A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE 2011 ENGLIGH LANGUAGE CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER DEBATE

William L. Benoit, *Ohio University*

In March of 2011, Conservative Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper lost a vote of no confidence in Parliament, which triggered an election in May and two debates in April. Three challengers also participated in the debates: Michael Ignatieff (Liberal), Jack Layton (New Democratic Party), and Gilles Duceppe (Bloc Quebecois). This study applied the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse to the English language debate. Attacks and acclaims (which occurred at about the same frequency) were more common than defenses. However, incumbent Prime Minister Harper acclaimed more than he attacked and he acclaimed more frequently than the three challengers. The challengers attacked more than they acclaimed and attacked more often than the incumbent. This contrast was particularly acute when the candidates discussed past deeds (record in office). Each of the four candidates discussed Harper's record more than any other candidate's record and, of course, Harper acclaimed when he discussed his record, whereas the challengers attacked when discussing Harper's record. These four candidates discussed policy more than character. When discussing general goals and ideals, they acclaimed more than they attacked. These results are compared with studies of political leaders' debates in other countries and elections.

Introduction

Debates are a very important campaign message form in democratic governments. The American presidential campaign of 2012, for example, featured debates which were the talk of the campaign. Debates have several key advantages over other message forms. First, debates present information to voters: televised debates are much longer than some messages forms, such as TV spots. This

means that they offer candidates a greater opportunity to communicate themselves and their policies to voters and to distinguish themselves from their opponents. Second, the format of debates, with voters hearing alternatively from the leading candidates, allows voters to directly compare the candidates' issue stands and character. Third, rules for debates usually prohibit candidates from bringing notes into the debates; this means that candidates must present information extemporaneously, and at times, they must provide impromptu answers to unexpected questions or comments from opponents. Of course, candidates usually prepare extensively for their debates; still, debate viewers may receive a more candid view of each candidate than they could from highly scripted message forms such as stump speeches or TV spots (Schrott, 1990). Debates also generate a great deal of media attention and political discussion among many voters concerning the candidates and their policies, which broadens their potential influence. Candidates themselves can benefit from the free media exposure provided by televised debates.

Televised political campaign debates have effects on viewers, another reason for studying this message form. Benoit, Hansen, and Verser (2003) used meta-analysis to determine that watching American presidential debates increased issue knowledge, influenced perceptions of the candidates' character, and changed vote choice (of course, not every viewer's knowledge is increased or attitudes changed, but the observed effects are significant). Evidence also indicates effects from viewing debates in other countries. Lanoue (1991) argued that the 1984 Canadian leadership debates influenced the voting behavior of viewers. Blais and Boyer (1996) reported that the Canadian debates in 1988 altered vote choice and voters' perceptions. Maier and Faas (2003) wrote that the 2002 German debates had effects on candidates' images. Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau, and Nevitte (2003) concluded that the

2003 Canadian debates were "critical in the Conservative surge" (p. 49).   Blais and Perrella (2008) documented effects from both Canadian and American debates. Debates can also increase feelings of political efficacy and promote civic engagement among voters (Chaffee, 1978).   Because political election debates tend to attract large audiences – for example, half of eligible Canadian voters watched the 1979 debate (LeDuc & Price, 1985), 59% watched the Israeli debate in 1996 (Blum-Kulka & Liebes, 2000), and 65% watched one of the German chancellor debates in 2002 (Faas & Maier, 2004) – these encounters have a tremendous potential to inform and influence voters.

Political leaders' debates in countries other than the U.S. are a comparatively understudied phenomenon (e.g., books on American presidential campaign debates include Hellweg, Pfau, & Brydon, 1992; Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988; Kraus, 1962; see Louden, 2011) and McKinney and Carlin (2004) note that more research in this area is necessary. Benoit's (2007) Functional Theory, which argues that candidates for elective office use three functions (acclaims or positive statements, attacks or criticisms of opponents, and defenses or refutations of attacks) on two topics (policy or issues, character or personality) to court voters, has been applied to every American general election presidential debate and to many American presidential primary debates.   This research revealed that acclaims tend to be more common than attacks, which are in turn more frequent than defenses.   Further, incumbents in general election debates are prone to acclaim more and attack less than challengers, and particularly so when the candidates discuss past deeds or record in office (which enable retrospective voting; see Benoit, 2006). Presidential candidates in United States debates focus more on policy (i.e., problems amenable to governmental action and proposals for governmental action) than character (i.e., personality and traits of candidates; Benoit,

2007).

This theory has also been extended to political leaders' debates in other countries: Australia and Canada (Benoit & Henson, 2007), France and South Korea (Choi & Benoit, 2009), Israel (Benoit & Sheafer, 2006), Taiwan (Benoit, Wen, & Yu, 2007), and the Ukraine (Benoit & Klyukovski, 2006). Results of these studies are generally consistent with analyses of American political debates: acclaims outnumbered attacks, which in turn were more common than defenses in most of these debates. Only the Ukraine debates had more attacks than acclaims (this campaign was particularly vitriolic: the initial votes were declared invalid due to vote fraud and one candidate accused the other of poisoning him). Incumbents acclaimed more and attacked less than challengers in these countries (except South Korea, which limits presidents to a single term and does not have a vice president, so there is no true incumbent). Some characteristics of political leaders' debates cross borders.

We were unable to locate research on the functions and topics of the 2011 Canadian debates. Thus, one rationale for this study is to rectify a gap in the literature. Furthermore, little research has studied political leaders' debates in countries with parliamentary systems of government. Elections in the United States and some other countries use direct election (i.e., citizens vote for the candidate of their choice). In the U.S., for example, one need not vote for Republican candidates for the House or Senate in order to elect the Republican candidate for president. However, in a parliamentary system, the people vote for a legislative representative and not a prime minister or chancellor; a member of the majority party (or coalition of parties) becomes prime minister or chancellor. It is possible that the fact that citizens in such governmental systems cannot vote directly for their leaders could alter the messages produced in such campaigns. This study

applies Functional Theory to political leaders' debates in a parliamentary system, Canada.

Background

Elections were required when Prime Minister Stephen Harper's minority (coalition) government lost a no confidence vote in Parliament in March 2011. The Canadian Parliament declared the government to be in contempt of Parliament (Galloway, 2011). James (2011) reported that "Harper's opponents accused him and other officials of withholding vital information about various programs from Parliament" (para. 8). Harper responded by saying that his priority was to improve Canada's economy, unlike the opposition parties: "Unfortunately Mr. Ignatieff [Conservative] and his coalition partners in the NDP [New Democratic Party] and Bloc Quebecois made abundantly clear that they had already decided they wanted an election instead" (Galloway, 2011, para. 9). Although this was not the first time a Canadian government had received a vote of no-confidence (James, 2011), it was the first time a government had been held to be in contempt of Parliament (Galloway, 2011). The decision to vote no confidence and trigger an election was politically risky because "opinion polls indicate[d] his party is likely to win a plurality of votes, allowing it to form another minority government" (James, 2011, para. 4). Two debates were held in April of 2011: one in English and one in French. Elections were held on May 2, 2011. This study applies the Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse (Benoit, 2007) to the English debate.

Theoretical Framework

The Functional Theory of Political Campaign Discourse (Benoit, 2007) explains that candidates seek to appear preferable to other candidates in order to win elections. Three types (functions) of messages promote the impression that a candidate is preferable to

opponents: acclaims, attacks, and defenses. Acclaims are positive statements about the qualities, accomplishments, or desirable proposals of a candidate. Attacks identify weaknesses or limitations of an opponent (or an opponent's political party). Defenses are statements that attempt to refute an attack made against a candidate. These three functions combine in what can be thought of an informal form of cost-benefit analysis; note, though, that Functional Theory does not claim voters assign numerical values to acclaims, attacks, or defenses, or that they combine them mathematically: acclaims tend to increase a candidate's perceived benefits, attacks tend to reduce an opponent's apparent benefits, and defenses can reduce a candidate's alleged costs. Note too that every voter cannot be expected to interpret a candidate's statement in the same way (Jarman, 2005). However, Reinemann and Maurer (2005) found that use of acclaims in German political leaders' debates generated general support in the audience, whereas attacks, statements of fact, and political plans tended to polarize the audience.

Functional Theory also holds that political candidates can discuss two topics as they work to persuade voters of their preferability to other candidates: policy and character. Policy utterances, which are often called "issues," concern problems amenable to governmental actions and proposals for such actions; character comments address the qualifications and personalities of the candidates. Each of these topics is further divided into three components. When addressing policy, political candidates can acclaim or attack in three areas: past deeds, future plans, or general goals. Past deeds refer to the governmental actions taken by the candidate (record in office). Future plans are policies that the candidate will pursue if elected or re-elected such as specific campaign promises. Future plans propose the means to accomplish a desirable end. General goals are less specific than future

plans and do not contain information about the candidates' specific proposals: stressing ends rather than means (future plans and general goals both relate to prospective voting; Benoit, 2006).

Character, frequently referred to as "image," includes three categories: personal qualities, leadership ability, and ideals. Personal qualities are characteristics of candidates such as honesty, courage, and decency. Leadership ability refers to the candidates' abilities to administer the government. Often, statements concerning leadership relate to the candidates' experience in elective office. Those who have not served in such offices sometimes use other managerial experiences (e.g., success in business) to acclaim leadership ability. Ideals represent the candidates' basic principles or values.

Based on Functional Theory and research on political leaders' debates in other countries (Benoit, 2007), we test six hypotheses. Initially, Functional Theory explains that acclaims have no drawbacks, whereas attacks have a single drawback: voters say they dislike mudslinging, which could result in a backlash against a candidate airing attacks in an ad (Merritt, 1984; Stewart, 1975). Defenses, in contrast, have three potential limitations. The candidate must identify an attack to refute it, which could inform or remind some voters of a potential liability of the defending candidate. Second, attacks usually occur on a candidate's weak points, which means a defense usually takes a candidate "off message." Finally, the defensive posture is reactive rather than proactive, which could be perceived unfavorably by voters. Accordingly, Functional Theory predicts that:

H1: Candidates use acclaims more frequently than attacks; defenses occur least often.

Functional Theory argues that candidates have reasons to acclaim more than attack (and to attack more

than they defend); it does not assert that candidate never attack more than they acclaim. In fact, as noted below, challengers are prone to attack more than incumbents and so in some cases challengers could attack more than they acclaim.

Although some think that candidates are role models (foregrounding character), political leaders implement policy (and they may propose policy to legislatures as well). Prime ministers have important policy responsibilities, so Functional Theory would predict that:

H2: Candidates discuss policy more often than character.

Incumbent candidates running for re-election have an important resource that is rarely available for challengers: a record of service in the office sought. Challengers often have service in other governmental offices, but it is not the same as experience as president, chancellor, or prime minister. For example, in the United States in 2004, John Kerry had served as a Senator. However, Senators do not implement the bills they introduce and pass; the Senate ratifies treaties and confirms appointments of ambassadors, but Senators do not have the same kinds of foreign policy experience that incumbent presidents have. Similarly, challengers may have experience as state governors, as was the case, for example, with George W. Bush in 2000, but again that is not quite the same as experience in the Oval Office. Functional Theory argues that incumbents and challengers both engage in acclaims and attacks, but that incumbents are more likely to acclaim, and less likely to attack, than challengers. This relationship is particularly important when they discuss their records in office: incumbents are more likely to acclaim their own record, whereas challengers are prone to attack the incumbent's record. Hence, we offer two predictions:

H3: Incumbent candidates use acclaims more, and attacks less, than challengers.

H4: Incumbent candidates use past deeds more for acclaims, and less for attacks, than challengers.

The final two predictions concern a form of policy (general goals) and of character (ideals). Candidates generally find it easier to acclaim than to attack using these utterances. Who opposes strengthening national defense (a general goal) or equality (an ideal)?

H5: Candidates use general goals more frequently to acclaim than to attack.

H6: Candidates use ideals used more frequently to acclaim than to attack.

Tests of these hypotheses from an analysis of a Canadian Prime Minister debate in the 2010 election will enhance our understanding of the nature of televised campaign debates.

Method

This study content analyzed the English language Canadian PM debate of 2011 (downloaded from the Internet) employing the procedures developed for testing the Functional Theory. To ensure comparability of data in this replication, we followed the same procedures developed for conducting a Functional Theory analysis of other political leaders' debates (e.g., Benoit, 2007; Benoit & Henson, 2007; Benoit & Klyukovski, 2006; Benoit & Sheafer, 2006; Benoit et al., 2007).

Functional Theory unitizes the texts of campaign messages into themes, the coding unit for this study. Themes are complete ideas, claims, or arguments; a single theme can vary in length from one phrase to an entire paragraph. The coders first identified themes present in each of the debates. Then, each theme was categorized

by function: acclaim, attack, or defense. Next, coders categorized the topic of each theme as policy or character. The coders next identified the form of policy or character for each theme. Finally, the target of each attack was identified (some attacks did not have a clear target; some comments lamented existing problems without explicitly assigning blame).

Two coders analyzed the debate, which consisted of 631 coding units. Coder training consisted of four steps: (1) they read and discussed three earlier articles using Functional Theory; (2) they read and discussed the codebook; (3) they practiced coding on similar texts (not the debate analyzed here); and (4) the results of the practice training were discussed. Training occurred over a week; approximately four hours were devoted to training. Inter-coder reliability was calculated with Cohen's (1960) *kappa*. About 10% of the transcripts; including sections from all three debates, were used to calculate inter-coder reliability and were part of the final coded sample. *Kappa* was .89 for functions, .86 for topics, .91 for forms of policy, and .87 for forms of character. Landis and Koch (1977) indicate that *kappas* of .81 or higher reflect almost perfect agreement between coders, so these data have good reliability.

Results

Hypothesis one addressed the functions of the candidates' utterances. These candidates acclaimed (46%) and attacked (45%) at about the same rate; these functions were more common than defenses (9%). Harper illustrated acclaims when he declared in the debate that

> We're keeping taxes down to create jobs and that is working. Canada's job creation is far superior to virtually any other country.... We're making investments in training to make sure in our educational institutions to make sure Canadians can participate in

that economy in the future. (Global News, 2011)

Creating jobs and improving education are praiseworthy actions. An illustration of an attack can be found in Layton's statement: "There's no investments now to get five million Canadians that don't have family medicine, we are not getting the investments in home care, long-term care, and we're not seeing the program to get our pharmaceutical prices down" (Global News, 2011). Shortcomings in health care would likely be seen as undesirable by the audience, making this an attack. Duceppe attacked Harper for "not helping people in the forestry sector" (Global News, 2011). Harper replied that "The reality is quite different.... We have superior job creation in this country, in terms of our support for the automobile and forestry sectors" (Global News, 2011). Harper rejects this attack as untrue ("the reality is quite different") and he argues that in fact he has created jobs in forestry. These proportions were significantly different (χ^2 [df = 2] = 174.48, p < .001); however, there is no significant difference between the frequency of attacks and acclaims (the incumbent acclaimed more than he attacked, but none of the challengers did so). H1 was not confirmed in these data (see Table 1).

The second prediction anticipated that these candidates discussed policy more than character. These candidates discussed policy (70%) more than character (30%) in these debates. For instance, Harper illustrated a policy utterance when he said that "We cut taxes for businesses big and small several years ago and the New Democratic Party voted against all of those tax reductions" (Global News, 2011). Clearly, taxation is a policy topic. On the other hand, Ignatieff attacked the Prime Minister for not being truthful: "Canadians know exactly why we're having an election, Mr. Harper; we're having an election because you didn't tell Parliament the truth" (Global News, 2011). A lack of honesty indicates a blameworthy character.

Table 1

Functions of 2011 Canadian English Language Prime Minister Debate

	Acclaims	Attacks	Defenses
Harper (Incumbent)	144 (60%)	55 (23%)	42 (17%)
Ignatieff	68 (41%)	91 (55%)	7 (4%)
Layton	52 (36%)	89 (61%)	4 (3%)
Duceppe	29 (37%)	49 (62%)	1 (1%)
Challengers	149 (38%)	229 (58%)	12 (3%)
Total	293 (46%)	284 (45%)	54 (9%)
Australia (2007)	161 (49%)	141 (43%)	28 (9%)
Canada (2006)	882 (69%)	323 (25%)	65 (5%)
Israel (1984-1999)	165 (50%)	124 (38%)	38 (12%)
Taiwan (2004)	320 (49%)	303 (46%)	35 (5%)
Ukraine (2004)	256 (43%)	290 (48%)	52 (9%)
United States (1960, 1976-2008)	4800 (57%)	2958 (35%)	641 (8%)

Note. Rows may not total 100% due to rounding; other data reported here and in Tables 2, 3, and 4 are from previous research: Australia 2007 and Canada 2006 (Benoit & Henson, 2007); Israel (Benoit & Sheafer, 2006); Taiwan (Benoit et al., 2007); the Ukraine (Benoit & Klyukovski, 2006); United States (Benoit, 2007; Rill & Benoit 2009).

Statistical analysis confirms that these differences are significant (χ^2 [*df* = 1] = 99.69, *p* < .001), confirming the second hypothesis. These data are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Topics of the 2011 Canadian English Language Prime Minister Debate

	Policy	Character
Harper (Incumbent)	156 (78%)	43 (22%)
Ignatieff	98 (62%)	61 (38%)
Layton	98 (70%)	43 (30%)
Duceppe	55 (71%)	23 (29%)
Challengers	251 (66%)	127 (34%)
Total	407 (70%)	170 (30%)
Australia	201 (67%)	101 (33%)
Canada	715 (59%)	490 (41%)
Israeli	222 (77%)	67 (23%)
Taiwan	372 (60%)	251 (40%)
Ukraine	333 (61%)	2139 (39%)
United States	5180 (74%)	1828 (26%)

The third and fourth hypotheses contrasted incumbents and challengers. Harper, the incumbent, acclaimed more than he attacked (60% to 23%) whereas challengers attacked more than they acclaimed (58% to 38%). A *chi-square* test reveals that these differences are significant (χ^2 [*df* =2] = 93.38, *p* < .001, *V* = .38). This confirms hypothesis three. This contrast was particularly sharp when the four candidates discussed past deeds or record in office. The incumbent acclaimed more than he attacked when discussing past deeds (87% to 13%); the challengers attacked on past deeds more than they

Table 3

Functions and Incumbency in 2011 Canadian English Language Prime Minister Debate

	Acclaims	Attacks	Defenses
Harper (Incumbent)	**144 (60%)**	55 (23%)	42 (17%)
Ignatieff	68 (41%)	**91 (55%)**	7 (4%)
Layton	52 (36%)	**89 (61%)**	4 (3%)
Duceppe	29 (37%)	**49 (62%)**	1 (1%)
Challengers	149 (38%)	**229 (58%)**	12 (3%)
Total	293 (46%)	284 (45%)	54 (9%)

Table 3, continued

Functions and Incumbency in 2011 Canadian English Language Prime Minister Debate

	Acclaims	Attacks	Defenses
Australia Incumbent	**84 (56%)**	48 (32%)	17 (11%)
Challenger	77 (42%)	**93 (51%)**	12 (7%)
Canada 2006 Incumbent	**257 (75%)**	59 (17%)	25 (7%)
Challengers	625 (67%)	**264 (28%)**	40 (4%)
Israel Incumbents	**89 (55%)**	47 (29%)	25 (16%)
Challengers	76 (46%)	**77 (46%)**	13 (8%)
Taiwan Incumbent	**183 (54%)**	131 (39%)	25 (7%)
Challenger	137 (43%)	**172 (54%)**	10 (3%)
Ukraine Incumbent	**141 (54%)**	86 (33%)	33 (13%)
Challenger	115 (34%)	**204 (60%)**	19 (6%)
United States Incumbents	**2458 (63%)**	1031 (26%)	405 (10%)
Challengers	2342 (51%)	**1927 (42%)**	296 (6%)

Note. Rows may not total 100% due to rounding. Bolded values highlight important contrasts.

Table 4

Functions of Past Deeds and Incumbency in 2011 Canadian English Language Prime Minister Debate

	Acclaims	Attacks
Harper (Incumbent)	**48 (87%)**	7 (13%)
Ignatieff	0 (%)	**34 (100%)**
Layton	3 (7%)	**42 (93%)**
Duceppe	3 (14%)	**18 (86%)**
Challengers	6 (6%)	**94 (94%)**
Australia Incumbent	**29 (78%)**	8 (22%)
Challenger	2 (5%)	**36 (95%)**
Canada 2006 Incumbent	**37 (84%)**	7 (16%)
Challengers	49 (32%)	**105 (68%)**
Israel Incumbents	**36 (72%)**	14 (28%)
Challengers	18 (31%)	**41 (69%)**
Taiwan Incumbent	**49 (67%)**	24 (33%)
Challenger	16 (19%)	**68 (81%)**
Ukraine Incumbent	**43 (57%)**	33 (43%)
Challenger	6 (5%)	**122 (95%)**
United States Incumbents	**779 (69%)**	362 (31%)
Challengers	242 (17%)	**1153 (83%)**

Note. Rows may not total 100% due to rounding. Bolded values highlight important contrasts.

Table 5

Forms of Policy in 2011 Canadian English Language Prime Minister Debate

	Past Deeds		Future Plans		General Goals	
	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks
Incumbent	48	7	5	4	69	23
Challengers	6	94	4	6	104	37
Total	54	102	9	10	173	60

Table 6

Forms of Character in 2011 Canadian English Language Prime Minister Debate

	Personal Qualities		Leadership Ability		Ideals	
	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks	Acclaims	Attacks
Incumbent	9	19	7	1	6	1
Challengers	11	78	13	10	24	6
Total	20	97	20	11	30	7

acclaimed (6% to 94%). These differences were significant (χ^2 [*df* = 1] = 103.42, *p* < .001, φ = .82) with a noticeably large effect size. So, the fourth hypothesis was confirmed. These data are reported in Tables 3 and 4.

The last two hypotheses concerned the functions addressed when candidates discussed general goals and ideals. The candidates used general goals more often to support acclaims (74%) than attacks (26%). A *chi-square goodness-of-fit* test confirms that these differences are significant (χ^2 [*df* = 1] = 31.84, *p* < .001), which confirmed the fifth hypothesis. These candidates used ideals as the basis for acclaims more often than attacks (78% to 22%). A *chi-square goodness-of-fit* test confirms that these differences are significant (χ^2 [*df* = 1] = 7.35, *p* < .05). So, the final hypothesis was confirmed. Tables 5 and 6 report these data.

Discussion

One candidate acclaimed more than he attacked; however, the three challengers attacked more than they acclaimed. Thus, the total use of functions in this debate revealed that acclaims and attacks occurred at the same rate. The first hypothesis was not confirmed, except that defenses were the least common function.   Although candidates have a reason to avoid excessive use of attacks (voters do not like mudslinging), challengers tend to attack incumbents.   In this case, the reasons to attack the incumbent must have outweighed the desire to avoid backlash from attacking too much. Table 1 shows that acclaims were more common than attacks, and defenses least common, in leaders' debates in other countries. The Ukraine was an exception: it, like the Canadian elections of 2011, was quite hostile. The first vote was declared invalid due to vote fraud and one candidate accused the other of poisoning him. Here, the challengers forced a vote of no confidence even though polls showed the Conservatives

were doing well in the polls. Perhaps their animosity led them to attack Harper and his policies so much.

Functional Theory holds that political leaders (presidents, prime ministers, chancellors) implement policy; some voters may view them as role models but generally policy is more important than character. In the 2011 Canadian English language debate, every candidate discussed policy more than character. Table 2 reveals that this pattern was followed in other countries: Australia, Canada (2006), Israel, Taiwan, the Ukraine, and the United States. This emphasis on policy over character in debates appears to transcend political borders and culture.

Stephen Harper, the incumbent, acclaimed more and attacked less than the three challengers in this debate. Table 3 shows that this relationship held in other countries: Australia, Canada (2006), Israel, Taiwan, the Ukraine, and the United States. Functional Theory argues that this contrast is in large part a function of their records in office. One's record as Prime Minister is arguably better evidence of how one would perform as Prime Minister than a record as a Member of Parliament. Both incumbents and challengers talk more about the incumbents' record than the challengers' record and, of course, incumbents acclaim their record while challengers attack the incumbents' record. In Table 4, we can see this relationship between incumbents and challengers when they discussed past deeds occurred in other countries: Australia, Canada (2006), Israel, Taiwan, the Ukraine, and the United States.

The last two hypotheses concerned the prediction that general goals and ideals often lend themselves more to acclaims than attacks. This was the case in the data from the 2011 Canadian English language debate. Past research confirms that general goals are used more often to acclaim than attack in Australia, Canada (2006), Israel, the Ukraine, and the United States. In the 2011 Canadian

debate, ideals were more often the basis for acclaims than attacks. This relationship was confirmed in Australia, Taiwan, the Ukraine, and the United States; the frequency of ideals in Canada (2006) and Israel were too low for statistical analysis.

Conclusion

The election did not go well for the challengers who forced a vote of no confidence for Prime Minister Harper. His Conservative Party won enough seats in the election to move from being a minority party to being the majority party. Two of the challenger party leaders, Gilles Duceppe (Bloc Quebecois) and Michael Ignatieff (Liberal Party), lost their seats in this election (Elections Canada, 2012). This study does not have data on the audience effects of this debate, so it has no basis for claiming that these election results can be attributed to this debate. However, the research cited in the literature review shows that political leaders' campaign debates are capable of influencing voters. Future research could profitably investigate other aspects of election debates, such as use of evidence or metaphors, or inquire further into the effects of debates.

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William L. Benoit (Ph.D., Wayne State University) is a professor of Communication Studies at Ohio University. Correspondence should be addressed to William L. Benoit at benoitw@ohio.edu.