1.4 million viewers in 1990 to 641,000 in 2010. *Le Téléjournal* has also seen viewership drop from 781 thousand in 1990 to 294,000 in 2010, however this represents about twice the impact when you consider the population of each audience.

⁷³ Siegel, *Politics and the Media in Canada*, 105

⁷⁴ “Communications Monitoring Report 2010,” CRTC, 62, accessed May 18, 2011, <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/policymonitoring/2010/cmr2010.pdf>

The French service however, influenced a sovereignty project of a different kind. By the late 1950s, television took off in the French language at the same time Quebec went through a major socio-cultural transformation, which developed soon after into what is now called the “Quiet Revolution.” Marked by the change from a mostly agrarian and religious society to an urban/industrial one, it coincided with the rise of Quebec nationalism.⁷⁵ Quebec historian and researcher Jean-Pierre Desaulniers wrote that television had a transformative role. (Television) enabled the people of Quebec to recognize themselves as a totality for the first time in their history.”⁷⁶

Historian Louis Balthazar wrote

“Because the French network was, for all practical purposes, a Quebec network () the CBC contributed heavily to making French-speaking Quebecers closer to one another, reinforcing Quebec consciousness and Quebec nationalism. For the first time in their history, French-Canadians living in Quebec were watching, from day to day, a picture of themselves transmitted from one end of the province to the other.”⁷⁷

In a more recent speech, Julie Miville-Dechéne, the current Radio-Canada ombudsman said Quebecers’ attachment to the public service comes from this historical role played by early television. (translation)“Radio-Canada finally allowed Quebecers a chance to see themselves in the mirror and understand that they have their own identity.”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ These are the same industrializing ingredients that define the rise of nationalism by theorist Ernest Gellner

⁷⁶ Kyle Conway, “Everyone says no Canadian public Service Broadcasting and the failure of translation during Canada’s constitutional crisis,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2008), 10

⁷⁷ Siegel, *Politics and the Media* 47

⁷⁸ Julie Miville Dechene, (speech presented to the 40th meeting of l’Union internationale de la presse francophone, Oct 16, 2008), accessed June 8, 2011, <http://cbc-radio-canada.ca/discours/20081016.shtml>

In this way Quebec began to construct through the well-funded public broadcaster⁷⁹ what Benedict Anderson described as a “shared imagining” for a nation of francophones in North America. Quebec personalities on Radio-Canada became part of the society’s intellectual elite. People such as René Lévesque rose from war correspondent to influential talk show host to politician. Gérard Pelletier, an editor with the influential *Cité Libre* (credited with promoting the modernization of Quebec) also worked at Radio-Canada. In this way, Radio-Canada helped create the intelligentsia Charles Taylor describes as the essential ingredient contributing to the rise of Quebec nationalism. Kenneth McRoberts charts the influence and rise of the new Quebec francophone elite trained in the social sciences and the significance of Radio-Canada:

“(…) the emerging francophone new middle class was also able to assume positions in the rapidly growing operations of Radio-Canada. For francophone intellectuals, especially those trained in the social sciences, the introduction of television provided both new opportunities for employment and an important new vehicle for influencing French-Canadian society as a whole.”⁸⁰

The pattern continues today, with former Radio-Canada personalities sitting on both sides of the aisle of the elected National Assembly. Others have been cabinet ministers in the federal government.⁸¹ How this affected journalists in how they see their roles and by extension influence the newsroom environments in which they work,

⁷⁹ Mary Vipond, “One Network or Two,” 340 Vipond describes how the investment by the original commissioners of the CRBC in improving the French service was a priority, and in fact, they did open a number of stations in Quebec where there had been none before

⁸⁰ Kenneth McRoberts *Quebec Social Change and Political Crisis*, 3rd Ed (Toronto McClelland & Stewart Inc , 1988), 97-100

⁸¹ For example, in an interview, Christian Bourque from the polling firm Léger Marketing said four out of the five most popular politicians among Quebecers are former Quebec television personalities – among them, MNA Bernard Drainville with the Parti Québécois, and Christiane St Pierre, cabinet minister with the Quebec Liberal Party who both worked for Radio-Canada as journalists. Also worth noting Liza Frulla, a former Radio-Canada personality, was Heritage Minister under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Michaele Jean was the former Governor General of Canada.

is part of the discussion about journalists in chapter four. What is becoming clearer through this discussion, however, is how Radio-Canada and the CBC developed their roles under different historical and cultural contexts. These differences often created challenges for the two services to adhere to the mandate of the CBC.

The Paradox of the Mandate

In 1968, Parliament formalized the mandate when it passed a new Broadcasting Act. Among the mandates of the public broadcaster, it had to “contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity.” It also included a requirement to: “be in English and French, serving the special needs of geographic regions, and actively contributing to the flow and exchange of cultural and regional information and entertainment.” Canadian media scholar, Greg Marc Nielsen suggests this presented a paradox for the CBC and SRC. He says, while they are mandated to reflect Canada's regions and cultures, it must at the same time “represent one official Canadian culture, when there is no actual consensus that such a thing exists.”⁸²

By 1991, federal Communications Minister, Marcel Masse announced a change to the CBC mandate in the new Broadcasting Act. Rather than contribute to “national unity,” it would instead “contribute to shared national consciousness and identity.”

Masse explained:

⁸²Greg Marc Nielsen, *Le Canada de Radio Canada, Sociologie, critique, et dialogisme culture* (Toronto, Editions de Grief, 1994), 10

“I have removed from the CBC its obligation to promote Canadian unity because it is, first, maintaining this political value artificially, and second, it was a constraint to freedom of expression () In removing it, we will rather place greater emphasis on the capacity of Canadians to recognize each other through values”⁸³

Still the change of mandate did not stem a long tradition of accusations against the public broadcaster for failing to bring Canadians together, whether by developing a common sense of “national unity” or by creating a “national consciousness” It has been accused of failing its mandate, and perpetuating, rather than attenuating the *two solitudes* in Canada A brief look at the history of the public broadcaster reveals a story of challenges and on-going struggle with its mandate, with clashes that dominate particularly during political contests

⁸³ Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics Society* 63

Chapter 3: The Public Broadcaster and Linguistic Cleavage in Canada

“The electronic news media in Canada, English as well as French, are biased to the point of subversiveness. They are biased by their assumptions about what is newsworthy and what their audiences want to hear. (...) The assumption is that English Canadians could not care less about what happens to French Canadians, and vice versa. These assumptions are intolerable. They are also extremely stupid.”

– The Boyle Report, 1977

The two cultures in Canada in many ways continue to perpetuate separate understandings of their shared pasts as well as their current realities. Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the narrative that takes place in the news media. As this chapter outlines, these separate narratives conflict typically when opportunities arise for national public debate such as federal campaigns. This produces a reaction involving powerful myths that have been regenerating themselves from well before the founding of the country.

This section will examine the historical clashes during public debate in order to understand the dynamics that led to the differences in reporting during the coverage of the 2008 election campaign.

In his report to the British Parliament in 1839, Lord Durham described the French and English colonies in North America as “two nations warring within the bosom of a single state.” He resolved to set in motion the project to forge their futures together in what eventually led to the founding of the Dominion of Canada. The first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald declared: “...we have a Constitution now under which

all British subjects are in a position of absolute equality, having equal rights of every kind -- of language, of religion and of person ”⁸⁴

In reality, however, equality did not mean all British subjects agreed on what it all meant. Views on Confederation, as reflected in French- and English-language newspapers at the time could not be more different. In 1867, the press of Upper Canada and Lower Canada -- what would later become the provinces of Ontario and Quebec -- had very different perspectives on the upcoming project of Confederation.

While much of the press in Upper Canada appeared favourable to the idea of a united Confederation,⁸⁵ the French press in Lower Canada concentrated on the implications for their “nation” and cynicism about the ambitions of the English. Certainly, others among the pre-Confederation colonies opposed political unification, but French Canadians had a perspective that was qualitatively different. Lower Canadians thought of themselves as an ethnocentric nation looking out for not just their political interests, but their cultural survival as a separate race. Editorials declared “Confederation will become the tomb of the French race and the ruin of Lower Canada ”⁸⁶. The newspaper *Le Pays*, supported by the nationalist Parti Rouge, told

⁸⁴ Bruce Hicks, “Bilingualism and the Canadian House of Commons 40 Years after B and B,” *Canadian Study of Parliament Group* no 8, (June 2007), 12

⁸⁵ Yves Frenette, “French Canadians,” *Encyclopedia of Canada’s People* ed Paul R. Magocsy, (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 2008) 553, accessed on January 14, 2008, http://books.google.ca/books?id=dbUuX0mnvQMC&pg=PA553&lpg=PA553&dq=bn+act+reaction+fr+en+ch+press&source=web&ots=K6y4oI85jM&sig=Q_pU-IjAGR_RRcGRHNu_tvpRWg&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=3&ct=result#PPA553,M1

⁸⁶ That particular editorial was written by a young lawyer named Wilfrid Laurier who would later go on to become Canada’s first French Prime Minister in 1896. George M. Wrong, “The Federation of Canada, 1867-1917: Four Lectures ” Accessed on January 14, 2008, http://www.archive.org/stream/federationofcana00univuoft/federationofcana00univuoft_djvu.txt

readers the new Act was “an anglicizing bill,” aimed at “the annihilation of the French race in Canada.”⁸⁷

But even the French parties and their newspapers in favour of Confederation insisted on recognition of Lower Canada’s autonomy or separateness; very different from the Upper Canada demand for strong national unity. The newspaper *La Minerve* was the voice of Les Bleus, the Conservative party in Lower Canada led by Georges-Etienne Cartier.⁸⁸ It declared: “We see in it (Confederation) the recognition of French-Canadian nationality. As a distinct and separate nationality we form a state within a state with full enjoyment of our rights, and a formal recognition of our national independence.”⁸⁹

Upper Canadian newspapers had a different concept of Confederation. George Brown, founder and editor of *The Globe* fought special status for Lower Canada, calling for representation by population. He also advocated for a strong united nation. Of French Canadians he wrote: “What has French Canadianism been denied? Nothing. It bars all it dislikes. It extorts all it demands... and grows insolent over its victories.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *Le Pays*, March 27, 1867, as cited in A I Silver, *The French Canadian Idea of Confederation 1864-1900 2nd Ed* (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1997), 38, accessed January 15, 2008, http://books.google.ca/books?id=t1pNL717FbQC&pg=PA39&lpg=PA39&dq=newspaper+le+pays+lower+canada+confederation&source=bl&ots=OALPtjqONQ&sig=T18AAAdJGQSFm5IKveIDFqsdF14s&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=2&ct=result#PPA38,M1

⁸⁸ Georges Etienne Cartier was John A Macdonald’s Lower Canada lieutenant, tasked to “sell” Confederation to Lower Canadians. He is considered one of the fathers of Confederation

⁸⁹ Frenette, “French Canadians,” 553

⁹⁰ “Le Canada A People’s History,” CBC, accessed January 14, 2008, http://history.cbc.ca/history/?MIval=EpContent.html&series_id=1&episode_id=8&chapter_id=3&page_id=3&lang=E

So the country began, with two very different ideas about what it means to be Canadian as reflected in French and English newspapers at the time. What is so remarkable is how some of these same basic misunderstandings about each other and national unity continue today.

Why do these separate cultural perspectives persist? Theorists suggest news narratives carry 'culturally specific codes' that perpetuate cultural myths. Communications researcher James Etterna examined news narratives in "Crafting Cultural Resonance: Imaginative Power in Everyday Journalism." He writes "we may read, even in mundane stories of daily journalism, important truths about the cultural constitution of our world." Etterna suggests that in order for news to have resonance with audiences it must bring together "a public and cultural relation among object, tradition and audience." Tradition here, considers the particular public's understanding of its past. This section will explore how the English and French cultural groups' separate understandings of their shared history affects media reporting today. Etterna "conceives that writers and readers (draw) upon a *cultural repertoire* of themes and stories."⁹¹ Elizabeth Bird and Robert Dardene support this idea, suggesting news and myth are related in their essay "Myth, Chronicle and Story." They write "As a symbolic system, myth and news act both as a model of and as a model for a culture." Bird and Dardene remarked "news-sense is *culturally specific* story-telling codes."⁹² In Canada,

⁹¹James S. Etterna, "Crafting Cultural Resonance: Imaginative Power in Everyday Journalism," *Journalism* 6.2 (May 2005), 133-134.

⁹²Elizabeth S. Bird and Robert W. Dardene, "Myth, Chronicle and Story: Exploring Narrative Qualities of News," *Media Myths and Narratives: Television and the Press*, ed. James W. Carey (Newbury Park, NJ: Sage, 1988), 73.

those culturally specific codes are as different as the languages themselves. The authors suggest anthropologists study the “narrative to find an entrance point into a culture,” arguing that “texts (...) are cultural ‘models’ that encode values and guides for behaviour.”⁹³ The two clashing Canadian myths are rooted in our understandings of our own identities as peoples.

Clashing Myths: The Story of Two Canadas

At the very heart of this understanding is a clash over the story of Canada. One of Quebec’s new intellectuals, Jocelyn Letourneau, suggests in Quebec the myth of “unfulfilled destiny” has haunted Quebecers for generations. Letourneau describes the anglophone and francophone tension as a clash of identity based in history. During a recent program of CBC Radio’s *Ideas* he explained “Quebeckers would not accept the other story that says for instance that (...) after all the coming of the British in 1759 was not so bad, because for different reasons (...) society continued to evolve and to change and (let’s just) forget the past and move into the future.”⁹⁴

But “Je me souviens”⁹⁵(I remember) is part of the Quebecois identity. The Quebec story for Letourneau is one of francophone Canadians resisting British conquest:

⁹³ Bird, “Myth,” 75

⁹⁴ “Passages to the Future ” *Ideas, Episode 4*, (November 2007) CBC, accessed January 14, 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/features/passages/index.html>

⁹⁵ “Je me souviens” became Quebec’s motto when in 1883, Eugene-Étienne Tâché, the architect and Commissioner for Crown lands inscribed the three words in stone on the Quebec City Parliament buildings. He never specified its meaning, but in a letter to Tâché’s son-in-law, Lt-Col Étienne-Théodore Pâquet Jr wrote. “the one who synthesized in three words the history and traditions of our race deserves to be recognized ” In 1978, the newly elected sovereigntist party, the Parti Québécois replaced the tourist licence plate slogan “La Belle Province” with “Je me souviens,” in 1978. For more information see Dechênes, Gaston (the Director of the Study of Documents at the Quebec National Assembly) “La Devise ‘Je me souviens.’” *L’Encyclopédie de l’Agora*, accessed January 14, 2008,

“if you deconstruct that story for Quebeckers then you ‘unbuild’ (sic) Quebec’s identity. An individual and a collectivity cannot live in a vacuum of identity; cannot live in a vacuum of stories. If you ‘unbuild’ (sic) a story it means you ‘unbuild’ (sic) an identity. What is left?”

This divide in the telling of the original story of our shared history continues today through the retelling of the myths embraced by each culture through news. In English Canada, there persist echoes of George Brown and his statement: “What has French Canadianism been denied? Nothing...”⁹⁶ Consider, for instance, the periodically popular English Canadian lament: “What does Quebec want?”⁹⁷ Quebec’s demands are considered insatiable and a threat to national unity.

Inside Quebec, and among francophones, however, there persists what Letourneau describes as the myth of the “unfulfilled destiny.” Media researcher Fred Fletcher expands on the influence of the Conquest as a central myth for francophone Quebeckers and its influence on Quebec journalists in the modern era.⁹⁸ He writes:

“The Conquest, a term that expresses the loss of autonomy that followed from the British victory at the Plains of Abraham in 1759, provides a framework for much Quebec writing on Canada-Quebec issues and is often expressed as “humiliation,” for example. (...) Of course, no one alive today lived the Conquest, but most Quebeckers have lived with it – as a cultural myth – all of their lives.”

Fletcher quotes Quebec constitutional scholar Christian Dufour:

[http://agora.qc.ca/rcftext.nsf/Documents/Quebec - Etat--](http://agora.qc.ca/rcftext.nsf/Documents/Quebec_-_Etat--La_devise_Je_me_souviens_par_Gaston_Deschenes)

[La devise Je me souviens par Gaston Deschenes](http://agora.qc.ca/rcftext.nsf/Documents/Quebec_-_Etat--La_devise_Je_me_souviens_par_Gaston_Deschenes)

⁹⁶ “Canada, a People’s History,” CBC, accessed January 14, 2008,

http://history.cbc.ca/history/?MIval=EpContent.html&series_id=1&episode_id=8&chapter_id=3&page_id=3&lang=E.

⁹⁷ Consider that an entire commission, the Latourneau-Dunton Commission (1967) on Bilingualism heard from a number of premiers asking that very question.

⁹⁸ Fletcher, “Media and Political Identity,” 367.

“People are often very surprised that Quebeckers say they are still affected by an event that took place over 200 years ago, while other peoples have overcome more recent, more devastating defeats. They forget the fundamental difference between a defeat and a conquest. A conquest is a permanent defeat, an institutionalized defeat....Contrary to the vanquished, the conquered is affected at the heart of his collective identity.”

In this way, Fletcher says journalists no longer refer to the Conquest, but rather, it is referred to in its “mythic” sense: “the notion underlies the interpretation of many contemporary events.” He notes the term “humiliation” is an example of this when used in the coverage of politics. Journalist Susan Delacourt *of the Globe and Mail* touched on this perspective in describing her French colleagues’ coverage of the failed Meech Lake Accord. She wrote: “The issue [to Quebeckers] is about whether they feel wanted or not. So they [Quebec journalists] weigh up every story. They think in terms of rejection, acceptance or humiliation.”⁹⁹ This thesis will show these myths tended to clash when each side of the *two solitudes* is confronted with each other’s divergent views on national identity, often at pivotal moments, and sometimes bringing Canada itself to the brink.

The CBC and Radio-Canada have faced accusations that they have not helped bridge the gulf between Canada’s founding cultural groups and therefore, have failed to create “a national consciousness.”

The Corporation and Political Cleavage

⁹⁹ David Taras, “Mass Media and Political Crisis: Reporting Canada’s Constitutional Struggles,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 18, no 2, (1993).

A report from The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the late 1960s concluded “We believe the CBC has failed, and is failing today, to discharge adequately its duties to foster understanding between the two main cultural groups in this country ”¹⁰⁰

The commission was a response to the violent separatist movement le Front de la Liberation du Quebec (FLQ), and the rise of nationalism in Quebec. Part of its work looked at the role of the public broadcaster, and accusations Radio-Canada gave sympathetic coverage to the rise of nationalism, but it was not the only commission examining the differences between French and English newsrooms.

Since Canadian broadcasting began in the 1930s, there have been more than 100 studies comparing French and English media, many of these focusing particularly on the public broadcaster. During some of Canada’s most divisive political crises – including the two referendums on sovereignty – the CBC/Radio-Canada has been accused of contributing to linguistic cleavage, not unity.

At least two of these investigations began following accusations from two Prime Ministers (both from Quebec) that the French-language service of the CBC was in violation of the Broadcasting Act and its mandate. These investigations included some important analyses comparing the news content of the two services.

The first of these took place following the 1976 election of the Parti Quebecois in Quebec, when then Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau (along with some of his

¹⁰⁰ Nesbitt Larking, *Politics, Society and the Media* 64

cabinet ministers) accused the Radio-Canada of being “pro-separatist” and “undermining national unity.”¹⁰¹ The CRTC undertook an inquiry which later became known as the Boyle Commission. The author of one of the contributing reports, media scholar Arthur Siegel, compared news coverage between the English and French services during a 10 day period in March, 1977. Siegel found that among 1,785 news items the two services overlapped on only 259, (most international in nature). The Boyle report concluded: “if English and French Canadians were on different planets there could hardly be a greater contrast of views and information.”¹⁰² In Quebec that meant stories that tended to exclude the rest of Canada. In the rest of Canada, it meant stories that tended to exclude Quebec.¹⁰³ Siegel found that francophone news centred on Quebec almost half the time, and had six times the number of reports about that province than the rest of the provinces combined. The English service on the other hand spent less time on Quebec than its population likely warranted (Quebec was mentioned 12.7 per cent of the time during its newscasts),¹⁰⁴ and carried twice as much coverage of the United States (13.5 per cent) as the French service. Siegel suggested the English and French in Canada see the world through different eyes, and therefore, the media of each can play only a limited role in creating common values and shared experiences.

¹⁰¹ Kathryn-Jane Hazel, “The Media and Nationalism in Quebec: A complex relationship,” *Journalism Studies*, 2, no. 1, (2001), 94

¹⁰² Hazel, “The Media,” 103

¹⁰³ Siegel, *Politics and the Media*, 223

¹⁰⁴ Erni Research undertook a “News Balance Report” of the English network in 2010 and found a similar situation today, writing “With one major exception, the proportion of news about each province/territory corresponds to the population of the region. Quebec goes against the rule, with 23% of the population but just 11% of CBC network news. (Competing English-language news sources are similar to CBC.) This is a long-standing pattern. Historically, CBC news has reflected the geography of English-speaking Canada, while Radio-Canada news has focused on Francophone Canada.” “The News Balance Report,” Erni Research,

Still, according to Siegel, linguistic cleavage in Canada is fed by the media process of selecting and evaluating what it considers news. He added, the media reinforce the differences between anglophone and francophone Canadians, and television is not playing its role as social integrator.¹⁰⁵

“The pattern of content tends to reinforce value differences along linguistic lines. (...) In this sense, the news content patterns can be seen as not contributing in any significant way to a shared sense of Canadian identity. It isn’t so much what the newscasts contain ... but rather what they leave out (that weakens their role as agents of) national integration.”¹⁰⁶

Updates of this research took place in 10 year intervals; the first in 1987, the second in 1997. Jean De Bonville and Jacques Vermette very deliberately followed Siegel’s methodology in their research of 10 days of news coverage by the public broadcaster in 1987.¹⁰⁷ The authors found little had changed since Siegel’s report. The number of common stories remained a minority of those studied. Radio-Canada continued to devote half of its stories to the province of Quebec while stories about the rest of the provinces amounted to just 10 per cent of coverage. The CBC devoted 18 per cent of its stories to Quebec – an improvement from 10 years earlier. The authors suggested the reliance on established news sources in their own markets (for example, French and English wire services) influenced the newsroom frames of reference. De Bonville and Vermette concluded news selection for television depended more on language than ownership, since each service tended to make news selection choices that reflected

¹⁰⁵ Siegel, *Politics and the Media*, 223

¹⁰⁶ Fletcher, “Media and Political Identity,” 365.

¹⁰⁷ Jean de Bonville and Jacques Vermette, “Télévision et unité nationale la couverture de l’actualité canadienne à Radio-Canada, 1977-1987,” *Revue canadienne de science politique*, 27 (December 1994), 701.

similar choices made by their same-language competitors among the private broadcasters. They wrote: (translation) “Since the television networks are addressing viewers with different socio-cultural characteristics, the democratic and capitalistic context within which they operate pushes the electronic media irresistibly toward reflecting these differences in their newscasts.”¹⁰⁸

Ten years later, Julie Fortier and Denis Monière compared once again the separate language services.¹⁰⁹ The authors undertook a quantitative analysis comparing CBC to Radio-Canada, as well as Radio-Canada’s closest market competitor, TVA. In their research, they found a remarkable similarity in coverage between SRC and TVA, and a remarkable discord between SRC’s coverage and the CBC, particularly in political coverage. The authors suggest Radio-Canada’s fight to maintain audiences perhaps led the broadcaster to further increase its Quebec-centric focus from the 1987 research:

(translation) “We must conclude that SRC has adopted the behaviour of a private broadcaster by placing more importance on proximity in order to compete in the battle for ratings and advertising (...) and so, SRC is now even further away from the objectives of the mandate of the public broadcaster.”¹¹⁰

In other words, Radio-Canada wants to remain a credible news source for French Quebecers. Radio-Canada, therefore, must be careful how it manipulates its discourse differently from its market competitors in order to fulfill a mandate that demands “contributing to a national consciousness.”

¹⁰⁸ Bonville and Vermette, “Télévision et unité nationale,” 716

¹⁰⁹ Julie Fortier and Denis Moniere, *Radioscopie de l’information télévisée au Canada* (Montreal: La Presse de l’Université de Montréal, 2000)

¹¹⁰ Fortier and Monière, *Radioscopie*, 114

Other research examined political crises brought on by the two referendums on sovereignty in Quebec as well as the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords. Gertrude Robinson (1998) examined texts (from broadcast and print) in the coverage of the 1980 referendum. Robinson found differences in the political culture within French and English newsrooms contributed to this divergence.¹¹¹ Kyle Conway (2008) examined how the two services translated the political discourse that took place during the campaign preceding the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord Constitutional negotiations. He noted: "(...) instead of making it possible for different cultural and linguistic groups to understand each other's point of view, translation, as it functioned within CBC/Radio-Canada reporting confirmed viewers in their pre-existing assumptions."¹¹² He considers for example, the differences in meaning of the expression distinct society. He writes:

"As part of the 1987 agreement, Québec sought recognition as a 'société distincte' or 'distinct society' (...) To all appearances, *société distincte*. and *distinct society* were semantic equivalents; (...) However, the understandings of what each term implied were radically different in Ontario and Québec, as news coverage of reactions evoked by the terms made clear. Outside Quebec, (...) many people feared that such recognition would give the province undue special powers."¹¹³

Conway adds that inside Quebec, the distinct society clause in the Accord became defined by journalists as Quebec's line in the sand. The clause became the

¹¹¹Gertrude J. Robinson, *Constructing the Quebec Referendum: French and English Media Voices* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998)

¹¹²Kyle Conway, "Everyone Says No": Canadian Public Service Broadcasting and the Failure of Translation During Canada's Constitutional Crisis" (PhD diss, University of Wisconsin, 2008), 23

¹¹³ Kyle Conway, "A Cultural Studies Approach to Semantic Instability. The Case of News Translation," *Linguistica Antverpiensia* 7 (2008), 35

prerequisite for feeling accepted (verses rejected and humiliated) by the rest of Canada, and therefore the prerequisite for constitutional peace

A Canadian Press survey of the coverage of the 1993 federal election campaign that followed the Meech and Charlottetown constitutional failures, commented “the yawning chasm between the two solitudes hasn’t shrunk much” noting how the front pages of the English- and French-language dailies usually featured completely different stories

Following the 1995 referendum in Quebec, Jean Chretien and members of his cabinet once again accused the French language service of the public broadcaster of biased reporting in its coverage of the campaign, and violating its mandate to promote a “national consciousness ”

Globe and Mail reporter Jeffrey Simpson found the Prime Minister’s accusation unfair He wrote “() As for Radio-Canada’s main news program, *Le Telejournal*, it struck me as scrupulously fair, given the obvious fact, confirmed by the referendum, that there are two large camps of YES and NO supporters of roughly equal size That Radio-Canada should give equal coverage to both is journalistically defensible and reflective of the province ” In other words, Radio-Canada would have had a serious legitimacy problem for its audience if it failed to reflect a large segment of its views

The CBC commissioned Erin Research to examine the fairness issue at the public broadcaster more formally in the wake of the referendum in 1995.¹¹⁴ In the end, many of its findings echo the sentiments of Jeffrey Simpson. Its report suggested that although the CBC has “a specific responsibility to make sure that one part of the country understands what other parts are thinking on national issues,” this has never meant that it “should play a propaganda role.”¹¹⁵ Its report found some imbalance, but that imbalance existed with the English service, which covered opinions from the rest of Canada, creating more coverage inevitably in favour of the NO side of the referendum. Radio-Canada, on the other hand, gave both sides nearly equal coverage, according to the report.¹¹⁶ Political scientist Denis Monière looked more generally into the referendum coverage of French language television stations and supported that conclusion. His study found Radio-Canada particularly had covered both sides with remarkable equality: 285 YES supporters and 284 NO supporters appeared in its reports during the campaign.¹¹⁷

The Media and Canadian Federal Election Campaigns

While so far this thesis has considered the outputs of news organizations, it is also worth considering the inputs. During election campaigns, news organizations focus on the messages of politicians when generating news that is salient for voters. It is not uncommon for Canadian news organizations to be accused of following the agendas of

¹¹⁴ Hazel, “The Media,” 105 Erin Research had been commissioned before the referendum to monitor coverage.

¹¹⁵ Erin Research “Balance in Coverage of the 1995 referendum on Sovereignty,” November 1995

¹¹⁶ Hazel, “The Media,” 94.

¹¹⁷ Hazel, “The Media,” 106

those politicians. In their analysis of an earlier period of elections, media theorists Soderlund, Romanow, Briggs and Wagenberg found this phenomenon among the electronic media particularly and asked the question “() if there is implicit agreement among politicians about what the salient issues are, do the media have any credentials to legitimate an attempt to set an alternative agenda? On the other hand, one of the functions of the media in a democratic society is to put the hard questions to politicians ()”¹¹⁸ They found the media during the 1979 and 1980 federal election campaigns did not deviate very much from the election agendas set out by the politicians. They wrote “() our data tend to characterize the electronic media as holding the fiddle for the politicians to play, rather than attempting to call the tune.”¹¹⁹ How the politicians mediate Canada’s dual media system is worth considering, then, since this thesis will be looking at these issues during coverage of the election campaign of 2008.

Modelled after the United Kingdom, the Canadian government is generally led by the party which receives a plurality of seats at the time of election.¹²⁰ Because this can sometimes lead to an unstable minority Parliament, and therefore, an unstable government, (as seen during the period prior to the 2008) national political parties are motivated to vie for a majority of seats in Parliament. In this way, the national political parties broker the needs of various regions of the country internally, what has come to

¹¹⁸ Soderlund et al, *Media and Elections* 72

¹¹⁹ Soderlund et al, *Media and Elections* 72

¹²⁰ Since Confederation, and until 2008, Canada had been led only once by a coalition government, under the “Union Government” of Conservative Prime Minister Robert Borden which brought Conservatives and Liberals together during World War I, lasting from 1917 to 1920.

be called a “brokerage party system.”¹²¹ As discussed in the introduction, a national party will attempt to adopt policy that attracts one region, without alienating another where it hopes to secure seats. The parties therefore, must find ways to bridge the *two solitudes* carefully during federal election campaigns. The role played by Quebec is significant, because it has a history of volatile voting patterns, putting its 75 seats potentially up for grabs at election time. Further, until most recently, Canadian majority governments throughout the country’s history have depended on seats from Quebec.

This need, therefore, to reconcile policy with the needs of Quebec (or that will least alienate Quebec) is well understood by politicians vying for election. It is reflected in the way they organize communications for the media during political campaigns. The major parties typically have two separate organizations to handle media coverage. These separate organizations help the parties react to issues and events that are of interest to each particular audience. In the Canadian context, sometimes catering to one audience will get politicians in trouble with the other audience. Political journalists watch how well national leaders navigate this fault-line: get it right, and a leader can win

¹²¹Laura Stephenson, “Parties and Partisans: The Influence of Ideology and Brokerage on the Durability of Partisanship in Canada,” *Voting Behaviour in Canada*, ed. Cameron D. Anderson and Laura B. Stephenson (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). She writes: “In its first incarnation, at the time of Confederation in 1867, the brokerage parties concentrated on bridging the linguistic and religious cleavages between Ontario and Quebec; since then, the brokerage parties have expanded to encompass Western alienation and the regional interests of the Atlantic provinces, as well as the interests of central Canada, the specific nationalist claims of Quebec. The very nature of brokerage parties prevents them from establishing a strong ideological program, which a party label could represent.”

Canada through a majority Screw it up and strange things happen on election day This was the story of the 2008 election campaign

The Issue of Culture in Quebec

During the 2008 election, the handling of one policy issue in particular, seemed to galvanize a significant amount of media attention in Quebec What had seemed to many a minor cut to funding of the arts by the federal government became one of the defining issues in the campaign coverage, as this thesis will show It is particularly interesting if one considers that polls early in the campaign of 2008 suggested only 1% of voters in Quebec as well as the rest of Canada considered arts an important issue for the campaign ¹²² An editorial in the wake of that election in the *Victoria Times Colonist* perhaps sums up a general lack of understanding about how culture came to be so important to Quebeckers, writing “Quebec has given us the one-finger salute Who could have thought that something as inconsequential as the Conservatives' cancelling a few so-called artists' travel grants () could have made such a difference? () after all, aren't there artists in other parts of Canada?”¹²³

Many artists in the rest of Canada, in fact, tried in vain to get arts funding on the election agenda as it was in Quebec Yet, despite media events, communiques, and a

¹²² Daniel Lessard, “Artistes et politiques,” *Les Carnets*, September 2008, accessed May 20, 2011, http://www.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/carnets/2008/09/22/106240_shtml

¹²³ “Harper must manage rising anti-Quebec backlash How many times have we heard the question What does Quebec want?” *Victoria Times Colonist* October 22, 2008, accessed June 10, 2011, <http://www.canada.com/victoriatimescolonist/columnists/story.html?id=53fc2f65-0b46-4159-badb-a160afc677c0>

YouTube campaign,¹²⁴ only a single newscast devoted time to the issue of culture on *The National* and it appeared in the context of a media event being held by Quebec artists in Montreal. Ironically, English artists received coverage in French in a report on the *Telejournal* discussing why the issue of cuts to arts funding was NOT resonating with voters outside Quebec. The report featured English artists speaking in admiration of how Quebecers link the strength of their cultural industries with the health of their national identity.

The significance of the cultural industry in Quebec can be quantified. As already discussed, in the francophone market, the broadcast viewing share of made-in-Canada programming (mostly made-in-Quebec) is almost two thirds, where in English, it is less than half. In terms of spending on culture, Quebec received 30 per cent of culture expenditures from three levels of government in 2008, and 35 per cent of federal money according to an analysis by Statistics Canada. From the federal government Quebec received \$153 per capita, the highest amount, compared to Ontario, which received \$112 per capita. At the provincial level, Quebec doled out \$97 per capita compared to Ontario which handed out \$51 per capita.¹²⁵

Beyond the numbers, the importance of the culture industry can be seen in how the province reacts to issues of “cultural sovereignty.” The Quebec government has argued for power over its cultural and communications industries “for the defence and development of Quebecois culture,” according to political scientist Gaetan Tremblay

¹²⁴ Consider voteforculture.com, launched in September

¹²⁵ “Government expenditures on culture, 2008/2009” Statistics Canada, accessed August 11, 2011 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/87f0001x/2011001/t011-eng.htm>

He describes the Quebec government efforts to protect its cultural industries under the North America Free Trade Agreement in order to “guarantee the maintenance and the unhindered evolution of our society as a dynamic element within the Canadian and North American totality.”¹²⁶

The fight to keep Ted Rogers from buying out the Chagnon family's Videotron cable distribution company is another good example. Former Premier Jacques Parizeau weighed in on the issue saying the purchase was tantamount to “Toronto buying Montreal.”¹²⁷ The second largest shareholder in Videotron at the time was the publicly owned Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec.¹²⁸ The Caisse – the province’s pension holdings company -- vetoed the Chagnon family deal with Rogers citing “cultural sovereignty concerns.” The Caisse then worked with Quebecor in a joint venture to purchase the company, leaving Rogers *dans le froid*. Parizeau helped found the Caisse in the 1960s, and many say the Videotron deal was motivated by Quebec nationalism more than business.¹²⁹ It would be an ironic decision in retrospect, since the workers – who contribute to the Caisse through their pension contributions – were subsequently thrown out into the street in the longest communications’ industry lock-out in the

¹²⁶ Gaetan Tremblay, “Is Quebec Culture Doomed to Become American?” *Canadian Journal of Communications*, 17, no 2 (1992).

¹²⁷ “Videotron head slams Quebecor proposal,” *Broadcaster Canada’s Communication Magazine*, (Apr 2000), accessed June 17, 2011,

<http://www.broadcastermagazine.com/issues/story.aspx?aid=1000166382&type=Print%20Archives>

¹²⁸ The Quebec pension holdings company has a mandate to invest in Quebec-based industry

¹²⁹ “Videotron head slams Quebecor proposal ”

history of Quebec at that time. The next premier, Bernard Landry, publicly appealed for negotiations to end the dispute.¹³⁰

Quebec politicians, as evidenced above, are sensitive to issues involving cultural industries – even when it involves the private sector. In advance of the election of 2008, David Whissell, the Quebec Minister of Labour, wrote an open letter which appeared in newspapers throughout the province addressed to both sides in a *Journal de Quebec*¹³¹ labour dispute outlining his efforts to mediate and imploring both to get back to negotiations. He intervened again when the new owners of the Quebec television network, TQS, asked the CRTC in the spring of 2008 to allow it to eliminate newsrooms across Quebec and substantially cut its news programming in Montreal. That sparked a political firestorm centring on the CRTC's role in Quebec cultural industries, with all parties in the National Assembly supporting a motion demanding the federal government devolve the CRTC powers to the province. The issue created weeks of headlines during the summer of 2008 making cultural sovereignty a hot issue. It helped frame how Quebecers would perceive the federal government's decision to cut \$45 million dollars from arts and culture ahead of the 2008 election campaign. What had seemed such an irrelevant campaign issue in the rest of the country was primed as an important issue in Quebec.

¹³⁰ “Videotron head slams Quebecor proposal.”

¹³¹ Quebecor owner Pierre Karl Péladeau locked out workers at the *Journal de Quebec* in 2007, which became one of the longest running media lock-outs in Canadian history at 15 months, but that record was subsequently beaten with the lock-out at Quebecor's *Journal de Montreal*, which lasted a little over two years, finally reaching a settlement in early 2011

These values and views on issues such as cultural sovereignty are reflected in news coverage. As suggested by Fred Fletcher: “It is reasonable to assume that news both reflects and reinforces the dominant social myths and symbols.”¹³² Before this thesis goes further, however, consideration first should be given to the values and views of the journalists who make up those newsrooms. How do journalists’ attitudes contribute to the decisions of their newsrooms and is there an historical difference between English and French journalists in Canada?

¹³² Fletcher, “Media and Political Identity,” 365

Chapter 4 - Distinct Societies/Distinct Journalists

“There is nothing surprising or scandalous in that journalists reflect the society in which they live. There’s no such thing as objectivity. We get the media we deserve with their prejudices and weaknesses.” – Robert McKenzie, Quebec City bureau chief for the Toronto Star, 1991¹³³

This chapter will examine the differences among journalists working in French and English, how they see their roles, and how their views have been shaped by separate cultural and social forces.

The study of journalists has been an important theoretical field in journalism studies. The significance of news and its role in democratic societies, means the study of journalism needs to consider the views of the people who make it, as described by media theorists David Pritchard, Paul Brewer and Florian Sauvageau: “Central to the understanding of any system’s journalism is an understanding of journalists’ views about the importance of various social and political roles of the news media.”¹³⁴ Inevitably, these values influence news outputs “because (these) views shape perceptions and the recognition of how things ought to be done.”¹³⁵

Pritchard (et al) consider the significance of “role theory” which suggests that news output will be affected by how journalists see their own roles. This study of the journalists’ perception of their roles, according to the researchers, is important because journalists play such a vital role linking the people to their government, particularly in

¹³³ Diane Talbot, “Divided We Stand,” *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, (March 1991)

¹³⁴ David Pritchard, Paul R Brewer, and Florian Sauvageau, “Changes in Canadian Journalists’ Views about the Social and Political Roles of the News Media A Panel Study, 1996-2003,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 38 2 (June 2005) 287-306

¹³⁵ Richard V Erison, Patricia Baranek, and Janet Chang *Negotiating Control A Study of News Sources* (Toronto University of Toronto Press, 1989), 5

the Canadian context “() where the ties that bind citizens together are strained by the immense size of the country, its strong regional character and its lack of common language and culture ”¹³⁶ The authors studied a cross-section of Canadian journalists from the French and English media in 1996 and again in 2003 to see how their values had changed over time The researchers found in their 1996 work five issues that most journalists rated very important The researchers called it “the journalists’ creed ” The issues included accurately reporting the views of public figures, getting information to the public quickly, giving ordinary people a chance to express their views, investigating the activities of government and public institutions, and providing analysis and interpretation of complex problems The researchers found in fact, that both English and French journalists matched in the level of importance they gave to these values But by 2003, the researchers found a statistically significant drop in “creed” values among English journalists ¹³⁷ They attribute the continuing strength of the “creed” among French journalists to “the distinct professional culture of francophone journalism ” One sign of this professional culture, they suggest is the elevated membership among francophone journalists to the professional group, the Federation Professionnelle des Journalistes du Quebec (FPJQ),¹³⁸ which “socializes journalists to the profession and its ideology ”

¹³⁶ Pritchard et al, *Changes* 288

¹³⁷ Pritchard et al, *Changes* 288 The researchers found 23% of anglophone reporters, for example, lowered the importance of “accurately reporting the views of public figures from their declarations 7 years earlier

¹³⁸ Pritchard et al, *Changes* 302 The authors suggest half of journalists in Quebec belong to the FPJQ, compared to the small number of English Journalists who belong to the equivalent organization in English Canada, the Canadian Association of Journalists

Perhaps more significant to this thesis, is how equally francophone and anglophone reporters shared the values of the “journalists’ creed” in 1996 -- one year following the Quebec referendum on sovereignty, when accusations of biased reporting – particularly at the French language Radio-Canada -- came from as high up as the Prime Minister.

While adherence to the so-called “journalist creed” values, crosses the language divide, and speaks to the professionalism generally of Canadian journalists -- these values operate in separate cultural news environments, which may partly explain the differences in news content illustrated in chapter three. There are other journalistic values however, that may better explain some of these differences particularly in the area of national politics. These particular values evolved separately through the distinct cultural and social histories of French- and English-language journalists. These separate histories produced some distinct perceptions on important issues such as national identity; issues which inevitably affect coverage of federal politics.

Quebec journalist and *chroniqueur*, Lysiane Gagnon¹³⁹ suggests a key value separating French and English journalists is whether they see their role as “informing” the public or “forming” the public.¹⁴⁰ Gagnon wrote a submission to the Royal

¹³⁹ Lysiane Gagnon is an award winning journalist, and has been writing editorial columns for the *Globe and Mail* since 1990. She worked as a journalist for *Le Jour*, a nationalist paper run by then future premier, Jacques Parizeau in 1974-75. She also worked as a National Assembly correspondent for *La Presse*. Her editorials for *La Presse* during the referendum debate in 1980 tended to favour a moderate federalism. She was asked to contribute an article to the Royal Commission on Newspapers for its volume *The Journalists* published in 1981.

¹⁴⁰ Lysiane Gagnon, “Journalism and Ideologies in Quebec,” in *The Journalists*, Research Publication for the Royal Commission on Newspapers, Vol 2, (Ottawa: Ottawa, Supply and Services, 1981) 24. Note: In the English translation of *The Journalists*, Gagnon uses this expression “to form,” which is a bit of a

Commission on Newspapers (1981), which was published in a volume call *The Journalists*. In it she describes a journalistic environment in Quebec where great journalists were more often editorialists than reporters ¹⁴¹. Former journalist Peter Desbarats expands on this idea, observing “the marketable objectivity of the rest of North American journalism,” is contrasted with a press of opinions and analysis, where media stars are not “crusading investigative reporters” but rather columnists and opinion-makers ¹⁴².

The evolution of this difference is seen through separate cultural and social forces emerging more than 150 years ago. Gagnon offers a brief history of Quebec journalists, suggesting that in the 1800s, francophone newspapers featured a kind of opinion or advocacy journalism from the European French tradition. While English newspaper content during the period was evolving away from the partisan press, and driven by market interests, she suggests French journalists thrived as opinion-makers.

“French Canada’s first great journalists were, first and foremost, politicians and debaters. This was, of course, a result of the fact that politics was, from the outset, the one field above all others in which outstanding French Canadians could assert themselves, since industry and commerce had been monopolized by the English since the Conquest.”¹⁴³

By the mid-20th century, journalists in Quebec were influenced by the social transformation taking place in Quebec through the Quiet Revolution. In chapter two, this thesis discussed the impact of television on Quebec society. One of the co-founding

francization from the French verb “former” (noun “formation”) which means in this case, “to train” or “to educate” in English

¹⁴¹ Gagnon, “Journalism,” 24

¹⁴² Hazel, “The Media,” 100

¹⁴³ Gagnon, “Journalism,” 219

editors of *Cite Libre*, Gerard Pelletier¹⁴⁴ said television forced journalists to become active participants in Quebec nation-building

“It was to a very large extent television that awakened the press. The emergence of television in 1952 was in my view, our cultural revolution. We began to express opinions, to hold debates, and millions of people were watching. So the newspapers were obliged to follow suit and to express opinions themselves.”¹⁴⁵

Although the “press of opinion” gave way to the content needs of daily newspapers and the same technological and market forces that shaped all North American journalism up to modern times, the “opinion” element of the Quebec press persisted, according Gagnon. National politics, she writes, remained a prestige job in journalism and made up a large portion of news coverage in Quebec compared to stories that dominated English news, such as the economy, taxes and energy issues. She quotes the editor of the Quebec news magazine *L’Actualite*, Jean Pare who complained (Quebec) journalists “seek to influence rather than to reflect. there are too many people who *think* and not enough who have *seen*.” Gagnon describes this as “a continuation of the need to “form” rather than to “inform.”¹⁴⁶

The Royal Commission on Newspapers (1981) found the French press more closely tied to politics than the English press, and that “analysis, rather than simple reporting of events, dominates in the French language press.”¹⁴⁷ The Commission also

¹⁴⁴ Gerard Pelletier and Pierre Trudeau founded *Cite Libre* which became an influential political journal throughout the period

¹⁴⁵ Hazel, *The Media* 97

¹⁴⁶ Siegel, *Politics and the Media* 219

¹⁴⁷ Royal Commission on Newspapers - Report, ' (Kent Commission) (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1981)

noted a cross-over between journalism and politics among francophone journalists generally, stating “there is a tradition of the movement of leaders between careers in politics and journalism ” As already discussed, the pattern continues today

Another aspect of cultural and social forces that should be considered when examining the differences between French and English journalists is how they saw themselves as workers Desbarats suggests “Quebec journalists have a longer more turbulent and more profound history of union activity ”¹⁴⁸ Gagnon discusses how Quebec journalists have been involved in the longest labour disputes in Canadian history, and as already alluded to in chapter three, a brand of union militancy that continues today Some theorists suggest this is because francophone journalists have limited professional options in where they can work, and so fight to defend jobs in that province ¹⁴⁹ Gagnon writes “This is one factor () which explains the desperate and sometimes almost suicidal element of union militancy in journalistic circles ”¹⁵⁰ However, several significant disputes have been over editorial control of content, as described by Desbarats “issues of principle, rather than money ”¹⁵¹ The impact of these disputes on the larger Quebec society should not be overlooked

The sixty-eight day producers’ strike at Radio-Canada in 1958, according Desbarats is “now considered one of the triggers of the Quiet Revolution of the

¹⁴⁸Hazel, “The Media,” 100

¹⁴⁹Hazel, “The Media,” 100

¹⁵⁰Gagnon, “Journalism,” 29

¹⁵¹Hazel, “The Media,” 100 During the 60s and 70s, journalists, through their professional organization lobbied the provincial government to control media managers through “news management committees” that would include journalists and members of the public

1960s”¹⁵² The producers were fighting to belong to a separate Quebec union from other CBC workers in the rest of Canada. René Levesque – a journalist at the Corporation at the time – was arrested on the picket line. He said later that the federal government’s refusal to settle was a sign of indifference toward Quebec’s cultural aspirations. “the whole bloody French network became virtually nonexistent, and nobody cared.”¹⁵³ Levesque would say later the strike led to his own decision to become a sovereigntist. Journalists’ labour militancy was often supported by other elements of Quebec society. During the 1971 strike at *La Presse*, 12,000 people – mostly workers from other unions in Quebec -- defied a Montreal municipal ban and marched in a show of solidarity. A clash with police led to 50 arrests, and some suggest it also led to further entrenchment of union radicalism against the government of Premier Robert Bourassa.¹⁵⁴

This is not to say that unionization among English-speaking journalists did not have a significant impact on the professional lives of workers. Unionization by the 1960s among English journalists was the standard, and few mainstream media organizations today have non-unionized shops. However, it is fair to say Quebec journalists were at the vanguard of union militancy, with a focus on issues with broader implications for Quebec society as a whole, and with the support of whole sectors of that society.

How this distinction reflects how journalists in Quebec cover the news versus their English colleagues is not clear, although Quebec reporters are seen by some

¹⁵²Hazel, “The Media,” 100

¹⁵³Hazel, “The Media,” 97

¹⁵⁴“La Presse Strike,” The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed May 30, 2011, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0004402>

theorists to accept more widely collective rights over individual rights, as well as favouring social democratic policy and government intervention.¹⁵⁵

These historical differences described above illustrate how English and French journalists think about their own roles. A more recent study looks at how francophone and anglophone journalists think about the content of the issues they cover. In the wake of the 1995 referendum researchers Lydia Miljan and Barry Cooper surveyed journalists on a number of issues including their political beliefs. The authors argue: “In order to determine what ‘ways of understanding’ are in fact being disseminated, it is necessary to question individuals within media organizations who are in a position to make decisions about what counts as news.”¹⁵⁶ The goal of the research, they say is to find out “What moves the media? Are they driven by the profit motive, or do the personal backgrounds and idiosyncratic opinions of journalists make a difference in the type of news we receive?”¹⁵⁷

During the winter of 1997 and 1998, the researchers interviewed French- and English-speaking journalists from mainstream news organizations.¹⁵⁸ They also sampled English- and French-speaking members of the public (non-journalists) in order to

¹⁵⁵ Gagnon, “Journalism,” 26, also Marc Raboy, “Media, Nationalism and Identity in Canada and Quebec,” *Res Publica* 39 no. 2 (1997) 321 Note: good examples include Quebec journalists’ support and defence of Bill 101, the language law, as well as the protection of Quebec’s cultural industries under NAFTA

¹⁵⁶ Lydia Anita Miljan and Barry Cooper, *Hidden Agenda how journalists influence the news* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003). 22.

¹⁵⁷ Miljan and Cooper, *Hidden Agendas*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ Miljan and Cooper interviews 123 English speaking journalists from outlets including the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, as well as broadcasters such as CTV and CBC. The 55 French-speaking journalists came from newspapers such as *le Devoir* and *le Journal de Quebec* as well as the Radio-Canada television and radio newsrooms. All journalists surveyed performed varied jobs, from reporters to editors, as well as anchors and producers. The survey also included 626 English non-journalists and 178 French non-journalists.

compare responses and assess whether journalists reflect or lead public opinion.¹⁵⁹ Of particular interest to this thesis, Miljin and Cooper also compared the views of English journalists to their French colleagues, as well as the views of journalists working for the public broadcaster versus the private sector. The three issues examined include coverage of the economy, the partition of Quebec, and finally, the courts and social issues. Among the three, the most pronounced difference between French and English journalists existed over the issue of the partition of Quebec.¹⁶⁰ Specifically on the issue of national unity, the researchers found anglophone journalists supported the view that it is important to protect Canada from the threat of Quebec sovereignty. Francophone journalists on the other hand, tended to “uphold the legitimacy of Quebec nationalism.” More specifically, among francophone journalists, 60 per cent surveyed said they identified themselves as Quebeckers first, even higher than the general Quebec population at 50 per cent. The vast majority of English journalists, 89 per cent, identified themselves as Canadians first.¹⁶¹ The research found no statistical difference between public and private news organizations; the differences were based solely on which language the journalist spoke.¹⁶² Where English journalists’ views aligned with the views of English Canadians, francophone journalists tended to exceed (or lead) the francophone public in their nationalist views.

¹⁵⁹ Miljan and Cooper, *Hidden Agendas*, 67-68

¹⁶⁰ Miljan and Cooper, *Hidden Agendas*, 68. Note: the right of a portion or portions of Quebec to exclude themselves from the geographic territory of Quebec (the partition of Quebec) in a post-YES referendum scenario became a matter of considerable controversy and debate where federalist interests defended the rights of northern Quebec natives and even predominantly federalist/anglophone parts of the western region of Montreal to exclude themselves from a sovereign Quebec. It was an idea that was seen as a federalist provocation, even among non-sovereignist francophone Quebeckers who believed Quebec had an internationally sanctioned right to seek out legitimate means toward self-determination

¹⁶¹ Miljan and Cooper, *Hidden Agendas*, 93.

¹⁶² Miljan and Cooper, *Hidden Agendas*, 173.

This nationalist identification among Quebec journalists goes back to the beginning of the nationalist movement. Lysiane Gagnon talks about the relationship between Quebec journalists and the Parti Québécois

“There was an ideological affinity -- a great many journalists and PQ members were of the same generation, had been educated in the same places, shared a similar lifestyle and interest.”¹⁶³

Following the 1976 election that brought the Parti Québécois to power, a survey found 79 per cent of journalists voted for the PQ, while 66 per cent supported sovereignty.¹⁶⁴ Support for sovereignty by the Quebec population generally was substantially lower.¹⁶⁵

This supports an historical observation about journalists and their role as drivers in nationalist movements. Nationalist theorist Tom Nairn suggests studies of nationality

“() have underlined the crucial place of such professional strata in generating the identity shifts behind nationalism. It is teachers, clerics, lawyers, journalists and loose screws who cause the trouble far more than landlords, bankers, manufacturers or trade unionists.”¹⁶⁶

Yet, as this thesis discussed in chapter two, studies have repeatedly found no bias in reporting even during periods of political crisis. As well, this chapter illustrates that adherence to professional “creed” values is equally high among French and English journalists. Gertrude Robinson alludes to this professionalism in her study of the 1980 referendum, where she suggests Radio-Canada “abrogated its ‘national unity’ mandate

¹⁶³ Hazel, “The Media,” 98

¹⁶⁴ Robinson, *Constructing the Quebec Referendum*, 187

¹⁶⁵ In the 1980 referendum on sovereignty, 40.4% of Quebecers supported sovereignty

¹⁶⁶ Hazel, “The Media,” 95

to live up to its professional goal of neutrality.” This commitment to neutrality described by Robinson comes as a result of the much more complicated set of audience beliefs in francophone Quebec during the sovereignty referendums. Journalists were faced with three publics: those voting YES, NO and “uncommitted.”¹⁶⁷ One veteran Quebec reporter interviewed by media researcher Kathryn-Jane Hazel complained following the 1995 referendum, that English reporters do not share the same dynamics

“In French, both sovereignty and federalism are assumed to be valid options that deserve fair treatment. In English, federalism is assumed to be good and sovereignty evil. 99.9 per cent of English-speaking (reporters) are openly federalists. What kind of society would Quebec be if the same was said of French-speaking journalists? At the very least, it would be a society whose media is completely divorced from it. From that angle, I let you judge where fairness and objectivity is mostly found.”

Despite these differences in audiences, criticism of francophone journalists – particularly by their English colleagues -- has centred on how French reporters perceive their role, as described earlier to “form” versus to “inform.” Peter Stockland, now retired, covered the National Assembly for two years, but during the Meech Lake Accord constitutional negotiations he worked as a reporter with the *Toronto Sun*.¹⁶⁸ He told media researcher Diane Talbot at the time: “The francophone press has a tribal perspective – the idea that we’re doing this story by, about and for our people as opposed to doing a news story.”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Robinson, *Constructing the Quebec Referendum* 51

¹⁶⁸ Stockland later became the Editor-in-Chief of the Montreal Gazette from 2000 to 2004

¹⁶⁹ Talbot, “Divided We Stand”

During the intense coverage of the negotiations for the Meech Lake Accord, at a first ministers' conference, Stockland says a senior Quebec National Assembly correspondent asked the premier of Quebec

“‘Why are we continuing with this taponnage (screwing around)?’ I cannot imagine an English language reporter asking that kind of question. You might say, ‘What do you hope to achieve here?’ or ‘Isn’t this a little bit fruitless?’”¹⁷⁰

Talbot wrote about the coverage of the Accord, and suggested French journalists saw their role as active players in the building of Quebec society as well as defenders of that society. “In the francophone media, unconditional acceptance of Quebec’s demands quickly became the focus of debate. () So evident was the francophone media’s eagerness to pass the Accord unchanged that even Premier (Robert) Bourassa questioned their objectivity.”¹⁷¹

William Johnson – a federalist columnist with the *Montreal Gazette* – said the francophone journalists, instead of pointing out legitimate reasons for rejecting the Accord, “simply saw criticisms as rejections of Quebec.”¹⁷²

However, Robert McKenzie, Quebec City bureau chief for the *Toronto Star*, at the time said “There is nothing surprising or scandalous in that journalists reflect the society in which they live. There’s no such thing as objectivity. We get the media we deserve with their prejudices and weaknesses.”¹⁷³ He suggested journalists reflect the values of the societies they serve. As seen earlier in this chapter, the general “journalist’s creed”

¹⁷⁰ Talbot, “Divided We Stand ”

¹⁷¹ Talbot, “Divided We Stand ”

¹⁷² Talbot, “Divided We Stand ”

¹⁷³ Talbot, “Divided We Stand ”

values are highly respected by both English and French journalists. The values they differ over reflect their separate social and cultural backgrounds.

Media 'Gatekeeping' and 'Agenda Setting'

This thesis has been discussing the historical social and cultural differences between journalists as well as exploring their values and how they perceive their work. This context becomes significant when considering the media's role in "agenda setting" and "gatekeeping." Soderlund et al in *Media & Elections in Canada* define the gatekeeper as "any social institution, social context, activity or thing that has, as a consequence of its characteristics or behaviour, the effect of modifying media content." Further the authors write: "all media and media organizations work within the context of a culture which forms their operational environment." In this way French and English language newsrooms operate within separate and very different cultural contexts as their "operational environment," affecting the selection of news content. As agenda setters, the media select news within this context, and "here may lie the most important effect of mass communications: its ability to mentally order and organize our world for us."¹⁷⁴ This fuller and refined understanding of the CBC and Radio-Canada and its journalists is a necessary precursor to the next chapter's consideration of the differences in 2008 election coverage provided by *Le Téléjournal* and *The National*.

¹⁷⁴ Soderlund et al. *Media and Elections in Canada*, 33-35.

Chapter 5: Coverage of the 2008 Federal Election Campaign

The Conservative Party, in many respects, did very well in the federal election of 2008, particularly outside Quebec. It increased its standing in Parliament, gaining 19 seats from 2006, most at the expense of the Liberal Party. It increased its support from minorities and women, and became the leading party in Ontario.¹⁷⁵ The number one factor accounting for the Conservative Party growth was voter turn-out. As already mentioned, turn-out dropped to an historical low in 2008 to 58.8 per cent.¹⁷⁶ Even the Conservative Party saw a drop in voter support of a little over 165,000 votes or 3 per cent from 2006, but the Liberal Party suffered the worst losses with the disappearance of more than 835,000 former Liberal voters – an 18 per cent drop from 2006.¹⁷⁷ A significant change in favour of the Conservatives took place in Ontario where the party picked up 11 of its 19 new seats. In Canada's biggest province, the party went from 35 per cent popular support in 2006 to almost 40 per cent in 2008.¹⁷⁸ The Conservative gains came with very few actual additional voters from 2006. The Conservative success

¹⁷⁵ Faron Ellis and Peter Woolstencroft, "Stephen Harper and the Conservatives Campaign on Their Record," in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2008*, ed. Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), 16

¹⁷⁶ Although several publications reported 59.1% turn-out following the election, Elections Canada's final result was 58.8%. "Official Voting Results 40th General Election 2008, Table 4 Voter Turnout," Elections Canada, accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.elections.ca/scripts/OVR2008/default.html>

¹⁷⁷ "Official Voting Results 39th General Election, Table 9 Percentage of valid votes by political affiliation," Elections Canada, accessed June 16, 2011, <http://www.elections.ca/scripts/OVR2006/default.html> and "Official Voting Results 2008, 40th General Election, Table 9 Percentage of valid votes by political affiliation," Elections Canada, accessed June 16, 2011, <http://www.elections.ca/scripts/OVR2008/default.html>, also "2008 Canadian Election Results," Simon Fraser University, accessed June 16, 2011, <http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/elections/2008-results.html>

¹⁷⁸ "Official Voting Results," Elections Canada

in Ontario came courtesy of the half a million eligible voters – mostly previous Liberal voters in Ontario – who “went AWOL”¹⁷⁹ on election day.

Table 1: Party Standings

Party	Election 2006	At Dissolution 2008	Election 2008
Conservative Party	124	127	143
Liberal Party	103	95	77
Bloc Québécois	51	48	49
New Democratic Party	29	30	37
Green Party	0	1 ¹⁸⁰	0
Independent	1	3	2
Vacant	0	4	0
Total:	308	308	308

*Source: Elections Canada

In the end, however, the Conservatives failed to achieve the “dream of a majority,¹⁸¹ which had seemed within reach at the beginning of the campaign.

As suggested by political scientists Faron Ellis and Peter Woolstencroft, “Ultimately, the Conservatives won the election in the ‘rest of Canada,’ but lost their majority in Quebec.”¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ “2008 Canadian Election Results,” Simon Fraser University

¹⁸⁰ Liberal MP Blair Wilson left the party to sit as an Independent, however, during the summer of 2008, joined the Green Party of Canada. Because of the election call, he never sat in Parliament as a Green MP. He would have been the first. In 2011, Elizabeth May, the Green Party leader became the first to be actually elected to Parliament.

¹⁸¹ Ellis and Woolstencroft, “Stephen Harper,” 17

In Quebec, at first blush, it appeared as if not much had changed between the 2006 and 2008 election, but a closer look at the results tells a different story. For one thing, Conservative popular support in Quebec dropped in 2008 from its gains in 2006. In 2006, for the first time since the 1980s leadership of Brian Mulroney, the Conservatives beat the Liberal Party as the federalist party of choice for Quebeckers. However, with the 2008 vote, its support slipped behind the Liberals again.¹⁸³

Further, the Conservatives were not able to take advantage of the significant drop in support for the Bloc Québécois, which received approximately 173,000 fewer votes in 2008, an 11 per cent slide from 2006.¹⁸⁴ The Bloc also dropped to 38.1 per cent of the vote in Quebec in 2008 from 42.1 per cent in 2006 but the drop did not significantly affect the number of seats it held. In the end, the Bloc won 49 seats, just 2 fewer than the previous election. The Conservatives – who had been hoping to win 20-30 seats from Quebec in 2008 -- hung on to 10.

Polls at the beginning of the 2008 campaign predicted a very different outcome. A few weeks before the campaign began, a CROP poll showed the Bloc eleven points behind its 2006 result. The Conservatives had caught up (Bloc: 31 per cent versus the Conservatives: 30 per cent), and as suggested by political scientists Eric Bélanger and Richard Nadeau “The real prospect of making significant gains in Quebec was arguably one of the main reasons Harper decided to ask Canadians to go to the polls a full year

¹⁸² Ellis and Woolstencroft, “Stephen Harper,” 17

¹⁸³ The Conservative Party went from winning close to 25 per cent of the total vote in Quebec in 2006 down to 21.7 per cent, behind the Liberals at 23.8 per cent. *Elections Canada*

¹⁸⁴ In retrospect, this large drop in support for the Bloc was a harbinger for things to come in the 2011 election, where the party was almost wiped out, losing official party status

before the legal end of his term.”¹⁸⁵ Some pollsters in the initial weeks of the campaign even suggested Stephen Harper and his party could be headed for a majority government.¹⁸⁶

Much of this Conservative gain came from efforts to court Quebec voters during the previous session of Parliament. As a minority government, the Conservatives spent the 39th Parliament shoring up support in key demographics and regions, among them, women voters, minorities, and Quebec.¹⁸⁷ In Quebec Prime Minister Harper promoted “open federalism.” The government increased participation for Quebec in Canada’s international delegation to UNESCO. It also gained popularity among Quebecers following the passage of its motion in the House of Commons declaring “the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.”¹⁸⁸ But perhaps most concretely, it resolved one of the long-standing grievances with the Quebec government over what Quebec had characterized as a growing “fiscal imbalance” in transfer payments. The Harper government resolved the issue by handing over an additional \$3.6 billion in new money

¹⁸⁵ Eric Bélanger and Richard Nadeau, “The Bloc Québécois Victory by Default,” in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2008*, ed. Jon H. Pammett and Christopher Dornan, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), 136 and 152. The “legal end of his term,” refers to the fixed election date set in new legislation – the first fixed date set for October 2009.

¹⁸⁶ “What would PM do with majority?” *The Toronto Star*, Sept 13, 2008, accessed from Angus Reid, June 5, 2011, http://www.angus-reid.com/wp-content/uploads/archived-pdf/star_majority.pdf

¹⁸⁷ Ellis and Woolstencroft, “Stephen Harper,” 17.

¹⁸⁸ In November, 2006, the Bloc Québécois had originally promoted a motion calling for Quebec to be recognized as a nation. The decision by the Conservatives to re-jig that motion to include “within a united Canada” infuriated the Bloc, and Gilles Duceppe threatened to vote against it. However, with enormous support for the motion in Quebec, the Bloc had little choice but to support it. In the end the motion passed 266 to 16. Ellis et al, p35

to Quebec in transfer payments; a move that annoyed much of the Conservative base elsewhere.¹⁸⁹

The Bloc Québécois, on the other hand, began the campaign facing a number of challenges. The sovereignty movement had suffered a blow following the 2007 Quebec provincial election when the Parti Québécois received only 27 per cent of the vote, losing even official opposition status in the National Assembly. Further, the new official opposition party -- the *Action démocratique du Québec* (ADQ), was a conservative leaning party which began fostering allegiances with the federal Conservatives following that election.¹⁹⁰ Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe's personal popularity waned following a decision in May 2007 to leave the federal party and join the leadership race to head the Parti Québécois. However, Duceppe changed his mind just 24 hours later when polls suggested he would have come a distant second to Pauline Marois.¹⁹¹ To add to the Bloc's problems, on the eve of the 2008 federal campaign, it had become the target of several very public attacks from sovereigntists about the party's relevance to the nationalist movement.¹⁹²

However, during the 36-day campaign, the fortunes of the two parties reversed (see figure 1) with profound consequences on the result, proving the political strategists' adage: "campaigns do matter." Bélanger and Nadeau concluded, "the fact

¹⁸⁹ Bélanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc," 138. The outcry came particularly following the 2007 Quebec election, when the Premier, Jean Charest, handed a significant amount of the new money over to Quebec taxpayers as a tax cut contributing to the falling out between the Prime Minister and the Premier of Quebec.

¹⁹⁰ Bélanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc," 156.

¹⁹¹ Bélanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc," 140.

¹⁹² Including a letter published in a Quebec newspaper from former PQ minister Jacques Brassard, attacking the federal party for leaving sovereignty off its 2008 campaign agenda. Bélanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc," 145.

that this progression deprived the Conservatives of making the gains they needed to form a majority government is perhaps the key feature of the 2008 election¹⁹³ As already described, former Conservative speech writer, L Ian MacDonald blamed Conservative misfortunes on the Bloc and the media¹⁹⁴ In the dying days of the campaign, the (eventually defeated) Conservative candidate in Quebec's Sherbrooke riding, Andre Bachand offered this explanation "Stephen Harper has done so much for Quebec, but that's not the message that got through In terms of Communications 101, the Bloc won the campaign"¹⁹⁵ Since these messages are mediated through coverage by Canada's news organizations, exactly how that discourse unfolded on *Le Telejournal* and *The National* is the subject of the following analysis

Television Coverage *Le Telejournal* and *The National*

Canadians still obtain most of their election information from television news¹⁹⁶ An Ekos Research Associates poll at the end of the 2008 campaign found 82 per cent of Canadians still either "somewhat" or "exclusively" rely on television news for campaign information verses 79 per cent who rely on print sources and 52 per cent who look to the internet¹⁹⁷ The CBC/SRC newscasts have been cited as "the single most relied" on

¹⁹³ Belanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc," 152

¹⁹⁴ L Ian MacDonald, 'The wooing of Quebec will recommence at dawn,' *The National Post*, Oct 16, 2008, accessed June 7, 2011, <http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/fullcomment/archive/2008/10/16/1-ian-macdonald-the-wooning-of-quebec-will-recommence-at-dawn.aspx>

¹⁹⁵ Belanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc," 137

¹⁹⁶ Christopher Waddell and Christopher Dornan, "The Media and the Campaign" in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2006* ed Jon H Pammatt and Christopher Dornan (Toronto Dundurn Press, 2006), 225

¹⁹⁷ Waddell, "The Campaign in the Media 2008," 220

newscasts by their respective language audiences.¹⁹⁸

Ratings during the debate support this with Radio-Canada attracting 736,000 viewers to the French-language debate, compared to 676,000 watching its main competitor TVA according to BBM ratings research.¹⁹⁹ The CBC, however, lost the ratings war for the English debate against CTV, attracting 889,000 viewers²⁰⁰ compared to CTV's 1.03 million.²⁰¹ However, CBC beat CTV in election night coverage.²⁰²

2008 by the Numbers

Over 25 days²⁰³ of election coverage *Le Téléjournal* and *The National* diverged on a number of issues. In general terms, the story of the U.S. economic meltdown dominated both newscasts in the last three weeks of the campaign. *The National* led its program with stories on the economy in 17 out of 25 newscasts, followed by election coverage that typically began with reaction from politicians to economic stories. *Le*

¹⁹⁸ Waddell and Dornan, "The Media and the Campaign (2006)," 228-229

¹⁹⁹ "Debat des chefs," Richard Therrien, accessed August 11, 2011, <http://blogues.cyberpresse.ca/therrien/2011/04/14/debat-des-chefs-baisse-dauiditoire/> Another 171,000 watched Radio-Canada's cable news network RDI and 66,000 watched on TVA's cable news network LCN

²⁰⁰ According to CBC Corporate Communications, BBM ratings suggested 889,000 viewers watched the two hour debate on the CBC network while 365,000 watched on the cable all-news channel Newsworld

²⁰¹ According to CTV Corporate Communications, an average 1.03 million viewers watched the debate peaking at 1.3 million. Its press release suggests CBC's ratings were at 853,000 viewers in contrast to the 889,000 reported by CBC Corporate Communications

²⁰² The CBC network as well as its all-news specialty channel Newsworld (as it was called in 2008) attracted a combined audience of 2.431 million viewers at its peak on election night in 2008, compared to its main competitor, CTV along with its all-news channel CTV Newsnet, which peaked at 1.785 million viewers. "CBC's election coverage grabs and holds Canadians' attention," CNW, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/October2008/16/c6763.html> In French, the private network, TVA won the ratings war with 714 thousand viewers compared to SRC's main network with 437,000 viewers. Richard Therrien, "Élection, la victoire à TVA," *Le Blogue de Richard Therrien*, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://blogues.cyberpresse.ca/therrien/category/cotes-decoute/page/2/> Note that since Quebec represents 23 per cent of the Canadian population, its rate of consumption of the federal election results is significantly higher if ratings are any indication

²⁰³ The campaign is actually 36 days, but it includes weekends when the two programs do not broadcast.

Téléjournal led with the economy 12 out of 25 newscasts. The issue of culture only resulted in two reports on *The National*, where the same issue warranted more than a dozen full reports on *Le Téléjournal*. In this way, some of the general divergences observed during previous research described in chapter three are seen during the federal election campaign of 2008. In particular, English news coverage features more stories on the economy while French media tends to focus more coverage on issues of language and culture.²⁰⁴

As the CBC rules highlight, campaign coverage must be monitored for fairness by an outside observer. While Erin Research has been monitoring balance and fairness for both French and English services since 1993, beginning 2004 the public broadcaster decided to use two separate organizations to do this analysis. In 2008, Erin Research based in the Toronto area did the analysis for the CBC, and the Université de Laval's "Centre d'études sur les médias," based in Quebec City did the job for SRC. Comparing results from the two are challenging as each use different methodologies in compiling their data, and focus on different aspects of the coverage.²⁰⁵ Despite this, there are some areas that make comparison worthwhile for the purposes of this analysis.

²⁰⁴ For instance, Canadian researcher Fred Fletcher sums up the findings on federal elections stating "French reports pay more attention to constitutional and language issues while the English news gives greater coverage to economic issues () The most striking differences show up in coverage of constitutional issues and symbolic events or matters related to language and culture " Fletcher, "Media and Political Identity," 366

²⁰⁵ Erin Research for instance weighed coverage of issues such as the economy and culture, while the Centre d'étude did not. On the other hand, the Centre d'étude compared Radio-Canada to several media organizations in its market, not just TVA, while Erin Research mostly compared CBC to CTV throughout the bulk of its analysis.

In terms of covering the parties, the greatest difference appeared in the handling of the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party. During newscasts, 3 per cent of the proportion of statements and interview time²⁰⁶ referred to the Bloc on *The National*. *Le Téléjournal* included the Bloc in 18 per cent of its total coverage, or 6 times more.²⁰⁷ On the other hand, *The National* devoted 17 per cent of statements and interview time to NDP²⁰⁸ while *Le Téléjournal* featured the NDP in 13 per cent of its coverage.²⁰⁹ While it is true Canadians outside Quebec can't vote for Bloc candidates – limiting the party's relevance for audiences of *The National* – the 3 per cent accorded that party is somewhat lower than the 10 per cent public support it represented nationally on election day. The NDP had limited relevance for audiences of *Le Téléjournal*, since the vast majority of viewers live in Quebec where that party had a single Member of Parliament. However the 13 per cent accorded that party by *Le TJ* is more in line with the 18 per cent the party received on election day. This discrepancy in treatment of the parties appeared among the two programs direct competitors. CBC's competitor, CTV,

²⁰⁶ ErIn Research monitored total statements about the party, total statements about the party leader and total interview time (excluding feature interviews with leaders) The Centre d'études looked at all aspects together The Bloc coverage in the ErIn Research findings ranged from 2 to 3% The researcher decided to pick the higher value in the case of the Bloc The NDP coverage results according to ErIn Research, however, ranged from a high of 25% for interview time to a low of 12% for statements referring to the leader In this case the researcher took the average of the three, or 17% The Centre d'écoutes amalgamated all forms of references to the parties in its research, but divided its findings between SRC Radio and SRC Television Television included two programs *Le Téléjournal* at 22 00 on the main network as well as *Le Téléjournal* at 17 00 on the all-news channel RDI The head researcher Daniel Giroux said the findings of the two programs were so similar the results appearing for both could stand legitimately as the results for each "Balance in News Coverage," ErIn Research, 10-14, "Analyse de la couverture," Centre d'études sur les medias (specific information not publicly available in the executive summary available online, however, obtained directly through the researcher Daniel Giroux, Université de Laval)

²⁰⁷ See note 31

²⁰⁸ As mentioned in note 31, this figure is an average of statements about the party, statements about the leader as well as interview time See note 31

²⁰⁹ "Analyse " Centre d'études sur les medias, (portion of report obtained directly from the researcher) See note 31

devoted 2 per cent of coverage to the Bloc and 18 per cent to the NDP according to Erin Research. TVA, according to the Centre d'études, committed 20 per cent coverage to the Bloc and 7 per cent to the NDP, suggesting TVA is far more regional in coverage than SRC. (See table 2.)

Table 2 – Coverage of the Parties²¹⁰

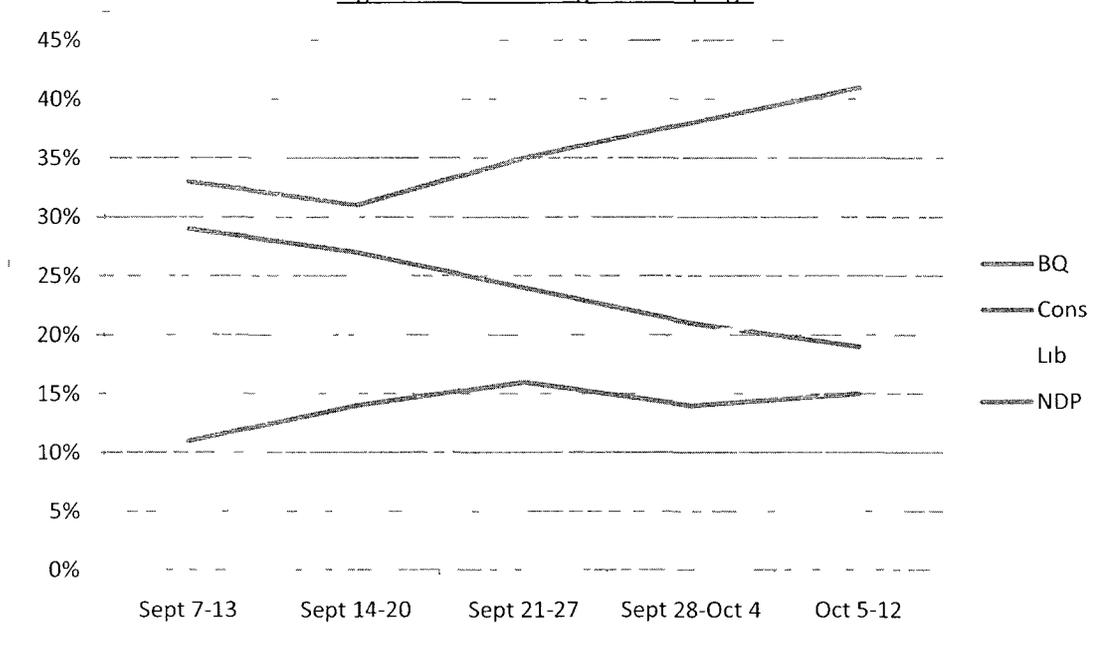
Broadcaster	Coverage of the Conservative Party	Coverage of the Liberal Party	Coverage of the Bloc Québécois	Coverage of the New Democratic Party
<i>The National</i>	42%	27%	3%	17%
CTV	43%	35%	2%	18%
<i>Le Téléjournal</i>	40%	26%	18%	13%
TVA	47%	25%	20%	7%
Election Day Result	38%	26%	10%	18%

*Source: findings from Erin Research and Centre d'études sur les médias reports on balance following the campaign. See note 31

These are the broad differences between the two programs during the campaign period. For the following qualitative analysis of the campaign coverage on *Le Téléjournal* and *The National*, the 36 day campaign has been broken up into three sections.

²¹⁰ Compiled through a comparison of Erin Research and Centre d'études sur les médias. For information on methodology see note 31

Figure 1 – Polls during the Campaign²¹¹



*Source: 90 polls from Nanos Research, EKOS, Harris/Decima, Ipsos, Leger Marketing, Segma, Crop and Strategic Counsel, sample sizes vary

Using Figure 1 and its breakdown of party support in Quebec polls during the campaign, the first section will analyze coverage during the beginning of the campaign, when Conservative fortunes were highest in Quebec. The second part will begin when a viral internet video first appeared on YouTube on September 18, and was reflected in Quebec newscasts during the third week of the campaign. The third and final section will begin with coverage following the leaders’ debates in French (October 1) then English (October 2) and continue through the last week of the campaign to election day.

This examination looks specifically at election coverage on the 60 minute weeknight newscasts which aired at 10 o’clock in September and October on the main

²¹¹ Bélanger and Nadeau, “The Bloc,” 145

CBC and SRC networks. The analysis will provide some general comments on coverage during each of the three sections, then focus on a couple of specific campaign days, and finally outline the major themes established during that period.

SECTION ONE – CAMPAIGN BEGINS

On the morning of September 7, Stephen Harper met the media gathered in front of the Governor General's residence after asking for the dissolution of Parliament.

Another Canadian election campaign had begun:

"Between now and October 14, Canadians will choose a government to look out for their interests at a time of global economic trouble. They will choose between direction or uncertainty; between common sense or risky experiments; between steadiness or recklessness."²¹²

In French Stephen Harper added:

"We promise to practice open federalism,²¹³ the fiscal imbalance is resolved, and the debate over Quebec sovereignty is way down on the agenda -- way down on the agenda of even sovereigntists themselves."²¹⁴

Until election day, Radio-Canada's *Le Téléjournal*, and the CBC's *The National* featured the campaign as a central element of each newscast, on average devoting 10-15 minutes of each program to the campaign, typically with an election news package,

²¹² See full Harper's speech at the launch of the campaign: "À la conquête du Québec," *Radio-Canada*, September 7, 2008, accessed June 11, 2011 <http://www.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/Politique/2008/09/07/003-Elections-Harper.shtml?ref=rss>

²¹³ As described by Bélanger and Nadeau, "The Conservatives made surprising inroads in the province of Quebec, winning ten seats in 2006 after having pledged "open federalism, meaning an approach to federal-provincial relations that would be more respectful of the provinces' (particularly Quebec's) powers and interests" Bélanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc,"¹³⁷ Further, according to Ellis and Woolstencroft, "The Conservatives' national unity agenda was centred on its policies of open federalism and designed as a branding and outreach exercise." Ellis and Woolstencroft, "Stephen Harper," 35

²¹⁴ From Harper speech at launch of the campaign, see "À la conquête du Québec."

and distributing election features²¹⁵ throughout the hour. The election news sometimes led newscasts, however, during this period, the story that eclipsed other stories on newscasts around the world was the international market turmoil induced by the cascading failures of some of the United States’ largest financial institutions, as well as the subsequent multi-billion dollar bail-outs by the U-S government. Most Canadian newscasts covered this story, leading a substantial number of programs in both languages throughout the 36-day campaign. (See table 3)

Table 3: Economic Crisis during Campaign 2008²¹⁶

I-----During the 5 wks of the campaign, the TSX dropped more than 4000 points, the Cdn \$ dropped \$0.10-----

--|

<u>Week 1 – Sept 7-13</u>	<u>Week 2 – Sept 14-20</u>	<u>Week 3 – Sept 21-27</u>	<u>Week 4 – Sept 28-Oct 4</u>	<u>Week 5 – Oct 5-12</u>
International markets begin to spiral with looming failure of Lehman Brothers as well as near collapse of Merrill Lynch and AIG Insurance.	Markets continue to meltdown and oil prices spike as Hurricane Ike hits the Gulf of Mexico.	US law proposing bail-out package struggles through Washington. Markets continue to panic. Merrill Lynch Canada publishes report predicting financial crisis in Canada.	Monday, US House of Representatives rejects bail-out package with negative reaction in the markets. By Wednesday, hopes rise again as US Senate votes in favour of the rescue package.	Wednesday, Cdn govt lowers bank rate simultaneously with other govts. Thursday 2 intrnl banks praise Canada’s banking system. Stats Canada figures show a gain of more than 100,000 jobs in September.

As a result, during the first two weeks of the campaign, very few newscasts on *The National* and *Le Téléjournal* led with election news. During the second week of the campaign, *The National* led each day with international news – whether it was markets

²¹⁵ Features for both programs included reality checks, interviews with the leaders, panel discussions, riding and region profiles, etc.

²¹⁶ “Balance in News Coverage,” Erin Research, 6-7. (From “Notable Events”)

or oil prices.²¹⁷ *Le Téléjournal* also featured the economy high in newscasts but also led with Quebec-centric non-election news stories.²¹⁸

Despite the international context, however, the programs differed in their election news content from the first day forward. Story line-ups rarely overlapped, and when they did, story focuses differed between the two programs. The launch day of the election was a good example.

Day 1, September 7 – Close - Up

On that first day, September 7, both newscasts led with the launch of the election campaign. It was one of the few days during the campaign that both programs featured virtually the same line-up, introducing their election team of reporters assigned to cover the major party leaders. In this way, the line-up offered a good demonstration of how consistently the two programs differed in story focus.

What becomes immediately apparent for viewers comparing the two shows was *Le Téléjournal's* emphasis on how issues affect Quebec compared to *The National's* broader focus. This regional preoccupation of *Le Téléjournal* supported the findings of previous analyses of the French network, as discussed in chapter three.

²¹⁷ In the fall of 2008, the spectacle of the collapse of some of the U S 's largest financial institutions was made worse by Hurricane Ike hitting the Gulf of Mexico – home to a substantial number of oil drilling operations. The subsequent impact on gas prices broke into the campaign on this week.

²¹⁸ During these initial weeks, other stories leading newscasts in Quebec included an item about Ad-man Jean Brault (one of the few convicted of a crime in the so-called federal Liberal Party sponsorship scandal) helping the RCMP, as well as a lead story about the Quebec mafia, and a lead story featuring Quebec's Cardinal Turcott wanting the federal parties to consider the abortion issue.

Both programs began with stories about the Conservative Party. With Stephen Harper heading first to Quebec, both CBC reporter Paul Hunter and his SRC colleague Daniel L'Heureux discussed the significance of the province for Conservatives in the push to win a majority. Paul Hunter talked about speculation Harper's party hoped to gain 15 additional seats in the province. L'Heureux discussed the Conservative communication strategy aimed at Quebeckers. The Conservative message, he explained, focused on the Bloc Québécois' limitations as a party in perpetual opposition and highlighted the Conservatives' ability to resolve issues such as the so-called fiscal imbalance.

The next story on each line-up centred on the Liberal Party. The CBC's Susan Bonner discussed Stéphane Dion's leadership image with a clip from Dion saying "I love to be the underdog." SRC's Emmanuelle Latraverse reported on Dion's assertion that his "Green Shift" platform would help Quebec lead the country on the environmental file. It focused less on his leadership problem, and more on his appeal to Quebec voters.²¹⁹ Latraverse used a clip of Dion saying in French: (translated) "cher Quebec, I am at least as nationalist as Duceppe."

²¹⁹ Dion's public relations problem within Quebec was qualitatively different from how he was perceived outside that province. In the rest of Canada, Dion was not well known before his leadership of the Liberal Party, and in that way, may have been vulnerable to the Conservative narrative that he was "not-a-leader." In Quebec, he had been negatively associated as former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's ideological pit bull on the Clarity Act, assigned to publicly attack sovereigntist arguments against its passage during the sensitive post-1995 Referendum period. As a result, according to Daniel L'Heureux, Dion was hated particularly by the sovereigntists. Daniel L'Heureux, Interview, July 2011

Coverage of the NDP in English on this opening day of the campaign focused on leader Jack Layton's vow that he was running to be Prime Minister. The French version highlighted Layton's statement to Quebeckers "our values are your values."

The stories about the Bloc Québécois differed significantly between the two newscasts. In English, the report did not focus on the issue of leadership as the previous reports had. Instead it examined the issue of sovereignty, though the Bloc did not discuss a plan for sovereignty in its 2008 platform. The CBC's Nancy Wood discussed whether the Bloc's decline signalled waning interest in sovereignty in the province.²²⁰ The SRC's Daniel Thibeault highlighted the Bloc's 'us-versus-them' messaging, that Harper politics are the politics of George Bush, with a hidden agenda to increase the use of guns, and take women's rights away. In this way the SRC report focused on the content of what Duceppe said (to Quebeckers), while the CBC report focused on what he represented (to Canadians – specifically, what was the level of the threat to national unity.)

As mentioned, the two programs produced very similar line-ups, except for the placement of the story about the Bloc Québécois – which preceded the New Democratic Party on *Le Telejournal*.

While the programs diverged from each other, they did not deviate very much from the agenda set out by the *sources* of campaign messages – the politicians. Stephen

²²⁰ The issue of sovereignty in 2008 was not part of the Bloc platform however, there is a consistent interest from the "Toronto desk" in stories that measure the level of interest in sovereignty among Quebeckers.

Harper at the outset in English focused on leadership²²¹ while in French he spoke to Quebecers about how his party served the interests of Quebec. The journalists' reports focused on those separate themes on the launch day, and beyond.

Day 6, September 12 – Close Up

There continued to be differences in story focus between the two programs throughout the first week, with a particular emphasis on Quebec issues on *Le Téléjournal*. The Friday of the first week is highlighted here because of the entry of the Premier of Quebec in the campaign on the French network. This day also featured culture for the first time as a significant issue on *Le Téléjournal*. Meanwhile, *The National* continued to show more interest in the economy and issues of leadership.

The National began its program with the international story of Hurricane Ike²²² building up to hit the Gulf Coast and its impact on gasoline prices in Canada. Then its election coverage began with a report surveying leaders' reaction to rising gas prices.²²³ Later in the show, returning to election news, *The National* highlighted the day's party policy announcements in copy stories.²²⁴ The program also featured a story about the significance of leadership in the 2008 campaign produced by senior correspondent Brian Stewart.

²²¹ Francophones received the same message through translation

²²² Hurricane Ike was building in the Gulf Coast, about to hit Texas, affecting the US domestic oil industry in the Gulf Coast, and gas prices at home. Prices went up 13 cents a litre in some parts of the country.

²²³ *The National's* Keith Boag surveyed reaction to gas prices from the leaders.

²²⁴ One of the ways to determine the importance of a story is where it appears in a line-up. The higher the story, usually the more important it is, especially with regard to "the first block" before the commercial. But another determination of the level of importance of a story can be seen through its treatment. Stories determined more important usually get assigned to a reporter and become a full "report." The copy and copy-with-a-clip are usually considered less important stories – although sometimes late-breaking stories or stories difficult to access can also determine treatment.

Le Téléjournal began its newscast with non-election news.²²⁵ Like *The National*, it also began its election news package surveying leaders on rising gas prices. It also featured several policy announcements through copy and visuals. Then it diverged significantly from *The National* with a report from National Assembly correspondent Josée Thibeault about Premier Jean Charest. The host of the program introduced the report saying: “And now, a new player in this election campaign: Jean Charest, and his demands for Quebec during this election.” Thibeault began the report saying: “Jean Charest arrived as if he was in campaign mode...”²²⁶ In the report, the Premier demands the federal government cancel its cut to funding of the arts and culture and further, hand the money over directly to Quebec to manage. The report also featured the reaction of the Parti Québécois in support of the Jean Charest’s demands.²²⁷ *Le TJ* election news package later included a “reality check”²²⁸ report by Catherine Kovacs on whether federal arts and culture funding had actually gone up as asserted by Stephen Harper, despite the \$45 million in cuts to one program.²²⁹ Kovacs concluded that in general, federal government spending in arts and culture had declined since the Conservative mandate first began. *The National* would not do its own “reality check”

²²⁵ It led its newscast with a Quebec-centric story about Jean Brault, one of the few men convicted of a crime in the sponsorship scandal, and his decision to help the RCMP with further investigations. It then featured the story of Hurricane Ike and rising gas prices.

²²⁶ The provincial election campaign, in fact, began almost immediately following the federal election.

²²⁷ The PQ wanted the Premier to go further, however, the two parties appear together in the same story condemning the Conservatives.

²²⁸ “Reality check” reports are stories that attempt to analyse the true state of an issue or situation, often assessing the validity of statements said by opposing sides of an issue. In the case of the federal government’s \$45 million cut to culture programs, the arts community was concerned the cuts would have a significant impact on its industry, where the government suggested in total, programs to that department had actually increased overall.

²²⁹ The \$45 million would be cut from the Canadian Heritage Ministry’s budget affecting its arts culture and new media branch. It would, among other things, cut training and funding for promotion of Canadian artists abroad. The value of the cut for Quebec represented about \$20 million, according to the Premier.

on the arts and culture sector for another two weeks, but when it did appear, reporter Terry Milewski would come to a different general conclusion.²³⁰ *Le Téléjournal* capped its election package with an analysis by senior political correspondent and National Assembly bureau chief, Michel Auger about the premier's motivations in getting involved in the federal campaign.²³¹

Day 11/12, September 17/18 – Close-Up

The newscasts the following Wednesday and Thursday highlight not only the continuing divergence between *The National* and *Le Téléjournal*, but as well, a growing interest in the culture story by the French broadcaster, compared to an emerging theme focused on political campaign gaffes by the English service.

On Wednesday, day 11 of the campaign, both *The National* and *Le Téléjournal* led the election portions of their newscasts with the same story -- already a rare occurrence since the campaign launch. Both programs featured a late-breaking story about federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz. Ritz apologized for flippant comments he made in the midst of the listeriosis outbreak weeks earlier.²³² Following this story, however, the two program line-ups diverged.

²³⁰ As this thesis will soon show, the report by Terry Milewski appeared on September 23, 2008 – the same day artists put on a special gala in Montreal to protest the program cuts

²³¹ The premier's interest in the campaign is further explored in the analysis section of this thesis

²³² A listeriosis outbreak linked to a Maple Leaf meat processing plant in Toronto led to 23 deaths during the summer of 2008. Agriculture Minister, Gerry Ritz apparently made light of the deaths during a conference call in late August, saying "This is like a death by a thousand cuts. Or should I say cold cuts." He then reportedly said he hoped the latest victim in PEI was Liberal Opposition critic Wayne Easter. The details of the conference call were made public during the second week of the election campaign, with various groups and opposition leaders calling for Ritz' resignation. For details, see Brian Laghi and Campbell Clark and Karen Howlett, "Harper stands by Ritz despite 'tasteless' jokes," *The Globe and Mail*,

Le Telejournal launched into²³³ another story about the culture program cuts, this time highlighting conflict between Conservative candidates and provincial cabinet ministers. The report began with a statement by host Bernard Derôme that the culture issue had become a “battleground” in the dispute between the federal and provincial governments. In the report that followed, SRC journalist Daniel L’Heureux said in his voice over: “The controversy is not letting up () and it’s becoming an issue in the election in Quebec.” Like a harbinger of later statements made by the Conservative leader himself, the report featured one Quebec Conservative candidate in the Quebec City region characterizing artists as already “spoiled” through federal funding. That clip set up reaction from the Quebec minister responsible for culture, Christine St. Pierre, who suggested the Conservative candidate didn’t understand the file. In the stand-up at the end of the item, L’Heureux concluded that perhaps Harper hoped the middle class wouldn’t care.

The National did not do a story focusing on Quebec or the culture issue. Note that CBC reporter Paul Hunter -- assigned to the Harper leadership tour travelling through Quebec on this day -- had already fronted the breaking story about Gerry Ritz.²³⁴ The story that followed the Gerry Ritz story in English featured NDP candidate Dana Larsen appearing on the now defunct website POT-TV smoking a fist full of

September 18, 2008, accessed June 30, 2011,

<http://www.theglobcanmail.com/news/politics/article710865.ccc>

²³³ Since the Ritz story was late breaking, it is quite possible the culture story was originally planned as the lead election story on this particular day.

²³⁴ *Le TJ* on the other hand reported on the Ritz story using reporter Daniel Lessard, saving L. Heureux on the Conservative tour for the Quebec story.

marijuana joints – a story *Le Téléjournal* treated with some copy and visuals, but no full report.

The next day, day 12, with Harper’s tour still in Quebec, *Le Téléjournal* led its election news with more focus on Quebec. The lead story featured Jean Charest delivering a shopping list of grievances – contradicting Harper’s assertion that the fiscal imbalance issue had been resolved. Once again, Charest insisted the federal money for culture should go directly to the provinces. *The National* led its newscast with two full reports with more reaction to the previous day’s Gerry Ritz revelations.²³⁵ *The National* also aired a copy story about the Conservatives forced to apologize for comments made to a native man by a minister’s aide²³⁶ – fitting in with a growing theme about campaign gaffes.

With Stephen Harper in Quebec *The National* did produce a story about Conservative aspirations in Quebec by Paul Hunter. It appeared later in the election news package. It highlighted the Conservative message to Quebeckers that its party can help Quebec, announcing new money for Canadian content for TV5 – Quebec.²³⁷ The TV5 – Quebec announcement appeared much higher – third story – on *Le Téléjournal*.

SECTION ONE - THEMES

²³⁵ The first story included more political reaction from the other party leaders calling for Ritz to resign. The second story included angry reaction from people directly affected by the listeriosis outbreak – also calling for Ritz to resign.

²³⁶ Darlene Lannagan, aide to the Minister of Transport Lawrence Cannon, was caught on tape by native protestors telling one member of event he could meet with the minister in his office “if you’re sober” The Conservatives were forced to issue an apology for the remark

²³⁷ TV5 – Quebec is linked to TV5 Monde, and is run out of Montreal by a non-profit consortium

By the end of the first segment of the election campaign, key divergences had clearly emerged between *The National* and *Le Téléjournal*. Viewers looking for opportunities to assess *The National's* focus during the campaign could consider the subjects discussed each week on the "At Issue" panel (featuring host Peter Mansbridge in discussion with Chantal Hébert (a columnist with the *Toronto Star* and *Le Devoir*), Allan Gregg (a pollster with Harris-Decima) and Andrew Coyne (a columnist with *Macleans Magazine*)). By the second week, the key topics discussed on "At Issue" revolved around the campaign gaffes, as well as Liberal Party Leader Stéphane Dion's struggle with leadership. Rex Murphy's editorial report appearing at the end of day 12 also focused on campaign gaffes and Dion's leadership problem. Earlier in the week, *The National's* "Insiders' Panel" featuring former campaign insiders, dealt with how to run a campaign around a "wild card" issue such as the economy. The economy, leadership, and gaffes had become central themes for *The National's* coverage by the end of the first section of the campaign.

Le Téléjournal had already established a Quebec-centric interest in story focuses, including reaction from Quebec City's National Assembly. The program had also begun developing the culture issue as an important theme.

SECTION TWO – "CULTURE EN PÉRIL"

By the second segment of the campaign, these separate themes emerged as defining campaign issues as demonstrated through the line-ups of *The National* and *Le Téléjournal*.

This period began with the release of a video called “Culture en Peril” (Culture in Peril)²³⁸ on YouTube soon after *Les Gmeaux* awards show (carried live on Quebec television) The awards gala had featured a parade of artists appearing at the podium slamming the Harper government for the cuts to culture spending, and calling for artists to mobilize a protest around the issue ²³⁹ “Culture en Peril” appeared four days later – September 18 Within hours it generated so many internet hits on YouTube, it made the YouTube list of “top viewed videos” – quite a feat for a French language clip ²⁴⁰ Independently produced with professional production values, it used well-known Quebec artists to deliver heavy doses of satire criticizing the Conservative government’s \$45 million cut to cultural programs

The video featured Quebec singer Michel Rivard in a skit where he appeals to a panel of bureaucrats in Ottawa for a grant to feature Quebec music at a festival in France – the kind of grant targeted by the program cut The bureaucrats portrayed in

²³⁸“Culture in Danger (Culture en Peril with subtitles),” YouTube, accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhgV85m852Q>. This is a version with English subtitles that appeared days after the first French-only version Collectively, the item received more than 1 million hits by election day

²³⁹ The gala was not an insignificant event, and visuals and sound-bites were used in a number of reports on *Le TJ* and other newscasts when referring to the artists mobilization against the cuts The images appeared in the lead story on *Le TJ* September 19 (about to be discussed) During the gala held Sunday night, September 14, on live television, Harper was severely criticized over the \$45 million dollars in cuts to the culture budget The host of Radio-Canada’s popular (over 1 million viewers) “Tout le monde en parle” Guy A Lepage was the first to express concern over the cuts and was seconded by actress Suzanne Clement, who yelled out ‘Entendez-nous, M Harper!’ as she got up to receive her prize The strongest crowd reaction at the event came when actor Vincent Graton called on artists to mobilize a protest around the issue Jean Charest was at the event, with the camera frequently going to him during these exchanges Charest appeared in the September 19 story (to be analyzed next) saying some artists may have been harsh, but were expressing themselves as part of a legitimate democratic debate For more background see Richard Therrien, “Prix Gmeaux les artistes enrage comme Harper,” *Le Soleil*, September 15, 2008, accessed July 15, 2011, <http://www.cyberpresse.ca/le-soleil/arts-et-spectacles/television-et-radio/200809/15/01-21278-prix-gmeaux-les-artistes-enrages-comme-harper.php>

²⁴⁰ By September 19 (within 24 hours) “Culture en Peril” had reached 40 thousand hits, and by September 23, half a million

the video played to long-standing anti-English Canadian stereotypes: they are unilingual English speakers with conservative values who insist the only culture they will promote is “Canadian” culture. The meeting degenerates when Rivard begins playing one of his most famous songs featuring the word ‘phoque’ (meaning seal in French) which is misinterpreted by the English panel. A series of comical linguistic misunderstandings follow, including one panel member asking Rivard if he is a homosexual. Behind the bureaucrats are posters of Heritage Minister Josée Verner and Prime Minister Stephen Harper who appears with an American flag in the background. At the end of the skit, Rivard’s grant is refused.

With close to 40,000 web hits in 24 hours, Quebec media antennae went up. French language journalists following the campaign began asking out loud why “Culture en Péril” resonated with Quebeckers.

Day 13, September 19 – Close-Up

Le Téléjournal and *The National* diverged significantly September 19, the day after the video “Culture en Péril” appeared. In particular, this day highlighted the prominence of culture as an issue on *Le Téléjournal* – now the lead story of the day. In fact it preceded an international story making headlines around the world: the announcement of the U.S. government bailout plan for the banking sector.²⁴¹ *The National* did not cover the culture issue at all.

²⁴¹September 19 was the day the Bush government announced its bail out package. The headline for AP matched many similar headlines internationally “Struggling to calm a financial hurricane, the Bush administration on Friday laid out a radical bailout plan with a jawdropping price tag -- a takeover of

That evening, after dominating talk shows in Quebec all day, SRC's Guy Gendron produced a story about "Culture en Péril" for *Le Téléjournal*. The report included a telephone clip from one of the video's anonymous producers saying he had no party affiliation, followed by a clip from Conservative Quebec MP Lawrence Cannon refusing to respond to the attack. It then featured a clip of Premier Jean Charest defending artists for what he called their legitimate participation in a democratic debate. Interestingly, the report reflects on the video's underlying message with a clip from Prof. André Lafrance from the Communications department of the Université de Montréal. Lafrance asked:

(translation) "Is this a message about how the government cut money from culture, or that the federal government is filled with anglophones and they don't understand Quebec; here the issue has changed, right?"

Gendron concluded that whatever the message, it was quickly becoming the most popular video in Quebec if not Canada.

In stark contrast, *The National* led its news cast with the story of the U.S. government bailout plan for the banking sector. When *The National* finally got to its own election coverage, it featured a round-up of various party announcements treated through copy and clips covered with visuals from the leaders' tour pool feed.²⁴² The first election report by Terry Milewski focused on the resignation of a second NDP candidate,

hundreds of billions of dollars in worthless mortgages and other bad debt" See "Radical bailout plan has a jawdropping price tag," *American Press*, September 19, 2008, accessed July 17, 2011, http://www.allstocks.com/stockmessageboard/cgi-bin/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic,f=14,t=004663,p=1
²⁴² 'Pool feeds' are shared visuals and clips from daily planned events and media conferences that journalists have access to when covering the leaders' tours

again because of his appearance on POT TV ²⁴³ The same story received a mention only through copy with visuals on *Le Telejournal* The story that led *Le Telejournal* did not even warrant a mention on *The National*

Significantly, the two services of the public broadcaster had more in common that day with their same-language market competitors than with each other *Le TJ's* private television competitor, TVA led its own campaign coverage with the story of "Culture en Peril" while most of the mainstream English media did not pick the story up at all *The National's* main competitor *CTV National News* also included a full report on the NDP embarrassment over POT-TV high in its line-up In the end, the story line-ups of the public broadcaster's two services mirrored those of the programs in their own markets more than each others' – a phenomenon already identified during previous analyses ²⁴⁴

Artists in Quebec seized on the momentum created by the popularity of "Culture en Peril," as well as the call to action at *Les Gemeaux* awards show and held a protest concert in Montreal the following Tuesday, September 23 With over 1000 people attending (including a spill-over crowd watching on a giant video screen in a park across the street,) SRC's Michel Auger identified it as the best attended campaign event to that

²⁴³ Terry Milewski's report focused on Kirk Tousaw's resignation as a candidate following revelations that he too had appeared smoking pot on POT-TV It came days after another BC candidate, Dana Larsen resigned his candidacy In this report, it showed Jack Layton appearing on POT-TV in an interview with Marc Emery of the Marijuana Party saying Layton was in favour of the decriminalization of marijuana

²⁴⁴ As identified in chapter 3

point.²⁴⁵ Extensive coverage appeared on French-language 24-hour news stations RDI (SRC's all-news sister channel) as well as LCN (TVA's all-news channel). Liberal leader Stéphane Dion and NDP leader Jack Layton featured arts and culture as the issue of the day. Dion appeared at his daily media briefing in B.C. surrounded by movie equipment to announce support for the film industry, and condemned Harper's approach to the culture issue. Layton flew into Montreal to be at the concert that night. Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe attended the event as well.

Stephen Harper was in Saskatoon. When an English reporter asked Harper for his reaction to the artists' protests²⁴⁶ at his daily media conference, Harper replied:

"I think when ordinary working people come home, turn on the TV and see a gala of a bunch of people at, you know, a rich gala all subsidized by taxpayers claiming their subsidies aren't high enough, when they know those subsidies have actually gone up -- I'm not sure that's something that resonates with ordinary people."

Minutes later, when French reporters asked for the Conservative leader to repeat the response in French Harper declined but it was too late. Harper's English statement and his refusal to repeat it in French would go on to be called his "double discours" throughout the rest of the campaign by his political opponents.

Day 17, September 23 – Close-Up

²⁴⁵ On September 23, 2008 as part of his daily e-mail feedback Michel Auger wrote "1000 persons at a concert protesting cuts in culture (largest crowd of the campaign so far in Québec, at least, probably in Canada too)" Analysis of these leads follows this chapter

²⁴⁶ In particular, Harper was talking about the Quebec Gémeaux awards, earned live on television September 14, the weekend before "Culture en Peril" came out. This is the "gala" Harper is referring to in his following statement. For more background see Richard Thérien, "Prix Gémeaux. les artistes enragé comme Harper," *Le Soleil*, September 15 2008, accessed July 15, 2011, <http://www.cyberpresse.ca/le-soleil/arts-et-spectacles/television-et-radio/200809/15/01-21278-prix-gemeaux-les-artistes-enrages-comme-harper.php>

A closer examination of coverage that day shows the lead stories of the two programs aligned as Quebec artists gathered for their protest concert called “contre les coupures” (against the cuts) – perhaps the largest campaign event to date. It demonstrated once more how the story focuses tended to diverge on the (rare) occasions the two programs undertook the same issue.

The National framed the defence of culture as a mobilization movement growing across the country. Peter Mansbridge opened with the statement

“the economy may be the number one concern among voters in this election -- health care, the environment are up there too -- but culture is getting more attention than usual this campaign.”

The report by CBC’s Rosemary Barton introduced English audiences to the video “Culture en Peril” for the first time — by then almost a week old and at half a million hits on YouTube. Barton described the culture backlash as a growing election issue throughout Canada “but perhaps strongest in Quebec.” CBC reporter Terry Milewski followed up with a “reality check” report weighing the impact of the cuts to programs against the government claim there had actually been increases in spending. Milewski came to a more neutral conclusion compared to SRC’s Catherine Kovacs in her report two weeks earlier. During his stand-up Milewski said “the cultural budget has not really been slashed as the opposition claims nor has it been boosted as the Tories claim.”

In contrast, *Le Telejournal* devoted more than 9 minutes to this single issue. Anchor Bernard Derôme began by suggesting “culture” had become a key issue in the campaign – “at least in Quebec.” The line-up began with a story by Emmanuelle

Latraverse which showed footage of a francophone reporter at the Harper media conference trying to get the Conservative leader to repeat his comments about “rich artists” in French, and Harper refusing to accommodate. Latraverse then included a clip of Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe accusing Harper of having a “double discours.” “Harper could not be further away from Montreal tonight,” said Latraverse. Subsequent stories in the line-up included a clip of NDP leader Jack Layton promising to restore funding if elected. Then the line-up featured a ‘live’ from the red carpet outside the on-going protest concert in Montreal, featuring SRC’s arts and culture journalist Tanya Lapointe. The ‘live hit’²⁴⁷ lasted four and a half minutes, and included clips of artists slamming the Harper government on stage at the event. Lapointe included a clip of comedian Daniel Lemire saying “it would be nice if the Conservatives could present more than just the army abroad.” Michel Rivard, the singer featured in “Culture en Peril,” appeared in a clip telling the audience the video was made (translation) “in solidarity with those who are victims of the cuts (to programs) and future victims, () if we keep up this slide to the right in Quebec, films won't be made, artists will be muzzled ()” The final story in the focus on culture on *Le Telejournal* took a self-reflective angle. It examined why this story had not gotten any traction in the rest of Canada. It included clips of English Canadian film-makers, singers and actors. Film maker Atom Egoyan suggested Quebecers are more willing to support culture because it is part of Quebecois identity. Singer Martha Wainwright also appeared saying Quebecers have a deep understanding for why culture should be protected.

²⁴⁷ A ‘live hit’ is a real time cable, satellite- or microwave transmitted link up with a reporter live into a show from the scene of an event.

Day 19, September 29 – Close Up

Two days later, (day 19) the programs diverged significantly again, although both programs led with the economy²⁴⁸ Harper's approach to youth crime received special treatment on *Le Tj* Election news coverage on the French network began with two reports dealing with the Conservatives "tough-on-crime" platform SRC's Catherine Kovacs used a clip of Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe suggesting Quebec had reached a consensus ("le consensus Québécois") about how to treat young offenders, adding that under the Harper plan prisons would become "universities for crime." Harper responded in the report insisting a Conservative law would only deal with young offenders convicted of serious crimes. Next, a "reality check" report by SRC's Vincent Maisonneuve focused on Quebec's Youth Reform Program, humanizing the issue through the experience of one young offender. Later in the program, Michel Auger offered analysis of how the young offenders' platform along with culture compounded the Conservatives image problem among Quebecers. Auger also discussed how the polls began showing significant gains for the Bloc Québécois over the Conservatives in the province.²⁴⁹

The National's election coverage began with two reports on campaign gaffes First Keith Boag focused on NDP candidate Michael Byers' speech to journalism students suggesting the Alberta tar sands should be shut down – conflicting with the NDP

²⁴⁸ Interestingly, *Le Telejournal* featured a Quebec-centric "reality check" on the economy, centering on how Quebec's massive investment in infrastructure spending could buffer the province from the worst of the economic downturn

²⁴⁹ The most recent polls had shown the Bloc 9 points over the Conservatives, where they had been neck and neck a week prior Belanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc," 145

platform. CBC reporter Paul Hunter followed with a story on Conservative candidate Lee Richardson's suggestion that immigrants were responsible for increasing crime rates in Canada. Two copy stories followed, both on the same theme: the first about an NDP candidate, Andrew McKeever, using rude language on Facebook; the second about Liberal candidate Lesley Hughes comments from 2003 that Israeli and other international intelligence organizations knew about the 9-11 attacks before they happened.²⁵⁰

The National did not focus on the Conservative crime platform.²⁵¹ Interestingly, this same day top English film and television performers met in Toronto to condemn the Harper government's cut to arts programs, however, a story on the event did not make it onto the line-up of *The National*.

The issue of Quebec and culture, however, dominated the weekly "At Issue" panel. The discussion began with pollster Allan Gregg explaining Harper's tactics of "wedge politics" pitted rural voters against urban elites. Chantal Hébert suggested the tactic backfired in Quebec. Andrew Coyne contradicted Hébert saying he felt Quebecers were likely more concerned about the economy along with most Canadians, but Hébert defended her position, telling the English audience that Quebec is the one region in the country where "culture counts" and the Conservatives could lose votes over the issue. As demonstrated on this day, Chantal Hébert's contribution to *The*

²⁵⁰ Dion was heavily criticized for his handling of the Hughes affair. After calls for her resignation from the Conservatives and negotiations with the Canadian Jewish Congress, Hughes found out she was let go as a candidate through the media. For details see Bruce Campion-Smith, "Dion drops candidate over 9/11 remarks," *The Toronto Star*, September 26, 2011, accessed July 17, 2011, <http://www.thestar.com/FederalElection/article/506806>

²⁵¹ The platform on young offenders had actually been released on Monday, September 22, three days earlier

National consistently highlighted the Quebec reality and its consequences for the show's audience. Viewers had few other opportunities to hear what was happening on the ground in Quebec, despite the implications on Harper's hopes for a majority.

SECTION TWO – THEMES

As illustrated by coverage on *Le TJ*, the issue of Harper's spending cuts to cultural industries was being transformed – now along with the Conservatives youth crime platform -- into a discussion about defending Quebec's identity and interests, reflected through comments by the opposition parties. The Liberal leader, Stéphane Dion toured the province on day 19, borrowing from the Bloc play book telling Quebeckers "Harper must be stopped." He even used Quebec identity language on the larger English Canadian audience. His clip appeared in Rosemary Barton's story that day:

"We need to stop this man. He wants to pit everyone against everyone: Canadians against artists, but we are speaking about our identity."

The NDP retuned its message even earlier. By the end of the weekend following the appearance of the "Culture en Péril" YouTube video, the NDP paid for advertising on Montreal metro video billboards portraying the Conservatives as 'culture killers,' changing the party name in the ad from "les Conservateurs" to "les Conservateurs" (tueurs meaning *killers*)

The main beneficiary of this transformation of meaning, however, seemed to be the Bloc Québécois.

Quebec pollster Raynald Harvey, the president of Segma Research, suggested during the campaign:

(translation) “Normally \$45 million in cuts isn’t a big issue for voters, but by touching on culture, emotions start to come in, and for nationalists, questions of identity are fundamental ”²⁵²

By the third week of the campaign, the Bloc had packaged the culture spending issue with the Conservative’s platform proposal for new tougher young-offenders legislation (unveiled Monday September 22) to form a ballot box question that asked voters to choose between “us” and “them ” Consider Gilles Duceppe’s statement to reporters the morning of September 24

“Quebec's visions and Stephen Harper's visions oppose each other That's why in Quebec, the vast majority think that, we must not give Stephen Harper a blank cheque We must keep him in close check ”

In the following weeks, Duceppe’s rhetoric would get harsher and harsher against the Conservatives generally and against Stephen Harper particularly On the eve of the debates, for instance, a story on *Le Telejournal* with a clip of Duceppe suggested Harper would reopen the abortion issue Harper denied the accusation in the report The story never appeared on *The National*, likely because it originated with the Bloc

The polls following the third week began showing an attitude change among Quebec voters The Bloc Quebecois, floundering in the first week with stories on *Le TJ* about its relevance, rebounded now in the polls. By the end of the third week, the Bloc experienced a resurgence in the polls while the Conservatives began losing momentum.²⁵³

²⁵² Denis Lessard, “Stephen Harper en chute au Quebec,” *La Presse*, October 10, 2008, accessed July 17, 2011, http://www.cyberpresse.ca/actualites/elections-federales/enjeux/sondages/200810/10/01_28193-stephen-harper-en-chute-au-quebec.php

²⁵³ Belanger and Nadeau, “The Bloc,” 145

On *The National*, this middle section of the campaign featured a large number of reports about campaign gaffes,²⁵⁴ more often handled with simple copy on *Le TJ*. The economy deserved attention not just in news reports but in panel discussions as well as “reality check” features. Other than the contributions of Chantal Hébert, and some coverage of Quebec polls, audiences of *The National* did not see much of the story unfolding in Quebec.

SECTION THREE – THE ROAD TO ELECTION DAY

The final campaign segment covers the period following the leaders’ debates through to election day. The divergences already present between the two programs continued through this period with some new differences – particularly in the treatment of the Liberal and Conservative leaders following the debates.

Often election debates can mark the turning point in a campaign. Certainly, millions of Canadians – French and English -- tuned in as demonstrated by the ratings for the two broadcasts. Stephen Harper had asked for more time during the debates to deal with economic issues, however, Stéphane Dion seemed to score most on the economy when he pulled out a five point economic plan to deal with the economic crisis during the French language debate.²⁵⁵ The polls reflected the *two solitudes* following the

²⁵⁴ By the end of week three, six candidates in eight days of various party affiliations came under attack – some forced to resign – because of current or past deeds. “Balance in News Coverage,” Erin Research, 6

²⁵⁵ David Herle on *The National*’s “The Insiders” panel, Chantal Hébert on *The National*’s “At Issue” panel, as well as Michel Auger during an analysis discussion on *Le TJ* each felt Dion’s plan was what voters were looking for to calm fears about the unfolding crisis. Media scholar Chris Waddell also makes this observation about the 2008 French debate, suggesting Canadians lacked confidence “It’s that lack of confidence that Stéphane Dion tapped into () by announcing a five-point plan to address future economic problems () (Canadians) sought confidence that their political leaders were aware of the pending downturn and realized how scared the public had become ()” Waddell, “The Campaign,” 238-239

debates, with Dion coming out on top during the French debate, and Harper winning the English debate. Following the French debate, Ipsos Reid found a plurality of viewers (mostly francophone) stating they felt Dion had won, looked the most prime ministerial, and offered the best policies.²⁵⁶ Angus Reid's poll came out with similar results for the French debate.²⁵⁷ Harper came in third or fourth place in the French debate depending on the poll.²⁵⁸ Following the English debate, Canadians (mostly English) told pollsters Harper won. Dion came in a distant third in the Angus Reid poll following the English debate.²⁵⁹

During analytical discussion on *Le Tj* the following Tuesday (the final week of the campaign) senior correspondent Michel Auger noted the Liberals were going up a point a day in Quebec polls, while Harper was dropping a point a day. He also noted Dion seemed to have more passion in his campaign since the debate. But increased interest in Dion appeared on the English network as well. In a news report the Friday following the debate, CBC reporter Susan Bonner mentioned a bump in polls for the Liberal leader, and included a quote from Dion saying "Harper can be beaten." The following Monday –

²⁵⁶ Ipsos Reid/CanWest News Service surveyed French-speaking Canadian voters who watched Wednesday night's French-language leaders' debate, finding 40 per cent of those polled said Liberal leader Stéphane Dion won the debate, with Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe at 24 per cent, Conservative leader Stephen Harper at 16, NDP leader Jack Layton at 11 and Elizabeth May at 1 per cent. Andrew Coyne, "Débats des chefs, premières réactions," *Macleans* ca, accessed July 15, 2011 *Macleans* ca at <http://www2.macleans.ca/2008/10/02/debat-des-chefs-premiers-reactions/>

²⁵⁷ Angus Reid suggested more Canadians watching the French debate said Dion was the winner at 32 per cent "Canadians say Harper won English debate, Dion the French version," Angus Reid, accessed July 15, 2011, http://www.visioncritical.com/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/2008_10.04_Debates.pdf

²⁵⁸ The result for Harper in the Angus Reid poll during the French debate was worse than the result in Ipsos Reid Dion came in first with 32%, then Duceppe with 27%, followed by Layton at 16%, Harper at 10%, and finally Elizabeth May brought up the rear with 2%

²⁵⁹ "Canadians say Harper won" Angus Reid Harper was the clear leader in the on-line poll following the English debate with 34%, Jack Layton came in second with 19%, followed by Stéphane Dion with 14%, just a single point higher than the Green Party's Elizabeth May with 13% Finally Gilles Duceppe received 1% support.

the final week of the campaign, *The National's* Keith Boag noted at the end of his report that Dion was making “a surprising surge in the final days of this campaign ” However it isn't clear whether Dion's uptick in the polls during this period came in reaction to his performance during the debate or simply the outcome of an accumulation of the self-inflicted wounds by the Conservative team particularly over the issue of the economy How the two programs dealt with the Conservative troubles showed once more, divergence between the shows

Day 31, October 7, 2008 – Close Up

On this Tuesday of the final week of the campaign, the two programs diverged in many of the same ways shown to date Now, there also emerged a difference in the treatment of the leaders themselves, in particular, Stephen Harper and Stephane Dion

On this day, Harper unveiled the entire Conservative platform In it he deviated from his “stay-the-course” program with a spending promise to assist the manufacturing sector²⁶⁰ *The National* began its show with a political story about the platform by Keith Boag, including Harper's message with opposition reaction Later in the program, a closer look at the Conservative platform by Paul Hunter began with an intro from Peter Mansbridge saying that while much of the platform contained a lot of previously announced programs, “there were new ones today” The intro contrasted with the text read by *Le Telejournal* host Bernard Derôme for its report on the Harper platform

“The deepening economic crisis and the recession – we now think will be inevitable – has not changed Stephen Harper's plans One single economic

²⁶⁰ Harper's Finance Minister Jim Flaherty had already announced the same week the government would be aiding the banking sector by buying up some mortgages

measure was introduced (...) Stephane Dion voiced today what many already think: “too little too late.”

The National left much of the criticism of the Conservative platform to the other party leaders in the Boag report. *Le TJ*, however, also featured an analysis interview with senior correspondent Michel Auger who made the point himself. He suggested Canadians losing their pensions wanted more from the Conservative platform. He also made much of the fact that Harper waited so long to release it.

This day also featured longer one-on-one interviews with Stephen Harper. The interview lasted 12 minutes on *Le TJ* and 26 minutes on *The National*. Both interviews concentrated more than two-thirds of their content to questions about the economy, but the two interviews diverged significantly as well.

One-on-one with Stephen Harper – Close-up

Both programs had feature interviews with each party leader. These interviews did not tend to coincide on the same day on both programs, however, this is what happened with Stephen Harper. Harper appeared on both *Le TJ* and *The National* Tuesday, October 7, (day 31) setting up a good opportunity to compare the two programs approach to interviews generally and the Conservative leader, particularly.

The interview with CBC’s Peter Mansbridge²⁶¹ included several questions about Harper’s decision to continue his “stay-the-course” message despite the international context, where governments around the world were intervening to stabilize their

²⁶¹ *The National* used a format where audience members gave pre-taped questions for the leader, however, Stephen Harper refused to participate in that format, and host Peter Mansbridge told audiences the day of the interview *The National* decided to acquiesce to Harper’s demand for a simple one-on-one interview in the public interest

banking systems. During this portion of the interview Harper made a comment that would be used against him throughout the final week of the campaign. Harper told Mansbridge the market spiral could actually present some good buying opportunities for investors. Mansbridge asked “are you sure you want to be saying that?” Harper defended his statement. The opposition parties used the comment through the final week of the campaign to portray Harper as insensitive to Canadians either concerned about their retirement savings, or losing their jobs in the manufacturing sector. Both the French and English network used the clip from the Peter Mansbridge interview the final week in order to frame the opposition attacks.

Another significant element of that interview took place toward the end, when Mansbridge asked Harper whether he regretted his comment on September 23 regarding “rich” artists. Mansbridge explained he asked the question because it had been suggested it may have cost the Conservative leader support in Quebec. It was one of the few times *The National* raised the issue of culture as a significant factor in the upcoming vote. Stephen Harper said he didn’t like the way the message had been “torqued,” suggesting a media influence. He further said “I think I may have gotten baited into an argument instead of discussing our policies.”

Le Telejournal’s host Bernard Derôme had a somewhat more aggressive style with Stephen Harper. Consider his first question

(translation) “Mr Harper, you made the decision to end your government’s term, you’re the master of this contest, you’re the master of your platform, is it reasonable, is it even democratic, to wait until one week before the election to release your platform?”

His second question asked hypothetically, should the economy get worse, (translation) “what’s left, cut spending? You have no manoeuvring room!”²⁶² On the issue of Harper’s “stay the course” approach to the international economic situation, Derôme said his own son felt Harper “est trop cool ” in the face of the crisis Harper remained calm throughout the Derôme interview, even in the face of questions such as “And where’s the compassion in all of this?” On the culture issue, Derôme asked “You turned off a lot of Canadians – a lot of Quebeckers – with the culture question, what’s the problem there?” Harper responded with a slightly different answer to the question on the same issue in English described earlier Harper said he felt there was a lot of “disinformation” and enumerated policy announcements in cultural programs

In general, it’s fair to say the Mansbridge interview featured more neutral open-ended questions that began with *how*, *why* and *what* Mansbridge’s first question asked “There’s a lot of fear out there, people worried about their jobs, their savings, their homes, what do you personally do to try and identify with those people ” Compare that to Derôme, who on the same issue said to Harper, “people tell me they want you to be more reassuring, you’re their leader, afterall ” This difference in style illustrates the discussion in chapter four about journalists and how they see their roles

Day 32, October 8, 2008 – Close-Up

The following day demonstrated a growing divergence in the treatment of Stephen Harper and Stephane Dion by the programs in the final week *Le TJ* included a

²⁶² The question referred to the Conservative platform that promised to not increase taxes, and not allow deficit spending Economists had been speculating on how much manoeuvring room that left the government without cutting program spending

package of several reports depicting Harper and the Conservatives clearly in a defensive position, while Dion seemed to have momentum. *The National*, however, did not portray Harper in as vulnerable a position.

On this day the economy led both newscasts with international governments (including Canada) simultaneously lowering central bank interest rates to ensure the availability of credit for borrowers. *The National* began its election coverage with Mansbridge suggesting “the issues have narrowed to one,” the economy. The report by senior correspondent Keith Boag led with a Liberal event²⁶³ and focused on the Liberal message that the party has experience handling the economy during tough times. Harper appeared in the item countering the Liberal message, suggesting the Liberal “Green Shift” program would hurt the economy.

Le Téléjournal also led its election coverage with a report on the Liberals highlighting an invigorated campaign that had a more aggressive approach against Harper. It suggested Harper was on the defensive. SRC reporter Philippe Leblanc added a passionate clip from Dion to Quebeckers to join him in beating Stephen Harper. SRC’s Daniel L’Heureux followed with a report in which he replayed Harper’s clip from *The National* interview with Mansbridge. L’Heureux suggested Harper was still dealing with the repercussions of that remark. The next item by SRC journalist Daniel Thibeault featured the Bloc Québécois. The report included a media conference put together by the Conservative candidates in the Quebec City region wanting to “set the record

²⁶³ The event included Paul Martin former Prime Minister and Liberal finance minister responsible for consecutive budget surpluses

straight” following repeated statements by Duceppe and the Bloc Québécois. “Ça dépasse les limites” (translation: “it’s gone too far”) complained Josée Verner – one of a handful of Conservative cabinet ministers from Quebec. By this time, Duceppe had been in reports suggesting the Harper government would bring back the abortion issue, calling Harper a liar, and accusing the Conservatives of engaging in cultural genocide. At the end of the report, Thibeault said Duceppe had been solidifying his message that Harper and the Conservatives values did not match Quebec values.

Finally, the election package ended with another analysis interview with Michel Auger focused on Harper’s gaffe²⁶⁴ made during his interview on *The National* and its impact on the Conservative campaign in the final week. Auger went on to describe a transformation in Dion’s campaign: “même son anglais est amélioré!” (even his English has improved!). Auger repeated Dion’s message that perhaps he really could beat Harper: “reste à voir” (we’ll have to wait and see). Auger suggested as well that the media conference by the Conservatives in Quebec City showed desperation; a sign the Quebec campaign was in trouble.

Day 33, October 10, 2008 – Close-Up

A one-on-one interview with Liberal leader Stéphane Dion by ATV (affiliated with CTV) in Halifax dominated this day’s coverage. During the interview, Dion appeared uncertain over the meaning of a question about how to handle the economy and asked several times to have it repeated. ATV decided to show the interview unedited “out of

²⁶⁴ Harper’s remark that the downturn in the markets presented a buying opportunity had come to be considered a gaffe in both language media.

public interest” despite making a commitment to Dion the producers would cut the repeated questions out. A lot has been written already about this incident, particularly over the ethics of the decision by ATV to renege on its deal with Dion and its subsequent impact on the campaign just a few days before election day. But there is another dimension to this incident – the *two solitudes* dimension – that is also significant for the purposes of this thesis.

Daniel L’Heureux discussed the incident during an interview for this analysis. L’Heureux had been assigned to the Conservatives during that final week, and on that day the Conservatives delayed the leader’s plane in order to allow journalists to watch the interview and see for themselves. L’Heureux says he watched the interview and phoned his assignment desk:

“I told them that I knew this was going to be a big story for the English media, and so we should cover it. But in my opinion, Dion was right about the question not being clear. It wasn’t even good English. But I looked around, and the English media had already decided Dion looked like a fool.”²⁶⁵

Then, according to L’Heureux, at a point in the campaign when Harper was giving very few media scrums, he made a statement criticizing Dion performance, and suggested it showed further evidence Dion wasn’t prepared to deal with the economy.

The National did the story that day showing a clip of the gaffe, and (while CTV aired the clip of Harper’s response) featured copy of what Harper had said. On the following day, a report by Terry Milewski about the Liberal leader described Dion’s agenda in terms of “recovering from yesterday’s gaffe.”

²⁶⁵ Daniel L’Heureux, Interview, July 12, 2011

Le Téléjournal did the story similarly the first day. The following day, Philippe Leblanc's report showed the Bloc's Gilles Duceppe using the issue to bolster his attack on Harper and the Conservatives. Duceppe said it was a low blow when so many Conservative ministers struggle in French: "I always said there are two official languages in Ottawa: English and translation." In this way, while the incident seemed to bolster the "not-a-leader" characterization of Dion by the Conservatives through the English media, it seemed to provoke sympathy towards Dion as seen through the French media.

SECTION THREE – THEMES

During the final stage of the campaign, the two programs continued to diverge, now in new ways. The programs featured qualitative differences in their treatment of Dion and Harper in the final week, with Harper seen far more on the defensive on *Le TJ* versus *The National*, and at the same time, a much more sympathetic treatment of Dion appeared on *Le TJ*.

Not only did Harper have to fight attacks from Gilles Duceppe. Harper continued to be the target of a "guerre des mots" (war of words) from the Premier of Quebec on the Radio-Canada newscasts. Jean Charest appeared once more on October 6 in the final week with his shopping list of demands to the federal government. Harper tried to fight back saying Charest had his own political agenda with a provincial election looming.

This final period capped off a consistent pattern of divergence between the two networks programs in line-up, choice of stories, and story focus.

The Lead Project

This analysis has shown major divergences between *Le Téléjournal* and *The National* during the campaign, including different focus as well as story choice. Did these *two solitudes* extend beyond the decisions of the senior line-up editors of the programs – in particular, to the working journalists following the campaign?

For 25 days of the campaign, two journalists, Michel C. Auger (lead political correspondent with Radio-Canada) and Julie Van Dusen (a veteran political correspondent with CBC) participated in the research for this paper. At the end of each day, they wrote an e-mail with a subject line that read: “Today’s Lead” revealing their own choice for what they thought should be the “lead story” for that day.

The following are sample leads chosen from some of the days highlighted already in this thesis.

Day 11 - September 17:

Van Dusen: *“Bedeviled by the deficit-who can best keep Canada’s boogeyman at bay”*
Auger: *“Harper talks about culture in QC, does not even mention his budget cuts, still very sore point with QC gvt”*

Day 17 – September 23:

Van Dusen: *“Culture cuts-does anyone care”*
Auger: *“1000 persons at a concert protesting cuts in culture (largest crowd of the campaign so far in Québec, at least, probably in Canada too)”*

Day 18 – September 24:

Van Dusen: *“Battleground BC-could the Dion carbon tax blow the Liberals off the map?”*
Auger: *“Polls show Liberals fourth in BC, third in QC while Bloc is on the upswing. Seems like that culture thing is not just a “Plateau” thing after all.”*

Day 32 – October 8:

Van Dusen: “*Can Stephen Harper turn it around?*”

Auger: “*Harper takes fire from all sides on aftermath of his "there are bargains on the market" gaffe.*”

Many of these responses reflect the differences that appear on the program line-ups of the two shows. For further analysis, answers from the daily leads were tabulated according to eight categories, including whether there is mention of four parties – the *Conservatives*, the *Liberals*, the *NDP* or the *Bloc*, or mention of the following issues: the *Economy*, *Culture*, *Quebec* or *Other*.

The results suggested the two overlapped predominantly through mentions of the Liberal and Conservative Parties. There were issues, however, where one dominated over the other, reflecting, in fact, coverage by their own media outlets. For example, CBC’s Julie Van Dusen out-paced SRC’s Michel Auger in mentions of the *Economy* by 2 to 1. CBC’s Van Dusen never mentioned the Bloc, where SRC’s Auger mentioned the party on three occasions. The province of Quebec and Culture are both mentioned three times more by SRC’s Auger. See figure 2 below:

This is in no way meant to be a scientific measure, but only an observation of how the senior working journalists assess leads, and how closely their views reflect the decision-making process of their larger organizations.

Graphic: The Lead Project

	Cons	Libs	NDP	Bloc	Economy	Culture	Quebec	Other
WEEK#1								
Day#1	SUN	..						
#2	V A	V						V
#3	V A							V
#4				A			A	V
#5	V A	A						
#6	A				V A			
WEEK#2								
#9	A				V A			
#10		A			V			
#11	A				V	A	A	
#12		A						V
#13	V A	V						
WEEK#3								
#15	A	V A						
#17						V A	A	
#18		V		A		A	A	
#19					V			
#20		A			V			

WEEK#4								
	A			A	V		V	
1	V A						V A	
1/2		> > > >	>>>>	>>>>	>>>>>	> > >	V A	>>>>
1/6		> >	>>>>>	>>>>>	>>>>>	> >>>	>>>>>	>>>>
1/7		V	V					
WEEK#5								
1/8	V A				V A			
1/31	V A							
1/52	V A						A	
1/30								V A
1/34		V			A			
Totals	8 vs 13	6 vs 5	1 vs 0	0 vs 3	8 vs 4	1 vs 3	2 vs 6	
	Cons	Libs	NDP	Bloc	Economy	Culture	Quebec	Other

Chapter 6: Analysis of the 2008 Campaign Coverage

As illustrated in the preceding examination, substantial differences existed between *Le Téléjournal* and *The National* in their coverage of the 2008 election campaign. The differences occurred in both focus and subject. In the end, the emerging themes produced profoundly different campaign narratives.

The opening day of the campaign offered a perfect example of differences in focus. It was one of the only days where line-ups matched, and both had a full report on each of the main party leaders. However, stories on *The National* focused on leadership issues and *Le TJ* focused on Quebec-centric themes – particularly, what the parties offered Quebec.

The *two solitudes* emerged even more profoundly over story selection. Following the first day, the line-ups rarely overlapped. An issue featured high in the line-up by one would be either ignored or reduced to copy in the other. The treatment of the issue of culture and youth crime in Quebec on *Le TJ* versus campaign gaffes, the economy and leadership on *The National* are the best examples.

When the English broadcast finally did note the culture story, the report covered it as a Canada-wide issue, not as a Quebec phenomenon. Consider the Rosemary Barton report, for example, which included a French clip of Quebec singer Ariane Moffatt translated as “it’s a hot issue because we’re proud of our identity.” Moffatt actually said: “c’est chaud parce que je pense qu’on a une identité unique et on est très fier” (it’s hot because I think we have a unique identity and we’re very proud.) It’s a subtle

difference, but including the phrase “we have a unique identity” would have turned the protest into a particularly Quebec confrontation

Moreover, the line-ups and story treatment by the two broadcasters seemed to reflect their same-language competitors more than each other. This took place on September 19, when the video “Culture en Peril” led *Le TJ*, while *The National* led with the economy and its election coverage focused on the emerging NDP problems over candidates appearing on POT-TV. *CTV National News* did not cover the “Culture en Peril” story though it did have a report about POT-TV. TVA, *Le TJ*’s largest competitor in French meanwhile, led its election news package with the story of “Culture en Peril.” Interviews with journalists working with the English networks in Quebec say they flagged the story developing in Quebec to assignment desks (mostly located) in Toronto. At the same time, Radio-Canada’s assignment desk was well aware of the stories being developed by the English services.

Nancy Wood, *The National*’s Montreal correspondent said she had been sent the video link to “Culture en Peril” and knew from the chatter on the talk shows that this was developing into a story in Quebec. She says she pitched the story for the program, but “they really weren’t interested.”²⁶⁶ Chantal Hebert, *Toronto Star* columnist on the weekly “At Issue” panel said she phoned Peter Mansbridge, the anchor of the program, to personally flag the story. “It just wasn’t something that resonated with their viewers

²⁶⁶ Wood was assigned to cover the Bloc in the campaign, and was the program’s Quebec correspondent based in Montreal. On that particular day she said during an interview she had flagged the issue early but had been assigned a non-election story about how tainted milk from China had reached Canada. Nancy Wood, Interview, July 10, 2011

at that point,” she said during an interview²⁶⁷ Both programs seemed to be guided by different news values, and as seen from the leads sent in by senior correspondents, that separate sensibility is seen among the rank and file journalists themselves

The campaign narrative that emerged in the end told different stories to different audiences Audience language, therefore, determined which issues dominated the two services of the public broadcaster

Who’s Holding the Fiddle?

It is also fair to suggest both programs followed the agendas of the politicians in determining the issues salient for voters In this way, the *two solitudes* exist with the messengers and their messages Consider that in English Canada, Stephen Harper outlined in the beginning of the 2008 campaign that this would be an election about the economy, and more particularly, “proven leadership in uncertain times”²⁶⁸ Although it is more than likely *The National’s* concentrated focus on the economy in the campaign came as much from the pull of world-wide events, the program did reflect the politicians’ agenda In Quebec, Stephen Harper delivered a message tailored to Quebec audiences His speech in Quebec City the opening day of the campaign focused on the opportunities for Quebecers in supporting the Conservatives and the impotence of the Bloc in delivering the goods to Quebec²⁶⁹ *Le Telejournal’s* emphasis on measuring how well the parties serve Quebec’s interests can be linked in this way to the agendas set by

²⁶⁷ Chantal Hebert, Interview, November 23, 2008

²⁶⁸ L Ian MacDonald, ‘A Missed Rendezvous with a Majority,’ *Policy Options* (November 2008) , 26, accessed July 20, 2011, <http://www.irpp.org/po/archive/nov08/macdonald2.pdf>

²⁶⁹ Ellis and Woolstencroft, “Stephen Harper,” 46

politicians. The Bloc had the obvious advantage of having a leader who firstly, never had to consider the feelings of Canadians outside Quebec, and secondly, could deliver the party message inside the province every day while other party leaders were limited by their cross-country tours. Other leaders were not only hampered in delivering a consistent message shaped specifically for Quebec audiences, there were times when a message for another audience actually conflicted with messages aimed at Quebecers. Tough-on-crime legislation and culture are two examples of this. However, Quebec journalist Michel Auger points out one of the big failures of the Conservative campaign in Quebec was its inability to attract star candidates. (translation) “the presence of a strong Quebec team of candidates could have compensated for this shortcoming. It wasn’t the case.”²⁷⁰

As seen in chapter three, it is not uncommon for Canadian news organizations to be accused of following the agendas of the politicians. In their analysis of an earlier period of elections, media theorists Soderlund, Romanow, Briggs and Wagenberg concluded “() our data tend to characterize the electronic media as holding the fiddle for the politicians to play, rather than attempting to call the tune.”²⁷¹

Following the 2008 election campaign, Christopher Waddell’s analysis of media performance also found the media agenda continues to be strongly controlled by the agendas of the politicians. He suggests the media should abandon the leaders’ tours, as they close off reporters from voters. “captives of the candidates.” He says “election

²⁷⁰ Michel Auger, “Le Quebec du statu quo,” *Policy Options* (November 2008) 33, accessed July 20, 2011, <http://www.irpp.org/po/archive/nov08/auger.pdf>

²⁷¹ Soderlund et al, *Media and Elections* 72

campaigns still run the way they did thirty years ago and the media dutifully tag along, reporting in the same tired way.”²⁷²

Quebec-Ottawa Relations

In Quebec, it's clear from this analysis that a significant political actor is the premier himself. The premier of Newfoundland, Dany Williams, had a similar impact in 2008 on Newfoundland voters with his ABC campaign (“anything but Conservative”), but in Quebec, this provincial involvement in campaign coverage is more formalized. Federal election media coverage in Quebec typically incorporates the elite political correspondents covering the National Assembly. For example, Michel Auger, the network's National Assembly Bureau Chief at the time, contributed the regular federal campaign analysis interviews for *Le Téléjournal*. Senior National Assembly correspondent Josée Thibeault covered the premier's involvement in the campaign from the very first week.²⁷³ During this particular campaign, Jean Charest appeared in reports on *Le Téléjournal* almost each week of the campaign usually in conflict with the messages coming from the Conservative party's Quebec campaign. (In contrast, the premier did not appear on *The National*.) Charest, himself in a volatile minority government position at the time, held off the Quebec election call while the federal election campaign dominated the airwaves.²⁷⁴ Reporters such as Thibeault, however, frequently described Charest as clearly in campaign mode. Journalist Michel Auger

²⁷² Christopher Waddell, “The Campaign in the Media 2008,” in *The Canadian Federal Election of 2008*, ed. Jon Pammett et al. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2009), 253

²⁷³ Thibeault's first report appears the end of week one, on Friday, September 12, and focused on how the premier of Quebec had entered the race criticizing Harper on the culture issue before the issue had even been picked up by the BQ. It was followed later in the show by an analysis by Michel Auger about what the premier had to gain by getting involved in the federal campaign.

²⁷⁴ The Quebec provincial election took place on December 8, 2008.

explained late in the first week of the federal campaign on *Le Téléjournal* that the Liberal Premier had a dual interest in attacking Stephen Harper's Conservatives. For one thing, the Conservatives – in lieu of much of a party infrastructure in Quebec²⁷⁵ – had aligned themselves with the conservative-leaning ADQ Party following the 2007 provincial election, abandoning much of their relationship with Jean Charest and the Liberal "Big Red Machine."²⁷⁶ With the relationship cooled between the two leaders, Charest may have preferred Harper in a minority position, matching his own volatility in the National Assembly. For another thing, the culture issue had given Charest an opportunity to set himself as the only true defender of Quebec interests.

Le Téléjournal did on some occasions break away from the agenda set by politicians. An example took place on September 16, when the lead election story featured an investigation of the dilapidated state of the federally-funded Champlain Bridge over the St. Lawrence River to Montreal. It included responses from the party leaders on what they would do to fix the problem – a story picked up by the francophone print press the following day.

A joint Globe and Mail – CBC investigation appeared on *The National* on September 24, as well as October 8 suggesting the listeriosis outbreak had been known

²⁷⁵ Since the Mulroney era, much of the federal Conservative Party presence in the province had disappeared

²⁷⁶ The Conservative leader had not been happy with Jean Charest after the Quebec premier turned around and handed the multi-billion dollar increase transfer payments from Ottawa as a generous tax cut to Quebecers in order to attract votes during the 2007 provincial election campaign. When the conservative leaning ADQ made a major breakthrough during that same election, becoming the official opposition over the Parti Québécois, the federal Conservatives began making ties with that party, Harper even attended an event with ADQ leader Mario Dumont in late 2007. By the time of the 2008 federal campaign, Jean Charest and his "Big Red Machine" were not working for the Conservatives as they had in the previous election, and turned Charest into one of Harper's fiercest critics during the campaign. See Ellis and Woolstencroft, "Stephen Harper," 36, also, Bélanger and Nadeau, "The Bloc," 156.

by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency long before it was reported to the public. However, the story appeared in the news section of the program, and did not elicit responses from the parties vying for election (*Le Téléjournal* picked up the story the same day.) To be fair, *Le Téléjournal* has the advantage of being able to take on very local Quebec issues that *The National* would never get away with without immediate cries of being irrelevant to national audiences.

The Meaning of Culture during the 2008 Election Campaign

Since one of the key divergences in coverage occurred over the issue of culture in the 2008 campaign, it is worth taking a closer look at how culture may have been interpreted differently by English and French audiences.

Paul Nesbitt-Larking describes three definitions of the word culture. The first is related to what is considered “high culture,” that is, the work produced by artists. A second definition, according to Nesbitt-Larking is “the general process of intellectual, spiritual, and artistic development of a people.” He refers here to the definition of the expression: “Canadian culture.” Finally, and more broadly, culture is a way of life specific to a group “in terms of those practices and artefacts through which they express their being.”²⁷⁷ Following is, once again, the controversial statement by Stephen Harper on culture in order to deconstruct its meaning by the two audiences.

“I think when ordinary working people come home, turn on the TV and see a gala of a bunch of people at, you know, a rich gala all subsidized by taxpayers claiming their subsidies aren't high enough, when they know those subsidies have actually

²⁷⁷ Paul W. Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics, Society and the Media: Canadian Perspectives* (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2001), 84.

gone up -- I'm not sure that's something that resonates with ordinary people ”

Stephen Harper is suggesting the issue of arts and culture funding is of limited interest and the purview of those defending “high culture,” which falls under the first definition explored by Nesbitt-Larking. It is a notion of culture that as a campaign issue should not warrant concern by reasonable thinking Canadians. “I’m not sure that’s something that resonates with ordinary people ”

This understanding of culture – and the reasonable right by a government to cut spending in this area – is put forward as accepted ideology. Nesbitt-Larking argues that ideologies are manufactured beliefs and values manipulated but founded from common “understandings of the world ” They are put into play in order to assert power. But in Canada, there are two separate “understandings of the world ”

Nesbitt-Larking considers culture and ideology as it is understood by media theorist Tony Bennett, who explained “the field of culture is a field of struggle, a sphere within which different practises of meaning-making with different ideological consequences and effects () vie with one another for dominance ”²⁷⁸

In this way, each audience decoded Harper’s statement differently. The notion of culture as it refers to this particular federal policy had already been “encoded” for days in Quebec thanks to the viral spread of the “Culture en Peril” video, followed by assertions by the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Liberal Party, and then further repeated by the Quebec media in a kind of feedback loop. The projected significance of

²⁷⁸ Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics* 86

culture in this context had been encoded in francophone Quebec to involve Nesbitt-Larking's second and third definitions of culture. In this way, defenders of Quebec culture asserted that interference with funding of the arts now signified an interference with "the general process of intellectual, spiritual, and artistic development of a people." To interfere with this definition of culture is to impede the aspirations and way of life of French Quebec, and how they "express their being."

Le TJ sometimes reflected on this very issue, for example, in SRC reporter Guy Gendron's report on "Culture en Péril" appearing September 19 in which he included a clip of Prof. André Lafrance from the Communications department of the Université de Montréal:

(translation) "Is this a message about how the government cut money from culture, or that the federal government is filled with anglophones and they don't understand Quebec; here the dossier has changed, right?"

This became a powerful ideological tool for the Bloc Québécois and its leader Gilles Duceppe in asserting why Quebecers should not vote for the Conservative leader. Consider more closely Duceppe's statement in a report the day following the protest concert:

"Quebec's visions and Stephen Harper's visions oppose each other. That's why in Quebec, the vast majority think that, we must not give Stephen Harper a blank cheque. We must keep him in close check."

A Quebec audience had pre-conceived understandings of the significance of culture in its struggle to survive as a nation, as already discussed in chapters three and

four. Therefore, in the “struggle for dominant meanings,” Duceppe had a clear advantage in presenting his argument to a Quebec audience.

Further, it was not unreasonable for Stephen Harper to assume his argument on the culture issue would resonate among many English-speaking Canadians, particularly rural voters – seen as a significant constituency for the Conservative party. In a survey commissioned by the *Calgary Sun*, the pollster asked “Should the feds increase spending on arts and culture?” Eighty-six per cent of those surveyed said no.²⁷⁹ A *National Post* article during the election campaign asked popular talk show hosts in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta how their own listeners responded to the decision to cut funding to arts. The hosts reported listeners supported the Harper government decision. Dave Rutherford, host of a top rated radio show aired throughout Alberta, responded: “the people who listen to me and respond to my program are in full agreement with the attitude of the Prime Minister in this case.”²⁸⁰ Bill Tieleman, former communications director and political strategist for the NDP in British Columbia under Premier Glen Clark, explained Harper’s target audience:

“These are the average, workaday Canadians in the suburbs, exurbs and rural regions -- those whose cultural experiences are more about TV’s *Survivor* than the Stratford Festival. (...) It is elites versus the ordinary people.”²⁸¹

Virtually the only dissenting voice challenging what seemed an accepted ideology regarding “cultural elites” were English artists themselves. They fought back

²⁷⁹ Kevin Libin, “Harper’s arts cuts, a populist move?” *The National Post*, September 27, 2008, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/fullcomment/archive/2008/09/27/kevin-libin-harpers-arts-cuts-a-populist-move.aspx>

²⁸⁰ Libin, “Harper’s arts cuts.”

²⁸¹ Libin, “Harper’s arts cuts ”

using very different arguments compared to francophone groups, struggling from within a different paradigm where culture for most Canadians is not connected to Canadian identity. In order to challenge the characterization of arts as the purview of elites, they made rational economic arguments: 1) that the arts as an industry contributes to Canadian wealth, 2) that artists are not elite or “rich,” but struggle to survive, and 3) finally that Canadians benefit as they are committed consumers of Canadian production from film to books to music.²⁸² There was not a lot of discussion about the protection of a “Canadian culture” or an identity as a people.²⁸³

A Tory strategist quoted anonymously in the *National Post* article said he delighted in watching the response from English artists who held a media conference in the days following the Prime Minister’s remarks:

“It’s so rich for them to be insulting and complaining that they’re not getting even more subsidy money than they already do, when average people are worried about economic uncertainty () If I had my way, I’d have them on the air six hours a day.”²⁸⁴

The problem for English artists, however, was more about lack of coverage than too much coverage. The largest event in English Canada took place September 25, and

²⁸² James Bradshaw, “Harper plays populist tune on arts cuts,” *Globe and Mail*, September 11, 2008, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/article708298.ece>

²⁸³ For a good sample of how English Canadian artists defended themselves from Harper’s comment about “rich artists” see Margaret Atwood, “To be creative is, in fact Canadian,” *Globe and Mail*, September 24, 2008, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/article712137.ece>, also “Stephen Harper’s use and abuse of culture,” 101 Reasons not to vote for Stephen Harper, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://100reasons.ca/101/>, also see Rob Benzies, “Ordinary folks don’t care about arts Harper,” *The Toronto Star*, September 24, 2008, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://www.thestar.com/FederalElection/article/504811>

²⁸⁴ Libin, “Harper’s arts cuts.”

it did not make it into the line-up of *The National* that night²⁸⁵ It is perhaps significant to note that artists in English Canada are not held in the same regard as francophone artists among Quebeckers. Quebec artists actively and openly participated, and continue to participate in Quebec politics. A member of the Radio Canada national election team, journalist Daniel Lessard, wrote about this in his political blog during the campaign. In a submission called “Les Artistes et Politique,” on September 22 he wrote

(translation) “In Quebec, artists were on the front lines in the advancement of the sovereignty movement. From Pauline Julien and Doris Lussier to Paul Piche, their influence was significant in Quebec.”²⁸⁶

The wide distribution of the YouTube video “Culture en Peril” can be credited to the enormous popularity of the artists featured in it, as well as the shared understanding of its themes. It included Quebec singer Michel Rivard, a member of the now disbanded group *Beau Dommage*, which enjoyed record-breaking album sales during the 1970s. The words of the song “La complainte du phoque en Alaska,” are well-known to Quebeckers, it is sung all together at concerts in a kind of anthem tribute to their shared cultural identity. The idea that Rivard, his band, nor his song would be recognized by English bureaucrats, as depicted in the video, or that the song’s essential meaning (*phoque* – seal – misunderstood as *f--k*) would be denigrated through translation to English, resonated as a metaphor for the classic Quebec myth about the dominant language group, and its disregard for Quebec culture. It plays on stereotypes and the deep-seated fear that the English are intent on destroying Quebec culture.

²⁸⁵ The event was covered by other platforms and programs of the CBC

²⁸⁶ Daniel Lessard, ‘Les Artistes et Politiques’ *Les Carnet*, September 22, 2008, accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/carnets/2008/09/22/106240.shtml>

Because of its popularity in French, a subtitled translation subsequently appeared on YouTube, but its themes did not resonate as well with English audiences, and some English artists were offended by its stereotypes of English Canadians²⁸⁷

Another aspect of Quebec dissent is the support from powerful players, including the premier. Jean Charest supported artists along with other members of the National Assembly from both sides of the aisle. They opposed federal cultural policy, and argued for cultural money to be transferred to the Quebec government.

Treatment of the Bloc Quebecois

As earlier discussed, there existed a quantitative difference between *The National* and *Le Telejournal* in their treatment of the Bloc Quebecois. It's worth considering this difference qualitatively in order to assess how this affected the campaign narrative.

On *The National*, other than the campaign launch day and the similar round-up reports appearing at the very end of the campaign, almost no stories focused exclusively on the Bloc. Gilles Duceppe did appear from time to time in reports reacting to issues, but infrequently. Even when discussing Quebec specifically, Duceppe often appeared only in visuals. Consider again, the report by Rosemary Barton that appeared September 23 regarding the artists' protest concert in Montreal. In that report, Barton

²⁸⁷ Brendan Kelly, *The Montreal Gazette* arts critic based in Montreal did an interesting critique of the video and its stereotypes of anglophones. He wrote "This is an issue that artists across the country agree on and it is NOT a French/English thing and to portray it as such is dishonest with gusts up to downright hysterical and anglophobic." See Brendan Kelly "What the phoque! Are you as offended by this clip as I am?" *The Montreal Gazette* September 27, 2008, accessed July 20, 2011, <http://blogs.montrealgazette.com/2008/09/22/what-the-phoque-are-you-as-offended-by-this-clip-as-i-am/>

used a clip from Harper, Dion and even Jack Layton, but none of Gilles Duceppe, who had the most to gain from the attack on culture in Quebec. Duceppe did appear in a visual following a clip from Layton condemning the cuts to culture programs. When the voice-over stated: “Layton is not alone... Duceppe has been attacking Harper on the issue in a bid to secure the nationalist vote,” there appeared a visual of Layton shaking hands with Gilles Duceppe; Duceppe, in other words, had to share his spotlight. Also, the voice-over statement “...in a bid to secure the nationalist vote,” implied that Quebeckers who support the party support its sovereigntist ambitions, a notion that risks catering to a frequent misunderstanding among English Canadians about why Quebeckers support that party.²⁸⁸

However, since two thirds of Quebec seats went to the Bloc (for the third election in a row), while at the same time interest in sovereignty was at an all time low (below 35 per cent), a more nuanced understanding of Quebec voters’ intention seemed to be consistently missing from the anglophone election news narrative.

Certainly, coverage of the Bloc has limited relevance for most English Canadian voters. However, since the party seemed to be so central to the telling of the Quebec story in this and other elections, and since Quebec had figured so significantly in

²⁸⁸ To be clear, Rosemary Barton is perfectly bilingual, attended College universitaire de Saint-Boniface and spent years covering the National Assembly for both Global Television as well as the CBC – she has a clear understanding of the Quebec reality. However, while Barton may have a nuanced understanding of the word ‘nationalist,’ the popular understanding among English Canadians involves the idea of sovereignty or political separation. The word “nation” among Quebeckers refers to the collective “people of Quebec,” and so in this way “nationalism” means supporting the people and not necessarily the independence of the nation. A good example of this notion is the Quebec legislature and the library which are called respectively “L’Assemblée nationale du Québec,” and “Le Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec.”

defining what kind of government Canadians got on election day, the lack of coverage could leave English viewers with at best a stunted understanding of the election story. At worst, since the limited coverage that did exist often appeared through a negative frame -- for example, using phrasing such as "...in a bid to secure the nationalist vote" or descriptors such as "the separatist Bloc Québécois" Canadians got a negative impression of the party and by extension, the Quebeckers who voted for them.

However, one of the impediments to covering the Bloc – according to the journalists interviewed for this thesis who work for English news organizations in Quebec – is the attitude toward the party from assignment desks in Toronto.

The National's Quebec correspondent in 2008 -- Nancy Wood -- has close to 25 years experience working as a journalist both at the National Assembly and Parliament Hill. Her credits include *The Gazette*, *The Toronto Star* and *Macleans* magazine before going to the CBC. During the 2008 election campaign she was assigned to the Bloc and in an interview for this thesis described what it was like to pitch stories involving the party:

"I think there's a veiled hostility toward the Bloc. There's the sovereignty issue of course, but they think (the Bloc) have always had an easy ride, and I think they felt Quebeckers weren't critical enough; there was something illogical about (Quebeckers voting for the party).²⁸⁹

Daniel L'Heureux, now retired, worked for Radio-Canada for more than three decades. Since 1984, L'Heureux worked as a correspondent in Ottawa, including the

²⁸⁹ Nancy Wood, Interview, July 15, 2011.

period when Lucien Bouchard walked out on Brian Mulroney's Conservative Party to form the Bloc Québécois following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord constitutional negotiations. L'Heureux said the Bloc always had a legitimacy problem among English journalists.

"Even the most serious reporters questioned the right of Quebeckers to be elected who would challenge (national unity) and threaten to break up the country. In their minds, this was not a legitimate presence in Ottawa. The French reporter would never feel this way: 'You were elected, you pay taxes, you have the right to be there.' The English would hate to think about the idea that (the Bloc MPs) take a pension from the federal government or that they use public funds to promote their sovereigntist ideas."²⁹⁰

On the other hand, the omnipresence of the Bloc in Quebec federal election reporting on Radio-Canada is equally criticized. Christian Bourque has been a Quebec pollster since the 1995 referendum, and the firm where he currently works, Léger Marketing, was cited by election observers in 2008 as the most accurate in polling of Quebec voters.²⁹¹ Bourque said he felt "(the media) have a huge role to play to determine what is salient at a given point in time." He said the Bloc's sovereigntist vision may have only represented the minority, but they were "brilliant tacticians" at representing "le consensus Québécois;" a consensus manufactured by the Bloc. About the culture cuts, he said:

"So maybe there'll be fewer Quebec mimes walking around Paris, is that really a

²⁹⁰ Daniel L'Heureux, Interview, July 17, 2011

²⁹¹ L. Ian MacDonald wrote in a *Policy Options* article that Léger came out "the clear winner in the polling sweepstakes," for calling the election result three days before election day. MacDonald, "A Missed Rendez-vous," 31. Christian Bourque during an interview said Léger Marketing use larger population samples and accounts for Quebec regional differences, where other pollsters tend to over sample the francophone nationalist vote in smaller samples as a portion of Canada-wide surveys. Christian Bourque, Interview, July 20, 2011.

problem? But it was impossible to say that after that consensus around the culture cuts was built up by Le Bloc Québécois.”

The Quebec media may have been complicit in this, he said, because the Bloc became a kind of default go-to in order to balance reports in election coverage:

“If (the media) do a story on the Liberals and you want someone to react to it, we know the Bloc will react immediately if it has any impact in Quebec, so the Bloc is always the other side. (...) so in a way they get half of the election coverage; they’re always the counter to the Liberals, to the Conservatives, to the NDP. (They’re) very accessible, very vocal and very well organized when it comes to French language media.”

Nancy Wood said she noticed this phenomenon during the 2008 campaign:

“(Gilles Duceppe) would get much greater coverage, say, reacting to the Bush bailout package, but how relevant is his opinion? If you think about it logically, wouldn’t it make more sense to have the Premier of Quebec, the man who’s actually (...) in charge of our economy giving his opinion than the leader of the third or fourth party in Ottawa? So you know I would find that he would get a lot of coverage for things where he didn’t have much real impact.”

Christian Bourque says easy access to the Bloc on the culture cuts issue helped develop the story as a central theme during the 2008 campaign. He said media troll for stories that will resonate with audiences, and the 2008 campaign began with few of those “sticky” issues. The media did not create the culture cuts, he said, they just “throw the bait out” hoping someone will bite, and “if people get hooked the media play it more”:

“(The media) can blow up something if it creates excitement in the campaign. (...) but I don’t think the media coalesced with the Bloc on that issue. It was more the case that the Bloc fed the hungry giant and it continued over a few days.”

Daniel L'Heureux says the issue appealed most to the Bloc because it was related to Quebec identity:

“Because it’s related to identity and “nous et les autres” and to get the unity of your group you need an enemy and if you can identify Harper as the enemy, the enemy of culture, the enemy of youths, that’s what they’re hoping for.”

In this way the treatment of the Bloc Québécois created very different dynamics on *The National* and *Le Téléjournal* during the campaign. While the Bloc helped drive the culture story for French audiences, its absence on *The National* may have contributed to missing this campaign narrative for English audiences.

The Conservative Party and the Message

As already discussed, it would seem the media tended to hold “the fiddle for the politicians to play, rather than attempting to call the tune.”²⁹² If this is the case, one last look at the Conservative party sheet music may offer some insight at the dynamic that took place in the media in 2008. Michel Auger mentioned the Conservatives lack of political star candidates in the province. Because of the years shut out of Quebec following the Mulroney era, the party relied on the political machinery of the ADQ in many regions. The communications strategy was highly centralized, and only at the very end of the campaign did candidates in the Quebec City region fight back on their own without their leader against attacks by the Bloc Québécois, as demonstrated through the media conference in the final week.

²⁹² Soderlund et al, *Media and Elections*, 72.

Unlike the 2006 campaign where the Conservatives made the first inroads into the province with a platform promoting “open federalism,” the 2008 platform offered few Quebec-centric items.²⁹³ Meanwhile, other platform items such as its get-tough-on-crime strategy toward young offenders and the culture cuts received very negative press in Quebec. Former Conservative speech-writer and columnist, L. Ian MacDonald said the party had few people in the war room to vet the platform and the strategy for Quebec audiences. One communications strategy involved a vehicle with a billboard following the Bloc campaign bus around suggesting the Bloc had been a complete waste of taxpayers’ money over the years. MacDonald said it showed contempt for Quebec voters, and was quickly abandoned. MacDonald attended the media conference the day the Conservatives unveiled its young offenders’ strategy on September 22. MacDonald said the platform seemed to be well received by the English media but:

“The French questions were all ‘you’re gonna send kids to prison?’ and ‘what about those culture cuts?’ and I thought: ‘uh oh... incoming...’ and there were smart guys there who could see it coming, but in the war room they were completely witless. And only in the last week, with the crash in the stock market and Harper pounding the pavement in Quebec did they manage to save ten seats. They started (the election) hoping for thirty, but there was a point when they thought they’d only get five.”²⁹⁴

It may be worth comparing this strategy to the approach of the NDP. The NDP credit their enormous success in the 2011 election²⁹⁵ to the seeds planted in Quebec

²⁹³ Bélanger and Nadeau, “The Bloc,” 156.

²⁹⁴ L. Ian MacDonald, Interview, August 11, 2011

²⁹⁵ In the most successful election for the party ever, the NDP won a record 103 seats becoming the Official Opposition. More incredible still, having never won more than a single seat (and only in two previous elections), in 2011 the party picked up 59 seats in Quebec, almost wiping out the Bloc Québécois. The

during the 2008 election campaign. Leader Jack Layton no longer wanted to be seen as ‘the half’ in the ‘two-and-a-half’ party system;²⁹⁶ he said he wanted to be Prime Minister. The communications director for the party, Marc-André Viau says Quebec was a central part of that strategy. For the first time, the party decentralized communications, set up an office in Montreal, and hired a Quebec ad firm to handle the Quebec message for 2008. The popular “Conservateurs”²⁹⁷ advertising campaign was not just perfectly timed but for the first time, grabbed up some of the space taken up by the Bloc on the issue of culture.

“Because we knew it was important to understand inside Quebec, we wanted to find the right message for Quebec. It is different. There’s a different way of doing politics in Quebec. There’s a different way to talk to people. The media is different. So if we use only a generic message and copy paste it, it’s not going to work. So to spread our message it was important for us to decentralize and regionally organize our office in Montreal.”

Viau suggests wedge politics, as practiced²⁹⁷ by the Conservatives in 2008, was not a good strategy for Quebec:

“In the rest of Canada it works better than it works in Quebec. I think it’s easier to exploit wedge issues in Canada; it’s Alberta versus Toronto, it’s rural versus urban ridings. In Quebec you won’t be able to exploit those to your advantage because Quebec sees itself (in a national context) as a block.”²⁹⁸

Quebec MPs dominate the NDP caucus “Official Voting Results: 41st General Election,” Elections Canada, accessed June 11, 2011

²⁹⁶ Canada is considered to have a ‘two and a half’ party system, where historically two national parties (the Liberals and the Conservatives) have been elected to form government, and a third (the NDP), while able to influence policy, never electing enough MPs to form government.

²⁹⁷ Viau says the NDP for the first time competed with the Liberals and the Conservatives with a similar ad budget. It hired a Quebec firm to undertake advertising. The “Conservateurs” campaign began as a typo by one of the ad men. Marc-André Viau, Interview, August 12, 2011.

²⁹⁸ Marc-André Viau, Interview, August 12, 2011.

Following the 2008 election during the debate over the possibility of a Liberal led coalition taking over government, Harper seemed to employ wedge politics again. He tried to demonize the effort because it involved a deal with the Bloc Quebecois. By suggesting the Liberals were in bed with 'separatists' he alienated many Quebecers, since a plurality had supported that party for almost two decades, and even among those who did not, sovereignty is still seen as a legitimate option.

Following the 2011 election campaign, the Conservatives were reduced to a handful of Quebec seats. As described earlier in this thesis, the brokerage party system managed regional differences from within the parties in order to help win majority governments. The Conservatives have had minimal representation within the party from Quebec in order to do that. Without being able to manage differences from within, perhaps the party is left vulnerable to media scrutiny of their message shortcomings for Quebec audiences.

On the other hand, the Conservatives still obtained a majority in 2011, suggesting some vulnerability for the future of the brokerage party system. It's not clear what kind of threat this poses for national unity. Certainly the media in 2008 didn't do much to bring Canadians closer together.

In General

In general, the programs featured pronounced differences in story-telling during the election campaign of 2008. Much of the time, the line-ups diverged substantially with lead stories focused on different subjects. When the two shows did deal with the

same subjects, the story focuses diverged in important ways. While *The National* and *Le Téléjournal* diverged from each other, they had a lot in common with their same-language competitors in their respective markets. Both programs seemed more often than not, to follow the agendas of the politicians, and in Quebec, that included the Premier of Quebec and the Bloc leader. The Bloc became the default “other side” for many issues, giving it enormous power to drive the campaign narrative for French newsrooms while the Conservative Party faced a number of challenges with its Quebec campaign strategy.

It’s fair to say at this point, few examples demonstrate the CBC and Radio-Canada lived up to their mandate to foster “a shared national consciousness.”

Chapter 7: Conclusion

As mentioned previously in this thesis, election coverage at the public broadcaster is monitored for fairness and balance by outside researchers. The corporation has been routinely doing this exercise since 1993.²⁹⁹ Since 2004, however, the job has been split between two research organizations: Erin Research based in the Toronto region for the CBC, and the Université de Laval's "Centre d'études sur les médias," based in Quebec City for SRC. Both came to the same conclusion for the 2008 campaign. The Centre d'étude sur les medias analyzed all Radio-Canada platforms and programs including *Le Téléjournal*:

(translation) "To conclude, we find that the journalists of Radio-Canada covered the federal election campaign with rigour and balance, conforming to the rules of their profession."³⁰⁰

Erin Research made the same finding, adding a comment about the subjectivity inherent in such an exercise.

"All in all, CBC coverage of the 2008 campaign appears to be fair and balanced. There are no absolute standards for what a broadcaster ought to do in campaign coverage; it is a matter of informed judgment. Past journalistic practice is probably as good a guide as any, and by this standard, CBC coverage was on course, consistent with the 5 election campaigns since 1993."³⁰¹

The two research organizations, therefore, concluded the programs of the two services satisfied the rules to remain fair and balanced in the coverage of the 2008

²⁹⁹ Confirmation from Pat Zulmov, Erin Research, e-mail August 19, 2011

³⁰⁰ "Analyse de la couverture de la campagne électorale fédérale 2008 par la Société Radio-Canada," 20, CBC/Radio-Canada, accessed August 7, 2011, <http://www.cbc.radio-canada.ca/annualmeeting/Couverture-elections-federales-2008.pdf>

³⁰¹ "Balance in News Coverage of the 2008 Federal Election Campaign," Erin Research, 4, accessed August 7, 2011, <http://www.erinresearch.com/images/cbc.pdf>

election campaign.³⁰² Still, this thesis clearly demonstrated two distinct election coverage narratives during the 2008 campaign. This analysis showed differences in the choice of stories, as well as differences in story focus on those occasions when both covered the same subject. Stories that led *Le Téléjournal*, sometimes did not appear on *The National* and vice versa. Stories that appeared high on *The National* line-up received treatment through copy lower down the line-up of *Le Téléjournal* and vice versa. The general themes appearing on *The National* included campaign gaffes, issues of leadership, and a focus on the economy. *Le Téléjournal* developed themes around culture, federal-provincial relations, and youth crime. The two programs diverged in how they framed certain ideas and issues including culture, treatment of the Bloc Québécois, and the significance of provincial leaders. These differences follow many of the same distinctions consistently found in previous research as seen in chapter three.

These differences are not apparent through the analyses dealing with fairness and balance in political coverage undertaken separately by Erin Research and the Centre d'études sur les médias. As mentioned, the public broadcaster once had the same research company undertaking this job until 2004, but the public broadcaster decided to separate the task. During an interview for this thesis, the President of the CBC, Hubert Lacroix explained that because the two news environments and their markets are so

³⁰² As mentioned in chapter one, the rules of election coverage since the early 1990s as part of CBC Journalistic Standards and Practices, states "Particular care must be given to information programs during election or referendum campaigns. These series require close and meticulous attention to overall political balance. Quantitative checks are normally employed for guidance during election or referendum campaigns. Such quantitative checks must be supplemented by the exercise of qualitative judgments so that imbalance does not occur through the manipulation of events." "CBC Journalistic Standards and Practices," CBC/Radio-Canada, accessed November 22, 2008, <http://www.cbc-radio-canada.ca/docs/policies/journalistic/xml/policies.asp>

different, “we think that by doing it that way we get the best possible research and that’s more important than having something you can compare”³⁰³

The public broadcaster should be publicly accountable for issues of journalistic professionalism and balance examined in the two reports, and as such this work is a valuable exercise. This work measures some of the professional “journalistic creed” values assessed in chapter four. However, as seen during that discussion, the “creed” values do little to explain the differences in content between the two services following the same campaign. The separate reports measure journalistic rigour, not the mandate to foster a “national consciousness”

Yet, this part of the mandate had been a key goal from the inception of Canada’s public broadcasting as a nation-building project, and then reiterated in subsequent broadcasting acts. It is a mandate undertaken by states internationally. Consider again the words of the first head of the CBC board of directors, Leonard Brockington

“If Canadian (broadcasting) makes no lasting contribution to a better understanding between the so-called French Canadian and the so-called English Canadian, between the East and the West, then we have faltered in our stewardship”³⁰⁴

Unlike the commissioned studies on balance and fairness, this thesis’ undertook a comparative analysis of the content produced by the two services reporting on the federal election campaign – one of the few opportunities for national debate. It found

³⁰³ Hubert Lacroix, Interview, August 9, 2011

³⁰⁴ Jones, ‘Ethnic,’ 69

through qualitative analysis clear differences in coverage, and more over, not a lot of content that helped viewers understand “the other.”

Since Canadians pay for the public broadcaster, it’s worth considering how members of the public feel about its coverage of the federal election – one of the broadcaster’s primary democratic functions.

The French service ombudsman, Julie Miville-Dechêne in her annual report of 2008-2009 discussed the feedback from the public regarding Radio-Canada’s 2008 election campaign coverage. Miville-Dechêne said she received 20 complaints from audience members saying Radio-Canada showed bias in its reporting against the Harper government. Nine complaints suggested the NDP received insufficient coverage. Five citizens felt the Bloc Québécois did not receive just coverage; among them, one person who said the Bloc should receive equal amounts of coverage as the other major parties. Miville-Dechêne made clear the complaints did not represent a poll, simply a report on the people who made the effort to contact her office. However, she gives several samples that reveal how some citizens viewed how issues had been dealt with. A number of statements involved the issue of culture. For example:

(translation) “The public broadcaster depends in large-part on public funds, and this explains the sensitivity around the protests of artists (...) The news service is no longer giving us neutral nor quality information.” *Michel B.*

On the issue of the NDP coverage, one person wrote:

(translation) “Tonight you mentioned the Conservative rally which involved 500 people in Longueuil. Great. But meanwhile, we were twice that number – almost a thousand – meeting at the Club Soda in Montreal to greet Jack Layton. And you passed over that event with total silence. Why?” *Alexandre B.*

In the same annual report, the ombudsman included some of the findings of six citizen consultation committees which involved 30 members of the public put together to go over the 2008 election campaign coverage. The citizens, she reports, criticized the lack of diversity in the issues covered as well as the people chosen to discuss the issues. While they found the journalists competent, particularly in the “reality check” reports, they had negative comments as well. Here is an example of criticism against television:

(translation) “On the subject of the cuts to culture, (...) we get the distinct impression the journalists – who are the friends of members of the arts community in Montreal and elsewhere – followed the debate blow by blow (...) We expect more balance from our public broadcaster.”³⁰⁵

The English language Ombudsman provided no such feedback publicly, although Kirk LaPointe says similar committees have been assessing English coverage following elections, with reports of findings reviewed internally.³⁰⁶

While it is certainly problematic to rely on anonymous web comments to assess the true nature of Canadian views, they do offer some insight. What emerges reading many of the more than 1200 comments appearing on the CBC website the day after the election is a general misunderstanding among some English Canadians’ about what happened in Quebec. Here’s one example of a view familiar to many Canadians.

“The Bloc and those in Quebec who support them are nothing but parasites sucking up taxpayers' money to destroy the country. They bring no benefit to the rest of Canada.”³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ “Rapport annuelle 2008-2009,” 7-10, Bureau de l’ombudsman Services Francais, accessed August 9, 2011, http://blogues.radio-canada.ca/ombudsman/files/2010/11/Rapport_annuel_2008_2009.pdf

³⁰⁶ Confirmed by Kirk LaPointe, CBC ombudsman, e-mail August 16, 2011

³⁰⁷ “Harper ‘very pleased’ with stronger minority,” CBC.ca, accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2008/10/15/elexn-wednesday.html>.

While this sentiment is not shared by all Canadians, few would argue there is a general misunderstanding between Canada's two linguistic communities about the other's motivation when choosing a government they both have to live with after election day.

The election result in 2008 featured two distinct patterns of voting with support for the Conservatives generally on the rise in the rest of Canada, and in decline in Quebec. What role the public broadcaster has played and, perhaps more importantly, *should* play in fostering mutual understanding can only be assessed with a deeper understanding of the *two solitudes* at the Corporation.

The actual impact of the media on voter choice is a subject about which most researchers have found little conclusive evidence. This, as already mentioned, is not the focus of this research. However, the study of the media's role in "gate keeping" and "agenda setting," does attempt to understand the relationship between the media and its audience. Paul Nesbitt-Larking in his book *Politics, Society and the Media: Canadian Perspectives*, writes:

"The job of the news media in making the news is to transform a complex series of events into a news package the audience can understand. This means that the story must be placed within a frame of meaning familiar to the audience."³⁰⁸

These "frames of meaning" are clearly different for English and French audiences. *The National* and *Le Téléjournal*, in coverage of the 2008 federal election campaign, share 'frames of meaning' with their market competitors more than with each other.

³⁰⁸ Paul Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics, Society, and the Media: Canadian Perspectives*, (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2001) 345

These differences between the two are clearly not new as suggested in chapter three. Consider the findings of Arthur Siegel's research about the two services in 1977, and then again, ten years later by Jean de Bonville and Jacques Vermette, and then again, ten years after that, in 1997 by researchers Julie Fortier and Denis Monière. In all three studies, the French and English services featured different outputs. Again and again, this research showed Radio-Canada continued to be preoccupied with Quebec in its news coverage and few stories overlapped with the English service. In a comparison with TVA, Fortier and Monière found a growing similarity between SRC and its competitor:

(translation)“(...) placing more importance on proximity in order to compete in the battle for ratings and advertising (...) and so, SRC is now even further away from the objectives of the mandate of the public broadcaster.”³⁰⁹

Fortier and Monière undertook their work at the end of the 1990s; a period when Radio-Canada began competing fiercely for ratings with TVA along with a recent competitor in the market: TQS. In 1984, *Le Téléjournal* attracted 689,000 viewers. By 1990, ratings were up to 781,000 but since then viewership has been on an accelerating decline throughout the last decade. Today ratings for the program are at 294,000 viewers.³¹⁰ TVA has also seen its viewership decline during this period, facing the same issues challenging television news programming throughout North America – namely competition for audiences faced with more and more choice on satellite television, the Internet, etc. Still, TVA has over 800,000 viewers watching its 10 o'clock newscast *Le*

³⁰⁹ Julie Fortier and Denis Monière, *Radioscopie de l'information télévisée au Canada*, (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2000), 114

³¹⁰ Source: CBC Corporate Communications courtesy of BBM ratings

TVA 22 heures³¹¹ (*The National* has fewer! see table 4). Pollster Christian Bourque says one of the keys to TVA's success is its salience with local audiences.³¹² He says in terms of news coverage, it tends to avoid federal politics and in particular, airing English comments that require translation.

“So if someone only answers a question in English, it probably won't make it into their (report). You may see a visual (of the person) in the report, (otherwise) they feel it's bad TV to translate somebody on air. So that probably accounts for a difference in how the campaigns are covered.”³¹³

Retired veteran correspondent, Daniel L'Heureux said he noticed Radio-Canada began getting more and more concerned about its main competitor, TVA, during the late 1990s when TVA moved its flagship news program from 11 pm to 10 pm to compete directly with *Le Téléjournal*. Once TVA's all-news specialty channel LCN came along to compete directly with RDI, Radio-Canada started looking over its shoulder a lot more, according to L'Heureux:

“So more and more Radio-Canada took into account TVA and of course, TVA is going for ratings and they avoid translation and even without translation, they know the federal scene is not that interesting. A minister will be talking about closing a nuclear plant in Ontario, and the story is far from their viewers and the translation only adds another barrier between their public and the subject itself.”³¹⁴

³¹¹ BBM ratings for the TVA newscast has been as high as 818 thousand, one of the highest rated regional news programs in North America Philippe Meilleur, “Cote d'écoute TVA deviance son ses concurrents,” *Le Journal de Montréal* January 1, 2008, accessed July 6, 2011, <http://fr.canoe.ca/divertissement/tele-medias/nouvelles/2008/01/14/4771887-jdm.html>

³¹² Quebecor, owner of TVA, is a frequent client of Léger Marketing, as are most media outlets, including SRC

³¹³ Christian Bourque, Interview, July 20, 2011

³¹⁴ Daniel L'Heureux, Interview, July 20, 2011.

This highly competitive environment puts the mandate to foster “national consciousness” often at odds with making sure Radio-Canada remains salient for viewers exposed to private competition.

Table 4: Ratings

Program	Ratings (BBM) 1990 (among viewers over 2 yrs old and over)	Ratings (BBM) 2010 (among viewers over 2 yrs old and over)
<i>Le Téléjournal</i>	781, 000	294, 000
<i>Le TVA 22hr</i>		818, 000**
<i>The National</i>	1, 420, 000	641, 000
<i>CTV National News</i>		1, 000, 000***

*Sources: CBC ratings from CBC Corporate Communications, obtained July 20, 2011 **2008 findings (see footnote 307)
 *** CTV can hit as high as 1.5 million during the hour (see footnote 311)

The National also faces declining audiences and attracts sometimes as little as half the audience of the number one newscast among English Canadians, *CTV National News*.³¹⁵ Consider, however, that *The National* and *CTV National News*³¹⁶ combined have on average fewer than 2 million viewers or a little over 7 per cent of the population excluding Quebec on any given evening.³¹⁷ The combined 1 million viewers of *Le Téléjournal* and *Le TVA 22 heures* suggest the two programs attract 13 per cent of

³¹⁵ In October 2009, television critic Alex Strachan suggested *CTV National News* averages 1 million viewers a night. He writes *The National* dips as low as 500 thousand viewers some evenings, under a new BBM rating system, with *CTV National News* getting up to 1.5 million on some nights. He blames the new BBM measuring for CBC’s poor showing, because it monitors audiences throughout the program, and then averages the audience per minute. He suggests *The National*, as an hour long program will measure lower audiences than the half hour CTV program. Alex Strachan, “News Ratings,” *TV Guys Guide to Good TV*, accessed July 25, 2011, <http://communities.canada.com/shareit/blogs/tvguy/archive/2009/10/07/news-ratings-score-it-ctv-lloyd-roberston-1-cbc-peter-mansbridge-0-under-new-ratings-measurement-system.aspx>

³¹⁶ Global National, the third network, does not go on air during primetime and is not counted here.

³¹⁷ “Canada’s population clock,” Statistics Canada, accessed July 25, 2011, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/ig-gi/pop-ca-eng.htm>, Canada’s population on that day was 34.5 million people. The researcher subtracted 7.9 million (the population of Quebec) to compensate for the Quebec market.

the Quebec population.³¹⁸ As well, according to the 2010 CRTC Monitoring Report, “news and analysis” represents 17 per cent of total weekly viewing time among English Canadians, but 32.8 per cent among French-speaking Canadians, almost twice the rate.

³¹⁹ This suggests that news and current affairs seem to have a larger impact on French-speaking Canadians compared to English-speakers. Radio-Canada programming generally, as outlined in chapter three, has been more successful than the English service in satisfying the public broadcaster’s mission to deliver distinctively Canadian programs to audiences. It also suggests Quebeckers are more engaged in public debate than English Canadians.

Although Canadians still prefer Canadian news over foreign news,³²⁰ English television generally faces a much larger problem attracting audiences competing both with the private sector, as well as same-language programming from the U.S, as discussed in chapter three. This has been the challenge facing the public broadcaster since its inception.

However, at some point, could ratings get so low they render the CBC irrelevant to Canadians? The former president and CEO, Robert Rabinovitch laid out the problem

³¹⁸ “Quebec’s population clock,” Statistics Canada, accessed July 25, 2011, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/ig-gi/pop-qc-eng.htm> Quebec’s population on that day was 7.9 million people. Consider here that this calculation does not consider francophones outside Quebec.

³¹⁹ Meanwhile, drama and comedy represent 43.1% of English Canadian viewing hours where 21.3 per cent is Canadian content. Francophones consume 37.7% Canadian content in this category. “Communications Monitoring Report 2010,” CRTC, 78, accessed May 18, 2011, <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/policymonitoring/2010/cm2010.pdf>

³²⁰ According to the broadcast monitoring report undertaken by the CRTC, news and analysis programming consumed by English audiences is 95% Canadian, with Francophones consuming 99.5% Canadian content. Compare that to drama and comedy where just 21.5% is Canadian content among English audiences and 32% is Canadian among French audiences. Consider as well that drama and comedy represent 43.1% of English Canadian viewing hours (37.7% among Francophones) where news and analysis represents 17.1% (32.8% among Francophones). “Communications Monitoring Report 2010,” CRTC, 78, accessed May 18, 2011, <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/policymonitoring/2010/cm2010.pdf>

before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in 2007, during a review of the mandate one year before the 2008 campaign

“Of course, no matter how compelling our programs, we cannot succeed if audiences do not watch or listen to them. Audience size is not everything, **but one cannot have a public broadcaster without a public.** (*Rabinovitch’s emphasis*) If too few people are watching, or listening, we are irrelevant. (...) And, if we are irrelevant, why should Canadians continue to invest in public broadcasting?”³²¹

His pitch to the committee for stable long-term funding for the public broadcaster included a proposal for a new contract with Canadians “to ensure that public broadcasting provides the services Canadians want in the future ”

“() the public broadcaster can be seen as a vehicle for cultural identity and social cohesion. It is not easy to offset fragmentation and embrace diversity at the same time. (...) A public broadcaster can create community-building spaces that serve as a buffer against fragmentation. These same spaces can also facilitate interaction and dialogue among different communities locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.”³²²

This “interaction and dialogue” was not always evident across the space that divides the *two solitudes* in the coverage of the 2008 campaign. The challenges rub up against the mandate. As discussed in chapter one, the mandate is part of the state’s effort to exert “technological nationalism” but tensions from both the private sector and Quebec nationalism, as just described, have shaped the kind of public broadcaster Canadians experience today. This thesis has shown those tensions at work, manifested in the coverage dynamic that unfolded before English- and French-speaking audiences.

³²¹ Robert Rabinovitch, “Opening remarks for Mr. Robert Rabinovitch, president and CEO of CBC/Radio-Canada for CBC’s appearance before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage,” CBC Corporate, November 27, 2007, accessed July 22, 2011, <http://www.cbc-radio-canada.ca/speeches/20071127.shtml>

³²² Robert Rabinovitch, “Public Broadcasting in Canada: Time for a New Approach. Submission to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage,” presented by Robert Rabinovitch to the Standing Committee March 22, 2007, accessed July 22, 2011, <http://www.cbc-radio-canada.ca/submissions/pdf/Mandate.pdf>

That's not to say the mandate has not had some influence over programming. The Fortier and Monière study, for instance also found that while SRC is more like its private competitors than the CBC, its coverage of Canada outside Quebec is much better than the private broadcasters. The English service has also done a better job, the researchers conclude, at covering Quebec issues compared to its private industry counterparts.³²³

Today Radio-Canada and the CBC continue to have a reputation for more comprehensive coverage of national and international news than their private competitors. Erin Research, for instance found the CBC referred to Gilles Duceppe, the leader of the Bloc Québécois, twice as much as CTV.³²⁴ The analysis undertaken by the Centre d'études sur les médias found a similar difference between Radio-Canada and TVA. For example, TVA included the NDP in 7 per cent of statements, according to the group's research, compared to Radio-Canada at 15 per cent. The researchers concluded Radio-Canada's mandate as a national broadcaster explains the differences in coverage:

(translation) "Radio-Canada is the only pan-Canadian French language media organization. The mandate is to serve all francophones across Canada. (...) Radio-Canada has to take into account the entire territory served even though the majority of its public is in Quebec. (...) The difference between the practices of Radio-Canada and those of TVA or the large Quebec dailies concerning coverage given to each of the parties does not necessarily translate as a problem. This is explained by taking into account the very particular mandate of the public service."³²⁵

³²³ Fortier and Monière, *Radioscopie*, 118

³²⁴ "Balance in News Coverage," 14 In measuring the proportion of statements with references to the party leaders, Duceppe received 4 per cent of coverage on CBC versus 2 per cent on CTV, both very low. However, in a measurement of positive and negative statements about each party, the total number of statements on CTV about the Bloc was so low, it was not measurable

³²⁵ "Analyse de la couverture," 6

Christian Bourque says the mandate does not necessarily put the corporation at a disadvantage. It has developed a niche attracting a particular audience, in this way, standing out from its competition which has a positive impact on federal election campaign coverage.

“If it wasn’t for the public broadcaster, our elections would be much more regionalist. But if Radio-Canada did not cover Quebec, it wouldn’t have the ratings. As a private broadcaster why (care) what happens in Saskatchewan cause it doesn’t matter to viewers. Still there’s an audience for that, and that’s SRC -- same in the rest of Canada.”³²⁶

One good example of this commitment to national coverage by Radio Canada during the 2008 campaign was the presence of SRC correspondents on the leaders’ tours. TVA saved its money and jumped onto the tours only when the leaders made their way through Quebec, otherwise, TVA relied on pool feeds for coverage of the leaders. The financial and personnel commitment by Radio-Canada translated into reports covering issues outside Quebec, though these stories did not often play very high in the campaign news line-ups. Radio-Canada also has a presence from its reporters stationed throughout the rest of Canada where correspondents provided riding and regional profiles during the 2008 federal campaign.³²⁷

Meanwhile, the “At Issue” panel on *The National* with the regular contribution of Chantal Hébert, has been frequently cited as a valuable forum for Canadians wanting some insight into how the federal campaign is playing out in Quebec.

³²⁶ Christian Bourque, Interview, July 25, 2011

³²⁷ There were, however, the usual complaints to the Ombudsman of Radio Canada about the poor coverage of francophone communities outside Quebec during federal election campaigns. Daniel L’Heureux, Interview, July 26, 2011

But was it enough to fulfill the challenge of the mandate? Certainly, these efforts did not prevent the very different campaign narratives that appeared on *Le Telejournal* and *The National*. As mentioned, while it is impossible to know what impact coverage had on how Canadians voted the election result can be viewed as further entrenchment of the *two solitudes* among voters in Quebec and the rest of Canada. In this context, it's hard to see how the public broadcaster did much to promote a "shared national consciousness." Moreover, it would seem not much had changed in 2008 in terms of the public broadcaster acting as a social integrator compared to even the most divisive periods of national debate.

Consider as well, that the Conservatives won a larger minority government in 2008 and then a majority in 2011 despite a communications strategy that seemed to enhance regional cleavage rather than broker differences between Canada's two linguistic communities. What will be the role of the public broadcaster in bringing Canadians together – particularly if election coverage continues to allow the politicians to "hold the fiddle," as found so far? The risks are considerable, according to some

Fred Fletcher, in considering the impact of globalization on Canada's dual media system, writes that Canadians and particularly politicians have been preoccupied with the need for public spaces to debate national issues (consider Robert Rabinovitch's pitch to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in 2007 for a CBC that creates spaces that "facilitate interaction and dialogue"). Yet, some are not optimistic about how well the current dual system in public broadcasting serves that purpose. Media scholar Paul Nesbitt-Larking suggests "We are a state whose national system of public broadcasting

has been contributing to its oblivion ”³²⁸ The assumption discussed in chapter two, is that stable democracies require that citizens share a system of values and beliefs “so that the dispute resolution mechanisms of the political system are accepted as legitimate and a common vocabulary () can be employed in public debate ”³²⁹

Without a common sense of belonging, Canadian researcher Greg Marc Neilsen warns

“the more widespread the apathy concerning a sense of belonging to a country, the less citizens are willing to participate in the democratic process and the greater the risks to that country of social disintegration ”³³⁰

Fletcher writes

“The space for debate of a common future seems to be contracting and the common vocabulary of historical precedents remains limited or divisive The gulf in news coverage of critical issues reduces the basis for resolution ”³³¹

With audience fragmentation in the globalized communications system, creating those spaces for debate will likely get more difficult

In Canada, the state’s effort to exert some kind of “technological nationalism” has been met with tensions leading to compromises that are sometimes complementary, and often contradictory Consider the mandate to foster a “national consciousness ” It has endured while at the same time – whether by accident or through deliberate policy – the public broadcaster developed and supported two separate consciousnesses through two separate networks It has been called in this thesis “the paradox of the mandate,” however, as Marc Raboy suggests, this policy has been “part of a political strategy to preserve the coherence of the Canadian state ”

³²⁸ Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics Society and the Media* 64

²⁹ Fletcher, *Media and Political Identity*, 362

³⁰ Nesbitt-Larking, *Politics Society and the Media* 65

³¹ Fletcher, “Media and Political Identity,” 366

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor suggests our federation's success has depended more on the accommodation of *two solitudes* than efforts to impose national unity:

"(...) the combination of an unresolved national identity as Canadians and the strength of our historical regional societies make it virtually mandatory for us to practise a more decentralized style of government than other comparable federations."³³²

Canada's accommodation strategy has been an evolving project. One gauge of its success is the referendum results on Quebec sovereignty which seem to suggest the majority of Quebecers have so far opted to continue their relationship with Canada. There seems to be a preference for a kind of non-state seeking nationalism described by political scientist Michael Keating, where people within a state exert their aspirations while enjoying the rights of their citizenship to the state.³³³

Radio-Canada has been one of the vehicles for exerting nationalist aspirations. Radio-Canada has given French Quebecers an opportunity to seek out those aspirations within the state of Canada, rather than seek a different arrangement through – for example – separation. Perhaps, as Raboy argues it's time to move from a broadcasting policy that promotes national identity and toward one that promotes "democratic community development and national, regional, and local public spaces."

"As Canada searches for a place in the sea of global culture, its linguistic duality is one of the most unmistakable, irreducible forms of Canadian distinctiveness.

³³²Charles Taylor, "Alternative Futures," in *Reconciling the Solitudes*, eds Charles Taylor and Guy Laforest (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993), 111.

³³³Michael Keating. "Stateless nation-building: Quebec Catalonia and Scotland in the changing state system." *Nations and Nationalism* 3(4), 1997, 689-717.

The challenge remains to try to find an institutional arrangement that turns this into a source of strength.”³³⁴

Rather than the state using public broadcasting to exert national unity or identity, Raboy submits, the public broadcaster could contribute to holding civil society together by creating spaces where “social antagonisms can be explored and worked out, not cater to accentuating difference (...)”³³⁵

After all, despite this dual system, Canada has continued to thrive and has consistently chosen peace and stability over conflict and separation. Canadian communications theorist Richard Collins suggests this raises questions about assumptions that the current situation is “unsustainable and dangerous.”

“The continued existence of Canada as a sovereign state, despite having little television programming shared by the two national communities (...) suggests that the nationalist axiom that political sovereignty and stability depend on cultural and communications sovereignty is misconceived.”³³⁶

Greg Marc Neilsen suggests, “it is, perhaps, not the deeds, but rather the narratives, that are missing. The two media solitudes may have helped to inhibit the development of such narratives.”³³⁷ This analysis of the 2008 campaign coverage illustrates the public broadcaster continues to fall short of its mandate to bring Canadians together during national debates.

³³⁴ Marc Raboy, “Linguistic duality in broadcasting policy: A microcosm of Canada’s constitutional politics,” in *Seeing ourselves Media power and policy in Canada*, eds H. Holmes and D. Taras, (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996) 169

³³⁵ Marc Raboy, “The World Situation of Public Service Broadcasting. Overview and Analysis,” in *Public Service Broadcasting: Cultural and Educational Dimensions*, (Paris: 1997), 19-56.

³³⁶ Fletcher, “Media and Political Identity,” 363.

³³⁷ Fletcher, “Media and Political Identity,” 372.

Certainly one of the solutions over the years has been to increase shared programming. During the 1990s, as political tensions in Canada rose, the public broadcaster invested new money to boost bi-cultural programming, among them, the *Canada: A People's History* series. However projects of that nature dried up by the end of that decade and since then, budgets for the CBC have become less stable.

CBC president Hubert Lacroix says efforts for increased bi-cultural exchanges are part of a five-year plan to 2015. The plan had to be delayed for two years because of budget cuts but he reports they're on track again

"It's a tough challenge but one that we want to tackle. This is our mandate (...) We're not perfect, but there are things in the plan to make us more integrated, closer, partly because of resources, as well, French and English will be working together more and more."³³⁸

The plan includes cross cultural programs and bi-cultural documentaries in both languages. But the CBC – as already mentioned – is vulnerable to the annual federal budget process. On a much smaller scale, newsrooms have initiated bi-cultural projects by creatively reallocating resources. During the 2008 campaign, for instance, Radio-Canada's radio service and CBC Radio initiated an exchange of journalists to appear on each services' radio programs. The Centre d'études applauded and encouraged this kind of effort in its report.

Lacroix says "we have a role to play in helping Canadians understand each other" and yet "being different does not mean you're not delivering news in the right way "

³³⁸ Hubert Lacroix, Interview, August 9, 2011

The mandate itself may soon be up for renewal. Hubert Lacroix says he supports updating the mandate, it has been more than 20 years since that exercise took place. Keep in mind, however, that any debate over the mandate is fraught with potential conflict since it inevitably involves two clashing notions of national identity. Marcel Masse, the federal Minister responsible for the exercise in 1991, was accused of pandering to separatists when he announced the mandate would change from a requirement to foster “national unity” to “national consciousness”³³⁹. However, enough issues have been raised in this thesis questioning whether the mandate is appropriate in the current context. Perhaps a renewal is worth the risks if it can lead to bringing Canadians closer together than during the federal election of 2008.

³⁹ Marc Raboy, *Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada's Broadcasting Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

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TVA *Le Grand Soir*, episode from Sept 19, 2008.

Formal Interviews

Michel C. Auger, Radio-Canada, Journalist, Montreal

Christian Bourque, Léger Marketing, Pollster, Montreal.

Chantal Hébert, *The Toronto Star*, Montreal

Daniel L'Heureux, Radio-Canada, Journalist, retired, Ottawa

Hubert Lacroix, President/CEO CBC/Radio-Canada

L. Ian MacDonald, Columnist, Telephone

Julie Van Dusen, CBC, Journalist, Ottawa

Marc-André Viau, Communications Director, NDP, Ottawa.

Nancy Wood, CBC, Journalist. Montreal