Choice or Consensus?:
The 2006 Federal Liberal and Alberta Conservative Leadership Campaigns

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INTRODUCTION

Two of Canada's most prominent political dynasties experienced power-shifts on the same weekend in December 2006. The Liberal Party of Canada and the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta undertook leadership campaigns, which, while different in context, process and substance, produced remarkably similar outcomes. In both instances, so-called 'dark-horse' candidates emerged victorious, with Stéphane Dion and Ed Stelmach defeating frontrunners like Michael Ignatieff, Bob Rae, Jim Dinning, and Ted Morton. During the campaigns and since, Dion and Stelmach have been labeled as less charismatic than either their predecessors or their opponents, and both of the new leaders have drawn skepticism for their ability to win the next general election.[1]

This pair of surprising results raises interesting questions about the nature of leadership selection in Canada. Considering that each race was run in an entirely different context, and under an entirely different set of rules, which common factors may have contributed to the similar outcomes?

The following study offers a partial answer. In analyzing the platforms of the major contenders in each campaign, the analysis suggests that candidates' strategies played a significant role in determining the results. Whereas leading contenders opted to pursue direct confrontation over specific policy issues, Dion and Stelmach appeared to benefit by avoiding such conflict. The result saw Dion and Stelmach 'come up the middle' by pursuing strategy of selective emphasis. This permitted them to stay above the fray, never directly engaging the frontrunners on policy, while stressing those issues most favorable to their own campaigns. This approach helped shield Dion and Stelmach from direct criticism from opponents and the media, and maintained their viability as compromise candidates on subsequent ballots.

The paper begins by providing a brief context of each leadership campaign. This is followed by a theoretical discussion of the two major campaign strategies employed in each contest: direct confrontation and selective emphasis. Next, findings of a content analysis of candidate platforms are presented, demonstrating the diversity of views and tactics present in both campaigns. Concluding sections outline the implications repercussions of these results, suggesting how strategies employed during a leadership campaign may impact the winner's performance once in office.

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[1] Many Liberals fear Dion's continued low popularity may prevent the party from returning to power in Ottawa, while some Alberta Tories fear Stelmach's rise may resemble that of Harry Strom, the less-than-dynamic, and final, Social Credit Premier of the province.

A TALE OF TWO CONTESTS

It is difficult to imagine two more distinct Canadian leadership contests than those that took place in December 2006. Obviously, one was at the provincial level, one federal; one was Conservative, the other Liberal. Yet the disparities were far more than superficial.

Each party entered its campaign under entirely different circumstances. After over a decade in power, the Federal Liberals were reeling from an election loss in January 2006, which saw Stephen Harper's Conservatives assume a minority government. Then-leader and Prime Minister, Paul Martin, resigned on election night, setting up an eleven-month, ten-candidate race to become Leader of the Official Opposition. The position was not a consolation prize, by any means; only one Liberal leader in the history of federal politics has ever failed to become Prime Minister.[2] Nonetheless, the tone of the Liberal leadership campaign was starkly different from that of the Alberta Conservatives. The latter contest would install a new Premier, and the head of one of the most successful political machines in Canadian history. The Conservatives had governed Alberta with substantial majorities since 1971, and – in contrast with the Federal Liberals – out-going Premier Ralph Klein had left the party in good standing both financially an in terms of public opinion. As a result, unlike the Liberal contest underway in Montreal, very few observers believed that the fate of the Tory dynasty rested on the outcome of the Alberta PC leadership campaign.

This lack of intrigue was due, in large part, to the early presumption that Jim Dinning, Klein's former Provincial Treasurer (1992-1997) and Executive Vice President of TransAlta (1999-2004), would emerge victorious. Dinning had spent the better part of a decade building key contacts and raising a substantial war chest in preparation for the race, and was viewed by most as the heir-apparent to the Premiership.[3] Prominent among his opponents were former Klein cabinet ministers Lyle Oberg, Mark Norris, Dave Hancock, Ed Stelmach, and rookie MLA Ted Morton.[4] This 'coronation' climate differed considerably from the Liberal campaign, which – at the outset, at least – appeared to be a balanced affair. Early on, potential frontrunners, including Sheila Copps, Frank McKenna, Brian Tobin, John Manley, Allan Rock, Denis Coderre, John McCallum, Belinda Stronach, and Martin Cauchon, all declared their intention not to run, leaving the contest relatively wide-open to lesser-known contenders. By mid-September, the field had narrowed to two favorites – Michael Ignatieff, a Harvard academic, and former Ontario New Democratic Premier Bob Rae – and three competitive contenders –

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[2] Edward Blake was Liberal Leader from 1869 to 1871, and 1880 to 1887, without becoming Prime Minister.

[3] The decision by Preston Manning – former Reform Party leader, and son of former Alberta Premier, Ernest – not to enter the race made Dinning an overwhelming frontrunner to replace Klein.

[4] Other official contenders for the Alberta Conservative Leadership included: Alana DeLong, Gary McPherson and Victor Doerksen.

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Stéphane Dion, Gerard Kennedy, and Ken Dryden.[5] Unlike the Alberta Conservative race, leading up to the final month, few observers were willing to predict the outcome of the Federal Liberal contest.

Yet, the most intriguing difference between the two campaigns lay in the distinct sets of rules that governed them. Officially begun on March 20, the Federal Liberal race was to culminate in a delegated convention, December 2 to December 3, 2006 (see Table 1). On the final weekend in September, fourteen delegates[6] were elected by party members in each of the country's 308 federal constituencies; over 800 additional *ex-officio* delegates included present and former party legislators, leaders, candidates, riding executives, and others, as well as representatives from the party's Women's, Youth and Aboriginal wings. On the first ballot, elected delegates were required to vote as declared by their constituencies, but free to vote as they chose in subsequent rounds. *Ex-officio* delegates were undeclared and free to vote their preference throughout the convention. Run-off balloting occurred at the convention itself, with lowest-ranked candidates being dropped from subsequent rounds until a victor had achieved 50 percent support.[7]

Table 1: Important Dates in the 2006 Federal Liberal Leadership Campaign

January 23	Conservative Party wins Minority Government; Paul Martin declares intention to step down as Liberal Leader
February 1	Liberal Caucus selects Bill Graham as Interim Leader of the Official Opposition
March 18 – 19	Liberal Party National Executive establishes date and rules for the leadership campaign
July 4	Deadline for sale of party memberships; only those who were members by this date were eligible to vote for party delegates
September 30	Deadline for candidates to enter the race
September 29 – October 1	Delegate selection weekend
November 29 – December 1	Liberal Policy Convention
December 2 – December 3	Liberal Leadership Convention

In addition, candidates for the Federal Liberal leadership were subject to an individual spending limit of $3.4 million for the entire campaign.

This comparatively rigid process stood in stark contrast to the rules selected by the Alberta Conservatives. As in 1992, the party's 2006 leadership race remained among the least regulated in Canadian politics (Stewart and Archer, 2000). There were no limits on fundraising or spending, for instance, with several candidates reportedly raising millions of dollars from large donors both inside and outside Alberta. Most significantly,

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[5] Other registered candidates included: Carolyn Bennett, Maurizio Bevilacqua, Scott Brison, Martha Hall Findlay, Hedy Fry, and Joe Volpe. (Bennett, Bevilacqua and Fry withdrew prior to the convention, each endorsing Bob Rae.) John Godfrey withdrew from contention before officially filing his nomination.
[6] These delegates included four women, four men, four youths, and two seniors.

the Conservative election was based on a one-member-one-vote system, which more closely resembles open primaries in the United States than the convention-style process adopted by the Federal Liberals. Moreover, the Conservatives' rules allowed potential participants to purchase party memberships throughout the entire campaign – including each election day – as well as permitting voters to hold memberships from other parties. This raised the possibility of 'tourists' joining the Conservative Party to cast ballots in favor of their choice for premier. Voting, itself, was a two-stage run-off, with members casting a categorical ballot in the first round and, if necessary, a preferential ballot in the second. As no candidate received a majority of votes on the first ballot (November 25), the top three candidates advanced to a second and final round of voting on December 2. (See Table 2.) New members were allowed to join the party between ballots, and no votes were carried over from the previous round. No candidate received a majority of first-preferences on the second ballot, and the third-place candidate had his votes re-allocated according to the second-preferences of his supporters. The results of this preferential vote determined the victor and, ultimately, the Premier of Alberta.

Table 2: Important Dates in the 2006 Alberta Conservative Leadership Campaign

March 31	Premier Ralph Klein receives 55.4 percent support in a mandatory leadership review at the Conservative Party convention
April 4	Klein requests that the PC Executive begin planning a leadership race for Fall 2006
September 20	Klein resigns as party leader, marking the official opening of the leadership campaign
October 16	Deadline for candidates to enter the race
November 25	First round balloting
December 2	Final round balloting

Despite the many differences in the two leadership contests the results appeared remarkably similar. How could the established elites of two dynasties – so staunchly supportive of Michael Ignatieff, Bob Rae and Jim Dinning – lose to seemingly under-staffed, underfunded contenders? How could two competent, but largely low-key, managerial cabinet ministers rise to the healm of their parties? In short, how could two politicial juggernauts like the Federal Liberal and Alberta Conservative parties be taken-over by two darkhorse candidates like Stéphane Dion and Ed Stelmach?

THEORIES OF POLITICAL COMPETITION

A large part of the answer has to do with the internal dynamics of each party. Indeed, most post mortems point to the desire among the grassroots to overturn each party's established elite. This explanation has merit: after so many years in power, the grip of the Liberal brass under Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, and the centralized control of the Conservatives under Ralph Klein, had alienated many activists in each party. In this sense, the selection of Dion and Stelmach – both former inner-circle cabinet ministers, yet both largely unconnected to the party's cadre of high-level advisors – appears to be rejection of the former leaders' coteries, and a safe departure from

business-as-usual. Moreover, the selection of Dion – the only French Canadian in the Liberal race – and Stelmach – a northern Albertan with substantial support in the Edmonton and Ukrainian communities – had certain regional-cultural roots. Other factors may have included the organizational capacity, 'likeability', personality, or other qualities of the successful candidates, themselves.

Rather than focusing on the 'demand' side of the question, this paper explores an alternative hypothesis: that the strategies of each candidate played a significant role in his performance. Like parties in a general election contest, leadership candidates have at least two crucial decisions to make when it comes to campaigning: (1) which issues to emphasize, and (2) which positions to take (Robertson, 1976: 13). In this vein, each candidate's platform consists of an overall agenda and list of specific policies. Each of these factors may conflict with other candidates' platforms to a greater or lesser degree. For instance, some candidates may agree on a particular list of issues, what we might call "agenda convergence", but disagree on the particular policy solutions to address those concerns ("policy divergence"). By the same token, candidates may disagree entirely on the issues to be debated ("agenda divergence"), or agree substantively on how best to move forward ("policy convergence") (Sigelman and Buell, 2004; Zielinski, 2002). Thus, each candidate's choice of issues and positions helps establish the competitive atmosphere of a leadership campaign.

This model of competition draws upon two general theories of political competition. The first is aptly named the "direct confrontation" school of conflict. In it, candidates (or parties) engage one another directly by converging on a specific set of issues and offering voters conflicting sets of policy options. Downsian spatial theory is grounded in this notion of political competition (Downs, 1957; see also: Simon, 2002). For example, two candidates may agree that a campaign should be fought over three main issues: health care, taxes, and the environment. Under the 'direct confrontation' model, typically a left-wing candidate would propose universal health services, few (if any) tax cuts, and anti-growth policies designed to help conserve the environment. Conversely, a right-wing candidate would propose privatization of health care, substantial tax relief, and economy-based measures designed to promote sustainable development. Here, the voters are provided with clear-cut choices on agreed-upon issues.

A second conceptualization of political competition holds that candidates seldom engage in a "Great Debate" over established concerns . Rather, they compete by "talking past each other", emphasizing those issues in which they feel they have the greatest advantage over their opponents, and down-playing those issues that hold the least benefit to their success (Budge, 1987: 24). This is termed the "issue emphasis" or "saliency" school of political conflict, and it is based on the notion that "All successful politicians instinctively understand which issues benefit them and their party and which do not. The trick is to politicize the former and de-emphasize the latter" (Carmines and Stimson, 1989: 6). In this sense, some candidates may "own" certain issues (Belanger, 2003; Damore, 2004; Petrocik et al., 2003). For example, one candidate may be a former civil rights attorney, and seek to emphasize issues like social justice and multiculturalism, which are his strengths. By contrast, a former police officer may wish to stress law and

order issues like mandatory minimums or stiffer sentencing. The attorney and the police officer are unlikely to converge on the same agenda. Instead of offering opposing policy positions or offering the electorate a dialogue, they compete by setting the agenda – by offering distinct packages of reforms (Klingemann et al., 1994: 26; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 2-3), by being strategically ambiguous about their unpopular policy preferences (Glazer, 1990; Meirowitz, 2005), and by priming the electorate according to the most favorable issues (Ansolabehere and Iyengar, 1994; Johnston et al., 1992; Soroka, 2002).

These two theories of are 'ideal types': in reality, political competition features a combination of both approaches (Johnston et al., 1993; Laver, 2001; Meguid, 2005; Petry and Landry, 2001). No campaign is likely to feature pure 'direct confrontation' or 'issue emphasis' (Bartolini, 2002: 95). This is especially true of internal party leadership contests, where too much confrontation may be viewed as overly divisive, and where some agenda convergence is necessary considering the common interests and goals of the organization. Likewise, no single candidate is likely to pursue a strategy based exclusively on 'confrontation' or 'emphasis'. Building alliances with other candidates is almost always a necessity, particularly for later rounds of balloting or for the cabinet-making process that follows the race; this makes all-out confrontation an unwise campaign tactic. And the decision to avoid opponents' issues may lead some voters to question a candidate's credibility as a well-rounded leader. Rather, each candidate's strategy – and each campaign – features its own unique mix of issue engagement and issue ownership, of confrontation and emphasis, of debate and heresthetic (Riker, 1993; 1996).

In this respect, their specific blend of 'direct confrontation' and 'issue emphasis' may have had an impact on the success of Dion's and Stelmach's campaigns. The following section outlines how this hypothesis may be investigated.

METHODOLOGY

Candidate platforms represent the major source of data for this analysis. Platforms do not constitute the only statements of policy made by candidates during a campaign, nor do they encapsulate their entire strategies. A comprehensive examination of these leadership races would certainly include analysis of speeches, advertisements, media coverage, and other data sources. However, as in the study of inter-party competition, policy platforms (or manifestos) are held as one of few valid sources for measuring the relative positions of political actors during an election campaign (Budge, 1994: 455). While not all voters read these documents, they do form the core of a candidate's campaign, serving as the wellspring for public speeches and the basis upon which media frames are established (Bara and Budge, 2001: 591). In short, platforms are the most comprehensive and authoritative statements of candidates' intentions, and serve as a reliable guide to their current positions and future actions if elected (Budge et al., 2001).[8]

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[8] As Hofferbert and Budge (1992: 157-158) argue, the relationship between what parties say in party platforms and what they do once in office is seldom perfect: "A test of mandate theory does not require or

Platforms were collected from the major competitors in each leadership campaign. These included the five candidates who reached the second round of balloting in the Federal Liberal race – Dion, Ignatieff, Rae, Kennedy, and Dryden – and the six Major Alberta Conservative contenders, each of whom received at least 5 percent of first ballot votes – Stelmach, Dinning, Morton, Oberg, Hancock, and Norris. Using Sartori's criteria of 'blackmail' and 'governing or coalition' potential, all other competitors were considered relatively non-relevant to the outcome of each race, and were excluded from analysis (Sartori, 1976). See Appendix 1 for results of each round of balloting.

Each candidate produced a full-length, traditional platform for his campaign. These varied in format – from web-based .html pages to published .pdf documents – and length – from Morton's 4-page plan to Dinning's 48-page manifesto. Yet each contained the same key components of any platform: a set of key priorities for the future, and a list of specific policies and programmes to be enacted if the candidate were to become leader (Budge, 1987: 18; Klingemann et al., 1994: 2). See Appendix 2 for a complete list of the platforms consulted.

These documents were analyzed using the well-established and highly-regarded Comparative Manifesto Project coding scheme. Originally designed and refined by the Manifesto Research Group (MRG) of the European Consortium for Political Research, this method of content analysis has been employed, tested and critiqued for over two decades, and continues to serve as one of the discipline's standard measures of political competition.[9] The approach uses specific statements – or "quasi-sentences" – as its unit of analysis, coding specific issue or policy "mentions" into one of over sixty issue areas. Each specific statement in each platform was coded into one (and only one) policy area. These ranged from general references to the quality of democracy or social justice, to specific proposals about foreign relations, tax relief or education (see Appendix 3). When combined, these coded statements create a sort of fingerprint, unique to each political platform in terms of the issues and positions contained therein.

To this point, the focus of the MRG has been on inter-*party* competition, and the coding of *party* manifestos. An extensive review of the literature reveals few, if any, studies have applied this methodology to the study of leadership campaigns, making the present study one of the first to do so.[10] Accordingly, the MRG methodology required minor revision to suit this particular research project (see Appendix 3). In addition to this quantitative analysis of issue saliency, this study also involves a qualitative dimension, assessing the contrasting policy *positions* present in each campaign.

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rest on a demonstration of causation between party programme emphases and policy. It need only demonstrate that the pronouncements of the parties give a reasonable indication of what the parties later do. Suicide notes do not kill people. Nor are they perfect predictors. But it is useful to read them ahead of time, if at all possible."

[9] For reviews of the platform analysis approach, and the work of the Manifesto Research Group of the European Consortium for Political Research (the Comparative Manifesto Project), in particular, see: Budge (2001); Klingemann et al. (2007: Chapter 1); and Volkens (2001).

[10] For a similar content analysis approach to the study of American presidential primaries, see: Meirowitz (2005) .

FINDINGS

Most research on political platforms supports the notion that competition primarily occurs along the lines of the 'selective emphasis' model (Budge et al., 2001). Only occasionally do parties or candidates directly engage each other in terms of offering conflicting policy solutions to common problems. For reasons mentioned above, this pattern is expected to be particularly strong in internal party contests, such as the leadership campaigns under examination in this study. The results presented in Table 3 largely confirm these suspicions.

The major lines of competition in the Liberal campaign were drawn in terms of the issues each candidate prioritized. All candidates devoted the largest proportion of their platforms to discussing 'societal' issues like multiculturalism and morality; this is not surprising, given the historic image of the party as a champion of social justice. Yet, beyond this, each had his own unique package of priorities. For Dion, these included the environment (14.1 percent of his platform) and resources (13.5). Meanwhile, Ignatieff emphasized the importance of leadership and societal unity (14.5); Rae, the economy (23.1); and Kennedy (23.1) and Dryden (16.6), foreign affairs.

These distinctions were somewhat blurrier among Alberta Conservatives. It is no surprise that the economy and social services dominated most of the candidates' platforms. Thanks to a boom in the oil and gas sector, the province was in the midst of tremendous economic and population growth in 2006, forcing issues like labor force development, royalty revenues, and affordable housing to the forefront of the political agenda. Aside from economic issues, however, each of the six major contenders for the premiership stressed his own mixture of priorities. Stelmach (20.8), Dinning (20.1), Hancock (12.6), and Norris (22.4) emphasized societal issues, with particular attention to seniors and rural communities. All four of these candidates also prioritized democratic reforms, including governmental accountability. Meanwhile, Morton keyed in on issues of leadership and unity (17.9), and Oberg on agriculture, energy and resources (12.8).

Overall, Ted Morton established himself as the most unique candidate in the campaign – a title few observers would contest. His choice to emphasize topics like leadership and his insistence on 'Alberta First' policies (17.9 percent of his platform), including a province-run pension plan, set him apart from most others. In addition, Morton devoted the greatest proportion of his platform to environmental issues (13.1 percent) and democratic reform (23.8). Mark Norris emerged as the champion of inter-governmental relations (10.6), stressing a mixture of conflict and conciliation with the federal government and municipalities, while Dave Hancock focused the greatest attention of any candidate on economic issues (29.4). Aside from these relatively subtle differences, however, most of the Alberta Conservative candidates produced similar platforms in terms of their priorities for the future.

Table 3: Platform Content by Candidate and Party

	FOREIGN AFFAIRS	FREEDOM & DEMOCRACY	INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS	LEADERSHIP & UNITY	ECONOMY	ENVIRONMENT	AGRICULTURE, ENERGY, RESOURCES	SOCIETY	SOCIAL SERVICES
Dion (n=178)	6.7	0.0	2.8	11.8	12.4	14.1	13.5	16.9	16.9
Ignatieff (n=448)	8.1	4.9	10.0	14.5	8.5	8.7	3.4	29.2	9.2
Rae (n=195)	10.3	1.5	2.1	12.3	23.1	6.7	3.6	25.6	13.3
Kennedy (n=411)	23.1	5.1	4.9	6.8	11.0	4.6	2.9	31.4	11.2
Dryden (n=572)	16.6	1.9	2.3	7.7	13.8	11.0	4.7	28.9	13.1
Liberal Mean	*13.0*	*2.7*	*4.4*	*10.6*	*13.7*	*9.0*	*5.6*	*26.4*	*12.7*
Stelmach (n=504)	0.6	10.7	6.8	4.8	20.4	4.6	10.3	20.8	18.9
Dinning (n=851)	0.0	9.6	5.3	2.2	25.3	9.2	6.8	20.1	19.6
Morton (n=84)	0.0	23.8	6.0	17.9	11.9	13.1	3.6	8.3	21.4
Oberg (n=890)	0.0	16.1	9.8	1.1	20.1	6.3	12.8	11.6	22.8
Hancock (n=452)	0.0	10.4	8.4	1.6	29.4	2.4	9.7	12.6	23.2
Norris (n=465)	0.0	5.2	10.6	0.7	21.6	5.8	13.3	22.4	22.2
PC Mean	*0.1*	*12.6*	*7.8*	*4.7*	*21.5*	*6.9*	*9.4*	*16.0*	*21.4*

Source: Candidate Platforms
'N' figures represent the total number of issue or policy mentions in the respective platform.
Cell figures represent percentage of quasi-sentences devoted to the issue area.
Rows may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
For complete descriptions of the content of each index, see Appendix 3.

This is not to say that the Alberta Tories were entirely on the same page when it came to the direction of the province. Indeed, an examination of their specific policy positions reveals substantial disagreement within the party on two key issues: health care and education. On the first topic, Ted Morton – and, to a lesser extent, Lyle Oberg – openly conveyed their interest in pursuing private provision of health services in Alberta. The other four candidates either promoted universality in public health care (Dinning), or at least remained strategically ambiguous about the question of privatization. A similar divide occurred on the issue of primary and secondary schooling. Morton, Norris and Oberg promoted the importance of parents' "choice" in enrolling their children in the private or public school system, while Dinning, Stelmach and Hancock remained silent on the issue. Of course, silence does not necessarily represent opposition; nor does it imply complicity. The active promotion of private options in health care and education,

however, set Morton and Oberg apart as being two of the more right-leaning candidates in the race.

Similar divisions occurred among Liberals on questions of military intervention and peacekeeping. Here, Bob Rae, Gerard Kennedy, and Ken Dryden leaned toward peacekeeping and reconstruction over direct military intervention in areas like Afghanistan and the Middle East, pitting them against Michael Ignatieff, who – of all Liberal candidates – placed greatest emphasis on the importance of investing in the Canadian military. Interestingly, Dion's platform remained silent on this issue.

These policy divergences are crucial to understanding the dynamics of the two leadership campaigns, particularly as they pertain to the top contenders. One notes how the Liberals appeared divided by Rae's left-leaning approach to foreign affairs, and Ignatieff's relatively hawkish stance. By the same token, Ted Morton's platform – a self-styled 'conservative plan for conservatives – stood in stark contrast with Jim Dinning's, whose image as a red tory placed him firmly in the left-wing of the Alberta PCs. These differences were magnified throughout the campaign, both by a media seeking to portray conflict and by the candidates, themselves, in advertisements.

The week between ballots in the Alberta Conservative race is particularly instructive, in this regard. The Dinning team opted to pursue an aggressive advertising campaign highlighting the differences between his own policies and those of first-ballot runner-up, Ted Morton. The radio and newspaper ads focused on Morton's promotion of private solutions to health care delivery, and accused him of attempting to create a "firewall" around Alberta to the exclusion of the federal government and other provinces – a reference to Morton's co-authorship of the "Alberta Agenda" in January 2001.[11] The advertising campaign is believed to be responsible for at least a portion of the mobilizing effect felt between the first and second ballots; arguments can be made that the ads helped all three remaining candidates to sell new memberships and bring existing members to the polls. For Dinning, the strategy likely mobilized many left-leaning non-members to join his cause; the move was also likely to energize Morton's base, as well; and those with a distaste for negative campaigning and a preference for 'Steady Eddie' could have been pushed to vote for Stelmach as a compromise candidate.

As the following discussion suggests, this latter effect may have had the most significant impact on the outcome of the Liberal and Conservative leadership races. Both Dion and Stelmach steered clear of the major divisive debates in their respective campaigns, making it easier for them to 'come up the middle' in later rounds.

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[11] Co-authored by Stephen Harper, Tom Flanagan, Ted Morton, Rainer Knopff, Andrew Crooks, and Ken Boessenkool, the "Alberta Agenda" (2001) called for the province to create its own pension plan, tax collection machinery, and police force; to enforce its jurisdiction on issues like health care; and to pursue Senate reform. It is worth noting that, of these issues, Morton made mention of only pensions and health care during the campaign.

At least one common characteristic in the Dion and Stelmach victories appears to lie in their campaign strategy. Both candidates were able to advance rather quietly by avoiding direct engagement with their frontrunning opponents; this enabled both to escape scrutiny from their competitors and the media, and emerge as the desirable compromise candidates for two divided parties. At the same time, their choice of emphasis – for Dion, the environment; for Stelmach, democratic reform and addressing growth – appeared rather non-controversial. Indeed, each of the victors attempted to take ownership of core "valence issues" in the campaign (Stokes, 1963). Each became the champion of priorities and positions that no other candidate opposed, and with which, it appears, most delegates were in agreement.[12] This made it easier for both Dion and Stelmach to build alliances with other candidates and their supporters, and to reach out to 'loose' delegates and voters, in future rounds of balloting. In particular, Dion's alliance with Kennedy, and Stelmach's alliances with Oberg, Hancock and Norris, were made more feasible by their decision not to confront any opponent directly on policy.

This may not have been a concerted strategy on their part, of course. Dion and Stelmach were not the only candidates in the race, and the choices of their opponents *not* to engage them may have had just as much impact on the outcome. It takes (at least) two candidates to create 'direct confrontation' or 'agenda divergence'. Hence, the lessons from these campaigns may be applicable as much to the vanquished as the victors. Ignatieff and Rae made a choice to engage each other on foreign policy, and leave the environmental field to Dion. So, too, did Dinning and Morton confront each other on social policy, entirely abandoning attempts to discredit Stelmach.

To be certain, no one could have expected a final ballot's two leading contenders to leave each other alone, entirely. And attacking a third-place candidate, whose supporters may be crucial in breaking a deadlock in future rounds of balloting, does carry its own risks. Yet, in systems where final ballot movement is possible, and in close races where gaining ballot-by-ballot momentum is crucial, the results of both of these contests reveal the consequences of leaving a third-place opponent untouched. They also demonstrate the potentially negative effects of direct confrontation when it comes to luring support from one's primary opponent in subsequent rounds of balloting. Locked in an effort to defeat each other, the decisions of frontrunners like Ignatieff, Rae, Dinning, and Morton contributed, at least in part, to the surprise outcomes of December 2 and 3, 2006.

What does this mean for the parties going forward? Both the Federal Liberals and Alberta Conservatives are now led by the dark-horses they elected. Known for their managerial abilities, and apparently widespread appeal as compromise candidates, both Dion and Stelmach are unlikely to face challenges to their leadership in the short term.

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[12] One must be careful, here, to avoid a functionalist argument. However, it would be difficult to find many Liberal delegates who opposed Dion's moderate stance on the environment and social policy, or Stelmach's middle-of-the-road position on democratic reform and handling growth.

No one in either party is likely to welcome a second leadership campaign in the near future, at least not until after the next election.

In addition, both leaders are associated with strong, focused and relatively salient agendas. Dion's connection with the environment file – now the number one issue in the minds of most Canadian voters – has placed him in the centre of public debate. Stelmach's association with the issue of growth, and aid to municipalities, in particular, has helped focus media attention on his first-year performance. Not all of this attention has been positive for either new leader. Dion's association with the Liberal-Green alliance, and with his party's previous record on the environment, has drawn sharp criticism from other parties and the media. So, too, has Stelmach's handling of growth issues like municipal transfers and affordable housing, particularly in Calgary.

Moreover, if history offers insight into the fate of dark-horse candidates, their positions are likely to be very vulnerable in the event of a poor performance in upcoming elections. While the Alberta Tories are unlikely to lose the next election, a loss of seats by Stelmach may trigger second thoughts among the party faithful, particularly in Southern Alberta. A significant decline in Conservative fortunes may conjure up memories of Harry Strom, the lackluster successor to charismatic Premier Ernest Manning, whose three years in power marked the final days of Social Credit in Alberta. The comparisons between Klein and Manning, Stelmach and Strom, are already prevalent in provincial media.

By the same token, Dion's failure to reverse the Liberal Party's decline may abbreviate his term in office. Unlike Stelmach, there are a host of potential replacements for Dion waiting in the wings, among them a field of strong contenders who opted to forgo the race in 2006. Just as Jean Chrétien made a triumphal return to politics by assuming the party's leadership in 1992, so, too, may figures like Frank McKenna, Allan Rock, or John Manley promote themselves as potential party saviors in the event of a disappointing performance by Dion in the next federal election.

If heir apparents are burdened with the weight of expectations, so, too, do dark-horse candidates face challenges in consolidating their power. Healing internal party rifts, and bringing powerful factions together under a common goal does not appear to be a problem for either Dion or Stelmach; their major opponents have either accepted prominent portfolios – as have Ignatieff, Rae, and Morton – or have disappeared from sight – as has Dinning. More important, it seems, is performing above expectations in their first election. With Stelmach's comparison to Harry Strom, and the doubt of many Liberal Party insiders and the media, simply maintaining their parties' current standing may be seen as a victory, in this regard.

CONCLUSION

With both culminating on the first weekend of December 2006, the Federal Liberal and Alberta Conservative leadership races raised many eyebrows not only for their surprising outcomes, but also for the striking similarity in their results. Two underdog candidates, Stéphane Dion and Ed Stelmach, had each upset heavily favored opponents with strong ties to the party establishment. Both new leaders appear to lack the charisma of their predecessors and their opponents, and neither was given an outsider's chance at the outset of the campaign. These results came despite stark contrasts in the context, rules, and substance of each race. That two so very different contests should produce two such similar outcomes forces analysts to look more deeply into the dynamics of leadership campaigns.

This study examined one particular, often-neglected, element of leadership research in Canada: campaign strategy. The results of a content analysis of candidate platforms revealed that the two victors had pursued strategies of 'selective emphasis', stressing the most popular issues and positions, while the frontrunners took a more 'confrontational' approach, directly engaging each other to the neglect of the eventual winners. Because of these strategies, Dion and Stelmach avoided the scrutiny and negativity associated with their opponents' more adversarial style of competition. This allowed both to come quietly 'up the middle' in the later rounds of balloting, as Dion and Stelmach were able to attract the support of other opponents and loose voters.

This analysis does not pretend that campaign strategies are the only explanation for the surprising outcomes of the Federal Liberal and Alberta Conservative leadership races. No doubt local campaign dynamics, personalities, and institutional factors were at play. But it does suggest significant value lies in examining the positions, preferences and decisions of candidates in these campaigns.

The following statistics were distributed by the respective parties.

2006 Alberta Conservative Leadership Election Results, First Ballot (11/25/2006)

	Votes	Percentage
Jim Dinning	29,470	30.2%
Ted Morton	25,614	26.2%
Ed Stelmach	14,967	15.3%
Lyle Oberg	11,638	11.9%
Dave Hancock	7,595	7.8%
Mark Norris	6, 789	6.9%
Victor Doerksen	873	0.9%
Gary McPherson	744	0.8%
Total	**97,690**	**100.0%**

2006 Alberta Conservative Leadership Election Results, Second Ballot (12/02/2006)

Round 1:

	Votes	Percentage
Ed Stelmach	51,764	35.9%
Jim Dinning	51,282	35.6%
Ted Morton	41,243	28.6%
Total	**144,289**	**100.0%**

Round 2:

	1st Preference Votes	Morton's 2nd Preference Votes	Total Votes	Total Percentage
Ed Stelmach	51,764	25,813	77,577	58.3%
Jim Dinning	51,282	4,227	55,509	41.7%
No Second Choice	--	*11,203*	*11,203*	--
Total	**103,046**	**41,243**	**144,289**	**100.0%**

2006 Federal Leadership Election Results, First Ballot (12/02/2006)

	Votes	Percentage
Michael Ignatieff	1,412	29.3%
Bob Rae	977	20.3%
Stéphane Dion	856	17.8%
Gerard Kennedy	854	17.7%
Ken Dryden	238	4.9%
Scott Brison	192	4.0%
Joe Volpe	156	3.2%
Martha Hall Findlay	130	2.7%
Total	**4,815**	**100.0%**

2006 Federal Leadership Election Results, Second Ballot (12/02/2006)

	Votes	Percentage
Michael Ignatieff	1,481	31.6%
Bob Rae	1,132	24.1%
Stéphane Dion	974	20.8%
Gerard Kennedy	884	18.8%
Ken Dryden	219	4.7%
Total	**4,690**	**100.0%**

2006 Federal Leadership Election Results, Third Ballot (12/02/2006)

	Votes	Percentage
Stéphane Dion	1,782	37.0%
Michael Ignatieff	1,660	34.5%
Bob Rae	1,375	28.5%
Total	**4,817**	**100.0%**

2006 Federal Leadership Election Results, Fourth Ballot (12/02/2006)

	Votes	Percentage
Stéphane Dion	2,521	54.7%
Michael Ignatieff	2,084	45.3%
Total	**4,605**	**100.0%**

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PLATFORMS CONSULTED

The following documents were retrieved from candidate websites between October 10 and December 1, 2006. Copies of each platform are available from the author.

Federal Liberal Party

Stéphane Dion: "On the Issues." (.html)

Ken Dryden: "A Big Canada: Politics with a Purpose. Politics with a Passion." (.pdf, 24pp.)

Michael Ignatieff: "Agenda for Nation Building: Liberal Leadership for the 21st Century." (.pdf, 41pp.)

Gerard Kennedy: "His Policies: Policies We All Believe In." (.html)

Bob Rae: "On the Issues." (.html)

Alberta Conservative Party

Jim Dinning: "Seeing Our Plan: Jim Dinning – The Alberta We're Ready For." (.pdf, 48pp.)

Dave Hancock: "Your Values. Your Alberta. Your Choice." (.pdf, 26pp.)

Ted Morton: "Ted's Plan: The Morton Plan." (.html)

Mark Norris: "The Real Plan For Alberta: A Blueprint for the 21st Century." (.pdf, 28pp.)

Lyle Oberg: "Blueprint for Prosperity: A Sustainable Plan for Alberta's Future." (.pdf, 42pp.)

Ed Stelmach: "Policy Platform." (.html)

APPENDIX 3: CODING SCHEME

To adapt the methodology to this research project, minor revisions to the Manifesto Research Group coding scheme were necessary. First, and in keeping with repeated recommendations by other critics, each issue variable was made bi-polar; i.e., each issue was given a 'positive' and 'negative' variable (Laver and Garry, 2000). Second, certain variables were expanded with subcategories to allow for greater specification, as recommended by MRG lead researcher, Andreas Volkens (2001):

v1011	Special Relationship: United States
v2011	Freedom and Human Rights: Freedom
v2012	Freedom and Human Rights: Rights
v2021	Democracy: Direct Democracy
v2022	Democracy: Representative Democracy
v5031 to v5037	Social Justice: Class; Race; Gender; Disability; Age; Sexual Orientation; Other
v5041	Welfare State: Health Care
v7051 to v 7053	Underprivileged Minority Groups: Disabled Peoples; Non-traditional Sexual Orientation; Immigrants
v7061 to v7065	Non-economic Demographic Groups: Women; Seniors; Youth; Linguistic Groups; Other Groups

Third, the following variables were added to suit the specific Canadian and Albertan political context:

v2023	Democracy: Consultation of Stakeholders
var291	Internal Party Democracy
v3011	Decentralization: Federal-Provincial Cooperation
v3012	Decentralization: Inter-Provincial Cooperation
var391	Municipalities, Local Communities, Local Organizations
v4051	Public Private Partnerships (P3)
v4141	Economic Orthodoxy: Tax Relief
var491	Non-Renewable Resources & Energy
v4911	Natural Resources & Energy: Investment of Resource Revenue
var492	Economic or Population Growth
v4921	Economic or Population Growth: Labor Force Recruitment
v4922	Economic or Population Growth: Immigration
v4923	Economic or Population Growth: Urban Sprawl / Land Use
var493	Forestry
var495	Economic Diversification
var496	Fisheries
var500	Quality of Life / Standard of Living
var591	Affordable Housing
var592	General Infrastructure
var593	Roads, Highways and Transportation
v6011	Canadian Way of Life
v6012	Albertan Way of Life
var791	Aboriginal Peoples
var792	Quebecois
var793	Rural Communities & the North

Fourth, certain variables – e.g., reference to European Integration or Post-Communist Relations – were excluded from this data set.

Each of these changes were made "hierarchically" to preserve comparability with the original MRG coding scheme and dataset. For information on the original MRG methodology, see: Klingemann et al. (2007: 150-194). A complete codebook for the present study is available from the author.

Based on the MRG codebook, issue indexes were constructed as follows:

Foreign Relations
Foreign Special Relationships (including the United States)
Military
Peace
Internationalism

Freedom & Democracy
Freedom and Human Rights
Democracy
Constitutionalism
Internal Party Democracy
Governmental Efficiency
Governmental Transparency

Intergovernmental Affairs
Decentralization / Centralization of the Federation
Federal-Provincial Cooperation
Inter-Provincial Cooperation
Municipalities, Local Governments, Local Organizations

Leadership & Unity
Political Authority
National / Provincial Way of Life
Social Harmony

Economy
Free Enterprise
Incentives
Market Regulation
Economic Planning
Public-Private Partnerships
Protectionism
Productivity
Technology and Infrastructure
Controlled Economy
Economic Orthodoxy
Economic or Population Growth
Economic Diversification

Environment
Environmental Protection
Anti-Growth Economy (sustainable development)

Agriculture, Energy, Natural Resources
Non-renewable Resources & Energy
Forestry
Fisheries
Farmers

Society
Culture
Social Justice
Law and Order
Multiculturalism
Labor Groups
Underprivileged Minority Groups
Non-economic Demographic Groups
Aboriginal Peoples
Quebecois
Rural Communities

Social Services
Welfare State Expansion / Limitation (including: Health Care, Education, Social Security / Pensions, Social Assistance, Homelessness, Child Care & Early Childhood, Development, Senior Assisted Living)
Affordable Housing
General Infrastructure
Roads, Highways and Transportation
Middle Class and Professional Groups

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