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An Election to End an Era?

A Study of Print and Television Coverage of the 2004 Alberta Provincial Election

by

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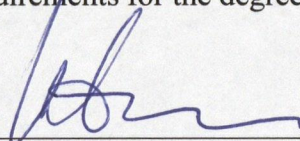
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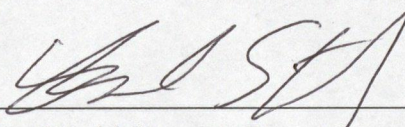
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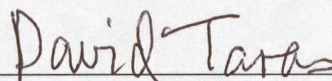
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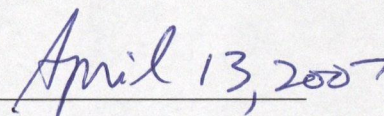
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a study of print and television coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election. Based on a comprehensive quantitative content analysis of print and television coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, this thesis explores how the media covered the election campaign, and investigates how media coverage of the 2004 provincial election compares to past elections in Alberta, Canada, and the United States.

This thesis will show that particular media outlets provided voters with much more comprehensive and substantive election coverage than other print and television outlets, and provided more comprehensive and substantive election coverage than in previous elections in Alberta. This thesis will also show that media coverage of Ralph Klein and the Conservatives was significantly negative, more so than in previous elections in Alberta, and that there were fewer stories in 2004 framed in terms of the electoral horserace than in previous elections in Alberta.



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## Introduction

This thesis is a study of print and television coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, and is an attempt to gauge and explore the relationship between media coverage and voting in Alberta. This thesis, based on a comprehensive quantitative content analysis of print and television coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, principally explores how the media covered the 2004 provincial election.

The central question that will be addressed in this thesis is this—how did the media cover the 2004 provincial election? In particular, how did media coverage compare to past media analyses in Alberta, Canada, and the United States? Following from this central question, this thesis will briefly speculate and explore what effect election coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, and the way the media covered the campaign, may have had on Alberta voters.

The findings of this thesis, based on a comprehensive quantitative content analysis of media coverage from four print outlets and three television outlets from media outlets in Calgary and Edmonton, are unique and paint a compelling picture of the relationship between the media and politics in Alberta.

The 2004 Alberta election was a rather lacklustre campaign from the start. The outcome—yet another majority for Premier Ralph Klein and the Conservatives—was never in question. The province's opposition was under-funded, fragmented, and outmatched by a Conservative party having held office in the province since 1971 (Alberta. Chief Electoral Officer, "Electoral Summary 1905-2004," 2004). Both the Liberals and New Democrats were expected to gain a few seats in the election, and the

Alberta Alliance—a nascent party to the right of the Klein Conservatives—was deemed to have a small chance of winning a seat or two in the province’s rural areas (Editorial, “Klein wins again!” *Edmonton Sun*, October 26, 2004; Tony Seksus, “Klein set to sweep Alberta,” *Calgary Herald*, November 18, 2004). Beyond a minor decrease in its overwhelming legislative majority, however, the Conservative government was poised to win its tenth consecutive election in the province. After three terms in office, Ralph Klein had acknowledged that this would be his final election, and had noted at his party’s campaign launch that he would “campaign on his government record, focusing on the province’s strong economy” rather than future promises or specific policy proposals (Jason Markusoff and Tom Barrett, “Klein seeks strong mandate to ‘deal with’ Ottawa,” *Edmonton Journal*, October 26, 2004).

In short, the Alberta provincial election of 2004 featured no real, competitive race, and little prospect for issue debate by the governing party. As a result, the campaign provided a true challenge to the media—without an obvious angle or evident overarching theme to the campaign, how were the media to cover the campaign? The media in the 2004 Alberta provincial election was obliged to supply a script and to provide entertainment value to a largely uninteresting campaign, and to essentially fill a void left by the silence of a dominant party and its popular leader—to essentially answer the question, ‘What is this election about?’

This study of media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election will contribute to the literature and study of media politics in three important ways. Firstly, this study of the 2004 provincial election in Alberta will contribute something very important to the study Alberta media politics-- the incorporation of television coverage



into the analysis. Given the resources available—or unavailable—to scholars in Canada and especially in Alberta, conducting a content analysis using television as well as print, as this thesis will do, has never before been done in Alberta. Since television is considered to be the primary source of political news and information for voters (Taras, 1990: 95), an examination of the content of television news during an Alberta provincial election campaign is absolutely essential to improving our understanding of the relationship between the media and politics in Alberta.

As well, unlike the previous studies of Alberta media politics, this thesis will examine television and print coverage from every single day of the election campaign. Past studies in Alberta have either limited their study to headlines in major papers (Sampert, 1997), have focused on only a portion of the campaign, such as fifteen days of a five-week campaign (Klinkhammer, 1999), or have analyzed content of media during non-election periods (Savage-Hughes and Taras, 1992). This thesis will address this deficiency in the literature by providing a more comprehensive and thorough analysis of an entire campaign period.

Thirdly, this thesis will explore the implications of the results of the content analysis of the provincial campaign of 2004, rather than simply identifying trends in coverage as past studies in Alberta have done. This thesis will attempt to compare the results of the 2004 provincial election to existing data on the 1993 and 1997 provincial election, as well as other content analyses done in Canada and the United States, to attempt to more accurately assess the implications of the findings and their relevance for the future of the relationship between the media and politics in Alberta. As such, this thesis will attempt to go beyond what has often been done in the study of media politics,

particularly in Canada, and examine not only *what* the media did and does in Alberta, but ask *what effect* media coverage has on voters. Given that the 2004 election was the final election for popular premier Ralph Klein, leaving the door open to a new Progressive Conservative leader and thus new, uncharted waters in Alberta politics, this content analysis of the 2004 provincial election and the discussion of its effects on Alberta voters will make an original, meaningful, and relevant contribution to existing literature on media politics.

This thesis will proceed in the next chapter, Chapter 1, by reviewing the study of the relationship between the media and politics and the study of the effect of media coverage on voters and elections in Alberta, Canada, and the United States. Chapter 2 will outline and discuss the methodology used in this study of media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election; in particular, Chapter 2 will present the independent and dependent variables used in the study, will discuss how the study was undertaken, and explain specifically how the data were collected, coded, and analyzed. Chapter 3 will present the first set of findings from this study concerning the dependent variable of quantity of coverage, and will show that particular media outlets—the *Calgary Herald*, the *Edmonton Journal*, and the CBC-- produced much more extensive and substantive election coverage than other print and television outlets, and, moreover, more than during past elections in Alberta. Chapter 4 will present and discuss findings concerning tone and framing, the final two dependent variables of the analysis. In particular, this chapter will show that the coverage afforded Ralph Klein and the Conservatives was strongly negative, and that there were fewer stories in 2004 framed in terms of the horserace than in elections past in Alberta. The final chapter, Chapter 5, will explore the effects of media

coverage on voters in the provincial election of 2004, and will present several arguments regarding the effects that election coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election may have had on the vote choices of Albertans in 2004.

## **Chapter 1—Literature Review**

This first chapter of the thesis is a review of the study of the relationship between the media and politics; this chapter will specifically discuss the study of the effect of media coverage on voters and elections. This review is not intended to serve as an exhaustive account of the abundant literature on the subject; rather, it is intended to acquaint the reader with the central and relevant ideas, methods, studies, and findings in the field of media politics from both a comparative and Canadian perspective.

This chapter will outline the three major effects of media coverage on voters that have been identified by scholars—agenda-setting, priming, and framing—and will present and discuss examples of these effects as identified in both the United States and Canada. This chapter will then outline and examine the historical development of the study of the impact of the media on voters, from the earliest studies in the 1930s to the present day. A discussion of the research methods that have been utilized in studying the media's impact on voters, including each methods' strengths and weaknesses, will follow, along with an explanation of why a quantitative content analysis was the research method used for this thesis. Lastly, this chapter will conclude with a discussion of the methodologies and key findings of content analyses undertaken in Canada and the United States.

This chapter will address two central, fundamental questions. Firstly, why should we look at the relationship between the media and politics? Why is it important to examine the impact of the media on politics? Secondly, how have scholars gone about

studying the impact of the media on politics, in particular its effect on voting and elections?

*Why should we look at the relationship between the media and politics? Why is it important to examine the impact of the media on politics?*

There are two fundamental reasons why the impact of the media on politics is a subject that merits scholarly attention.

Firstly, the media is more than the means through which the contemporary voter receives his or her political information; it is also the principal means by which one becomes aware of politics. Doris Graber (1993: 292) argues that the “media do more than depict the political environment; they *are* the political environment.” Given the capacity and the power of the media to reach the vast majority of voters, whether it be through television, print, or radio, there is less need today for more direct contact with voters through leader’s tours or town hall meetings than historically was the case, to the point where the vast majority of voters have little contact or acquaintance with politics through any means other than the media. While one certainly receives political information and becomes aware of politics through such means as discussions with family and friends, cues from group leaders, and from the broader processes of socialization, nonetheless the media are still the primary provider of political information to the citizen. This effect of the media on voters is so substantial that, as one scholar suggests (Hollihan, 2001: 75) “if the media tell us nothing about a topic or event, then in most cases it simply will not exist on [a voter’s] personal agenda.” The media have a profound impact on the voter simply by the fact that it is through the media that the voter will receive his or her information

about politics, and about an election campaign. The knowledge that the media provides—and, as will be discussed, the means by which the media provides such political knowledge—is a key part of the information available to the voter. As David Taras (1990: 33) suggests, “[given] the weight of scholarly evidence about media effects, it would be foolish to deny that the media play a role in shaping the public agenda and have... an effect on political outcomes.” Since the media are the primary provider of political information, they hold substantial power over voters, and as such clearly must have an impact on elections.

The second reason to study the relationship between the media and politics has been alluded to above; the media provide the voter not only with political information, but with the *means* by which voters can evaluate political information. As Hollihan (2001: 77, emphasis added) notes, “research has suggested that the press not only tells us what to think about, it also tells us *how* to think about it.” The media influences voters’ perceptions of parties, leaders, and issues by providing voters with the very terms and criteria to use when evaluating the political choices they are offered.

Scholars have noted this influence of the media, and have identified three specific effects of this influence—agenda-setting, priming, and framing. The first of these effects, agenda-setting, is an effect that takes place when the media, in emphasizing different campaign issues, has a demonstrated (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Wagenberg et al, 1988; Lowery and Defleur, 1988, cited in Taras, 1990; Hetherington, 1996; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004) impact on voters; issues that the media emphasizes consequently come to be seen as important by voters. Indeed, as Taras (1990: 30) notes, a relationship exists



“between the issues given prominence by the media and the issues that [are] prominent in the minds of voters.”

Another of these effects, similar to agenda-setting, is known as priming; Iyengar and Kinder (1987:114) argue that priming is “drawing attention to some aspects of the political at the expense of others.” Priming, essentially, goes a step beyond agenda-setting; as Iyengar and Kinder (1987: 63) suggest-- “[by] calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, [the media] influences the standards by which governments... policies, and candidates for public office are judged.” Agenda-setting entails affecting and changing the *priorities* of voters; priming, however, entails affecting and changing the *evaluative criteria* by which voters will make political decisions as a result of the media’s persistent focus on particular issues. Iyengar et al (1982: 849) present, as an example of priming, a media focus on international events rather than on domestic issues. They suppose that, during an election period, “the national press becomes fascinated by a dramatic international crisis, at the expense of covering worsening economic problems at home.” Based on that, they suggest that “the public’s evaluation of the president [or prime minister] may now be dominated by his apparent success in the handling of the crisis...and his management (or mismanagement) of the economy may now count for rather little” (Iyengar et al, 1982: 849). In other words, “fluctuations in the importance of evaluational standards may well depend on fluctuations in the attention each receives in the press” (Iyengar et al, 1982: 849).

More recent studies suggest that priming does indeed take place in contemporary elections. Mutz (1994: 707) suggests that coverage of issues like unemployment can shape the way voters view American presidential candidates; she contends that, in the

1992 American presidential election voters “were more likely to hold the president accountable for their personal unemployment experiences when unemployment coverage was heavy.” This effect of priming in American presidential elections can also be seen in Canadian provincial and federal elections. Klinkhammer (1999: 144) suggests that the predominantly negative coverage given to Grant Mitchell-- the provincial Liberal and opposition leader during the 1997 Alberta provincial election—clearly “relegated Mitchell to the margins” of the election, and thus likely influenced the standards by which voters judged him. Trimble and Sampert (2004: 61) suggest as well that the placement of leader mentions within print headlines—that is, the leaders who are mentioned first and most frequently—functions to draw attention to only one or two “key players” in the electoral game, leaving other options aside in the minds of the voters.

Framing, the third effect of the media’s influence on the way voters make their political decisions, “is the necessary technique of processing and packaging information so it can be quickly conveyed by reporters and easily interpreted by the audience” (Trimble and Sampert, 2004: 52). Frames are essentially a narrative around which a news story is focused in order to “fit complex and even novel events into familiar categories” (Trimble and Sampert, 2004: 52). Framing is the context within which a news story about politics is written, and is as such the context within which a voter’s perceptions of a party, leader, or candidate are formed.

As an effect of media coverage, framing was identified by scholars in both Canada and the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and has been studied and analyzed in much detail in both countries. What scholars in both countries noted was that media coverage of campaigns began to focus heavily on the competitive nature of the

campaigns themselves, rather than on substantive issues or discussions of policies and party platforms. In Canada, Fletcher (1981) argued, based on his analysis of the 1979 and 1980 federal elections, that the campaigns were primarily covered and treated as a game or a race between the parties and leaders. Also examining at the 1979 and 1980 federal elections, Soderlund et al (1984; 54-55) noted that discussions of policies and issues were featured in over half of election stories, and that the competitive nature of the campaign—the horserace-- was featured in approximately two-thirds of stories.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, this tendency of election coverage to frame campaigns in terms of the electoral horserace increased, and the amount of issue and policy discussion generally began to decrease; Frizzell and Westell (1994) note that, in the 1984, 1988, and 1993 federal elections, print stories tended to be framed in terms of the horserace between parties and leaders, and issues tended to receive less coverage—even in the 1988 ‘free-trade’ election; issue coverage in 1984 was 21 per cent, increased to only 37 per cent in 1988, and declined to 31 per cent in 1993. More recent Canadian studies (Klinkhammer, 1999; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004; Trimble and Sampert, 2004) indicate that this tendency of election coverage to frame campaigns in terms of the horserace at the expense of issue discussion has by no means faded. Klinkhammer (1999: 130) observed that approximately two-thirds of election coverage in both the 1993 and 1997 Alberta provincial elections were framed in terms of the horserace. Trimble and Sampert (2004, 60) observed that only 19 per cent of National Post headlines and 34 per cent of Globe and Mail headlines during the 2000 federal election were placed in an issue frame, and Goodyear-Grant et al (2004: 87) noted that only 40 per cent of print stories from the 2004 federal election were issue-based. What Canadian findings in terms of

framing suggest is that only a minority of stories during a given election are framed in terms of issues.

In the United States, framing of election coverage has tended to focus even less frequently on issues than in Canada. Patterson (1982, 30) observed that approximately 60 per cent of television coverage of the 1976 Presidential election and 55 per cent of print coverage emphasized the competitive nature of the campaign. A subsequent analysis of CBS coverage of the 1980 Presidential election (Robinson and Sheehan, 1983, cited in Wayne, 2004) found that over 80 per cent of stories emphasized the competitive nature of the campaign. This trend persisted throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as Wayne notes (2004: 28) with issue discussion tending to be abandoned in favour of a focus on the competition between parties and leaders; Hess (2000) observed that horserace coverage increased in the 2000 Presidential election to 67 per cent, from 54 per cent in 1992 to 48 per cent in 1996. Other studies of media coverage of the 2000 Presidential election placed horserace coverage at 71 per cent (Farnsworth and Lichter, 2003: 51) to between 75 and 79 per cent (Hershey, 2001:66). In short, what the findings have suggested in the United States is that framing of campaigns in terms of the horserace is predominant, with two-thirds to three-quarters of coverage in any given campaign being devoted, not to matters of substance, but to the competitive nature of the election race.

In view of the analysis presented above, the study of the impact of the media on politics is a topic of prime importance. Through the effects of agenda-setting, priming, and framing, media coverage of campaigns has a significant impact on voters, and can influence the issues perceived as important, the way priorities are established and evaluated, and the way substantive information is obtained about the platforms and

policies of candidates and parties. However, as useful and beneficial as past studies have been, there is room for elaboration in subsequent studies. In particular, past studies have shown that media coverage clearly has an effect on voters, but have not chosen to explore and examine *how* media coverage affects voters. Subsequent studies would do well to build upon the rich discussion of media effects that already exists by doing more than simply *identifying* the existence of particular effects in media coverage, but also by exploring and attempting to determine what specific effects such coverage had on voters. This thesis is an attempt to do precisely that—to not simply identify tendencies in media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, but also to speculate as to what effects such media coverage had on Alberta voters.

*How have scholars gone about studying the impact of the media on politics, in particular its effects on parties, leaders, and elections?*

For decades, scholars have studied the impact of the media on politics. Some of the first analyses of the impact of the media were undertaken in the 1920s and 1930s. As Taras (1990: 26) observes, this “first wave of research [on media effects and impact]... tended to support the view that the media were powerful, pervasive, and could dramatically alter the perceptions and beliefs of entire populations.” The hypothesis of these studies “was that media images could directly penetrate people’s conscious and unconscious thoughts” (Taras, 1990: 27).

The most influential of the studies conducted during this time were the Payne Fund Studies, conducted between 1929 and 1932. These studies explored “the effects that movies had on children and adolescents in isolated rural communities” in the United

States, and found that these movies “were a singularly powerful source for learning and imitation” (Taras, 1990: 27). In other words, when these children and adolescents were exposed to new images and ideas courtesy of popular movies, their behaviour was altered quite dramatically, including the way they related to each other and to the outside world (Taras, 1990: 27). Given this research, scholars tended to believe that the media acted almost like a ‘magic bullet’, consciously and unconsciously shaping and altering the views of those exposed to it in a dramatic and powerful way, whether it be through popular culture or election coverage.

Subsequent research in the 1940s and 1950s, however, served to put this ‘magic bullet’ theory to rest. The Columbia school’s extensive research in the late 1940s (Lazarsfeld et al, 1948) on public opinion and voting behaviour concluded, quite contrary to past research, that media coverage, particularly of election campaigns, had little to no impact on behaviour; they concluded that election coverage instead served to reinforce existing beliefs and perceptions. Wagner (1983: 407), in reference to the work of the Columbia school, notes that the conclusions of their work “were that mass media failed to exercise any significant control over the beliefs, attitudes, or behavior of the American voting public.” Lazarsfeld et al suggest (1948: 125) that this is because those who are most exposed to media coverage during an election are the least likely to be susceptible to media influence, since those voters who paid more attention to the campaign were also most likely to have made a firm vote choice at the beginning of the campaign. As Lazarsfeld et al (1948: 125) phrase it, “the people who did most of the reading about and listening to the campaign were the most impervious to any ideas which might have led them to change their vote,” and that media coverage “was least likely to reach the people



most likely to change.” Further studies (for example, Berelson et al, 1954; Klapper, 1960; Converse, 1962) also suggested that the media served more to reinforce existing perceptions and attitudes than to dramatically alter them, and that “the determinants on both behavior and attitude appeared to depend upon steady state demographic characteristics and interpersonal communication,” rather than on media coverage (Wagner, 1983: 407). Unlike the previous, ‘magic bullet’ body of research, this second vein of research became known as the ‘minimal effects’ thesis.

However, this thesis of minimal effects eventually came under much criticism from other scholars. These scholars “criticized [previous studies in the minimal effects tradition] for being too narrow [in focus] and for measuring effects over relatively short time spans,” and noted that there had been no attempt made in previous research to evaluate the cumulative impact of media coverage over time (Taras, 1990: 29). According to these scholars, it was unsurprising to find that these studies had found little to no evidence of media impact or effect. Subsequent research in the 1970s and 1980s (for example, Erikson, 1976; Patterson, 1980; Coombs, 1981; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987) began to “seek more localized impacts in response to specific and often unique media events,” rather than attempting to search for more “broad-based uniform media effects” (Wagner, 1983: 409). These studies focused less on determining the direct effect that media coverage could have on altering the values and beliefs of those exposed to it—as was the approach of the minimal effects thesis-- and focused more on determining the indirect effects that media coverage can have on the priorities of citizens and the importance that they attach to particular issues. As Zaller notes (1992: 310), studies such as these that attempted to gauge more specific and localized effects of media coverage

“have found evidence of substantial media effects.” Zaller also notes that no “single news story or broadcast may have great effect, but the cumulative effect of many stories... may nonetheless be large” (Iyengar, 1991, cited in Zaller, 1992: 311).

This third approach to examining the impact of media coverage, is, in essence, a “middle position between the magic bullet theory and the minimal effects thesis” (Taras, 1990: 30). This contemporary position stresses that media coverage has the power to significantly shape people’s perceptions and beliefs. Media coverage may not have the ‘magic bullet’ capacity to dramatically alter beliefs and perceptions as the earliest scholars contended, but it can and does have the capacity to change the priorities of voters, and the power to affect how citizens make their vote choice.

In contemporary media analyses, content analysis is one of the most frequently used means of analyzing the impact of media coverage. As the name suggests, content analysis examines the content of what is being covered in the media; it is “a valuable way of determining the frequency with which specific variables are published” in media coverage (Klinkhammer, 1999: 11). Content analyses of media coverage have explored, for example, how news media construct electoral mandates in post-election coverage (Mendelsohn, 1998), and whether particular leaders and parties are given predominantly negative or positive coverage (Klinkhammer, 1999); content analyses have also explored whether there are notable biases in the Canadian media (Miljan and Cooper, 2003) and how leaders and parties are framed in national news coverage (Dornan and Pyman, 2001; Trimble and Sampert, 2004).

There are alternative approaches to content analysis, both qualitative and quantitative approaches, that have also been used in exploring the media’s impact on

politics. Of these qualitative approaches, the more common approaches have been the use of personal in-depth interviews, the use of panels and focus groups, the use of journalist and insider accounts of politics, and political biographies.

The use of comprehensive interviews with relevant actors in the media and in politics offers some key advantages for the researcher. Firstly, in-depth interviews, as Berger (1998: 57) indicates, can provide “a great deal of detailed information” for the researcher, and can “often [produce] unexpected information that other forms of research might not discover.” Berger notes (1998: 57) that “the more people talk, the more they reveal... about themselves”; that is, the process of in-depth interviewing can often reveal “slips of the tongue” that are “useful sources of information about their mental states that other kinds of research cannot get at,” and offer a fresh perspective for the researcher (Berger, 1998: 57). In-depth interviewing, therefore, can offer penetrating analysis and insight into the relationship between media and politics and political actors, since the focus of the analysis is not as much the media coverage itself, but the causes, reasons, and motivations behind the actions of relevant actors in the political game. For example, in studies by Savage-Hughes (1990) and Klinkhammer (1999), both researchers used comprehensive sets of interviews with journalist, editors, and politicians—coupled, it must be noted, with content analyses of media coverage—in order to more accurately gauge and assess the relationship between the media and politics in Alberta.

While in-depth interviewing is certainly useful in exploring the relationship between media and politics, it nonetheless has several significant weaknesses. Although the process of in-depth interviewing can, in theory, provide the researcher with a great deal of information, it can just as easily leave the researcher without any real, useful

answers. Berger (1998: 56) suggests that many potential interviewees are reluctant to speak freely with interviewers, and may even “talk around” relevant subjects, leaving the researcher with little useful information. As well, “it is not always possible for respondents to give meaningful answers” in in-depth interviews, as “[moving] from discussing *what* they have done to *why* they did it is not easy for many people” (Berger, 1998: 58); this lack of in-depth information about motivations and explanations may very well hamper the researcher. As well, there is no guarantee that the information provided by the interviewee is unbiased and objective.

As far as this thesis is concerned, another fundamental weakness of the use of in-depth interviewing is that it does not offer enough insight into the effect that media coverage has on voters—a reason why studies like Savage-Hughes (1990) and Klinkhammer (1999) each combined their interview-based research with content analyses. While one may be able to make assumptions and speculations of such effects based on such qualitative research, they are simply weak without the strong empirical backing of a quantitative content analysis. As well, qualitative analysis into media politics is intended more to explore how and why the media and political actors behave and interact in particular ways, and for this it serves its purpose well. However, if it is one’s goal to explore the effects of election coverage, then such a technique on its own is much less suitable.

Another means of studying the relationship between the media and politics is through the use of panels and focus groups. As Wimmer and Dominick (1983, 100) describe it, the “focus group technique involves interviewing two or more people simultaneously, with a moderator or facilitator leading the respondents in a relatively free

discussion about the topic under consideration.” Focus groups and panels offer the advantage for the researcher of providing a great deal of detailed and useful information about the topic in question. There is also “a great degree of interviewing flexibility” with the focus group technique, as a moderator or facilitator “can easily follow up on member’s comments, ask questions as needed...[and] obtain valuable information firsthand” (Berger, 1998: 91). As well, the group dynamics of a particular focus group can also function to get respondents caught up in the discussions at hand and to stimulate further contributions and insights that may well be of use to the researcher (Berger, 1998: 91).

However, there are some key disadvantages to the use of focus groups that hamper its effectiveness, especially insofar as studying the relationship between the media and politics is concerned. Firstly, the results of focus group research cannot be effectively generalized; a focus group “represents a relatively small group of people, and they may not be representative” of the entire population (Berger, 1998: 91). As well, results of focus group research cannot be quantified, and are fraught with subjectivity; respondents of a focus group can “state their opinions, display their attitudes, and provide their recollections of past behavior”—which, as Berger stresses, “may be incorrect” (Berger, 1998: 91). If the goal of the researcher is to explore the relationship between the media and politics, and in particular the ways that the media may impact and affect politics, using focus groups is not the best option. The potential for an inaccurate representation of the population, coupled with the non-quantifiable and inherently subjective nature of the results makes it a tool unsuitable for the purposes of this thesis.

Other qualitative methods used in studying the impact of the media on politics include the use of journalist and political insider accounts and the use of biographies of relevant actors in the political arena. The advantages of such qualitative techniques are similar to those of the process of in-depth interviewing; these techniques offer fresh and “interesting ways of looking at how our ideas about various topics, events, and personalities have evolved” (Berger, 1998: 112). As well, given the wealth of such accounts and biographies available to researchers from both past and present, there is a great deal of information, opinions, and perspectives available to the researcher wishing to explore the relationship between the media and politics.

However, the use of journalist and insider accounts and biographies is fraught with weaknesses. These approaches hamper the researcher because he or she can never be sure “how accurate or correct [the] sources are” (Berger, 1998: 113); as Berger (1998: 113) goes on to ask, how does one “separate fact from opinion or interpretation?” This issue of the potential lack of objectivity significantly affects the usefulness of such research. While such a method of research may well offer fresh insight and perspective for the researcher studying the relationship between the media and politics, it does not suffice on its own as an effective method of research. Given that the information that can be collected through this method is always “secondhand,” and that the material “has usually been filtered through someone else’s mind” (Berger, 1998: 82), it does not suffice on its own as an adequate and effective technique for exploring the relationship between the media and politics.

In addition to these qualitative techniques, several quantitative techniques have been utilised in researching the relationship between the media and politics. The first of



these techniques is the use of survey research and of existing survey data. By directly asking voters questions on such matters as media use and consumption, as well as on a variety of topics concerning the factors in deciding his or her vote, studies like the Canadian Election Study (CES) and the National Election Study (NES) in the United States provide comprehensive data for scholars.

The Canadian Election Study asks a random sample of eligible voters, both during and after a federal election campaign period, a comprehensive set of questions on values and beliefs, including opinions on social conservatism and moral traditionalism, free enterprise, political cynicism, immigration, and Quebec sovereignty. (Nevitte et al, 2000: 142; Blais et al, 2002: 228). Citizens are also asked questions about their party identification, perceptions of their personal economic well-being, and their opinions on political issues, like health care (Blais et al, 2002: 229); citizens are also asked to rate the previous government's performance on a number of issues—for example, health care and taxes—and are asked to make evaluations of all the party leaders involved in the campaign (Blais et al, 2002: 231). The data collected from the random sample of citizens are coupled with socio-economic variables and characteristics of the respondents—for example, province of residence, income, and religious beliefs—thus providing scholars with a detailed data set with which to analyze elections.

Since the beginning of the Canadian Election Study in 1965, the main findings for each election, as Blais et al (2002: 189) note, tend to converge upon a “conventional wisdom”, a wisdom “informed by the cumulative studies of voting behaviour in advanced industrial states, and those that come from the systematic study of Canadian voting behaviour [from the CES].” Findings from recent studies suggest that socio-demographic

characteristics, values and beliefs, party identification, and evaluations of parties and leaders have the most significant impact on Canadian vote choice (Blais et al, 2002: 189). More recent research suggests that values and beliefs have a “substantial impact on vote choice,” more so than had been observed in elections past, and that, although Canadian politics has traditionally been beset with much voter volatility, “a substantial number of Canadians do have a feeling of attachment to a particular party,” which, as such, can have quite a substantial impact on vote choice (Blais et al, 2002: 192).

Other survey research, particularly American research, has asked similar questions, and produced similar results. The National Election Study (NES) in the United States, “is designed in part to document what has happened in each national election, what the salient issues are, [and] how the major demographic groups distribute the characteristics of candidate and party supporters” (Lipset, 2001: 116). The National Election Study, like its Canadian counterpart, asks a variety of questions from “class and group membership factors, to personal, psychological variables,” like values and beliefs and leader evaluations (Lipset, 2001: 116); in particular, the NES focuses on three sets of variables—party identification, orientations towards issues, and orientations towards candidates, leaders, and parties (Lipset, 2001: 116). As well, the NES asks citizens questions about their media use and consumption, and to “identify the kind of the media that they rely upon most as their source of information on current events” (Wagner, 1983: 412). Lipset notes, in regards to more recent research (Lipset, 2002: 116), that “issues and candidates have become more important” than party identification, and that “class factors are clearly less significant”; however, “ethnicity, religion, and union membership...still

explain much of a voter's preference." The comprehensiveness of survey data offers an obvious advantage for researchers.

While such survey research is valuable and very useful for scholars attempting to make sense of elections and voting behaviour, it is, however, less advantageous for those attempting to gauge the impact of the media on politics. As Wagner (1983: 412) observed, probing voters themselves for information about their media use and its effect on them can be unreliable, as it "[requires] respondents to make a subjective and introspective assessment of the source for their political information." More importantly, Wagner goes on to observe that "if one believes that media's influence can be powerful, and perhaps most powerful when its message is not consciously recognized, then use of self-assessment may well defeat attempts to study media's influence." This assessment still rings true today, especially in light of more recent identification of the effects of agenda-setting, priming, and framing. After all, even the most prescient voters are surely unaware of the subtle effects that agenda-setting, priming, and framing may have on them; in other words, a voter who, for example, stated that they voted against a particular candidate because they disliked the candidate or party may have well been primed to make their vote choice by consistent negative coverage of that particular candidate or leader—negative coverage of which the voter was likely not conscious. Moreover, using survey data on factors of vote choice and attempting to determine the effects of media coverage on those factors and on one's vote choice is difficult and insufficient without a direct analysis of media coverage that can be provided through a content analysis. An additional limitation of survey research like the CES in studying media effects, particularly for the purposes of studying media coverage of a provincial election as in this

thesis, is that such survey research is not conducted at the time of provincial elections, but rather during federal elections, and as a result fails to provide the researcher with relevant information. If one wishes to explore the effect of media coverage on voters-- as is the purpose of this thesis--attempting to do so with survey data alone paints only part of the picture.

Content analysis is another quantitative means of exploring the relationship between the media and politics. Content analysis "is a way of analysing the meaning and significance in media material by breaking it down into units and measuring how many of each type of unit appear" (Burton, 1997: 227). As Burton further notes (1997: 227), the "more one item appears[,] the more likely it is to have some significance." Observing the occurrences of particular items or variables allows the researcher to not only draw conclusions about the nature of the coverage, but also to make reasonable observations and conclusions about the effects of media coverage on those exposed to it. Content analysis, as one of the first theorists of content analysis stated (Berelson, 1971: 18), provides researchers with a "systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communications." This comprehensiveness is what gives content analysis its strength as an analytical tool for studying media coverage. The quantitative findings from a content analysis can be used as an effective comparative referent with other content analyses; content analyses are, as well, detailed and comprehensive, providing researchers with anywhere from several hundred to several thousands sets of cases, and with dozens of variables to analyze. Most importantly, especially in regards to this thesis, the systematic understanding of the content of media coverage can be linked with

qualitative assumptions and observations to reach conclusions regarding the effect of media coverage on voters, as will be done in this thesis.

A key shortcoming of content analysis is that it does not in itself examine the relationship that exists between politicians and the media, nor does it determine the reasons why particular media content contains certain variables as opposed to others. In other words, content analysis supplies no immediate context for the researcher; as Klinkhammer (1999: 12) notes, a content analysis “can demonstrate that something is occurring in the news... [but] it will not demonstrate why that [content] is appearing.” While a comprehensive content analysis may provide researchers with an ample amount of data of which to make use, it is incumbent upon the researcher to understand and to explain why certain variables and trends appear in the analysis as opposed to others, and to situate the data in the relevant context by comparing the quantitative results with past content analyses and with relevant assumptions and observations.

Another potential shortcoming of content analysis concerns the reliability and objectivity of findings. In order for the results of a content analysis to be considered reliable, an independent coder must be used to examine the original content being analyzed—or, as is frequently the case with larger-scale content analyses, a random sample of the original content—and, using identical coding rules and identical techniques, arrive at an acceptable level of agreement.<sup>1</sup> If this step is successfully undertaken, then the results can be considered reliable.

As well, researcher bias can become an issue within a content analysis. Berger (1998: 27) stresses that “even in content analysis... the interests, beliefs, and... even the

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<sup>1</sup> As will be elaborated in the next chapter of this thesis on Methodology, the accepted standard of agreement in contemporary content analyses is 80 per cent (Savage-Hughes, 1990: Klinkhammer, 1999: Trimble and Sampert, 2004).

personalities of researchers are important,” and can impact the analysis. Researcher biases can affect which questions and variables are chosen and used as opposed to others, and, more significantly, can shape the way researchers examine, analyze, and code their material. Researcher bias in this regard, therefore, can seriously impact the results of a content analysis, and can render them unreliable, subjective, and thus not particularly useful as a comparative referent with other content analyses.

However, any potential researcher bias can be mitigated with a proper research design of a content analysis. If the questions and variables of a content analysis are designed and chosen to directly correspond with questions and variables of previous content analysis, then researcher bias can be minimized. After all, the questions chosen would not be intended to elicit a certain type of response, but would be principally intended to serve as a comparative referent with previous content analyses. As well, utilising a strict set of coding rules can limit researcher bias, especially if those coding rules have been used in previous content analyses. This thesis-- as will be elaborated in the next chapter of this thesis concerning methodology—has made use of variables and coding rules used in past media content analyses in Alberta of the 1993 and 1997 elections in an effort to mitigate potential researcher bias.

Quantitative content analysis is the research method best suited for the purposes of this thesis. Given that it provides the most comprehensive and objective means of analyzing the nature of media coverage of a campaign, and given the fact that it is a key means of analysis and research in the field of media politics, this study will employ quantitative content analysis, and the review of relevant scholarly literature in this paper will focus on studies that have employed quantitative content analysis.



American literature employing quantitative content analysis has used media outlet, media type, city, and time during a campaign as independent explanatory variables, and has used tone—whether a leader or party was described positively or negatively—the quantity of coverage, and the frame of coverage as dependent variables in such analyses. Patterson's (1980) study of the 1976 American Presidential election was the first comprehensive study of media impact on voters using content analysis undertaken in the United States. Unlike earlier studies (for example, Qualter and MacKirdy, 1962, Erikson, 1976; Hollander, 1979; Scarrow and Borman, 1979) that were much smaller in scope, Patterson employed a wide-ranging content analysis of print and television coverage across the United States in order to accurately gauge the amount of issue discussion in election coverage. Patterson found that the majority of coverage was devoted, not to the discussion of issues, but to the discussion of the competitive nature of the campaign; he indicates that "the candidates' standing with the voters was pictured as resulting more from their skills as electioneers than from the political alternatives they represented" (Patterson, 1980: 53). Patterson also found (Patterson, 1980: 138) that unfavourable and negative media coverage increased over the campaign period for a number of candidates, and that this negative coverage influenced voter impressions of these candidates—impressions of the candidates became more negative as negative coverage of them increased. In a more recent example, Hershey (2001), using a comprehensive content analysis of both television and print coverage across the United States during the 2000 Presidential campaign, concluded that the types of frames used to cover Al Gore and George W. Bush focused overwhelmingly on strategy, tactics, and personality at the expense of more substantive issue coverage, and that coverage of both

major leaders was overwhelmingly negative in tone. As well, Hershey found that television and print media covered the campaign differently, noting that substantive issue coverage was far more likely to be found in print than on television (2001, 69). Hershey, as a result of the framing and negativity of this coverage, concludes that “such coverage carries a risk for democracy” (2001, 69), as it trivializes elections as being little more than games and contests, and fails to provide the voter with substantive political information.

Such findings and conclusions are strikingly common in the literature. Hollihan (2001) notes, based on a content analysis, that strategic framing has been overwhelmingly used in American politics, and, moreover, asserts that “the media has become increasingly obsessed with reporting who is ahead or behind in the race” (2001: 89). Wayne, (2004: 228) based on several content analyses undertaken through the 1980s and 1990s, notes quite simply that there is an ever increasing “emphasis placed on the [electoral] game and... decreasing attention given to policy debate.” Election coverage, however, has not always been so drawn to negativity and the horserace. Hollihan (2001: 90) notes that, since the 1970s in the United States, campaign “reporting has become increasingly aggressive, intrusive, negative, and cynical, often focusing on gossip and rumors.” Before this time, campaign reporting was much less aggressive and less negative, to the point where Sabato (1992: 128) dubs such journalism “lapdog” journalism, as opposed to the contemporary style of “junkyard” dog reporting. Such a change in journalistic style has occurred in Canada as well; Trimble and Sampert (2004: 55) note that “media coverage of federal election campaigns illustrate increasingly

ensorious evaluations of parties and leaders”, and has increasingly generated “cynical exposés of the manipulative tactics of parties.”

The conclusion that can be drawn, based on past quantitative content analyses, is that campaign coverage is increasingly negative in tone, and focuses excessively on issues like campaign strategy, tactics, and personality at the expense of more substantive issues concerning parties’ and leaders’ platforms and policy proposals. Campaigns and elections become trivialized, and voters have access to less and less substantive political information with which to make their decisions. The consequences of this for the health of democracy should be evident.

Some scholars, however, have attempted to go beyond such conclusions, and tried to ground such findings from content analyses into quantitative survey research data to more specifically determine what affect the media have on voters. Hetherington (1996: 372) argues, in regards to the 1992 American presidential election, that “[relentlessly] negative reporting on economic performance during the election year negatively affected voters’ perceptions of the economy....[which] influenced [their] voting behavior.” While there is much difficulty in trying to conclude that a particular sort of media coverage was responsible for a particular voting outcome—in this instance, a changed vote among a substantial enough number of American voters to make a difference in the election—such analyses nonetheless indicate that media coverage does indeed have an effect on voters. This difficulty is a result of the many complex factors that enter one’s vote choice, and performing an analysis without controlling for such variables as region or race, for example, as Hetherington failed to do, leaves many questions unanswered. Regardless, it can be concluded that media coverage affects the way voters evaluate and make their

political decisions, and that quantitative content analysis can help us arrive at conclusions that can suggest more specifically what those effects may be—although those conclusions will be, at least to some degree, exploratory and approximate.

Iyengar and Kinder (1987) have provided a comprehensive study that combines extensive content analysis of television media across the United States over a number of years with equally extensive public opinion data over the same time period. They found that there was a strong relationship between the issues covered by the media and voters' perceptions of the importance of those issues. As the authors phrase it, the "verdict is clear and unequivocal...[when] television news focuses on a problem, the public's priorities are altered, and altered again as television news moves on to something new" (1987: 33). The evidence from this extensive study is that the media can and do have an effect on the way voters perceive politics. The media do more than merely reinforce existing perceptions among voters, as Lazarsfeld and his colleagues contended (Lazarsfeld et al, 1948: 94); they can and do shift and change those perceptions altogether.

However, do such changing perceptions at the hands of the media have an impact on vote choice during an election? Can the media change the perceptions of voters to the point where they can change their vote altogether? This effect is difficult to measure; the problems inherent in such an approach have been broached above in the discussion of Hetherington's analysis. As Zaller (1992:6) reminds us, "every [political] opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition." To measure with complete accuracy the effect of media coverage on voter perceptions and on vote choice would require, among other things, an exhaustive combination of extensive content analyses, corresponding

with extensive and reliable survey research data over a period of time and with a model of vote choice that incorporated these and other variegated variables that influence vote choice—something that is, quite simply, “not possible, or even useful” (Blais et al., 2002: 11). What is, however, within the scope of this paper and of this thesis is to assert this—using a quantitative content analysis, it is possible to make and reach rational and logical observations and conclusions about the ways in which media coverage may affect vote choice.

This, essentially, is the approach to this topic that has been adopted by Canadian scholars of media politics who have employed quantitative content analyses in their research. As well, Canadian scholars of media politics have quite frequently made use of content analyses in their research (Wagenberg and Soderlund, 1976, 1984; Mendelsohn, 1996; Klinkhammer, 1999; Miljan and Cooper, 2003; Trimble and Sampert, 2004; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004).

Canadian literature on the subject has employed methodology and produced results similar to those found in American literature. From Fletcher’s and Wagenberg and Soderlund’s research in the 1970s and 1980s, up to present-day analyses of the 2004 election by Goodyear-Grant et al, Canadian literature has focused on measuring the dependent variables of tone, quantity of coverage, and frame of coverage. Canadian literature, like American literature, has used media outlet, media type, city, and time as independent explanatory variables.

Fletcher (1981) examined media coverage of the 1979 and 1980 federal election, and principally used media outlet, type, city and time as independent variables, and in particular used quantity, tone, and frame of coverage as dependent variables, concluding,

as noted previously, that the 1979 and 1980 elections were primarily framed in terms of the horserace, and concluded as well (1981: 320) that an undue amount of coverage had “a nasty tone” to it, and was “capriciously negative.” Wagenberg et al (1988; 129) also made use of the same independent and dependent variables to show that campaign coverage tended to frame the campaign in terms of the horserace, and that Liberal leader John Turner—the Prime Minister going into the election—was subject to an intense and “truly extraordinary” amount of negative coverage. Frizzell and Westell (1994: 196) in observing the 1993 federal election, also looked more into the dependent variable of tone of coverage, noting that approximately a quarter of all coverage of the two main leaders in the campaign—Kim Campbell and Jean Chretien—was unfavourable. As well, Frizzell and Westell, as noted previously, found that only approximately one-third of all stories were framed in terms of issues. More recent studies (Klinkhammer, 1999; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004; Trimble and Sampert, 2004) have also made use of the same independent and dependent variables, and have revealed much about tone and framing in contemporary Canadian elections. Klinkhammer (1999: 130) observed that the majority of election coverage in the 1993 and 1997 Alberta provincial elections was framed in terms of the horserace, and noted that opposition leaders were more likely to receive negative coverage than Premier Klein. Trimble and Sampert (2004, 60) contended that election coverage of the 2000 federal election was overly negative in tone, and Goodyear-Grant et al (2004: 91) concluded that media coverage of the 2004 federal election tended to frame the campaign in terms of the horserace and, as well, that “negative coverage dominated positive coverage” during the campaign.

Canadian and American literature on the subject has no substantive difference insofar as methodology is concerned, save for the fact that American researchers are often able to do more comprehensive analyses, owing to the fact that American researchers in this area tend to have greater resources and more data of which to make use; for example, American scholars have access to an impressive amount of data provided by organizations and research bodies like the Pew Center for the People and the Press and the Center for Media and Public Affairs, among others.

Canadian results, too, are similar to results of American studies. Canadian scholars from Clarke et al (1979), Fletcher (1981), and Wagenberg et al (1988) to Dornan and Pyman (2001), Trimble and Sampert (2004), and Goodyear-Grant (2004) have noted, as have American scholars, that, over time, the media have begun to emphasize issues of strategy and tactics as opposed to more substantive policy discussion, and that media coverage of political campaigns has generally become more negative in nature.

Canadian literature differs from its American counterpart in discussing the implications of such findings on voters' perception and on vote choice; in short, Canadian scholars have not attempted to make a link between the findings and these implications on the electorate over the long-term. This is not intended to be a criticism of Canadian scholars; rather, given the fact that, as mentioned, Canadian scholars do not have access to the same resources as do American scholars, this lack of focus on this link should not be surprising. Canadian literature, in essence, has left the door open to exploring this potential link between Canadian media coverage and Canadian voter perception and vote choice. As Denise Savage-Hughes and David Taras (1992: 215) note, scholars "have not yet attempted to gauge the ways in which... voting [has] been influenced by media

coverage.” It is the goal of this study to do precisely that—to attempt to gauge and explore this relationship in Alberta, along with the implications of media coverage for the future of politics in the province of Alberta, based on an extensive content analysis of the 2004 provincial election.

This chapter of the thesis has served as a review of the study of the relationship between the media and politics, with a specific focus on the study of the effect of media coverage on voters. It has identified that there are three major effects of media coverage on voters that have been observed in past research—agenda-setting, priming, and framing—and it has presented examples of the occurrences of these effects in Canada and the United States. This chapter then briefly discussed the historical development of the study of the impact of the media on voters, from the earliest studies in the 1930s to contemporary studies that emphasize the effects of agenda-setting, priming, and framing. This was followed by a discussion and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the various research methods that have been used to study media effects on voters, along with an explanation of why this thesis employed a quantitative content analysis. This chapter then concluded with a discussion of the methodologies and results of content analyses undertaken in Canada and the United States.

The following chapter of this thesis, Chapter 2, will present and discuss in detail the methodology undertaken in using a quantitative content analysis to study the 2004 Alberta provincial election. Chapter 3 will present findings concerning the dependent variable of quantity of coverage, discussing results concerning frequency of publication, genres of stories, foci of stories, and frequency of leader and party mentions. Chapter 4 will present and discuss findings pertaining to the final two dependent variables of the



analysis—tone and framing. Chapter 5 will serve as an analysis of the implications of the results of this quantitative content analysis of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, and will speculate as to the effects of media coverage of the 2004 provincial election on Alberta voters.

## **Chapter 2- Methodology**

This chapter will briefly outline and discuss the methodology used in this study of media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election. It will present the independent and dependent variables used in the study, and will explain and discuss how the study was undertaken, specifically how the data were collected, coded, and analyzed.

As outlined in the previous chapter, past quantitative content analysis research on media politics has used media outlet, media type, time during the campaign, and city of publication as independent, explanatory variables. Patterson's (1980) comprehensive study of the 1976 American Presidential election, as well as Fletcher's (1981) examination of media coverage of the 1979 and 1980 Canadian federal elections, made use of media outlet, media type, time, and city as independent variables. More recent studies (for example, Wagenberg et al, 1988; Frizzell and Westell, 1994; Klinkhammer, 1999; Hollihan, 2001; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004; Trimble and Sampert, 2004) have also made use of similar independent variables. The only independent variable of the above four that differs between content analyses is the variable of media type. Some studies (for example, Mendelsohn, 1996; Klinkhammer, 1999; Trimble and Sampert, 2004) focus their research on only one media type, usually print; studies that focus on more than one media type—print and television—make use of media type as an independent variable to explore the differences in coverage between the two types of media (Patterson, 1980; Hess, 2000; Hershey, 2001; Hollihan, 2001). This study, consistent with past research, will also use these four independent variables.

For this analysis, every election-related news story in all four of the above print outlets mentioned was collected from the day the writ was dropped (October 25), and up to and including two days after election day (November 24). For the three television outlets, the same schedule was followed, coding all weeknight, six o'clock newscasts.<sup>2</sup> Each story and article collected was then carefully reviewed and analyzed using the coding rules as a guide; the occurrences of particular variables within each story were noted in the relevant place on the code sheet. These data were then input into a statistical program, and further analyzed; presentation and analysis of the results will take place in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

For the independent variable of media outlet, seven outlets in total were used in the analysis. The Calgary affiliates of CBC Television, Global Television, and A-Channel were used for the collection of television data.<sup>3</sup> The *Edmonton Journal*, *Edmonton Sun*, *Calgary Sun*, and *Calgary Herald* were the outlets used for the collection of print data. Though the addition of media outlets from other Alberta cities and rural areas would have been a welcome addition to the analysis, limited resources prevented their collection for this thesis. These seven outlets were chosen because each paper is one of the two major newspapers in each city, and because these outlets have been the principal outlets studied in past Alberta media analyses (Savage-Hughes, 1990: Sampert, 1997: Klinkhammer, 1999). These outlets, as well, have, had noted tendencies in coverage in the past (Savage-Hughes, 1990: Sampert, 1997: Klinkhammer, 1999). The *Edmonton Journal* has

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<sup>2</sup> All data were collected by the author and co-investigator, Jared Wesley. Mr. Wesley was responsible for collection and coding of all television data for this project. As well, Mr. Wesley was instrumental in developing the coding scheme, particularly the code sheets and coding rules, for this project, and for providing assistance and guidance to the author during the project's initial stages. Many thanks are due to Jared for his assistance.

<sup>3</sup> Given time and resource constraints, television coverage from Edmonton affiliates and from the Calgary CTV outlet could not be retrieved.

generally been seen as less supportive of the government in power, and more likely to be critical of Ralph Klein and the Progressive Conservative party; the *Calgary Herald* and the *Suns*, on the other hand, have been overwhelmingly supportive of Klein and the Conservatives, often to the point where the quality of the journalism itself, particularly of the *Calgary Herald*, has been called into question (Sampert, 1997: 12; Klinkhammer, 1999: 94). Whether these tendencies persisted into the 2004 provincial election will be explored and discussed later in this thesis.

For the variable of time during the campaign, each story collected from the day the writ was dropped (October 25) to two days after the day of the election (November 24) was simply noted on which numerical day of the campaign it appeared; a story that appeared on October 25 was the first day of the campaign, on October 26 the second day, and so on until November 24 (Day 30), two days after election day in order to assess post-election coverage. Time during the campaign is an important variable for any media content analysis undertaken during an election, as without it there is no way of noting changes and differences in coverage over the campaign period; as such, time during the campaign has been a key variable in content analyses of election coverage (Savage-Hughes, 1990: Klinkhammer, 1999: Hollihan, 2001: Goodyear-Grant et al., 2004: Trimble and Sampert, 2004).

The independent variable of city of publication is an especially important one for the purposes of this analysis. For this analysis, it was deemed that analyzing print coverage from Alberta's two major cities, Edmonton and Calgary, would be of utmost importance, especially given the political differences existing between the two cities; recent elections in Alberta have largely served as evidence of this, with most, if not all, of

Liberal and New Democrat seats in the provincial legislature coming from Edmonton, with Calgary being solidly Progressive Conservative (Alberta. Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, 2001: 24-25).

Three dependent variables were employed in this analysis—again, as discussed in the previous chapter, dependent variables that have been utilized in past quantitative content analyses. The quantity of coverage, the first of the dependent variables in this analysis, refers to the number of election stories published, the genres of stories published, the foci of stories, and the amount of mentions of issues, parties, and leaders.

Concerning the genres of stories, a genre was defined as a means of classifying a story based on its structure and style, and based on the news that the story covered or reported. There were eight genres used; the definitions of these genres were based on those used in past content analyses of media coverage of the 1993 and 1997 elections in Alberta (Klinkhammer, 1999). A story in the 'hard news' genre was a factual style of story with the most important information first, often of a breaking nature, or with a focus on a new development; hard news stories were stories that could be viewed as stories that would be news, even if the election were not on. For instance, the death of Ralph Klein's mother, as happened during the campaign, would be considered hard news, but a visit by Kevin Taft to an elementary school would not be. Feature articles were stories that were not breaking events and, therefore, lacked the same element of timeliness as hard news stories, and were often general interest stories that provided more detail and background; for example, a detailed story about the parties' plans for the future development of Alberta's oil sands would be considered a feature story. Campaign-generated stories were stories that were being covered solely because of the campaign and because they

occurred within the context of the election; they are also stories that arise from events being staged because of the election—for example, stories on the leadership debates. Editorials were stories that ran on television, or specifically on the editorial page in newspapers, that represented the position of the outlet. Columns were stories that were the opinions of an individual who was a regular contributor to the medium, as well as guest columnists. Interviews were stories that had been directly transcribed from interviews, without major editing of the material having taken place, and often run in a question and answer format. News analysis stories were in-depth thought pieces written by a reporter or columnist about an issue or event; generally, these were lengthy, containing both background information and generally reflecting the writer's opinions. Personality profiles focused on the background and personal life of the candidate, and included stories that were about a leader's political views. For television coverage, 'vox pop' stories—stories where reporters ask people on the street their thoughts about the election and election issues--, 'at-issue' panels with experts and party officials, and journalist-initiated stories were also added to the list of genres; these genres were added to the list of genres for this analysis so that these types of stories unique to the medium of television could be noted and accounted for.

Concerning the foci of stories, there were several options available to coders. Stories could focus on the campaign race itself—on who was winning or losing, and on what kinds of strategies were being employed. Stories could focus on a number of other issues-- the health care system in Alberta, social services, crime and law, senior citizens' issues, the environment, taxes, same-sex marriage, automobile insurance, the debt, deficit, and budget, and energy and natural resources. Stories could also focus on

education, or specifically on post-secondary education, including stories on budget and labour issues related to these institutions. Stories could also focus on who could have succeeded Ralph Klein as Premier, although references alone to the election of 2004 election being Klein's last, without specific mention of succession, were not coded as having such a focus.

Stories could also focus on Alberta, western Canadian, or Canadian identity; stories with this focus included stories with an appeal to the collective interest of or sense of belonging to either Alberta, the West, or Canada, respectively. Stories that focused on a topic or issue not noted above were coded as 'other.' As well, stories were analyzed for the mention of issues, regardless of whether they were the dominant issue of the article or whether the issue was mentioned merely in passing; any number of issues could be mentioned in a story, and if that issue was mentioned at least once, the issue in question was coded as having been mentioned. Coding stories for both the foci of stories and the mentions of issues in stories allowed for the analysis to determine the depth and comprehensiveness of issue coverage during the 2004 provincial campaign.

Examining the number of election stories published and the amount of mentions of issues, parties, and leaders is a common feature of content analyses, from smaller-scale, more localized studies like Sampert (1997), or larger-scale studies like Hershey's of media coverage across the United States (2001); doing so allows the researcher to determine the amount of stories published during a campaign, the amount of coverage for each party and leader, and, importantly, the differences in the amount of coverage between outlets, cities, media types, and time during the campaign.

The tone of coverage—whether a leader or party has been described positively, negatively, neutrally, or in a mixed way in an article or story—is the second dependent variable in this analysis, and refers to the general impression the coder is left with after reading the article. Tone could be determined by the facts that are covered, by the quotes of others who are commenting on the politician, or by the opinions of the writer or reporter. A story with a positive tone will have a positive feel and may offer statements that can be viewed as supportive of that party or leader; for example, a story speaking positively and discussing the merits of a party's proposed policy towards the management of the province's natural resource revenues would be coded as having a positive tone. A story with a negative tone was critical of either the leader or the position or policy that person has put forward; for example, a story discussing a party's lack of coherent policy towards natural resource revenues and the potential negative outcomes of such a policy would be coded as having a negative tone. A neutral story was a story with coverage that was neither positive nor negative, appearing unbiased, balanced, and objective; a story about, for example, a leader or party's policy announcement, without commentary on the merits or negatives of that policy, would be coded as having a neutral tone. Stories with a mixed tone contained an element, or combination, of positive, neutral, and/or negative news; for example, a story that, on the one hand, contained neutral or positive commentary on a party's policy that was followed by another party's negative reaction to their policy was coded as having a mixed tone towards that party or leader. A story could be coded as being positive, negative, neutral, or mixed for any of the leaders or parties mentioned in the story; for example, a story could mention both Ralph Klein and Kevin Taft, and be coded as being negative for one leader and positive for the other, depending



on the treatment of each leader in the article. As well, stories that did not mention a particular party or leader were coded as 'N/A'—not applicable—for that party or leader. For example, a story that did *not* mention Kevin Taft at all would have its tone coded as 'N/A' for that particular article; this should not be confused with the *neutral* tone mentioned above, in which a leader *is* mentioned in an article, and is covered in a neutral manner.

The variable of tone of coverage has been employed in media content analyses in both Canada and the United States (for example, Savage-Hughes, 1990: Hetherington, 1992: Klinkhammer, 1999: Hershey, 2001: Farnsworth and Lichter, 2003). In particular, the above division of tone into the four categories of positive, negative, neutral, or mixed coverage has been utilized in examining media coverage in Alberta (Savage-Hughes, 1990: Sampert, 1999: Klinkhammer, 1999).

The frame of coverage, as explained in the previous chapter, refers to the angle or thematic structure of the article, and is the context that serves as an interpretive device for the reader. As also noted in the previous chapter, the frame of coverage is an important variable that has been extensively studied and analyzed in both Canada and the United States, from analyses of framing in American presidential elections (Patterson, 1980) and in Canadian federal elections (Soderlund et al, 1984: Frizzell and Westell, 1994: Trimble and Sampert, 2001). Stories within an issue frame focused on an issue, like health care or post-secondary education; and highlighted and detailed various issues or the policies surrounding the issues. Stories within a horserace, or strategic frame, focused on predictions of gains or losses and the campaign contest itself, and on the kind of strategies being used. Other non-issue based frames included the anti-politics frame,

which included stories reflecting a generally critical and negative view of politics, and having this critical and negative nature be the central focus of the article, and the personality frame, which included stories focused within this frame focus exclusively on the person in question in the story, with mention of issues, strategy, or the campaign in these stories being secondary to a focus on personality.

The units of analysis in this study were entire stories; all stories were coded using a code-sheet and a comprehensive set of coding rules based directly on coding rules and definitions used in past media content analyses in Alberta (Savage-Hughes, 1990; Sampert, 1999; Klinkhammer, 1999).<sup>4</sup> Some past studies, particularly Trimble and Sampert (2004), limit their units of analysis to headlines of print stories; this study, however, will analyze entire articles and stories, as other Canadian studies in the field have done (Frizzell and Westell, 1994; Klinkhammer, 1999; Dornan and Pynan, 2000; Hershey, 2001). It was required for this analysis that all news stories selected for coding included information about at least one of the leaders of a political party. Stories that are solely about MLA candidates were not coded, nor were stories that could be considered briefs, such as 'Ask the Leaders' or 'Notes' sections. Stories about a non-election issue that only mentioned a leader in passing were, as well, not coded. For example, a story may have been about a parade and mentioned that Premier Klein would attend; stories like these were not coded. As well, it was required for this analysis that news stories selected for coding must be on some aspect of the 2004 election campaign; these included stories arising from campaign speeches, television debates, media conferences, news releases or responses to the statements of others. Stories that were about party leaders, but not about the election, were not coded; for example, a story noting that Ralph Klein met

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<sup>4</sup> The codebook and coding rules are available in Appendices A and B, respectively.

with the Prime Minister would not be coded unless the story had been given an election angle. The only exception to this rule was for stories running on specific election pages in newspapers, but have no apparent link to the election other than through this placement; a story, for example, about Klein's decision on a policy issue that does not concern or mention the election was only coded only if it is found on a special election page.

It must be noted, as well, that while data were coded, collected and analyzed for the Alberta Alliance party and its leader, Randy Thorsteinson, as well as for other minor parties, the findings concerning these parties are not included in this thesis. The findings concerning these parties and leaders were not particularly significant or noteworthy, and thus, in the interest of giving space to more significant and noteworthy findings concerning the other parties and leaders, these findings are not included in the final analysis.

Collection, coding, and inputting of data were conducted by the author and co-investigator. To ensure accuracy in the results, an independent coder was trained to code a randomly selected 10 per cent of the sample. Reliability was determined by dividing the number of questions in agreement by the total number of questions. Inter-coder reliability was assessed at 89.3 per cent, well above the established acceptable agreement level of 80 per cent (Savage-Hughes, 1990: Klinkhammer, 1999: Trimble and Sampert, 2004).

The following chapter of this thesis will present and discuss findings concerning the first dependent variable of this analysis—quantity of coverage.

### **Thesis- Chapter 3- Results (Quantity)**

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings from this study of media coverage in Calgary and Edmonton of the 2004 Alberta provincial election. The data show that certain media outlets—the *Calgary Herald*, the *Edmonton Journal*, and CBC-TV-- produced much more comprehensive, extensive, and substantive election coverage than other print and television outlets, and, moreover, more than during past elections in Alberta.

This chapter will focus on findings concerning the dependent variable of quantity of coverage, of which, as noted in the previous chapter, there are four facets. Firstly, results concerning the frequency of publication of stories will be discussed, followed by results concerning the genre of stories. Then, results pertaining to the foci of stories will be examined. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion of the frequency of leader and party mentions.

Given past media analyses, particularly of the 1993 and 1997 provincial elections in Alberta (Klinkhammer, 1999), there were a number of research expectations going into the analysis. Firstly, given media coverage of the 1993 and 1997 provincial elections, as discussed in the previous chapter, the coverage provided by the *Calgary Herald* was expected to be lower in number than its counterpart in Edmonton, the *Edmonton Journal*; this, as will be indicated and discussed, turned out not to be the case. Television coverage was expected to be less thorough and diverse than print coverage, and it was expected that, quite simply, there would be far fewer election stories on television than in print. It was as well expected that, concerning the genres of stories, that stories would be largely

campaign-generated stories, given that campaign-generated stories have dominated past election coverage in Alberta (Klinkhammer, 1999). It was also expected, given past research in Alberta, that the plurality of stories, particularly on television, would be focused on the horserace, with much less of a focus on more substantive issues. Lastly, it was expected that the opposition parties and leaders would be mentioned less frequently than Ralph Klein and the Conservatives, particularly in Calgary, than in past Alberta media analyses; this was owing to the fact that the two major opposition leaders were both from Edmonton, relatively new to their jobs, and led parties that each had very few seats at the time the writ was dropped.

As this chapter will discuss, most of these expectations were met. There were, however, several key findings from this analysis that were not expected; these particular findings will be indicated, explained, and discussed.

### *Frequency of Publication*

As seen in Table 3.1, a total of 756 stories were collected and coded for this analysis. Of these, 577 stories were collected from four print sources—the *Calgary Herald*, *Edmonton Journal*, *Calgary Sun*, and *Edmonton Sun*. The other 179 stories were collected from three Calgary television outlets—CBC, Global Television, and A-Channel.

(Table 3.1 about here)

Of print sources, the *Calgary Herald* had the most stories, devoting 210 stories to the provincial election. The *Edmonton Journal* had 142 stories, the *Calgary Sun* had 122 stories, and the *Edmonton Sun* had 103 stories.<sup>5</sup>

There is a striking difference between the frequency of publication of the *Calgary Herald* and *Edmonton Journal*, as opposed to both the *Calgary Sun* and *Edmonton Sun*; as can be observed in Table 3.1, the *Herald* and *Journal* together devoted 352 stories to the provincial election, whereas the two *Suns* devoted only 225 stories altogether to the provincial election. As will be further shown and discussed, this distinction between *Sun* coverage and *Herald* and *Journal* coverage exists across several different variables.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that the *Calgary Herald* devoted far more coverage to the election than any other media outlet, including the *Edmonton Journal*. Almost 28 per cent of all stories collected for the analysis appeared in the *Herald*, and comprised just over 36 per cent of all print stories collected. In comparison, the media outlet with the next highest number of stories—the *Journal*—published 19 per cent of stories overall and almost 25 per cent of print stories.

This comparative wealth of coverage devoted to the election by the *Herald* is striking, considering that past research on media coverage in Alberta provincial election campaigns has made much note of *Herald* coverage actually being much *lower* in frequency of publication than other outlets. Indeed, Klinkhammer (1999: 94) notes that the *Herald* had a “lower number of articles” than the *Journal* in both the 1993 and 1997 provincial elections, and, moreover, that a “number of reporters... felt that the *Herald* did not cover the 1997 election as well as the *Journal* in terms of amount of coverage.”

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<sup>5</sup> The October 29<sup>th</sup>, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, and November 13<sup>th</sup> editions of the *Edmonton Sun* were unable to be collected for this analysis, explaining the lower number of cases in this and other instances.

Why did the *Herald* in 2004 provide so much more election coverage than in elections past, and indeed more election coverage than any other media outlet? Firstly, the *Herald's* relative lack of coverage, particularly in 1997, can at least be partly attributable to the fact that, as Klinkhammer notes (1999:146), journalists and media outlets in general “appeared to be less [interested] in the 1997 campaign.” With less overall interest, it should come as no surprise that the *Herald's* coverage in 1997 was lower than in 2004—although it does not explain the *Herald's* increase in 2004 election coverage from 1993 and 1997. This can be explained by the fact that the *Herald* itself was in a much different situation in 2004 than in 1993 or 1997; in the late 1990s, the paper was in the midst of internal conflict that would result in the newsroom strike of 1999-2000, and, as well, the paper's ownership would soon change hands. In the wake of the strike, “[only] a few reporters returned to the newsroom,” and “[what] became far more newsworthy were reports of [Conrad Black's] Hollinger selling the *Herald*... to CanWest Global Communications.” (Yearwood, 2001). The *Herald* found itself in 2004 with new ownership and largely new staff—including a new editor-in-chief-- and therefore, it should not be surprising that its election coverage differed so much between the 1997 and 2004 elections. The likeliest explanation for the increase in *Herald* election coverage, therefore, is that an editorial and managerial decision was made to cover the election more extensively and thoroughly than in years past.

Television sources devoted far fewer stories to the election campaign than did print sources; CBC had 78 stories, followed by 59 stories for Global Television, and 42 stories for A-Channel.<sup>6</sup> Similar to the relationship between the *Suns* and the *Herald* and

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<sup>6</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, only weekday TV broadcasts were used—in spite of this, the considerably lower number of stories for TV is quite significant.

*Journal*, a distinction between CBC, Global, and A-Channel coverage persists; as will be further shown, the CBC's coverage of the campaign was more extensive than other television outlets.

This difference between print and television coverage, as indicated, is to be expected; there is nothing unusual in this finding. Print, by virtue of its format, allows more detailed and in-depth examination of issues at hand, and provides for a larger number of stories on a daily basis. Television, however, is an "undeniably visual" medium that does not lend itself as well to more detailed and penetrating analysis (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987: 1). As Hollihan (2001: 82) notes, television quite simply "does not provide the thorough and detailed discussions of public issues that are common in the print media."

There was also a link between frequency of publication for both print and television and time during the campaign, albeit a small and expected one. As can be seen in Table 3.2, both print and television gave more coverage to the election during the first week of the campaign, and even more during the fourth and final week of the campaign. Considering that the last week of the campaign is when many voters increasingly turn to the media for information about possible vote choices (Hershey, 2001: 69), this increased amount of coverage during the final week, while not particularly significant, is still certainly of note.

(Table 3.2 about here)

In short, most of the findings regarding frequency of publication were expected. The fact that television outlets produced far fewer campaign stories was expected, given, as noted, the inherent differences between print and television. As far as print is



concerned, the *Edmonton Sun* and *Calgary Sun* published fewer stories than did the *Journal*, as was the case in 1993 and 1997 (Klinkhammer, 1999: 94). The *Calgary Herald*, however, defied expectations, publishing a much greater amount of stories in 2004 than in 1993 and 1997. This increase in the *Herald's* campaign coverage, as will be further indicated and discussed, is part of an overall trend in *Herald* coverage, a trend that saw the *Herald* provide much more comprehensive campaign coverage than any other media outlet. Similar to the *Herald's* positioning in newspaper coverage, the CBC broadcast more election stories than did other television outlets, and also provided much more comprehensive and extensive coverage of the campaign than did other television outlets.

### *Genre of Stories*

Previous studies of media effect in elections, particularly in Alberta, have identified the type or genre of stories as a necessary part of the analysis (Klinkhammer, 1999). The genres that have been identified as the most significant, and that have been used in analyzing media coverage in Alberta include 'hard news', feature articles, campaign-generated stories, editorials, columns, interviews, news analysis, and personality profiles. For television coverage, 'vox pop' stories—stories where reporters ask people on the street their thoughts about the election and election issues--, 'at-issue' panels with experts and party officials, and journalist-initiated stories were added to the list of genres; these genres were added to this analysis so that these types of stories unique to television as a medium could be included.

The genres of stories were coded using a comprehensive list of coding rules based directly on coding rules used in past research in media politics in Alberta (Savage-Hughes, 1990; Sampert, 1999; Klinkhammer, 1999).<sup>7</sup> Stories in the hard news genre were stories that would have been news, regardless of whether an election was taking place or not. For example, a story on the death of Ralph Klein's mother, as happened during the campaign, would be considered hard news, whereas a campaign visit by Kevin Taft to an elementary school would not, and would instead be considered campaign-generated news.

Feature articles were stories that were not breaking events, and were instead lengthier stories providing more detail, analysis, and background. Campaign-generated stories were stories being covered solely because of the election, and would not have appeared otherwise in standard news coverage, and were stories arising directly from events being staged because of the election—for example, the aforementioned campaign visit to an elementary school.

Editorials were stories that, in print, ran on the editorial page, and represent the position of the paper or television outlet. Columns were stories representing the opinions of an individual who is a contributor to the medium. Stories coded as interviews were essentially interviews that had been directly transcribed, when no major editing of the material has taken place, and run in a question and answer format.

News analysis stories were in-depth thought pieces written or produced by a reporter or columnist about an issue or event, and were generally lengthier and contained background information. Personality profiles were stories that focused on the background and personal life of the leader or candidate, including stories about the person's political

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<sup>7</sup> The codebook and coding rules are available in Appendices A and B, respectively.

views. For television stories, 'at-issue' panels, vox pop stories, and journalist-initiated stories were added to list of genres.

The majority of stories coded for the analysis, 63.4 per cent, were campaign-generated news. Given that this analysis was confined to the campaign period, this should come as no surprise. However, the percentage of campaign-generated news was much higher in this study than in past Alberta elections; Klinkhammer (1999) notes that, in 1993 and 1997, 45.7 per cent and 37.9 per cent of stories were campaign-generated, respectively.

Why were there more campaign-generated stories in 2004 than in 1993 or 1997?

The difference can in part be explained by the differences in the amount of hard news coverage. In 1993 and 1997, Klinkhammer (1999) found that that 16.9 per cent and 26.3 per cent of stories, respectively, were hard news; in this study of the 2004 election, as seen in Tables 3.3 and 3.4, only 3.5 per cent of print coverage and 5 per cent of television coverage were hard news. Perhaps this difference is the result of the use of different coders between the two analyses, and that the coders involved in the analyses interpreted the coding rules differently. While this is certainly a possibility and must be kept in mind when interpreting these results, there may well be other reasons for this difference.

Firstly, as Klinkhammer notes (1999: 103), "[the] decline in [campaign-generated] coverage [from 1993 to 1997] seems to provide evidence to support the perceptions of journalists and campaign workers who said there appeared to be less interest in the 1997 campaign." With less interest in the campaign, media outlets simply covered the campaign less, and thus were more likely to publish hard news stories related to the campaign than to publish news generated by the campaigns themselves. As well,

campaigns, even on the provincial level, are steadily becoming more sophisticated, and parties are increasingly “[orchestrating] their campaigns for the news media” (Wayne, 2004: 258). Alberta politics is certainly not exempt from these sorts of things that define campaign-generated coverage—“pseudo events staged by candidates, reports on polls, the platforms of candidates and campaign analyses by pundits,” as Klinkhammer (1999: 99) observes. Given this development of campaigning in Alberta, and the fact that the 1993 and 1997 elections seemed less able to capture the media’s interest, it is no surprise that campaign-generated coverage was higher in 2004.

(Table 3.3 and 3.4 about here)

Of note as well are the differences in genre between different media outlets and cities of publication. Two differences between genre and print outlets particularly stand out—the number of opinion columns in each newspaper, and the amount of features per newspaper. As can be seen in Table 3.3, the two *Sun* newspapers each had a greater percentage of their election coverage devoted to opinion columns than did either the *Herald* or the *Journal*. Given the Suns’ smaller tabloid-style format, more “sensational” and “dramatic” nature to its coverage (Klinkhammer, 1999: 146), and its particularly colloquial, opinionated nature, such a finding is unsurprising. In addition, the *Calgary Sun* actually had more opinion columns than did the *Calgary Herald*—this is especially remarkable, considering that the *Calgary Herald* had almost twice as many stories about the election as the *Calgary Sun*. The *Calgary Herald*, in addition, devoted much more attention to publishing feature stories than did any other print outlet, while the *Edmonton Journal* made occasional use of news analysis stories.

Television coverage was even more idiosyncratic, as shown in Table 3.4. Like print coverage, television coverage was dominated by campaign-generated news. What stands out, however, are how the different networks used—and, interestingly, neglected—particular genres. A-Channel was the only television outlet that used editorials during the campaign, and made the only use of a news analysis story out of all three networks. Journalist-initiated stories were used ten times by CBC, and twice by A-Channel, but never once by Global Television. CBC, as well, made use of ‘at-issue’ discussion panels and broadcast personality profiles four times each during the campaign, while no other network did so even once during the campaign.

Most election coverage of the 2004 provincial campaign was generated directly from the campaign itself, as expected, given media coverage of the 1993 and 1997 provincial campaigns. The *Calgary Herald*’s use of feature articles was quite noteworthy, especially considering, as has been discussed, that the Herald’s coverage of the 1993 and 1997 elections was seen as lacking; the *Herald*’s use of feature articles allowed the paper to analyze the election much more closely and in much more detail than any other print or television outlet.

Insofar as television coverage is concerned, CBC’s coverage was more extensive and comprehensive than other television outlets, given its more diverse use of genres, particularly of discussion panels and personality profiles. This is consistent with past research; Frizzell and Westell (1988: 85), based on a content analysis of television coverage from the 1988 federal election, note that “CBC coverage was far more extensive than that of the other networks.” As well, Attallah and Burton (2001: 218) note that, regarding the 2000 federal election, the “availability of more types of news [was] well

illustrated in the case of the CBC which, during the campaign, devoted the documentary and investigative part of its [evening] news broadcast entirely to election news.”

Consequently, the comprehensiveness and extensiveness of CBC coverage comes as expected.

### *Focus of Stories*

As seen in Table 3.5, the main issue of stories published or broadcast during the election was, overwhelmingly, the race itself; in 42.7 per cent of stories, the focus of the stories was on the horserace-- on who was winning or losing, and on what kinds of strategies were being used. This is slightly lower than the figures from the 1993 and 1997 elections (Klinkhammer, 1999), where 56.2 per cent and 51 per cent of stories, respectively, were focused on the horserace.

(Table 3.5 about here)

Of more substantive issues, the most frequent main issue of stories was health care, which dominated 11.5 per cent of stories. This prominence of stories focused on health care, more so than any other issue, is consistent with past findings; in 1997, the first election after Klein's controversial cuts to the health care system, 18.1 per cent of stories were focused on health care (Klinkhammer, 1999: 97). Health care, since the cuts of the 1990s, has remained a prominent issue in Alberta politics, and was especially prominent in 1997; Alberta nurses had threatened to go on strike during the campaign, and “during the last week of the campaign it was revealed that the government had struck an agreement with doctors that lifted their fee cap” (Klinkhammer, 1999: 98). Stories in the ‘other’ category dominated 8.7 per cent of stories, while AISH (Assured Income For

the Severely Handicapped) dominated 5.7 per cent of stories—no doubt because of Klein's controversial comments on the subject during the campaign.<sup>8</sup> Infrastructure and urban affairs dominated 4.3 per cent of stories during the campaign. No other story dominated more than three per cent of stories during the campaign.

It is notable that several issues that had been of recent high profile in Alberta politics were the dominant issue in few stories. Automobile insurance, which in the summer of 2003 was a hotly discussed issue in Alberta, was the dominant issue in only 1.3 per cent of stories—10 stories in total during the campaign. Education and post-secondary education, which have traditionally been issues of very high profile in recent Alberta politics (Klinkhammer, 1999), were the dominant issues in 2.7 and 3.0 per cent of stories respectively; BSE<sup>9</sup> and rural affairs were dominant in 1.7 per cent of stories, and the issue of debt, deficits, and budget dominated 2.3 per cent of stories. Same-sex marriage was dominant in only four stories during the entire campaign period.

This dominant focus on the campaign itself is largely consistent with past studies on Alberta politics. Klinkhammer (1999: 111) notes that "coverage of the [1993 and 1997 campaigns] focused on the race itself, and not on wider issues that might be of concern to voters." Moreover, only a similar handful of issues in 1993 and 1997 managed to be the focus of more than three per cent of stories. Where the findings of the analysis presented

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<sup>8</sup> On Wednesday, October 27, 2004, at a campaign rally, Ralph Klein made several controversial comments in regards to AISH recipients. As a Calgary Herald article phrased it, "Klein told a Calgary campaign rally Wednesday night he will cut off "undeserving" recipients of Alberta's Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped. He drew laughter when he talked of meeting two women who were "yipping" at him to increase AISH payments. The women didn't look severely handicapped to him, the premier said. "Both had cigarettes dangling from their mouths, and cowboy hats.'" (Jason Markusoff et al, "Premier feels the heat: Klein not quite contrite over AISH comments," *Calgary Herald*, October 29, 2004) Not surprisingly, Klein's comments were poorly received.

<sup>9</sup> In May 2003, the United States placed a ban on all beef imports from Canada after an Alberta cow was found to be infected with Mad Cow Disease (BSE). This ban severely affected rural communities in Alberta, resulting in many job losses and losses of livelihood. The border was not opened to Canadian cattle until July 2005

in this thesis differ is regarding the lower percentage of stories focused on the campaign than in 1993 and 1997; this, however, can be explained by the coverage of the *Herald* and the *Journal*, as can be seen in Table 3.6.

(Table 3.6 about here)

There were far more stories focused on the horserace in the *Edmonton Sun* and *Calgary Sun*, than in the *Journal* and the *Herald*. Other issues, like education and BSE<sup>10</sup>, were more likely to be the dominant issues in articles in the *Journal* and *Herald* than in the *Suns*—surely owing to the fact that the *Herald* and the *Journal* simply had more coverage overall of the election, and therefore there were more opportunities for other issues to dominate. As well, more stories in the *Herald* and *Journal* were focused on less popular issues, like post-secondary education; this helps to explain the comparatively lower percentage of stories dominated by the campaign itself, as discussed above.

As well, there were several notable differences of issue dominance between the *Herald* and the *Journal*. Both the campaign and health care dominated slightly more stories in the *Herald* than in the *Journal*. Most notably, however, infrastructure and urban issues dominated more stories in the *Journal* than in the *Herald*; given that infrastructure funding was a higher-profile issue in Edmonton than it was in Calgary during the election, this should be expected. This difference in coverage of infrastructure, moreover, was not limited to the *Herald* and the *Journal*; indeed, when all four newspapers are taken into account, infrastructure dominated 7.9 per cent of Edmonton print stories, as opposed to 2.1 per cent of print stories in Calgary.

When television is taken into account, we find that television stories were less likely to be focused on the horserace than were print stories. Outside of the horserace,

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there was little substantial variation in the issues that dominated stories, as can be seen in Table 3.6. Examining the differences between different television networks in Table 3.7, however, reveals much more variation, particularly insofar as the horserace and health care are concerned. Strikingly, half of all stories on Global were focused on the horserace, whereas not even a quarter of A-Channel's stories were focused on the horserace; while the small number of cases in this instance, particularly with A-Channel, must be kept in mind, this difference is nonetheless noteworthy. As well, CBC coverage was much more diverse insofar as dominant issues in stories are concerned, similar to the comprehensiveness that CBC also displayed, as discussed earlier, in the genres of its stories and the amount of stories broadcast. Global, on the other hand, did not display much diversity in its coverage, instead focusing on the horserace and on Klein's controversial AISH comments, leaving a focus on other substantive issues in the minority.

(Table 3.7 about here)

Stories were also analyzed for the mention of issues, regardless of whether they were the dominant issue of the article or whether the issue was mentioned merely in passing; the data here is presented in the paragraph, not in tables form. The issue of health care was mentioned in 31.3 per cent of stories, while education and post-secondary education were mentioned in 11.6 per cent and 7.9 per cent of stories, respectively. Topics in the 'other' category were mentioned in 18 per cent of stories in total. The debt, deficit, and budget was mentioned in 8.3 per cent of stories, while energy and natural resources were mentioned in 11.2 per cent of stories. There were only eleven mentions of same-sex marriage in stories during the campaign period.

As can be seen in Table 3.8, issue mentions differed significantly between print and television. While the difference is certainly notable—especially considering that issues mentioned in at least some frequency in print received little to no mention on television—it should be kept in mind, as discussed earlier, that the inherent differences between print media and television media are no doubt to some degree responsible for these differences in coverage. The fact that print media has the capacity to delve more deeply into issues and simply does not have the constraints inherent to television makes it entirely logical that issues should be mentioned far less frequently than in print.

(Table 3.8 about here)

As seen in Table 3.9, there is a difference in the mentions of issues between different newspapers, most notably those issues that were mentioned the most frequently—the horserace and healthcare. Again, as with the difference between print and television coverage, some of this difference can no doubt be explained by the fact that the *Herald* and the *Journal* simply had more stories, and thus more occasion to mention other issues that did the *Suns*. There was, too, a difference between the *Herald* and the *Journal*—most notably, healthcare was mentioned in a greater percentage of stories in the *Journal* than in the *Calgary Herald*. Other issues that were mentioned less frequently, like education, energy, and debt were also more likely to be mentioned in the *Herald* or *Journal* than in either of the *Suns*.

(Table 3.9 about here)

Little inter-city difference exists for issue mentions in newspapers, with the exception of mentions of infrastructure; infrastructure was mentioned in twice as many stories in Edmonton than in Calgary--50 mentions to 24 mentions—and was mentioned in

20.4 per cent of stories in Edmonton, as opposed to 7.2 per cent of stories in Calgary. The issue of infrastructure funding from the province to Alberta's two largest cities was a controversial one, particularly in Edmonton. The government gave each city infrastructure funding on a per capita basis—meaning that Edmonton received less funding than Calgary, given its smaller population. However, the city of Edmonton and community and city leaders contended that the city should have received more funding, given that much of Edmonton's suburban population lives outside of the city of Edmonton—particularly St. Albert and Sherwood Park—and uses the city's infrastructure without contributing corresponding tax revenue to the city. The difference in mentions of infrastructure between Calgary and Edmonton should be expected.

Comparing the dominant issues in stories and mentions of issues in stories to time during the campaign reveals several findings, as seen in Tables 3.10 and 3.11. There were more stories dominated by the horserace and more stories mentioning the horserace during the final week of the campaign than the other weeks of the campaign, which were relatively consistent across both print and television during the first three weeks of the campaign. Interestingly, while there were more stories dominated by and mentioning the horserace during the final week of the campaign, these stories did not come at the expense of stories dominated by and mentioning *other* issues, since the final week of the campaign featured more stories than any other week.

(Tables 3.10 and 3.11 about here)

However, as can be seen in Tables 3.12 and 3.13, particular outlets help explain these differences. As can be seen in print media, the *Calgary Sun* alone is responsible for the higher number of stories dominated by and mentioning the horserace; no other print

network had such a marked increase of horserace-related stories during the final week of the campaign. A similar peculiarity can be seen for television coverage, as seen in Tables 3.14 and 3.15. Global and A-Channel broadcast slightly more stories dominated by and mentioning the horserace than did CBC. As shown previously, the CBC was more likely than the other two television networks to be more diverse in its coverage, especially in its issue coverage and the broader foci of their stories; this can explain why the CBC did not follow the trend of Global and A-Channel insofar as horserace coverage during the last week of the campaign is concerned. In short, the *Herald, Journal*, and the CBC diversified their election coverage and gave more coverage to substantive issues during the final week of the campaign, whereas Global, A-Channel, and particularly the *Calgary Sun*, did not; as noted, the final week of the campaign is when voters increasingly turn to the media for information, and as such, there are significant implications of the quality of issue coverage during the final week on voting (Hershey, 2001: 69).

(Tables 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, and 3.15 about here)

In sum, although the horserace was the focus of more stories than any other issue—as expected-- there were fewer stories focused on the horserace in 2004 than in 1993 and 1997. This difference in the foci of stories is largely because, as seen in Tables 3.5 and 3.6, the *Edmonton Journal*, *Calgary Herald*, and the CBC focused less on the horserace than did other outlets, and published more stories on lower-profile issues than did other outlets. As with the results regarding the frequency of publication and the genres of stories, these three outlets, and particularly the *Calgary Herald* and the CBC, stand almost in a league of their own; these outlets focused on a broader array of stories, and focused less on the horserace itself than did other outlets. In spite of this, however, it

must still be noted that each of these outlets still focused on and mentioned the horserace more so than any other issue—suggesting that the trend of horserace-dominated coverage and the “emphasis placed on the [electoral] game” in campaign coverage (Wayne, 2004: 228) has by no means faded in Alberta.

### *Frequency of Leader and Party Mentions*

It was expected, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, that opposition parties and leaders would be mentioned and quoted less frequently than Ralph Klein and the Conservatives, particularly in Calgary, than in past Alberta media analyses. As noted, the fact that the two major opposition leaders, Kevin Taft and Brian Mason, were both from Edmonton, and thus less well-known throughout the province, relatively new to the job, and led parties that each had very few seats at the time the writ was dropped led to this expectation. As well, in the 1993 and 1997 provincial elections, it was observed (Klinkhammer, 1999: 104) that the province’s opposition leaders and parties received much less coverage than Klein and the Conservatives, and, moreover, received less coverage in 1997 than in 1993. It comes as no surprise that Ralph Klein and the Progressive Conservative party were mentioned or quoted far more frequently than the opposition parties and leaders, as can be seen in Table 3.16.

(Table 3.16 about here)

There was a relationship between leader and party mentions and the frequency of coverage each received on print and television, as seen in Table 3.16—leaders and parties, particularly the opposition, were less likely to be mentioned on television. Some

of the less frequent mention of the parties and their leaders on television can no doubt be explained once again by the inherent restrictions of television; as well, the fact that television coverage collected for this analysis was restricted to Calgary—where the opposition leaders were less well known, and the opposition parties much less successful, not holding a single seat in the city when the writ was dropped—helps more so to explain why they received far less mentions and quotes than did Klein and the Progressive Conservatives.

It must be noted that opposition leaders were mentioned less frequently in 2004 than in 1993 and 1997. The Liberal leaders—Laurence Decore in 1993 and Grant Mitchell in 1997—were mentioned or quoted in 67 per cent and 58 per cent of stories, respectively; the NDP leaders of 1993 and 1997, Ray Martin and Pam Barrett, were mentioned in 55 per cent and 39 per cent of stories. As seen in Table 3.16, Kevin Taft and Brian Mason, in 2004, were mentioned in 38.4 and 31.8 per cent of stories, respectively. Indeed, even Ralph Klein was mentioned in slightly fewer stories in 2004 than in 1993 or 1997—Klein was mentioned or quoted in 82 and 89 per cent of stories, respectively.

Why this difference between 2004 and 1993 and 1997? Firstly, the difference in coverage for the opposition leaders can be explained by their relative lack of profile, both personally and of their respective parties. This was also the case to some degree in 1997, when two relatively new leaders, Grant Mitchell and Pam Barrett, received less coverage than did their predecessors in 1993. Ralph Klein's coverage, however, also decreased in 2004 from 1993 and 1997—surely not the result of any lack of profile for him or his party across the province. The decreases in mentions and quotes for Klein is likely a

result of the different climate in which the 2004 provincial elections was based; the election was Klein's last as Premier, and there was no doubt as to whether Klein would win the election. It is likely that the media, to some degree, chose simply to focus somewhat less on him than in elections past. That said, Klein was still mentioned in almost three-quarters of all stories published or broadcast during the election; he was, as such, still "the central figure" of the 2004 election, as in 1993 and 1997 (Klinkhammer, 1999: 103).

Comparing coverage of leader and party mention between newspapers in Calgary and Edmonton reveals some differences, as seen in Table 3.16. Given Kevin Taft's and Brian Mason's respective profiles in Edmonton, and the fact that the Liberals and NDP were more popular in Edmonton, the fact that both leaders and both parties were mentioned and quoted more frequently in Edmonton newspapers comes as expected. As well, Klein's massive profile across the province likely contributes to his relatively equal treatment in both Edmonton and Calgary. Interestingly, the Tories were mentioned far more frequently in Edmonton newspapers than in Calgary newspapers, despite the city traditionally being less supportive of the party. The fact that a more competitive three-way race was taking place in the city, more so than anywhere else in the province, likely contributed to the Progressive Conservatives, Liberals, and NDP all being mentioned or quoted more frequently.

However, as can be seen in Table 3.17, the differences in coverage for the opposition parties and leaders between Edmonton and Calgary newspapers are not particularly large—in some instances, the differences are quite small, and barely significant. As such, one should not attach too much weight to these findings; the fact

that there were such small differences in coverage should simply be expected in an instance where a leader and his or her party—particularly a new leader—has a higher profile in one city than another.

(Table 3.17 about here)

Turning specifically to television, several findings stand out, as seen in Table 3.18. Firstly, a largely consistent relationship can be seen between CBC, Global, and A-Channel insofar as their coverage of the opposition parties and leaders is concerned. Opposition parties and leaders were more likely to be mentioned or quoted on CBC than on Global or A-Channel, with one interesting exception—Kevin Taft was more likely to be mentioned or quoted in a story on Global than on any other network. Ralph Klein was also slightly more likely to be mentioned or quoted on Global as well—which is especially interesting, considering that the PC party was less likely to be mentioned on Global than on any of the other networks. These differences within Global's coverage, however, should be interpreted cautiously; as can be seen in Table 3.17, the number of cases involved is quite small.

(Table 3.18 about here)

As Klinkhammer notes (1999: 144), a “lack of coverage” for a party or leader can effectively “neutralize” and “marginalize” the views and policies of a leader and his or her party. A failure to even mention a leader can effectively push leader and party to the sidelines of an election campaign; as such, the implications of leader and party mentions can be quite significant. In the 2004 Alberta provincial election, it was Kevin Taft and Brian Mason, and their respective parties, who received less coverage than Ralph Klein and the Conservatives, and—more importantly—less coverage than their contemporaries



in 1993 and 1997. The comparative lack of mention for these leaders and parties, however, should not be seen as a deliberate bias on the part of the media, nor should it be seen as a trend in Alberta election campaign coverage. Quite simply, the decreased coverage afforded to Kevin Taft and Brian Mason was a result of circumstance—particularly their own newness to the job, the lack of profiles of each of their parties, and the popularity of Ralph Klein and the Conservatives. Whenever the next election in Alberta takes place, sometime before 2009, it is unlikely that these two leaders, provided they are still leading their parties, would see the same sort of reduced coverage for themselves and their parties—especially given that Ralph Klein will no longer be Premier.

Did this reduced coverage affect the outcome of the election? Could the Liberals and NDP have made a better showing had they received more coverage? Such questions are beyond the scope of this thesis. What can be asserted, however, is that with more coverage across the province, more voters may have been aware of each of these leaders and parties, and what they were advocating and running on. In future elections in Alberta, it is not a stretch to assert that such increased coverage could bode well for the opposition parties, considering they will be facing a PC party with a new leader.

Media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, insofar as the dependent variable of quantity of coverage is concerned, can be summed as follows—specific media outlets, particularly the *Calgary Herald*, *Edmonton Journal*, and the CBC, provided much more comprehensive, extensive, and substantive election coverage than did other print and television outlets. Across the four different facets of the dependent variable of

quantity of coverage—frequency of publication of stories, genres of stories, foci of stories, and mentions of leaders and parties in stories—these three outlets published and broadcast more stories, made use of more genres of stories, focused more on lower-profile issues and less so on less substantive issues like the horserace, and mentioned or quoted opposition parties and their leaders more frequently. Overall, there were more stories published on the campaign, and far more in the *Calgary Herald*; as well, there were more campaign-generated stories in 2004 than in 1993 or 1997. There were, as well, fewer stories focused on the horserace in 2004 than in 1993 or 1997, largely because the *Herald*, *Journal*, and the CBC focused more on more substantive issues than did other outlets. Lastly, the major opposition leaders and parties received less mentions in 2004 than in 1993 or 1997; however, given that both major opposition leaders—Kevin Taft and Brian Mason—were very new to the job and leading small parties that had no chance against Klein’s Conservatives, the fact that they were mentioned less frequently than in years past should come as no surprise.

As Farnsworth and Lichter (2003:6) phrase it, media outlets that “reduce the quality and quantity of election coverage” effectively “shortchange...voters.” Given the findings presented in this chapter, it can certainly be argued that voters were indeed short-changed by much of the election coverage of the 2004 provincial election—but by particular outlets more than others, particularly television outlets. A consumer of the *Suns* and of Global and/or A-Channel would have quite simply been exposed to less comprehensive, less extensive, and less substantive coverage than would a consumer of the *Herald*, *Journal*, and the CBC. The voter’s capacity to evaluate the options in front of them on Election Day are aided by media outlets that provide well-rounded and extensive

coverage. Unfortunately, even in the wake of improvements in the quantity of coverage from 1993 and 1997 to 2004, much of the coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, insofar as the dependent variable of quantity is concerned, has remained more superficial than substantive. The next chapter of this thesis will explore whether the same conclusions can be made concerning the dependent variables of tone and framing

*Tables*

**Table 3.1—Frequency of Publication, All Outlets**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Calgary Herald	210	27.8
	Edmonton Journal	142	18.8
	Calgary Sun	122	16.1
	Edmonton Sun	103	13.6
	CBC Television	78	10.3
	Global Television	59	7.8
	A-Channel	42	5.6
	Total	756	100.0

(N=756)

Table 3.2-- Frequency of Publication by Week of Campaign

			Medium		Total
			Print	TV	
Week of Campaign	Week 1	Count	135	48	183
		% within Medium	26.5%	29.1%	27.2%
	Week 2	Count	124	33	157
		% within Medium	24.4%	20.0%	23.3%
	Week 3	Count	100	32	132
		% within Medium	19.6%	19.4%	19.6%
	Week 4	Count	150	52	202
		% within Medium	29.5%	31.5%	30.0%
Total		Count	509	165	674

( $p < .68$ ) (significant at  $p < .05$ )  
 (Cramer's V: 0.05)

Note—For Week of Campaign, November 23rd and 24<sup>th</sup> (the days after Election Day) were left out of the calculation to ensure an equal number of days per week, explaining the lower number of cases in this instance.

**Table 3.3—Genre of Stories by Print Outlets**

		Cal. Herald	Edm. Journal	Edm. Sun	Cal. Sun	Total
Genre	Hard News	4.8%	1.4%	5.8%	1.6%	3.5%
	Feature	6.2%	1.4%	.0%	.8%	2.8%
	Campaign-generated	60.5%	64.1%	66.0%	59.8%	62.2%
	Editorial	9.0%	9.9%	6.8%	7.4%	8.5%
	Column	16.2%	18.3%	21.4%	30.3%	20.6%
	Personality Profile	2.9%	1.4%	.0%	.0%	1.4%
	News Analysis	.5%	3.5%	.0%	.0%	1.0%
Total		(210)	(142)	(103)	(122)	(577)

V: 0.17—Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

**Table 3.4—Genre of Stories by Television Outlets**

		CBC	Global	A-Channel	Total
Genre	Hard News	3.8%	1.7%	11.9%	5.0%
	Feature	3.8%	5.1%	2.4%	3.9%
	Campaign-generated	59.0%	81.4%	61.9%	67.0%
	Editorial	.0%	.0%	11.9%	2.8%
	Personality Profile	5.1%	.0%	.0%	2.2%
	News Analysis	.0%	.0%	2.4%	.6%
	Vox Pop	7.7%	8.5%	2.4%	6.7%
	Other	2.6%	3.4%	2.4%	2.8%
	"At Issue" Panel	5.1%	.0%	.0%	2.2%
	Journalist-initiated-story	12.8%	.0%	4.8%	6.7%
Total		(78)	(59)	(42)	(179)

Cramer's V: 0.37

**Table 3.5- Focus of Stories by Medium (Selected Issues)**

		Print	Television	Total
Genre	Horserace	44.4%	37.4%	42.7%
	Healthcare	11.8%	10.6%	11.5%
	Education	2.5%	3.4%	2.7%
	Debt/Deficit/Budget	2.3%	2.2%	2.3%
	Energy/Natural Resources	2.8%	1.7%	2.5%
	Other	8.2%	10.1%	8.7%
	Post-Secondary Ed.	1.8%	7.3%	3.0%
	Succession, Premier Klein	2.5%	.6%	2.0%
	Infrastructure/ Urban Affairs	4.6%	3.4%	4.3%
	AISH	5.4%	6.7%	5.7%
	BSE	1.6%	2.2%	1.7%
	Death of Klein's mother	2.5%	1.7%	2.3%
	Election-related information	2.6%	2.8%	2.7%
Total		(570)	(179)	(749)

Cramer's V: 0.38



Table 3.6—Focus of Stories by Print Outlets (Selected Issues)

		Cal. Herald	Edm. Journal	Edm. Sun	Cal. Sun	Total
Genre	Horserace	39.6%	36.2%	54.5%	53.7%	44.4%
	Healthcare	13.0%	10.6%	9.9%	12.4%	11.8%
	Education	3.4%	2.8%	2.0%	.8%	2.5%
	Debt/Deficit/Budget	2.4%	3.5%	.0%	2.5%	2.3%
	Energy/Natural Resources	2.9%	5.0%	2.0%	.8%	2.8%
	Other	10.1%	8.5%	5.0%	7.4%	8.2%
	Post-Secondary Ed.	1.9%	2.8%	1.0%	.8%	1.8%
	Succession, Premier Klein	3.4%	2.8%	1.0%	1.7%	2.5%
	Automobile Insurance	1.4%	2.1%	2.0%	1.7%	1.8%
	Infrastructure/ Urban Affairs	1.9%	7.1%	8.9%	2.5%	4.6%
	AISH	6.3%	5.0%	5.9%	4.1%	5.4%
	BSE	1.9%	2.1%	.0%	1.7%	1.6%
	Election-related information	3.4%	1.4%	1.0%	4.1%	2.6%
Total		(207)	(141)	(101)	(121)	(570)

Cramer's V: 0.21

**Table 3.7- Focus of Stories by Television Outlets (Selected Issues)**

		CBC	Global	A-Ch.	Total
Genre	Horserace	37.2%	50.8%	19.0%	37.4%
	Healthcare	6.4%	11.9%	16.7%	10.6%
	Education	5.1%	1.7%	2.4%	3.4%
	Other	17.9%	5.1%	2.4%	10.1%
	Post-Secondary Ed.	9.0%	3.4%	9.5%	7.3%
	Infrastructure/ Urban Affairs	3.8%	1.7%	4.8%	3.4%
	AISH	2.6%	10.2%	9.5%	6.7%
	BSE	2.6%	1.7%	2.4%	2.2%
	Election-related information	1.3%	3.4%	4.8%	2.8%
Total		(78)	(59)	(42)	(179)

Cramer's V: 0.38

**Table 3.8- Issue Mentions by Medium**  
 (note-- cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which this issue was mentioned)

		Print	TV	Gamma	Total
Issue	Horserace	50.4%	41.9%	0.17	48.4%
	Healthcare	35.0%	19.6%	0.38	31.3%
	Education	13.3%	6.1%	0.40	11.6%
	Debt/Deficit /Budget	9.5%	4.5%	0.39	8.3%
	Energy/Natural Resources	13.9%	2.8%	0.68	11.2%
	Automobile Insurance	6.9%	.0%		5.3%
Total		(577)	(179)		(756)

**Table 3.9- Issue Mentions by Print Outlets**  
 (note-- cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which this issue was mentioned)

		Cal. Herald	Edm. Journal	Edm. Sun	Cal. Sun	V	Total
Genre	Horserace	44.3%	42.3%	61.2%	61.5%	0.18	50.4%
	Healthcare	34.8%	41.5%	28.2%	33.6%	0.09	35.0%
Total		(210)	(142)	(103)	(122)		(577)

**Table 3.10- Horserace-Dominated Stories by Week of Campaign**

		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total
Medium	Print	36.6%	34.7%	49.0%	42.9%	40.4%
	TV	25.0%	33.3%	46.9%	36.5%	34.5%
Total		(61)	(53)	(64)	(82)	(260)

**Table 3.11- Horserace Mentions by Week of Campaign—**  
(note-- cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which this issue was mentioned)

		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total
Issue	Horserace	38.3%	42.7%	55.3%	45.5%	44.8%
Total		(183)	(157)	(132)	(202)	(674)

**Table 3.12- Horserace Mentions by Week of Campaign by Print Outlets**  
 (note-- cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which this issue was mentioned)

		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total
Print Outlets	Calgary Herald	31.9%	33.3%	55.3%	33.3%	37.5%
	Edm. Journal	21.6%	39.4%	37.5%	30.0%	31.8%
	Edm. Sun	65.2%	18.2%	53.3%	52.0%	47.1%
	Cal. Sun	40.7%	45.8%	53.3%	62.9%	51.5%
Total		(49)	(42)	(49)	(63)	(203)

**Table 3.13- Horserace-Dominated Stories by Week of Campaign by Print Outlets**  
 (note-- cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which this issue was dominant)

		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total
Print Outlets	Calgary Herald	33.3%	36.4%	60.5%	40.4%	41.7%
	Edm. Journal	29.7%	44.1%	40.6%	40.0%	38.3%
	Edm. Sun	73.9%	36.4%	66.7%	48.1%	55.2%
	Cal. Sun	44.4%	54.2%	66.7%	69.4%	58.8%
Total		(56)	(52)	(56)	(73)	(236)



**Table 3.14- Horserace-Dominated Stories by Week of Campaign by Television Outlets**

		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total
Print Outlets	CBC	23.5%	50.0%	47.1%	25.0%	34.3%
	Global	33.3%	45.5%	66.7%	56.3%	48.1%
	A-Channel	15.4%	.0%	16.7%	33.3%	17.1%
Total		(12)	(11)	(15)	(19)	(57)

**Table 3.15- Horserace Mentions by Week of Campaign By Television Outlets**  
 (note-- cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which this issue was mentioned)

		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total
Print Outlets	CBC	35.3%	58.3%	52.9%	25.0%	40.0%
	Global	33.3%	54.5%	66.7%	56.3%	50.0%
	A-Channel	15.4%	20.0%	33.3%	33.3%	24.4%
Total		(14)	(15)	(17)	(19)	(65)

**Table 3.16—Leader/Party Mentions**  
 (note—cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which a leader or party was mentioned or quoted)

		Print	TV	Gamma	Total
Leader/Party	Ralph Klein	75.0%	67.6%	-0.08	73.3%
	Kevin Taft	41.6%	27.9%	-0.28	38.4%
	Brian Mason	33.6%	26.2%	-0.16	31.8%
	PC Party	89.4%	64.2%	-0.65	83.5%
	Liberal Party	62.7%	41.9%	-0.4	57.8%
	NDP	55.5%	32.4%	-0.44	50.0%
Total		(577)	(179)		(756)

**Table 3.17—Leader/Party Mentions by City (Print)**  
 (note—cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which a leader or party was mentioned or quoted)

		Calgary	Edmonton	Gamma	Total
Leader/Party	Ralph Klein	74.4%	75.9%		75.0%
	Kevin Taft	38.3%	46.2%	0.16	41.6%
	Brian Mason	30.7%	37.6%	0.14	33.6%
	PC Party	86.4%	93.5%	0.38	89.4%
	Liberal Party	60.5%	65.7%	0.11	62.7%
	NDP	51.8%	60.4%	0.17	55.5%
Total		(577)	(179)		(756)

**Table 3.18—Leader/Party Mentions by Television Outlets—**  
 (note—cell entries reflect percentage of stories in which a leader or party was mentioned or quoted)

		CBC	Global	A-Ch.	Gamma	Total
Leader/Party	Ralph Klein	70.5%	64.4%	66.7%	-0.06	67.6%
	Kevin Taft	25.7%	32.2%	26.2%	V: 0.1	27.9%
	Brian Mason	29.5%	27.2%	18.1%	-0.16	26.2%
	PC Party	69.2%	54.2%	69.0%	V: 0.15	64.2%
	Liberal Party	47.4%	40.7%	33.3%	-0.19	41.9%
	NDP	37.2%	30.5%	26.2%	-0.17	32.4%
Total		(78)	(59)	(42)		(179)

### **Thesis- Chapter 4- Results (Tone and Framing)**

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss findings pertaining to the final two dependent variables of the analysis—tone and framing. In particular, this chapter will show that the coverage afforded Ralph Klein and the Conservatives was either neutral or negative, and that there were less stories in 2004 framed in terms of the horserace than in previous elections in Alberta.

As explained in more detail in Chapter 2, tone refers how a leader or party is covered in an article or story. As Klinkhammer (1999: 162) phrases it, the tone of coverage refers to the “impression...left with after reading the article” or viewing the story; a positive, negative, neutral, or mixed tone can be “determined by the facts that are covered, by the quotes of... people commenting on the politician [or party], or by the opinions of the writer.” Framing “is the necessary technique of processing and packaging information so it can be quickly conveyed by reporters and easily interpreted by the audience” (Trimble and Sampert, 2004: 52). A frame of a story is the narrative around which a story is focused, whether it is around an issue or issues or, as is often the case, the election race itself.

Given past research, there were a number of research expectations proceeding into this part of the analysis. Firstly, insofar as tone is concerned, it was expected that the tone of coverage for parties and particularly leaders, would largely be neutral in tone, but with more negative stories than positive stories. In Alberta, past research (Klinkhammer, 1999: 135) has found that, in the 1993 and 1997 elections, “all candidates received primarily neutral coverage,” and that only one opposition leader—Grant Mitchell of the Liberals in

1997—received more negative coverage than positive coverage. However, given past research that has indicated that election coverage has become increasingly negative in tone (Patterson, 1980; Fletcher, 1981; Wagenberg et al, 1988; Sabato, 1992; Frizzell and Westell, 1994; Hollihan, 2001; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004), for this study it was expected that there would be more negativity to 2004 election coverage. As Trimble and Sampert (2004: 64) indicate, “direct and often unfavourable media appraisals of parties and leaders” have become common over the years in Canadian election coverage, and, moreover, that there is “considerable negativity” in contemporary Canadian campaign coverage. As well, Hollihan (2001: 91) notes, based on research on American journalism throughout the 1980s and 1990s, that a “tendency towards hard-hitting negative reporting has become part of the institutional culture of modern news organizations.” Given such findings in Alberta, Canada, and the United States, it was expected that there would be more negativity in 2004 provincial election coverage. As will be shown, this was indeed the case for Ralph Klein and the Conservatives.

Secondly, concerning framing, it was expected that the majority of stories, especially on television, would be framed in terms of the horserace, with less of an emphasis on substantive election issues and policies. As Hollihan (2001: 89) phrases it, “the media has become increasingly obsessed with reporting who is ahead or behind in the race” (Hollihan, 2001: 89). Past research in both the United States and Canada (Frizzell and Westell, 1994; Hess, 2000; Hershey, 2001; Farnsworth and Lichter, 2003; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004; Trimble and Sampert, 2004) has indicated that the media, particularly on television, emphasize issues of strategy and tactics—in other words, the horserace-- as opposed to more substantive policy discussions, and that such emphasis on

the horserace has tended to increase over time. As well, past research in Alberta (Klinkhammer, 1999) indicates that the majority of print coverage of the 1993 and 1997 provincial elections was framed in terms of the horserace. As will be shown, however, the results with respect to framing were mixed—while horserace coverage continued to be the most common theme, data from the 2004 election indicated an increase in coverage of substantive issues.

This chapter will firstly discuss the tone of stories, exploring differences in tone between parties and party leaders in different print and television outlets. Secondly, the framing of stories will be discussed and analyzed, paying particular attention to differences between print and television outlets as well as to differences in framing over the course of the campaign.

### *Tone of Stories*

The definitions of tone of coverage for this study were based directly on definitions and coding rules used in studying coverage of previous elections in Alberta (Klinkhammer, 1999: 162). Tone of coverage in this analysis refers to the general impression the reader is left with after reading the article or viewing the story. Moreover, tone can be determined by the facts that are mentioned or discussed in the article or story, by the quotes of other people—voters, politicians, pundits, and the like—who are commenting in the story, or by the opinions expressed by the author of the story.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the categories of tone used in this analysis were positive, negative, mixed, or neutral, and were directly based on



definitions used in past research in Alberta (Klinkhammer, 1999: 162). A positive tone refers to the discourse of a story having an evident positive feel and may offer statements that can be viewed as supportive of that candidate or party. A negative tone refers to a story that is critical of the leader, position or policy that person or party has put forward. A neutral tone is neither positive nor negative, and appears unbiased, balanced, and objective, while a mixed tone has elements or combinations of positive, neutral, and/or negative news. If a leader or party was not mentioned in a story—as indicated in the previous chapter, a great deal of stories did not even mention parties and leaders, particularly the opposition—there was no tone noted towards them for that story; these stories appear as “N/A”—not applicable—in the tables at the end of the chapter, and should not be confused with neutral coverage, in which a leader or party *was* mentioned in an article but covered neutrally.

As noted above, past research in media politics in Canada and the United States (Wagenberg et al., 1988; Frizzell and Westell, 1994; Hershey, 2001; Hollihan, 2001; Dornan and Pynan, 2002; Trimble and Sampert, 2004) has indicated that negative coverage of parties and politicians has become the norm, and this negativity, moreover, has tended to increase over time. As one scholar notes, since the 1970s, campaign coverage and campaign reporting “has become increasingly aggressive, intrusive, negative, and cynical” (Hollihan, 2001: 90). This change in journalistic style since the 1970s, as Sabato suggests (1992: 128), can largely be attributed to the rise in more investigative and penetrating forms of journalism that arose in the wake of the Watergate scandal in the United States. Moreover, this aggressive and negative style of journalism, as scholars have suggested, (Fletcher, 1981; Soderlund et al, 1984; Wagenberg et al.,

1988, Frizzell and Westell, 1994, Trimble and Sampert, 2004) has made its way into Canada as well.

Considering first the overall tone of leader and party coverage in stories, we can see that the results concerning Ralph Klein and the Conservatives are quite distinctive, as seen in Table 4.1. While there is little variation in the tone towards the two main opposition leaders and of the two main opposition parties—indeed, the overwhelming majority of their coverage, when they were mentioned in articles, was neutral—the coverage of Ralph Klein and the Conservatives was evenly split between neutral and negative. A plurality of Klein’s coverage, unlike any other party leader, was negative in tone, and is especially striking considering that Klein was mentioned in far more stories than any other party leader. While Conservative party coverage was somewhat less negative than was Klein’s, the party still received an considerable amount of negative coverage, far more than any other party.

(Table 4.1 and 4.1a about here)

A great deal of Klein’s negative coverage, especially at the beginning of the campaign, concerned negative commentary towards his controversial comments on AISH recipients (for example, Tony Seskus and Sherry Zickefoose, “Klein attacks disabled funding abusers,” *Calgary Herald*, October 28, 2004; Suzanne Wilton, “Klein not quite contrite over AISH comments,” *Calgary Herald*, October 29, 2004). As the campaign progressed, the negative coverage afforded Ralph Klein and the Conservatives concerned his and the party’s apparent lack of vision for the province’s future, lack of coherent and substantive policies, and Klein’s general seeming disinterest in the job. A commentator in the traditionally conservative *Calgary Sun* (Rick Bell, “Ralph needs to know where he’s

going,” *Calgary Sun*, November 7, 2004) contended that “the provincial government [was] running for re-election without any pretense of a policy,” and described Klein as “the leader of [a] parade with no known destination.” In the *Calgary Herald’s* last Saturday editorial before the election (“Send a message to a tired regime,” *Calgary Herald*, November 20, 2004), the Conservative party under Klein was described as one “without a vision” for important issues like health care, education, and management of natural resource revenue; the paper further contended that no “government falls into such malaise without a decline in leadership,” and that “the decline of [Klein’s leadership] has been painfully visible...[bearing] all the markings of a man who has grown weary of his job.” This negative coverage towards Klein and the Conservative party noted in these above examples were common tendencies throughout the campaign.

For the opposition parties and leaders, the predominantly neutral coverage they received is consistent with past research from the 1993 and 1997 elections, which suggests that “all candidates received primarily neutral coverage” in both years (Klinkhammer, 1999: 134). However, the largely neutral coverage that Klein received in 1993 and 1997 was by no means the case in 2004, where the coverage of Klein was more negative in tone. Considering that 11.7 per cent of Klein’s coverage in 1993 and only 7.2 per cent of Klein’s coverage in 1997 was negative, this increase in negative coverage is substantial.

Looking at the tone of coverage between different print and television outlets reveals another notable finding regarding Klein and the Conservatives, seen in Table 4.2. The findings for the two main opposition leaders and parties reveal little significant difference, aside from slightly more negative coverage for both parties and leaders in

Calgary—likely owing to their lower profile within a traditionally conservative city. Moreover, the Conservatives received more negative coverage in Edmonton, which should not be surprising, considering the city’s traditional leanings. Ralph Klein, however, received a similarly striking negative amount of coverage in *both* cities in print. Considering, as mentioned, that Edmonton has traditionally been more hostile ground for Klein, and Calgary has traditionally been more supportive, this similarity in negative coverage is striking. Considering that Sampert (1997:12) states that “the *Herald* went too far in its endorsement of Klein [in the 1997 election,] becoming more of a booster rather than a critical or even objective observer,” this dramatic increase in negative coverage across the board—including the *Herald*, as seen below in Table 4.3—clearly indicates that the negative angle towards Klein and the Conservatives was widespread, and, as well, that the *Herald* was certainly no longer the Klein booster that it had been in the 1990s.

(Tables 4.2, 4.2a, 4.3, and 4.3a about here)

A closer examination of individual print outlets in Table 4.3 more clearly elucidates some of these trends and findings. Both opposition leaders were slightly more likely to be mentioned negatively in the *Calgary Sun*, and both opposition parties had much fewer positive stories in the *Calgary Sun* than in the *Calgary Herald*. In other words, the negative print coverage that these two leaders and parties received in Calgary was in large part due to the *Calgary Sun* being slightly more likely to mention the leaders in a negative light, and to largely refrain from positive mention of their respective parties.

The coverage of the Conservatives in the *Edmonton Journal* is noteworthy—indeed, in this analysis the Conservatives received not one outright positive story in the

*Journal's* election coverage, although half the stories in the *Journal* were neutral towards the government party, and a further ten per cent were mixed. Both the *Edmonton Sun* and *Calgary Sun* tended to give somewhat less negative coverage to the Conservative party than both the *Herald* and the *Journal*; this, combined, with their propensity to be less positive and more negative towards the opposition parties and leaders, is noteworthy. Lastly, Ralph Klein was less likely to be mentioned negatively in the *Suns* than in either the *Herald* or the *Journal*—although, interestingly, he received much less negative coverage, and more neutral and mixed coverage, in the *Edmonton Sun*.

As expected, there were significant differences between the tone of print and television coverage, seen in Table 4.4. Klein and the Conservatives were more likely to receive a negative story on television than in print, whereas no such relationship existed for any other party or leader. Notably, one relationship did persist across all party lines and leaders-- every leader and party was less likely to receive a neutral story on television than in print. This relative lack of neutrality on television is unsurprising; as Wayne (2004: 232) notes, television coverage “has an additional bias”, as it is an “action-oriented, visual medium” that “emphasizes pictures and deemphasizes words [with] less attention... devoted to what candidates say and more to how people react to their words and images.” Television is a medium that does not provide as much occasion for neutrality in coverage as does print, since there is simply less opportunity for candidates and parties “to tell their own stories in their own words” (Wayne, 2004: 232).

(Table 4.4 and 4.4a about here)

The primarily neutral coverage that parties and leaders received in Alberta in 1993 and 1997 was not necessarily the case in 2004. While opposition parties and leaders

did indeed receive primarily neutral coverage—that is, when they were covered at all—they did receive slightly more negative coverage in Calgary, particularly in the *Calgary Sun*; as discussed, this is likely a function of each leader and party’s relatively lower profile within a traditionally conservative city, and of the *Sun*’s generally conservative bent. Most notably, Ralph Klein and the Conservative party receive a great deal of negative coverage, much more so than any other leader or party, and much more so than in 1993 or 1997.

Why was media coverage in 2004 so negative towards Ralph Klein and the Conservatives? Media coverage, it must be stressed, is often a two-way street; as Goodyear-Grant et al (2004, 91) phrase it, “shifts in coverage” for a candidate or party can often be “driven by parties [themselves] and public opinion [more] than proactive journalists.” In other words, negative media coverage—especially such pervasive negative coverage as was found during the 2004 Alberta provincial election for Ralph Klein—is not entirely driven by the media themselves and any bias on their part, but is also, if not more so, driven by the actions of candidates and parties themselves. In 2004, the Conservative campaign was beset by gaffes and political missteps that helped ensure that the party and Premier Klein would not be covered very positively. Ralph Klein’s controversial and offensive comments on AISH recipients near the beginning of the campaign effectively guaranteed that he and his party would be covered negatively, even in media outlets traditionally supportive of him and his party; as a *Calgary Herald* editorial phrased it (November 20, 2004), Klein’s increasingly “short-tempered and at times contemptuous” nature throughout the campaign, coupled with how he “[appeared] disengaged from public debate, arrogant, and aloof” throughout the campaign, did

nothing to endear him to those covering him. As the campaign progressed, the party and Premier's lack of substantive policy plans for the future and seeming lack of leadership on major issues facing the province after Klein's eventual departure from politics led the *Calgary Herald*—as noted, a traditional Klein booster—to suggest that voters “send a message to a tired regime,” and endorsed Kevin Taft and the Liberal party, suggesting that “the resurgent Liberals have presented the clearest, most understandable and largely achievable party platform,” and that more Liberal MLAs would be a welcome change in Alberta politics (*Calgary Herald*, November 20, 2004). Given these political missteps, it is, in some ways, unsurprising that Klein and the Conservatives were covered so negatively, and it would be too much to assert that this negativity was solely the result of media bias against Klein and the Conservatives—to some degree, the Premier and party brought it on themselves.

### *Frames of Stories*

A frame for a story is defined as the angle or thematic structure of the article; it can be viewed as a hypothesis that holds together all the pieces of the story. This frame, or theme, serves as an interpretive device for the reader. The frame of coverage is a variable that has been extensively studied and analyzed in both Canada and the United States, from analyses of framing in American presidential elections (Patterson, 1980) and in Canadian federal elections (Soderlund et al, 1984; Frizzell and Westell, 1994; Trimble and Sampert, 2001). Stories within an issue frame focused on an issue, like health care or post-secondary education, and highlighted and detailed various issues or the policies

surrounding the issues; a story that, for example, was principally about a plank of a party's health care policy, with discussion of and a focus on the substance of that policy, without highlighting the issue as merely a strategic or campaign device, would be a story within an issue frame. Stories within a horserace frame focused on predictions of gains or losses and the campaign contest itself, and on the kind of strategies being used; an example would be a story about the Liberal party's standing in the polls and likelihood of gaining seats in Calgary. Other non-issue based frames included the anti-politics frame, which included stories reflecting a generally critical and negative view of politics, and having this critical and negative nature be the central focus of the article—for example, a story criticizing not only all the parties and leaders, but the entire Alberta political process itself in a jaded and cynical way-- and the personality frame, which included stories focused within this frame focus exclusively on the person in question in the story, with mention of issues, strategy, or the campaign in these stories being secondary to a focus on personality. An example of this would be a personality profile of a leader.

Past research (Patterson, 1982; Robinson and Sheehan, 1983, cited in Wayne, 2004; Soderlund et al., 1984; Frizzell and Westell, 1994; Klinkhammer, 1999; Hess, 2000; Hershey, 2001; Hollihan, 2001; Farnsworth and Lichter, 2003; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004; Trimble and Sampert, 2004) indicates that strategic, horserace framing has become predominant in election coverage, and, moreover, that the use of the horserace frame in election coverage has tended to increase over time. As well, the majority of print coverage of the 1993 and 1997 provincial elections was framed in terms of the horserace (Klinkhammer, 1999). It was expected in this study that the horserace framing would be dominant, and that stories framed in terms of issues would be in the minority.



With this in mind, comparing the use of issue frames versus non-issue, more strategic frames across different print outlets reveals some notable contrasts, as seen in Table 4.5. It should be expected, given past media analyses (Frizzell and Westell, 1994; Klinkhammer, 1999; Hershey, 2001; Hollihan, 2001; Trimble and Sampert, 2004; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004), that the amount of stories using non-issue or strategic framing should be higher than those using issue framing, and, for the most part, there is little exception here. Both Suns, notably, had more non-issue, strategic framing than either the *Herald* or the *Journal*.

(Table 4.5 about here)

The finding, however, most notable from Table 4.5 above is the fact that the *Journal* had almost equal amounts of issue framing and non-issue framing in its election coverage. This notably higher use of issue frames in Edmonton is interesting, considering that the race in the city of Edmonton that was competitive between three parties, unlike most of the province, which might lead one to assume that there would be more strategic framing. However, as can be seen above, this was not the case.

In this analysis, as can be seen in Table 4.5, the number of issue-framed stories is generally higher than has been found in recent Canadian media studies. For example, Trimble and Sampert (2004: 55), in their study of headlines in the 2000 federal election, found that only 34 per cent of National Post headlines and 19 per cent of Globe and Mail headlines were framed in terms of issues. Klinkhammer (1999: 130) found that 20.6 per cent and 23.0 per cent of stories on the 1993 and 1997 Alberta provincial elections, respectively, were framed in terms of issues.

The higher number of issue-framed stories in the analysis presented in this thesis can, however, be explained in part by a key methodological difference—in Trimble and Sampert's study, only headlines were analyzed, whereas whole articles were analyzed in this study. In studies where whole articles have been analyzed (particularly Dornan and Pyman, 2000), the level of issue framing is closer to fifty per cent, and more similar to the findings of this study. As well, the higher numbers in 2004 coverage for issue framing than in the 1993 and 1997 provincial elections can be explained by the fact that, even more so than in 1993 or particularly 1997, the outcome of the 2004 election was a foregone conclusion from the start, and as such, without much of a true or particularly exciting horserace to cover, it may well have been the media's sole option during much of the campaign to focus on issues. As well, in 2004, there was an increasing amount of commentary suggesting that Klein had lost interest in the job of being Premier, and, moreover, that he was in charge of a government and party that did not have a clear policy agenda for how to govern post-deficit and post-Klein Alberta (Editorial, *Calgary Herald*, November 20, 2004). As a result, the media may well have felt it necessary to inject additional policy debate into the campaign, given that the dominant governing party was offering so little in the way of policy or ideas.

Comparing print and television coverage, as seen in Table 4.6, reveals that print coverage provided more issue-framed coverage than television. There is, however, nothing unexpected in this finding. As discussed previously, print, by virtue of its format, allows more thorough and comprehensive examination of election issues than television. Hollihan (2001: 82) observes that television "does not provide the thorough and detailed discussions of public issues that are common in the print media;" as well, Hershey (2001:

69) notes that substantive issue coverage is far more likely to be found in print than on television. As such, it is unsurprising to find more issue-framed coverage in print than on television.

(Table 4.6 and 4.7 about here)

Lastly, comparing time during the campaign to different print outlets reveals, once again, a contrast between coverage provided by the *Suns* and coverage provided by the *Herald* and *Journal*. As seen in Table 4.7, both the *Herald* and the *Journal* made use of issue frames slightly more frequently during the final week of the campaign, which is, as has been noted, the time during which many voters make their ultimate ballot decision (Hershey, 2001: 69). On the contrary, both the *Suns* used issue frames *less* frequently during this final week. Again, as discussed in the previous chapter, it was the *Herald* and the *Journal* that, among print outlets, diversified their coverage in the final week of the campaign by publishing more stories that were focused on issues, while the *Suns*, particularly the *Calgary Sun*, focused more on the horserace itself. As such, the *Herald* and the *Journal* not only focused more on issues during the final week of the campaign, but they tended to frame their stories in terms of the issues themselves, and not solely as part of an electoral homestretch.

While strategic, horserace framing was certainly predominant in coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, it was not as predominant as expected. While television outlets provided an amount of strategic framing more consistent with past research, the same was not necessarily the case for print media. In particular, the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald* published less stories framed around the horserace, and published more stories in issue frames than did other media outlets. However, given that

the outcome of the 2004 provincial election was never in doubt, and given as well that the 2004 election was Klein's last as Premier, this increase in the use of issue framing should not come as a surprise.

The purpose of this chapter was to present and discuss findings in regards to the dependent variables of tone and framing. Firstly, differences in tone in the media's presentation of parties and party leaders in different print and television outlets were analyzed and discussed, revealing, notably, that the coverage afforded to Ralph Klein and the Conservative party was more negative than the coverage for the other parties and leaders, and more negative than election coverage than in elections past in Alberta. The framing of stories was then discussed, with a focus on differences between different print and television outlets as well as to differences in framing during different times of the campaign, where it was revealed that issue framing during the 2004 provincial election was higher than expected, largely because of the more issue-based coverage provided by the *Calgary Herald* and the *Edmonton Journal*. It is the purpose of the next and final chapter of this thesis to speculate as to the effects that media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial elections may have had on voters.

**Table 4.1- Tone of Leader/Party Coverage**

		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N/A	Total	N
Leader/Party	Ralph Klein	3.7%	28.2%	25.8%	15.6%	26.7%	100.0%	756
	Kevin Taft	4.6%	2.6%	25.7%	4.8%	62.3%	100.0%	756
	Brian Mason	0.9%	4.2%	22.2%	3.6%	69.0%	100.0%	756
	PC Party	2.2%	25.0%	42.9%	13.9%	16.0%	100.0%	756
	Liberal Party	5.8%	4.6%	40.6%	5.6%	43.4%	100.0%	756
	NDP	2.4%	3.7%	40.5%	4.0%	49.5%	100.0%	756

Note: 'Not applicable' (N/A) in this and the following tables refers to stories in which the leader or party in question was not mentioned at all, and therefore could receive no tone regarding their coverage, since they received no coverage in the story.

**Table 4.1a- Tone of Leader/Party Coverage (with N/A Cases Removed)**

		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N
Leader/Party	Ralph Klein	4.8%	38.4%	35.1%	21.2%	555
	Kevin Taft	12.2%	6.8%	67.9%	12.7%	286
	Brian Mason	2.9%	13.5%	71.4%	11.5%	235
	PC Party	2.6%	29.7%	51.0%	16.5%	636
	Liberal Party	10.2%	8.1%	71.7%	9.9%	428
	NDP	4.7%	7.3%	80.1%	7.9%	382

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.2- Tone of Leader/Party Coverage by City (Print)

		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N/A	$\gamma/V$	Total	N
Leader/Party/City	Klein-Calgary	3.0%	25.0%	31.3%	14.5%	26.2%		100.0%	332
	Klein-Edm	2.0%	26.9%	27.8%	20.0%	23.3%	$\gamma: .09$	100.0%	245
	Taft-Calgary	4.5%	3.3%	24.7%	4.5%	63.0%		100.0%	332
	Taft-Edm	5.3%	1.6%	31.8%	6.9%	54.3%	$\gamma: -.13$	100.0%	245
	Mason-Calgary	0.3%	4.5%	21.4%	3.3%	70.5%		100.0%	332
	Mason-Edm	1.6%	1.6%	26.1%	4.9%	63.3%	$\gamma: -.14$	100.0%	245
	PCs-Calgary	2.7%	18.1%	52.4%	13.0%	13.9%		100.0%	332
	PCs-Edm	1.2%	24.9%	51.0%	15.9%	6.9%	$\gamma: -.12$	100.0%	245
	Liberals-Calgary	6.0%	5.1%	44.0%	5.4%	39.5%		100.0%	332
	Liberals-Edm	5.3%	4.1%	46.9%	6.5%	37.1%	$V: .05$	100.0%	245
	NDP-Calgary	2.1%	4.5%	43.7%	2.4%	47.3%		100.0%	332
	NDP-Edm	2.9%	3.7%	49.4%	5.7%	38.4%	$\gamma: -.12$	100.0%	245

**Table 4.2a- Tone of Leader/Party Coverage by City (Print) (with N/A Cases Removed)**

		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N
Leader/Party/City	Klein-Calgary	4.0%	33.7%	42.2%	19.6%	246
	Klein-Edm	2.6%	35.2%	36.4%	26.2%	187
	Taft-Calgary	12.2%	9.0%	67.2%	12.2%	122
	Taft-Edm	11.7%	3.5%	70.2%	15.2%	111
	Mason-Calgary	0.1%	15.4%	73.2%	11.3%	97
	Mason-Edm	4.4%	4.4%	71.8%	13.4%	89
	PCs-Calgary	3.1%	21.1%	61.0%	15.1%	285
	PCs-Edm	1.2%	26.8%	54.8%	17.1%	228
	Liberals-Calgary	10.0%	8.5%	73.0%	9.0%	200
	Liberals-Edm	8.4%	6.5%	74.6%	10.3%	154
	NDP-Calgary	4.0%	8.6%	83.4%	4.6%	174
	NDP-Edm	4.7%	6.0%	80.7%	9.3%	150

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.



Table 4.3- Tone of Leader/Party Coverage by Print Outlet

		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N/A	V	Total	N
Leader/Party/Outlet	Klein-Cgy Herald	3.3%	27.1%	31.9%	9.0%	28.6%		100.0%	210
	Klein-Cgy Sun	2.5%	21.3%	30.3%	23.8%	22.1%		100.0%	122
	Klein- Edm Journal	0.7%	36.6%	23.2%	14.1%	25.4%		100.0%	142
	Klein- Edm Sun	3.9%	13.6%	34.0%	28.2%	20.4%	V: 16	100.0%	103
	Taft-Cgy Herald	5.7%	1.4%	23.3%	5.7%	63.8%		100.0%	210
	Taft-Cgy Sun	2.5%	6.6%	27.0%	2.5%	61.5%		100.0%	122
	Taft- Edm Journal	4.9%	1.4%	30.3%	7.0%	56.3%		100.0%	142
	Taft- Edm Sun	5.8%	1.9%	34.0%	6.8%	51.5%	V:11	100.0%	103
	Mason-Cgy Herald	0.5%	3.8%	24.8%	4.3%	66.7%		100.0%	210
	Mason-Cgy Sun	0.0%	5.7%	15.6%	1.6%	77.0%		100.0%	122
	Mason- Edm Journal	1.4%	3.5%	26.8%	3.5%	64.8%		100.0%	142
	Mason- Edm Sun	1.9%	4.9%	25.2%	6.8%	61.2%	V:09	100.0%	103
	PCs-Cgy Herald	3.3%	23.3%	47.6 %	11.4%	14.3%		100.0%	210
	PCs-Cgy Sun	1.6%	9.0%	60.7%	15.6%	13.1%		100.0%	122
	PCs- Edm Journal	0.0%	35.2%	49.3%	9.9%	5.6%		100.0%	142
	PCs- Edm Sun	2.9%	10.7%	53.4%	24.3%	8.7%	V: 18	100.0%	103
	Liberals-Cgy Herald	8.6%	5.2%	40.0%	7.6%	38.6%		100.0%	210
	Liberals-Cgy Sun	1.6%	4.9%	50.8%	1.6%	41.0%		100.0%	122
	Liberals- Edm Journal	5.6%	2.8%	46.5%	6.3%	38.7%		100.0%	142
	Liberals- Edm Sun	4.9%	5.8%	47.6%	6.8%	35.0%	V: 10	100.0%	103
	NDP-Cgy Herald	3.3%	5.2%	44.3%	3.3%	43.8%		100.0%	210
	NDP-Cgy Sun	0.0%	3.3%	42.6%	0.8%	53.3%		100.0%	122
	NDP- Edm Journal	4.2%	2.8%	51.4%	4.2%	37.3%		100.0%	142
	NDP- Edm Sun	1.0%	4.9%	46.6%	7.8%	39.8%	V: 11	100.0%	103

Table 4.3a- Tone of Leader/Party Coverage by Print Outlet (with N/A Cases Removed)

Leader/Party/Outlet		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N
	Klein-Cgy Herald	4.6%	37.9%	44.7%	12.6%	150
	Klein-Cgy Sun	3.2%	27.3%	38.9%	30.6%	95
	Klein- Edm Journal	0.9%	49.0%	31.0%	19.0%	106
	Klein- Edm Sun	5.0%	17.0%	42.7%	35.4%	82
	Taft-Cgy Herald	15.8%	3.9%	64.1%	15.8%	76
	Taft-Cgy Sun	6.5%	17.1%	70.0%	6.5%	47
	Taft- Edm Journal	11.2%	3.2%	69.4%	16.0%	62
	Taft- Edm Sun	11.9%	3.9%	70.0%	14.0%	50
	Mason-Cgy Herald	1.5%	11.4%	74.4%	12.9%	70
	Mason-Cgy Sun	0.0%	24.8%	68.0%	7.0%	28
	Mason- Edm Journal	4.0%	9.9 %	76.1%	9.9%	50
	Mason- Edm Sun	4.9%	12.6%	64.9%	17.5%	40
	PCs-Cgy Herald	3.9%	27.2%	55.5%	13.3%	180
	PCs-Cgy Sun	1.8%	10.4%	70.0%	18.0%	106
	PCs- Edm Journal	0.0%	37.3%	52.2%	10.5%	134
	PCs- Edm Sun	3.2%	11.7%	58.5%	26.6%	94
	Liberals-Cgy Herald	14.0%	8.5%	65.1%	12.4%	129
	Liberals-Cgy Sun	2.7%	8.3%	86.0%	2.7%	72
	Liberals- Edm Journal	9.1%	4.6%	75.9%	10.3%	87
	Liberals- Edm Sun	7.5%	8.9%	73.2%	10.5%	67
	NDP-Cgy Herald	5.9%	9.3%	78.9%	5.9%	118
	NDP-Cgy Sun	0.0%	7.1%	91.2%	1.7%	57
	NDP- Edm Journal	6.7%	4.5%	82.0%	6.7%	89
	NDP- Edm Sun	1.7%	8.1%	77.4%	13.0%	62

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.4- Tone of Leader/Party Coverage by Medium

		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N/A	$\chi^2/N$	Total	N
Leader/Party/Medium	Klein-Print	2.6%	25.8%	29.8%	16.8%	25.0%		100.0%	577
	Klein-TV	7.3%	35.8%	12.8%	11.7%	32.4%	V: .21	100.0%	179
	Taft-Print	4.9%	2.6%	27.7%	5.5%	59.3%		100.0%	577
	Taft-TV	3.9%	2.8%	19.0%	2.2%	72.1%	$\chi^2$ : .23	100.0%	179
	Mason-Print	0.9%	4.3%	23.4%	4.0%	67.4%		100.0%	577
	Mason-TV	1.1%	3.9%	18.4%	2.2%	74.3%	$\chi^2$ : .14	100.0%	179
	PCs-Print	2.1%	21.0%	51.8%	14.2%	10.9%		100.0%	577
	PCs-TV	2.8%	38.0%	14.0%	12.8%	32.4%	V: .37	100.0%	179
	Liberals-Print	5.7%	4.7%	45.2%	5.9%	38.5%		100.0%	577
	Liberals-TV	6.1%	4.5%	25.7%	4.5%	59.2%	$\chi^2$ : .29	100.0%	179
	NDP-Print	2.4%	4.2%	46.1%	3.8%	43.5%		100.0%	577
	NDP-TV	2.2%	2.2%	22.3%	4.5%	68.7%	$\chi^2$ : .44	100.0%	179

**Table 4.4a- Tone of Leader/Party Coverage by Medium (with N/A Cases Removed)**

		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	N
Leader/Party/Medium	Klein-Print	3.5%	34.4%	39.7%	22.4%	433
	Klein-TV	10.8%	53.0%	18.9%	17.3%	121
	Taft-Print	12.0%	6.4%	68.0%	13.5%	235
	Taft-TV	14.0%	10.0%	68.0%	7.9%	50
	Mason-Print	2.8%	13.2%	71.8%	12.3%	188
	Mason-TV	4.3%	15.2%	71.6%	8.6%	46
	PCs-Print	2.4%	23.6%	58.1%	15.9%	514
	PCs-TV	4.1%	56.2%	20.7%	18.9%	121
	Liberals-Print	9.3%	7.6%	73.5%	9.6%	355
	Liberals-TV	15.0%	11.0%	63.0%	11.0%	73
	NDP-Print	4.2%	7.4%	81.6%	6.7%	326
	NDP-TV	7.0%	7.0%	71.3%	14.4%	56

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4.5—Frames by Print

		Cal. Herald	Edm. Journal	Edm. Sun	Cal. Sun	Total
Frame	Issue	41.9%	51.4%	37.9%	36.9%	42.5%
	Non-Issue	58.1%	48.6%	62.1%	63.1%	57.5%
Total		(210)	(142)	(103)	(122)	(577)

Cramer's V: 0.11

**Table 4.6- Frames by Medium**

		Print	TV	Total
Frame	Issue	42.5%	33.0%	40.2%
	Non-Issue	57.5%	67.0%	59.8%
Total		(577)	(179)	(756)

Gamma: .20

Table 4.7- Frames by Print by Week of Campaign

		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	$\chi^2/N$	Total
Outlet/Frame	Cgy Herald- Issue	37.5 %	47.7%	34.2%	52.6%		43.9%
	Cgy Herald- Non-Issue	62.5%	52.3%	65.8%	47.4%	V: .15	56.1 %
	N	(48)	(44)	(38)	(57)		
	Cgy Sun- Issue	40.7%	41.7%	40.0%	36.1%		39.2%
	Cgy Sun- Non-Issue	59.3%	58.3%	60.0%	63.9%	$\chi^2$ .06	60.8%
	N	(27)	(24)	(15)	(36)		
	Edm Journal- Issue	56.8%	50.0%	53.1%	60.0%		54.9%
	Edm Journal- Non-Issue	43.2%	50.0%	46.9%	40.0%	V: .07	45.1%
	N	(37)	(34)	(32)	(30)		
	Edm Sun- Issue	17.4%	68.2%	46.7%	40.7%		42.5%
	Edm Sun- Non-Issue	82.6%	31.8%	53.3%	59.3%	V: .37	57.5%
	N	(23)	(22)	(15)	(27)		

## **Chapter 5- Discussion**

There can be no doubt that media coverage of elections has an impact and an influence on public opinion and on voting; indeed, it “would be foolish to deny that the media... [has] an effect on political outcomes” (Taras, 1990: 33). It is the purpose of this final chapter of this thesis to gauge and explore this relationship between the election coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election and the choices of Alberta voters.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to determine precise effects of media coverage on particular instances and changes in voting behaviour—indeed, as noted in Chapter 1 in regards to Hetherington’s (1996) study, attempting to determine precise effects of specific facets of media coverage on vote choice is an enterprise fraught with many difficulties. It is, however, within the scope of this study to explore the broader, more general effects of media coverage on voters in the provincial election of 2004. The quantitative results of this study provide us with the opportunity to explore and speculate, and to offer arguments explaining what overarching effects that election coverage may have had on the vote. That is the goal of this chapter—to present several reasonable and plausible arguments regarding the effects that election coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election may have had—and may *not* have had-- on the vote choices of Albertans.

*Agenda-Setting?*



Agenda-setting, as explained in Chapter 1, is the means by which the media, in emphasizing particular issues and concerns over others, has a demonstrated effect on the issues and concerns that voters will come to identify as most important (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Wagenberg et al, 1988; Lowery and Defleur, 1988, cited in Taras, 1990; Hetherington, 1996; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004). Taras (1990:30) phrases this means of agenda-setting as a relationship “between the issues given prominence by the media and the issues that were prominent in the minds of voters.” Moreover, there is a strong relationship in the literature between the issues the media cover and voters’ perceptions of the importance of those issues. As Iyengar and Kinder contend, the “verdict is clear and unequivocal...[when] television news focuses on a problem, the public’s priorities are altered, and altered again as television news moves on to something new” (1987: 33). Hollihan (2001: 77, emphasis added) also notes that past “research has suggested that the press not only tells us what to think about, it also tells us *how* to think about it.”

As indicated in Chapter 2, there was no single issue that dominated the campaign, or any issue was given much prominence or emphasis in election coverage. Even the traditionally high-profile issue of health care, the most dominant issue during the campaign, was the focus of just over ten per cent of all stories. Aside from health care, there were no issues that received any particularly noteworthy or outstanding amount of coverage. The only possible exception to this may have been the much higher coverage of infrastructure and urban affairs in the city of Edmonton, but even coverage of this issue—comprising the focus of just over seven per cent of print stories in Edmonton—surely was not substantial enough to dominate the campaign and to shift voter priorities. Overall, there was no overarching theme to the campaign, and this was of course no

accident on the part of the governing party. In pledging to run a campaign about nothing against two main opposition parties with relatively low standing in the legislature and with much fewer resources and relatively new, untried, and unknown leaders, it is not surprising that there was no overwhelmingly prominent or dominant issue. In short, this suggests that there was little agenda-setting effect in the media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election. Simply put, there can be no issue agenda set when there is no coherent, identifiable issue agenda of which to speak. However, this poses a question—if there was no dominant issue emphasized by the media, then what did the media emphasize? Did the media emphasize anything at all?

To the extent there was an agenda, it appears that the matter of Klein's leadership was a key factor in the media's coverage. As will be explained below, the media certainly did tend to emphasize one key thing—the negative coverage of Premier Ralph Klein and the Conservatives. This negative emphasis, it can be suggested, had a priming effect on the electorate; it helped cause voters to make their vote choice—including a lack of vote at all—on the basis of a set of priorities and standards provided by the negative coverage of Klein and the Conservatives.

### *Priming?*

Priming, although similar to agenda-setting, is essentially a step beyond it; priming occurs when the media “[calls] attention to some matters while ignoring others,” and in so doing “[influences] the standards by which governments... policies, and candidates for public office are judged” (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987: 63). Whereas agenda-

setting implies directly effecting and changing the *priorities* of voters through an emphasis on certain issues in coverage—in other words, the issues voters see as most important-- priming is essentially directly effecting and changing the *evaluative criteria* with which voters will make political decisions. For example, Mutz (1994: 707) suggests that the way the media cover issues like unemployment can significantly alter the way voters view American Presidential candidates; she contends that, in the 1992 American presidential election, voters “were more likely to hold the president accountable for their personal unemployment experiences when unemployment coverage was heavy.” In addition, Klinkhammer (1999: 144) indicates that the negative coverage given to Grant Mitchell-- the provincial Liberal leader during the 1997 Alberta provincial election—clearly “relegated Mitchell to the margins” of the election, and thus likely influenced the standards by which voters judged him. Trimble and Sampert (2004: 61) contend that the placement of leader mentions within print headlines—particularly the leaders who are mentioned first and most frequently—serves to draw attention to only one or two “key players” in the electoral game, and thus leaves other voting options aside in the minds of the voters. Priming, then, while a more subtle effect of media coverage, is still nonetheless a considerable one, and one that can have a substantial impact on voters.

Given the findings presented in this thesis, it can be suggested and argued that there was at least some degree of priming in the media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, and that it likely had a substantial effect on the Conservative party’s vote. This effect of priming resulted from the media’s negative coverage of Ralph Klein and the Conservatives.

As indicated in Chapter 4, Ralph Klein and the Conservatives received a striking amount of negative, critical media coverage during the campaign, far more than any other party or leader, and far more than has been noted in past analyses of Alberta media. The negative coverage of Klein and the Conservatives was certainly not concentrated in a few places; this negative coverage was far-reaching, pervading every medium, occurring in both of Alberta's major cities, and taking place even in outlets traditionally more supportive of the Conservatives, like the *Calgary Herald*, *Calgary Sun*, and *Edmonton Sun*. This negative treatment towards the Premier and the governing party would be noticed by any voter, even those who may have paid only cursory attention to the campaign.

What was this effect of media coverage in 2004? Based on the data presented in this thesis, it can be argued that this negative coverage had a priming effect on the electorate. Without, as mentioned, a dominant issue to focus media coverage of the campaign, coupled with a concerted lack of effort on the part of the governing party to focus the campaign on an issue, voters were not presented with any particularly pressing or new set of priorities that could potentially alter the way they judged the parties and leaders, like government waste or corruption, nor was there any occasion to have existing priorities reinforced. Instead, what voters were presented with, was a general question—is the Premier, and his party, fit for office? If voters were to come to see one of the central criteria for their vote choice in 2004 that of the fitness of the governing leader and party, this can reasonably be seen to have been in part a consequence of the overwhelming negative coverage given to Klein and the Conservatives.

This negative coverage, coupled with the fact that opposition parties and leaders received much less coverage than Klein and the Conservatives—and indeed, less than in 1993 and 1997—likely helped to augment this effect of priming on the electorate. That is, if voters were, on the one hand, inundated with negative coverage that caused them to question the fitness of Klein and the Conservatives for office, the corresponding and comparative lack of coverage for the opposition parties could have caused voters looking for an alternative to the governing party to consider not voting at all. If voters, in other words, were more likely to judge the parties and leaders in terms of their fitness for office, the fact that the opposition parties and leaders received less coverage and were thus not as well-known may have made voters question *their* fitness for office as well. As well, traditionally Conservative voters who would not consider voting for an opposition party, even the nascent right-wing Alberta Alliance, may have simply opted to judge the fitness of Ralph Klein and the Conservative party by staying home on election day. This certainly appears to have been the case; it has been noted that the Conservative party “[lost] more than 210,000 voters, about one-third of whom [moved] to support the right-wing Alberta Alliance” during the 2004 provincial election (James Baxter, “Anatomy of a fall: Roots of unrest that led to suspension reach back to last election,” *Edmonton Journal*, March 25, 2006). As well, the Alberta Alliance “polled nine per cent [of the popular vote] at the expense of Klein, whose Progressive Conservatives dropped from 62 per cent to 47 per cent” (Jason Fekete and Tony Seksus, “Debate begins over meaning of Grit breakthrough in city,” *Calgary Herald*, November 24, 2004).

It must of course be stressed that a great many factors affect one’s vote choice; to assert that the reason for the Conservative’s notable decline in support was *solely* the

result of the abundance of negative coverage would be an unwarranted and unsupported conclusion. To assert, however, that this tremendous amount of negative coverage could have very well played a significant role in the vote choices of many Albertans and could have reasonably had some effect is a speculation that can be justified on the basis of the data presented in this study, and merits further study.

The preceding analysis, it must be stressed, is a speculative one. The data presented in this thesis do not show any effect of coverage on outcomes and voting decisions, and therefore, this argument must be treated as speculative. However, it is certainly reasonable to suggest that the negative coverage that Ralph Klein and the Conservative party received caused a significant amount of voters to make their political judgment not in terms of any parties' or leaders' abilities to deal with specific issues, but in terms of each party's and leader's fitness for office. Indeed, as Trimble and Sampert note (2004: 55), "hyper-critical evaluations of the strategies and motivations of political actors may affect voter interest and engagement in elections." The negative coverage given to Klein and the Conservatives could have caused many voters—particularly Conservative supporters-- to question not just their vote choice, but whether they should vote at all.

Another noted effect that media coverage can have on voters is the effect of framing. In the 2004 provincial election, did the framing of election stories have an effect on Alberta voters?

### *Framing*

Framing, as phrased by Trimble and Sampert (2004:52), “is the necessary technique of processing and packaging information so that it can be quickly conveyed... and easily interpreted by the audience.” It is, in essence, a narrative around which a news story is focused in order to fit events “into familiar categories” for readers (Trimble and Sampert, 2004: 52). Framing is the context within which a news story is written, and is, as a consequence, the context within which voter perceptions of leaders and parties are formed.

Scholars in both Canada and the United States have noted that media coverage of campaigns tends to frame stories in terms of the competitive nature of the campaigns themselves, and focuses less on more substantive issues or discussions of policies and party platforms. In Canada, examining the 1979 and 1980 federal elections, Soderlund et al (1984; 54-55) noted that discussions of policies and issues were featured in over half of election stories, and that the horserace nature of the campaign was prominent in approximately two-thirds of stories. The 1980s and 1990s in Canada saw this tendency of election coverage to frame campaigns in terms of the horserace increase, and issue and policy discussion to decrease; Frizzell and Westell (1994) show that, in the 1984, 1988, and 1993 federal elections, print stories tended to be framed in terms of the horserace between parties and leaders, and issues tended to receive less coverage, even in the 1988 ‘free-trade’ election. As well, more recent Canadian studies (Klinkhammer, 1999; Goodyear-Grant et al, 2004; Trimble and Sampert, 2004) confirm the tendency of election coverage to frame campaigns in terms of the horserace, and in some instances suggest the trend has increased. In the United States, Patterson (1982, 30) observed that the majority of print and television coverage of the 1976 Presidential election emphasized

the horserace. A subsequent analysis of CBS coverage of the 1980 Presidential election (Robinson and Sheehan, 1983, cited in Wayne, 2004) found that even more stories--over 80 per cent-- emphasized the horserace nature of the campaign. This trend persisted throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as Wayne notes (2004: 28) with issue discussion tending to be abandoned in favour of a focus on the competition between parties and leaders; Hess (2000) observed that horserace coverage increased in the 2000 Presidential election to 67 per cent, from 54 per cent in 1992 to 48 per cent in 1996. Other studies of media coverage of the 2000 Presidential election indicate that the horserace frame was used in over two-thirds of stories (Farnsworth and Lichter, 2003: 51; Hershey, 2001:66). The increased use of strategic framing in election coverage has lessened the quality of coverage; it provides voters with inadequate political information, and trivializes important issues, and indeed elections themselves. As Hershey (2001, 69) phrases the issue, the pervasive and increasing use of strategic framing in election coverage "carries a risk for democracy."

As indicated and discussed in Chapter 4, strategic framing was not predominant in 2004, not nearly to the extent that has been seen in past media analyses. While strategic framing was indeed predominant in 2004 Alberta provincial election coverage, as discussed in Chapter 4, it did not outnumber issue framing to the degree seen in past research. Issue framing was used more frequently than anticipated, especially in the *Calgary Herald* and *Edmonton Journal*. As well, articles were more likely to focus on and mention issues other than the campaign itself more frequently than expected. It is the contention here, based on the data presented, that the above concern—that of voters not



being supplied with adequate political information due to the predominance of strategic framing—was not necessarily the case in the 2004 provincial election.

Given the depth and breadth of issue coverage provided by some outlets, particularly the CBC, *Calgary Herald*, and *Edmonton Journal*, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a significant number of voters could have taken adequate steps to access information about the parties and candidates from the media. Indeed, given the availability of political news and information on the internet, both from media sources and directly from parties and candidates, it is also not unreasonable to assume that a great many voters had the ability to access a great deal of substantive political information that was available during the 2004 provincial election—especially during the ever-important final week of the campaign. Even voters who may not have been particularly interested in the election—indeed, as the 44.7 per cent voter turnout suggests, a majority of Albertans—were exposed to and had occasion to seek out even more substantive, issue-based coverage. In short, there was no scarcity of substantive, issue-based coverage of the 2004 provincial campaign.

That said, however, there was still a significant amount of strategically framed coverage, especially on television and in the *Edmonton Sun* and *Calgary Sun*. Could this coverage, in spite of the relatively high amount of issue-based coverage, have had an effect on voters?

Based on the analysis presented in this thesis, any effect that strategic coverage may have had on voters would not have been nearly as obvious and notable as the priming effect of the negative coverage of Ralph Klein and the Conservatives; if indeed there is an effect to strategic coverage, it is a longer-term, more subtle effect than a more

direct, immediate impact on vote choice, as past studies have suggested (Erikson, 1976; Patterson, 1980; Coombs, 1981; Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Zaller, 1992). A voter who relied overwhelmingly on television for his or her media coverage regarding the campaign—which has generally been seen as the primary source of political information for voters (Taras, 1990: 95)—or on the *Sun* newspapers would certainly have been exposed to predominantly strategy-based coverage. However, this emphasis on strategy over issues, unlike with agenda-setting or priming, does not seem to have a direct and immediately noticeable effect on voters. Whereas agenda-setting may cause voters to focus more on particular issues, and whereas priming may cause voters to alter the criteria by which they make their vote choices, strategic framing of stories will limit the level of political knowledge going to the voter—thus entailing the risk or possibility of an uninformed vote. The “risk for democracy” (Hershey, 2001: 69) that this process entails is that, if media coverage tends to be less and less focused on issues, a cyclical effect will develop, with politicians and parties tending as well over time to focus less and less on issues, to the point where healthy democratic debate is curtailed and threatened. In other words, it is hard to see how framing, especially in the context of the 2004 Alberta provincial election, could have had any direct effect on the vote choices of Albertans. It stands to reason that a voter who, for example, relied primarily on television coverage for their election information, as tend to be the majority of voters (Taras, 1990: 95), would have more likely changed their vote based on the wealth of negative coverage of Ralph Klein and the Conservatives; it is unlikely that they would have done so on the basis on the more abstract context—the frame-- in which the stories themselves were placed.

Media coverage of the 2004 Alberta provincial election was, as seen in Chapters 3 and 4, unique. As Chapter 3 showed concerning the dependent variable of quantity of coverage, particular media outlets—specifically the *Calgary Herald*, the *Edmonton Journal*, and the CBC—provided voters with much more comprehensive and substantive election coverage than other print and television outlets, and indeed provided more comprehensive and substantive election coverage than in past elections in Alberta, particularly 1993 and 1997. Regarding the final two dependent variables of the analysis, tone and framing, Chapter 4 showed that media coverage of Ralph Klein and the Conservatives was rather negative, and that there were less stories in 2004 framed in terms of the horserace than in elections past in Alberta. In a province beset with idiosyncratic politics, the fact that media coverage of the 2004 provincial campaign featured such distinctive findings should stand as no surprise.

The findings presented in this thesis suggest that media coverage, particularly during an election campaign, influences how we evaluate parties and leaders, alters how we determine our priorities, and, in the end, can influence our vote. It is, however, in the hands of future researchers to determine if media coverage of the 2004 provincial election represents a trend that will persist into future elections in the province, or whether it was a unique idiosyncrasy in an already unique province.

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**Appendix A- Codebook**

- 001 ID \_\_\_\_\_
- 0014 MEDIATED OR DIRECT COMMUNICATION  
01 Mediated  
02 Party Press Release (formal)  
03 Party Website Announcement / Article (informal)  
04 Party Advertisement
- 0015 MEDIA CATEGORY  
01 Print  
02 Television  
03 Internet
- 0016 CITY  
01 Edmonton  
02 Calgary  
77 not applicable
- 002 MEDIUM  
01 Calgary Herald  
02 Edmonton Journal  
03 Edmonton Sun  
04 Alberta Report  
05 Lethbridge Herald  
06 Calgary Sun  
07 CBC Television  
08 CTV Television  
09 Global Television  
10 A-Channel  
11 Party Website
- 0025 LEVEL OF MEDIA  
01 Elite  
02 Non-Elite  
77 not applicable
- 003 YEAR  
93 1993  
97 1997  
04 2004
- 004 DAY/MONTH  
dd-mm-yy

005 DAY OF CAMPAIGN

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006 LOCATION OF ARTICLE (print)

- 01 Front Page
- 02 Front with inside turn
- 03 Inside
- 04 Op/Ed page
- 05 Election Page
- 06 Other
- 07 Sun's 4
- 08 Cover Story
- 77 not applicable

0065 LOCATION OF STORY (television)

- 01 Lead Story
- 02 Second Story
- 03 Third Story
- 04 Fourth Story
- 05 Fifth Story
- 06 Sixth Story or later
- 77 not applicable

0066 LENGTH OF ARTICLE (print)

- \_\_\_ column inches
- 77 not applicable

0067 LENGTH OF STORY (television)

- \_\_\_ seconds on-screen
- 777 not applicable

007 WHICH LEADER DOMINATES THE ARTICLE/STORY

- 01 Ralph Klein
- 02 Laurence Decore
- 03 Ray Martin
- 04 Grant Mitchell
- 05 Pam Barrett
- 06 Randy Thorsteinson
- 07 none or mixed
- 08 Kevin Taft
- 09 Brian Mason

0071 WHICH PARTY DOMINATES THE ARTICLE/STORY

- 01 Progressive Conservatives
- 02 Liberals
- 03 New Democrats

- 04 Social Credit
- 05 Alberta Alliance
- 06 Other
- 07 none or mixed
  
- 008 RALPH KLEIN QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY
  - 01 yes – mentioned or quoted (from 1993/1997: unknown)
  - 02 no – not mentioned or quoted
  - 03 yes – mentioned
  - 04 yes – quoted
  
- 09 LAURENCE DECORE QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY
  - 01 yes
  - 02 no
  - 77 not applicable
  
- 010 RAY MARTIN QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY
  - 01 yes
  - 02 no
  - 77 not applicable
  
- 011 GRANT MITCHELL QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY
  - 01 yes
  - 02 no
  - 77 not applicable
  
- 012 PAM BARRETT QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY
  - 01 yes
  - 02 no
  - 77 not applicable
  
- 013 RANDY THORSTEINSON QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY
  - 01 yes – mentioned or quoted (from 1993/1997: unknown)
  - 02 no – not mentioned or quoted
  - 03 yes – mentioned
  - 04 yes – quoted
  - 77 not applicable
  
- 0131 KEVIN TAFT QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY
  - 02 no – not mentioned or quoted
  - 03 yes – mentioned
  - 04 yes – quoted
  - 77 not applicable
  
- 0132 BRIAN MASON QUOTED OR MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY
  - 02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

0133 PC PARTY MENTIONED OR SPOKESPERSON QUOTED IN  
ARTICLE/STORY

01 no

02 yes

77 not applicable

0134 LIBERAL PARTY MENTIONED OR SPOKESPERSON QUOTED IN  
ARTICLE/STORY

01 no

02 yes

77 not applicable

0135 NDP MENTIONED OR SPOKESPERSON QUOTED IN ARTICLE/STORY

01 no

02 yes

77 not applicable

0136 MINOR PARTY MENTIONED OR LEADER/SPOKESPERSON QUOTED IN  
ARTICLE/STORY

01 no

02 yes

77 not applicable

01361 GREEN PARTY MENTIONED OR LEADER/SPOKESPERSON QUOTED IN  
ARTICLE/STORY

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

01362 ALBERTA ALLIANCE MENTIONED OR LEADER/SPOKESPERSON  
QUOTED IN ARTICLE/STORY

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

0137 AT LEAST ONE PROSPECTIVE PC LEADERSHIP CANDIDATE  
MENTIONED OR QUOTED IN ARTICLE/STORY

01 no

02 yes

77 not applicable

## 01371 TED MORTON MENTIONED OR QUOTED IN ARTICLE/STORY

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

## 01372 GARY MAR MENTIONED OR QUOTED IN ARTICLE/STORY

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

## 01373 LYLE OBERG MENTIONED OR QUOTED IN ARTICLE/STORY

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

## 01374 JIM DINNING MENTIONED OR QUOTED IN ARTICLE/STORY

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

## 01375 MARK NORRIS MENTIONED OR QUOTED IN ARTICLE/STORY

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

- 0138 AT LEAST ONE SENATE NOMINEE MENTIONED OR QUOTED IN  
ARTICLE/STORY  
01 no  
02 yes  
77 not applicable
- 014 IN ARTICLES/STORIES CITING KLEIN AND AT LEAST ONE OTHER  
LEADER, WHICH LEADER IS MENTIONED FIRST  
01 Ralph Klein  
02 Laurence Decore  
03 Grant Mitchell  
04 Ray Martin  
05 Pam Barrett  
06 Randy Thorsteinson  
07 not applicable  
08 Kevin Taft  
09 Brian Mason
- 015 TONE OF RALPH KLEIN'S COVERAGE  
01 Positive  
02 Negative  
03 Neutral  
04 Mixed  
05 not applicable
- 016 TONE OF LAURENCE DECORE'S COVERAGE  
01 Positive  
02 Negative  
03 Neutral  
04 Mixed  
05 not applicable
- 017 TONE OF RAY MARTIN'S COVERAGE  
01 Positive  
02 Negative  
03 Neutral  
04 Mixed  
05 not applicable
- 018 TONE OF GRANT MITCHELL'S COVERAGE  
01 Positive  
02 Negative  
03 Neutral  
04 Mixed  
05 not applicable
- 019 TONE OF PAM BARRETT'S COVERAGE

- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 not applicable

020 TONE OF RANDY THORSTEINSON'S COVERAGE

- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 not applicable

02011 TONE OF KEVIN TAFT'S COVERAGE

- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 not applicable

02012 TONE OF BRIAN MASON'S COVERAGE

- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 not applicable

02021 TONE OF PC PARTY COVERAGE (aside from Klein)

- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 not applicable

02022 TONE OF LIBERAL PARTY COVERAGE (aside from Taft)

- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 not applicable

02023 TONE OF NDP COVERAGE (aside from Mason)

- 01 Positive
- 02 Negative
- 03 Neutral
- 04 Mixed
- 05 not applicable



- 021 GENRE
  - 01 Hard News
  - 02 Feature
  - 03 Campaign-generated news
  - 04 Editorial
  - 05 Column
  - 06 Personality Profile
  - 07 News Analysis
  - 08 Interview
  - 09 Vox Pop
  - 10 Other
- 022 DOMINANT FRAME (1993/1997)
  - 01 Issue
  - 02 Strategic
  - 03 Mixed
  - 04 Other
  - 77 not applicable
- 0225 DOMINANT FRAME (2004)
  - 01 Issue
  - 02 Horserace
  - 03 Anti-Politics
  - 04 Personality
  - 05 Mixed
  - 06 Other
  - 77 not applicable
- 02251 IF "ANTI-POLITICS", ANTI-PARTY
  - 01 yes
  - 02 no
  - 77 not applicable
- 02252 IF "ANTI-POLITICS", ANTI-PERSON
  - 01 yes
  - 02 no
  - 77 not applicable
- 02253 IF "ANTI-POLITICS", ANTI-SYSTEM
  - 01 yes
  - 02 no
  - 77 not applicable

## MAIN FOCUS OF ARTICLE/STORY (01 yes; 02 no)

- 023 Campaign Race and/or Strategy
- 024 Healthcare
- 025 Social Services
- 026 Premier's Record
- 027 Crime and Law
- 028 Senior Citizens
- 029 Education (PSE/elementary/secondary: 1993/1997; elementary/secondary: 2004)
- 030 Debt/Deficit/Budget/Surplus
- 031 Taxes
- 032 Energy and Natural Resources
- 033 Environment
- 034 Job Creation
- 035 Other
- 0351 Post-Secondary Education (2004)
- 0352 Same-Sex Marriage
- 0353 Succession of Premier Klein
- 0354 Alberta Identity
- 0355 Western Canadian Identity
- 0356 Canadian Identity
- 0357 Automobile Insurance

## OTHER TOPICS MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY (01 yes; 02 no)

- 036 Campaign Race and/or Strategy
- 037 Healthcare
- 038 Social Services
- 039 Premier's Record
- 040 Crime and Law
- 041 Senior Citizens
- 042 Education (PSE/elementary/secondary: 1993/1997; elementary/secondary: 2004)
- 043 Debt/Deficit/Budget/Surplus
- 044 Taxes
- 045 Energy and Natural Resources
- 046 Environment
- 047 Job Creation
- 048 VLTs
- 049 Abortion
- 050 Other
- 0501 Post-Secondary Education (2004)
- 0502 Same-Sex Marriage
- 0503 Succession of Premier Klein
- 0504 Alberta Identity

0505 Western Canadian Identity

0506 Canadian Identity

0507 Automobile Insurance

**SUBTOPICS MENTIONED IN ARTICLE/STORY (01 yes; 02 no)**

051 Campaign Race and/or Strategy

052 Healthcare

053 Social Services

054 Premier's Record

055 Crime and Law

056 Senior Citizens

057 Education (PSE/elementary/secondary: 1993/1997; elementary/secondary: 2004)

058 Debt/Deficit/Budget/Surplus

059 Taxes

060 Energy and Natural Resources

061 Environment

062 Job Creation

063 VLTs

064 Other

0641 Abortion

0642 Post-Secondary Education (2004)

0643 Same-Sex Marriage

0644 Succession of Premier Klein

0645 Albertan Identity

0646 Western Canadian Identity

0647 Canadian Identity

0648 Automobile Insurance

**065 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR FEDERAL PARTIES MENTIONED**

01 yes

02 no

77 not applicable

**066 PAUL MARTIN MENTIONED**

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

**067 ANNE MCLELLAN MENTIONED**

02 no – not mentioned or quoted

03 yes – mentioned

04 yes – quoted

77 not applicable

**068 STEPHEN HARPER MENTIONED**

02 no – not mentioned or quoted  
03 yes – mentioned  
04 yes – quoted  
77 not applicable

069 JACK LAYTON MENTIONED

2 no – not mentioned or quoted  
03 yes – mentioned  
04 yes – quoted  
77 not applicable

070 FEDERAL LIBERAL PARTY MENTIONED

01 yes  
02 no  
77 not applicable

071 FEDERAL CONSERVATIVE PARTY MENTIONED

01 yes  
02 no  
77 not applicable

072 FEDERAL NDP MENTIONED

01 yes  
02 no  
77 not applicable

073 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT / PARTY / LEADER MENTIONED BY / IN  
CONTEXT OF

01 Alberta Provincial PC Party / Ralph Klein  
02 Alberta Provincial Liberal Party / Kevin Taft  
03 Alberta Provincial NDP / Brian Mason  
04 mixed  
05 other  
77 not applicable

074 TONE OF COMMENTARY RE: FEDERAL GOVERNMENT / PARTY /  
LEADER

01 Positive  
02 Negative  
03 Neutral  
04 Mixed  
05 not applicable

### **Appendix B- Coding Rules**

1. News stories selected for coding must include information about at least one of the leaders of a political party. Stories that are about MLA candidates should not be coded. Do not code stories which could be considered briefs such as those under the “ask the Leaders” or “Notes” sections. Do not code stories which are about a non-election issue and only mention a leader in passing. For instance, a story might be about a parade and mention that Premier Klein is going to appear. A story of this nature should not be coded.
2. News stories selected for coding must be on some aspect of the 2004 election campaign. These could be stories which arise from campaign speeches, television debates, media conferences, news releases or responses to the statements of others. Stories about Klein or leaders of the other parties which are not about the election should not be coded. For instance, if a story notes that Klein is meeting with the Prime Minister, it should not be coded unless the story has been given an election angle or hook. The only exception to this rule is for stories which run on election pages, but have no apparent link to the election other than through this placement. For instance, a story about Klein’s decision on a policy issue that does not mention the election should only be coded only if it is found on a special election page.
3. Coding for 2004 will begin on October 25, and end on November 26.

4. "Day of campaign" refers to the incremental day of the campaign, not the date the story ran. For example, in 2004, day 2 will be October 26, day 3 will be October 27, etc.
5. "Which leader dominates the article?" refers to the primary focus of the story. If one leader receives more coverage than the other, then that leader should be selected as the focus. If all the leaders receive approximately the same amount of space, the "none or mixed" category should be selected. If the focus of the story is primarily about an issue and a leader is mentioned in connection with it, then the "none or mixed" category should be selected.
6. "Tone of coverage": this is the general impression the coder is left with after reading the article. Tone could be determined by the facts that are covered, by the quotes of other people who are commenting on the politician, or by the opinions of the writer as evidenced in the article, editorial or column. Tone will be positive, negative, mixed, or neutral.
 

"Positive news": The discourse will have a positive feel and may offer statements which can be viewed as supportive of that candidate.

"Negative news": The text will be critical of either the leader or the position or policy that person has put forward.

"Neutral news": This coverage is neither positive or negative. It appears unbiased, balanced, and objective.

"Mixed news": Has an element, or combination, of positive, neutral, and/or negative news.
7. Genres are:

“Hard news”: A factual style of story with the most important information first.

Often these stories will be breaking, or will focus on a new development in a continuing story. These articles should be viewed as stories that would be news, even if the election were not on. So, for instance, Ralph Klein’s comments on AISH recipients would be considered hard news. But Brian Mason’s visit to an elementary school would not be.

“Feature articles”: These are stories that are not breaking events and, therefore, do not have the same “edge” or element of timeliness that hard news stories do. They are often general interest stories that provide more detail and background than hard news stories.

“Campaign –generated stories”: These stories are being covered because of the campaign. They don’t have the “edge” that a hard news story typically has. On the other hand, they don’t provide as much detail as features. These can be viewed as stories that are only being covered because they occurred within the context of the election. They are also stories which arise from events that are being staged because of the election. Leadership debates fall into this category because they are only being held because there is an election, as do stories on polls.

“Editorials”: These are columns that run on the editorial page. They are unsigned and are not the expressed opinions of one individual. Instead, they represent the position of the paper.

“Columns”: These are the opinions of an individual who is a regular contributor to the medium. The author could be a regular columnist or a reporter who is writing a column. Guest columnists also fall under this category.

“Interviews”: These are interviews which have been directly transcribed.

Although portions of this interview may have been omitted, no major editing of the material has taken place and they are run in a question and answer format.

“News Analysis”: An in-depth thought piece written by a reporter or columnist about an issue or event. Generally these are lengthy and contain background information. They may reflect the writer’s opinions.

“Personality profiles”: These stories will focus on the background and personal life (past, present, or both) of the candidate. Stories that fall into this category also include those that are about a leader’s political views.

10. **Frames:** a frame is defined as the angle or thematic structure of the article. It can be viewed as a hypothesis, either stated or unstated, which glues together all the pieces of the story. This frame, or theme, acts like an interpretive device for the reader.

**Issue Frame:** This frame will focus on an issue, such as health care or educational reform. Stories that fall within the issue frame will highlight various issues and/or the policies surrounding the issues. These stories will offer detail and may provide background on the issue or policy. These stories will provide information about what is being said about the issue from both supportive and critical stances.

**Strategic Frame:** The candidate’s actions, his policies and platforms will all be examined in terms of how they affect the candidate’s standing in the election race. Stories may include information about a leader’s standing with the public and



predictions about gains and losses. Stories will focus on the campaign as a contest or a race with leaders battling for specific positions.

**Horserace Frame:** Stories within this frame focus on predictions of gains or losses and the campaign contest itself (including polls), on a race with leaders and candidates battling for specific positions, and/or on the kind of strategies being used.

**Anti-politics Frame:** Stories within this frame reflect a generally critical and negative view of politics, and this critical and negative nature must be the central focus of the article. Stories within this frame can be anti-party, anti-person, and/or anti-system. Anti-party stories focus on divisions within parties and on criticism of the party system in general (lack of real choice, etc). Anti-person stories focus on placing the person(s) in question in a negative light. Anti-system stories focus on scandal and corruption within the political system itself, and define the political system in terms of the problems it has yet to solve.

**Personality Frame:** Stories within this frame focus exclusively on the person in question in the story, and may include biographical information, his or her political beliefs, and other personal information. Any mention of issues, strategy, or the campaign in these stories is secondary to a focus on personality.

11. **Focus of Article:** Coders should select the primary focus of the article. A maximum of two categories can be checked. If there are many issues mentioned, the coder should list them in the subtopics section of the code sheet.

**Campaign Race and/or Strategy:** The focus is on the race, who is winning or losing; what kinds of strategies are being employed. Stories about polls or debates fall into this category.

**Healthcare:** A focus on the healthcare system in Alberta, including stories about hospital budgets and strikes.

**Social Services:** Stories are about services provided by the Department of Social Services such as social assistance.

**Crime and Law:** These stories are about the legal system or crime and its effects.

**Senior Citizens:** Stories about services to seniors.

**Education:** Includes public and private systems. Budget stories and labour unrest stories about education are included in this category.

**Post-Secondary/Advanced Education:** Includes public and private universities, colleges, technical colleges, trade schools, etc. Includes as well budget stories and labour unrest stories related to these institutions.

**Debt/Deficit/Budget:** These stories can focus on just one area or may combine information from more than one area. So, for instance, stories that are about the budget but contain no information about debt reduction should be coded. If a story talks about budget cuts to health care, then both categories should be checked if both receive equal play. However, if a story is primarily about budget cuts, and mentions cuts to hospitals in a paragraph, then select budget cuts under the focus section and health care under the subfocus section. If a story is primarily about hospital budget cuts, then select healthcare as the main focus.

**Energy and Natural Resources:** Oil, gas, forestry and mining industries. If the story looks at the effect of an energy or natural resource company on the environment, both categories should be checked.

**Environment:** Focus on the environment, wilderness areas, parks, recreation. If the topic is the effect of an energy or natural resource company on the environment, both categories should be checked.

**Taxes:** Stories on taxes. These can be about proposed tax increases, tax cut or taxes currently being levied.

**Job Creation:** A focus on the creation of jobs.

**VLTS:** These stories will focus on some aspect of video lottery terminals.

**Abortion:** These stories will focus on some aspect of the abortion issue.

**Post-secondary Education:** Includes public and private universities, colleges, technical colleges, trade schools, etc. Includes as well budget stories and labour unrest stories related to these institutions.

**Same-Sex Marriage:** These stories focus on and include reference to same-sex marriage.

**Succession of Premier Klein:** Includes stories focusing on and references to who may succeed Ralph Klein as Premier. References alone to the election of 2004 election being Klein's last, without specific mention of succession, should not be coded.

**Automobile Insurance:** Includes stories focusing on and references to auto insurance.

**Albertan/Western Canadian/Canadian Identity:** Includes stories with to an appeal to the collective interest of either Alberta, the West, or Canada, respectively. For example, these include appealing to a voters' sense of belonging to Alberta, the West or Canada. Other examples would include feeling a sense of pride in, loyalty toward, or attachment to any of these groups. Also, appealing to "Albertan values", "Western values" or "Canadian values" (however defined) would fit. It should have some type of ascriptive or emotive quality to it, rather than being purely a descriptive term.

12. **Subtopics Mentioned in Article:** (Note- Coders should select as many categories as applicable. The primary focus of article should not be selected again.) These are other topics which receive mention in the article. For instance, an article might be primarily about debt reduction, but also mention health care cuts too.