

BALANCE IN NEWS COVERAGE OF THE 2006 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

FINAL REPORT

NOVEMBER 29, 2005 – JANUARY 22, 2006

FOR THE CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

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SUMMARY OF RESULTS

AMOUNT OF COVERAGE

Across the five CBC programs, each party's time was within 3 percentage points of popular opinion at the outset of the campaign (except the Bloc, which, as a provincial party, presents a special case).

Leading into some elections, one party is far in the lead and media make an effort to level the playing field. With just 14 percentage points separating the three main national parties, little levelling was needed.

1. Exposure of the major parties on five CBC news programs November 29, 2005 -- January 22, 2006				
	SES poll Nov 13	Percent of interview time	Percent of discussion	Popular vote Jan 23
Liberals	34	31	42	30
Conservatives	28	29	32	36
NDP	20	23	15	18
Bloc	14	7	8	11
Green	5	7	3	5
Total	100	100	100	100

DIRECTION IN COVERAGE

The ratio of negative to positive statements made about a party is a concise summary of balance in coverage. The Liberals received the most negative coverage and the NDP the most positive. This was partly a reflection of the attack hierarchy, where those in the lead are targets for all below and those at the bottom draw little fire. The NDP's positive ratio (more positive than negative discussion) occurred partly because it was able to promote its virtues freely, unchallenged by others.

The overtly partisan element is only part of the picture. Analysts and citizens appearing in the news produced a pattern similar to the parties. They were most critical of the Liberals and least critical of the NDP.

2. Overall ratio of negative to positive statements Campaign 2005 -- 2006		
Party	Ratio	
	CBC	CTV
Liberals	4.8:1	4.9:1
Conservatives	2.5:1	2.2:1
Bloc	1.5:1	2.0:1
NDP	0.7:1	0.8:1
Base no. of statements	9,766	2,161

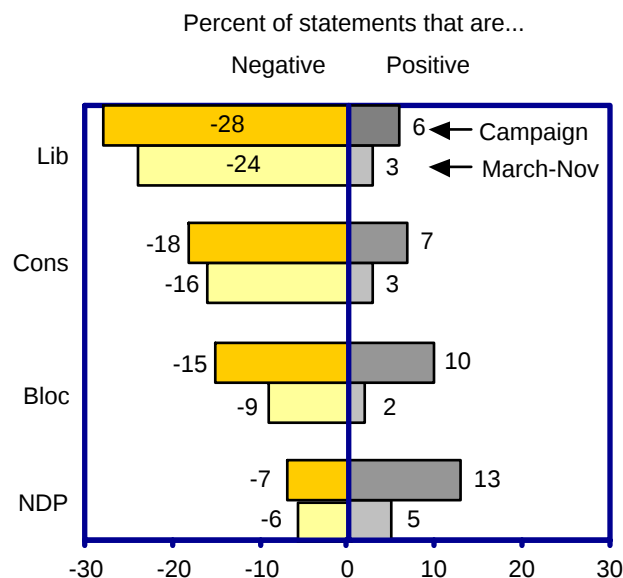
ARE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS NASTY BY NATURE?

It is common wisdom that once an election campaign begins, civility recedes and nastiness becomes the norm. The analysis of The National from March 2005 through the election period allows a direct assessment of this claim. The facts are these:

- Compared to the pre-election period, the campaign brings a slightly higher proportion of negative commentary about each party, **and also** a slightly higher proportion of positive commentary about each party.

The increase in negativism was expected; the parallel increase in positive commentary may raise an eyebrow. It occurs because the campaign gives each party a space to present its best side.

3. Statements about parties – all sources March – November 2005 vs Campaign The National



ISSUES

Economic issues, social issues such as childcare, and constitutional matters including national unity were the three top policy matters in the campaign. Government accountability was also prominent, in the context of the Gomery Inquiry and the income trusts investigation.

There has been a tendency in the several previous campaigns for policy issues to be the smaller part of the discussion.

The present campaign breaks this pattern, at least on the CBC programs, presenting an even balance of policy and strategy discussion through to the final two weeks, when talk of shifting momentum and the final outcome prevails.

GENDER AND RACE

As in previous years, the gender balance on CBC programs is distinctly more even than that on CTV news (Table 19). CBC presents a more balanced representation of white and visible minority interviews among citizens, though the great majority of analysts are white.

IN SUM

CBC's coverage of the campaign was appropriately balanced by each of the detailed measures used in the analysis – the amount of exposure that party members received, the amount of discussion that journalists and others devoted to each party, and the positive–negative direction of that discussion.

Coverage gave voice to a spectrum of citizens, and maintained the advances in participation by women and visible minorities that were made in the coverage of the 2004 campaign.

1. INTRODUCTION

Analysis of the 2005 -- 2006 campaign includes five CBC programs and the CTV National News. It includes all editions of each program except the CTV news, for which the Monday to Friday editions were analyzed.

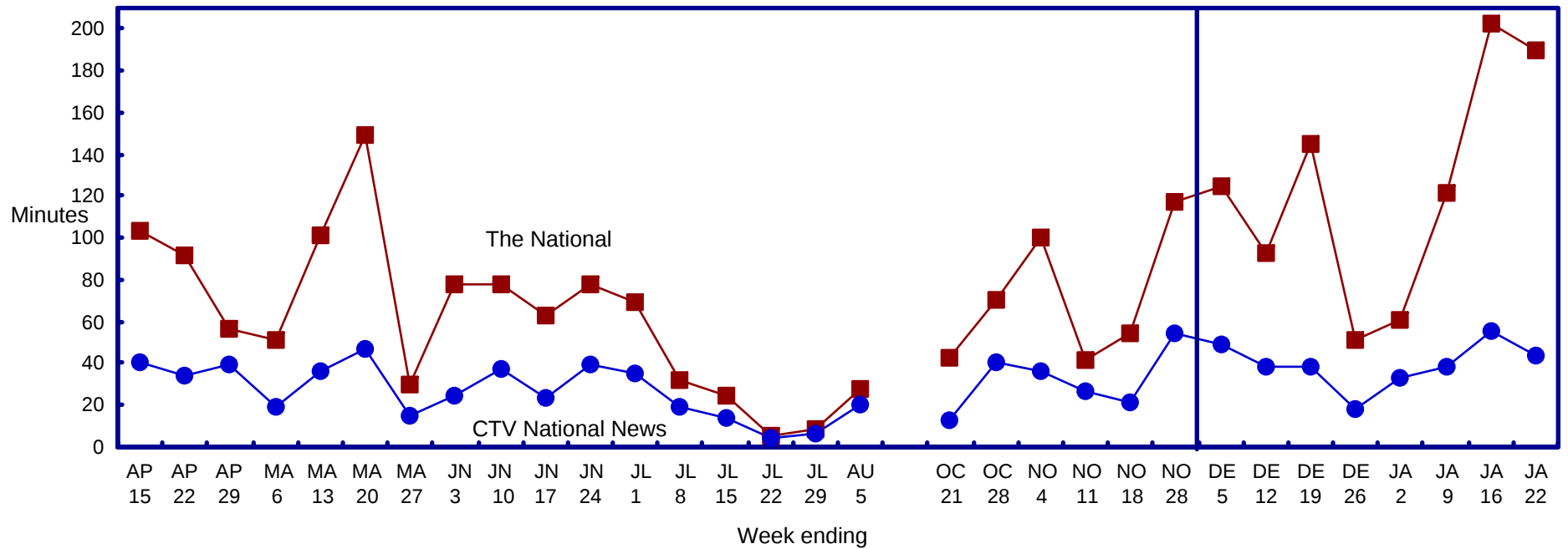
The analysis runs the complete campaign, November 29, 2005 to January 22, 2006.

4. Coverage to end of Week 8 Campaign 2005 -- 2006	
Program	Minutes of coverage to January 22
The National	988
CBC News: Sunday Night	163
World Report	140
The World at 6	384
The House	240
The CTV National News	315
Total for six programs	2,229

LONG-TERM TREND IN COVERAGE

Figure 5 shows the volume of political coverage on the two evening news programs since March 2005.

5. Weekly coverage of federal political events, March 14, 2005 to January 22, 2006



2. INTERVIEW TIME FOR PARTIES

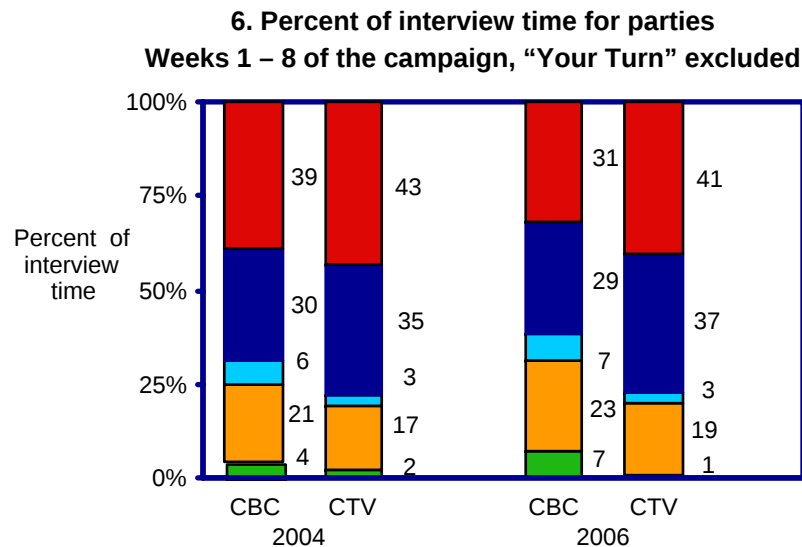
INTRODUCTION

“Interview time” is the amount of time that party representatives are heard speaking. “Party representatives” include the leader, candidates, and party members. Citizens who happen to support a party are not included.

Figure 7 shows the long-term pattern of results on The National and CTV National News.

The lower chart gives totals across all the CBC programs.

The National did an extended “Your Turn” interview with leaders of the four national parties (including the Greens). These are excluded from Figure 7, so that the chart shows interview time in regular news coverage only.



WEEK 8

As shown in Figure 8, the final week shows both CBC and CTV turning their attention to the Conservatives, presumably in anticipation of their impending victory. The Conservatives had the largest share of time on each of the other five CBC programs individually.

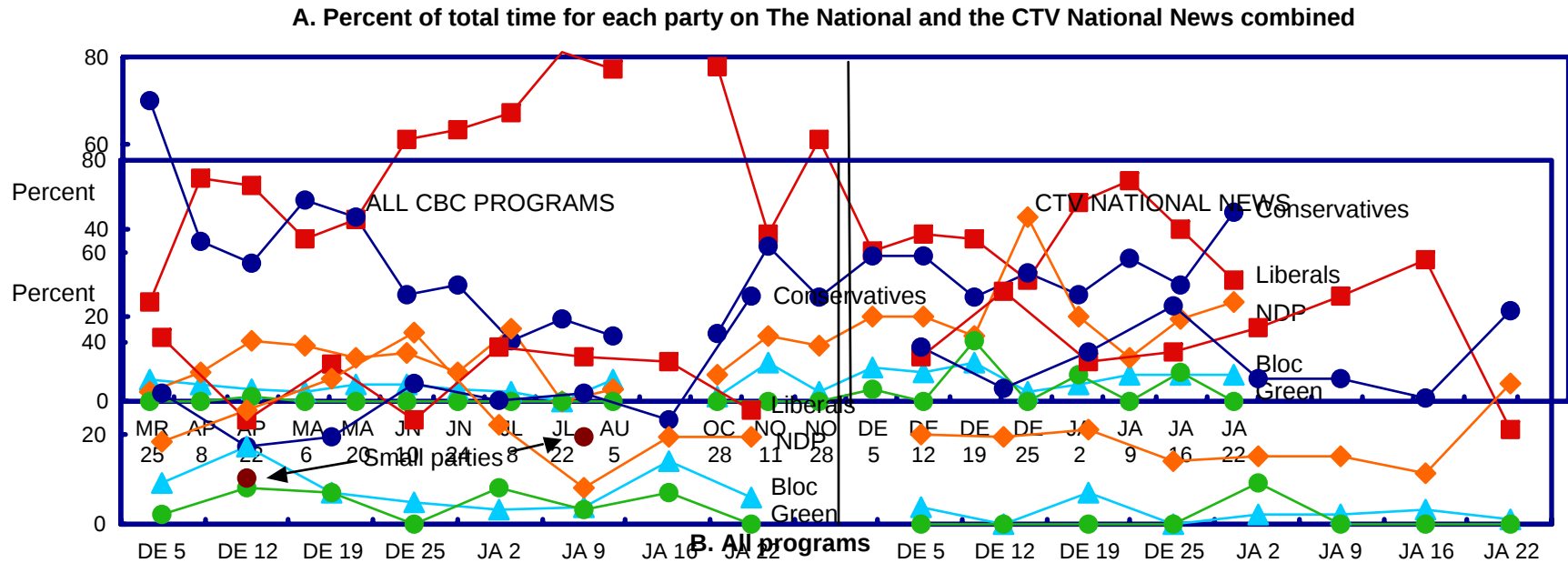
OVERALL

The CBC programs, both collectively and individually, take a slightly different approach to campaign coverage than does CTV. On CBC each party's time was within 3 percentage points of popular opinion at the outset of the campaign (except the Bloc, which is a special case as a provincial party). (Figure 6 and Table 8).

The CTV strategy gives precedence to the two larger parties, upping their time well above popular opinion levels.

As a result there is a spread of 24 percentage points on CBC between the Greens at 7 percent of interview time and the Liberals at 31 percent (across the five programs). CTV has a spread of 40 points between the Greens at 1 percent and the Liberals at 41 percent.

Figure 7. Interview time for leaders, candidates and party spokespeople:
“Your Turn” interviews are excluded



Data points are two-week periods prior to the campaign
and one-week periods beginning November 29 2005.

8. Total speaking time for representatives of major parties (in minutes)

“Your Turn” interviews are excluded

Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006

Party	SES Nov 13	The National		Sun. Night		World Report		World at 6		The House		Total CBC		CTV	
	%	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%
Liberal	34	73.8	33	7.0	24	6.9	36	18.2	35	17.2	26	123.1	31	19.7	41
Conservative	28	68.5	30	6.3	22	5.1	26	16.7	32	16.6	25	113.2	29	17.6	37
Bloc Québécois	14	8.6	4	0.7	2	3.2	17	3.8	7	10.4	16	26.7	7	1.3	3
NDP	20	54.9	24	9.6	33	4.2	22	11.7	23	11.7	18	92	23	9.0	19
Green	5	21.0	9	1.4	5	–	–	1.5	3	4.2	6	28.2	7	0.4	1
Others	–	–	–	4.0	14	–	–	–	–	5.5	8	9.5	2	–	–
Total	100	226.8	100	28.9	100	19.3	100	52.0	100	65.6	100	392.6	100	47.9	100

3. DISCUSSION OF MAJOR PARTIES

INTRODUCTION

“Discussion” is measured by counting the number of statements that are made about a party by all sources. Discussion about the Liberals, for example, includes statements made by journalists, analysts, citizens, other parties, and the Liberals themselves.

Figure 9 shows longer term trends on The National and the CTV National News.

Table 10 reports the amount of discussion that occurred about each party on each program.

RESULTS

The most immediate feature of Figure 9 is the difference between news outside the campaign period (March to November) and the campaign itself.

Outside the campaign, the focus is primarily on the government. Opposition parties make the news when there is a clear reason to do so. The March 25 data point reflects attention the Conservatives received during their national convention in late March 2005. There is an increase in discussion of the Conservatives during May and into June when they tried unsuccessfully to force an election. The July 22 spike in discussion of the Conservatives on The National reflects coverage of alleged misdeeds by Gurmant Grewal. CTV did not run anything on this story.

When the campaign begins, the playing field is leveled somewhat, though the hierarchy of discussion remains the same.

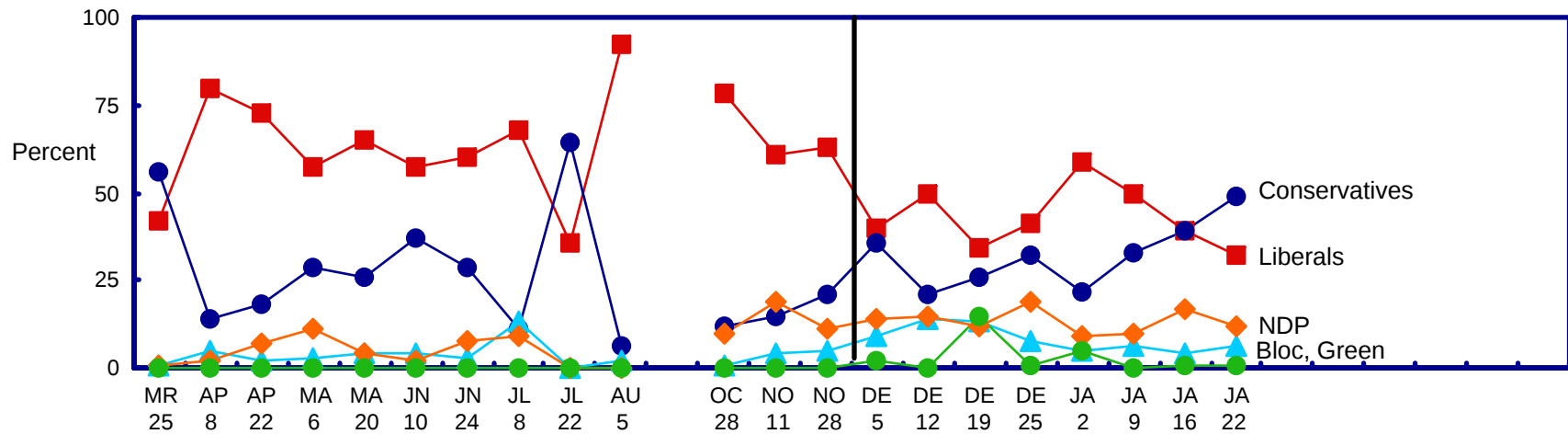
The common wisdom at the outset of the campaign predicted another Liberal minority, and the Liberals maintained their hold on

top spot in the news. Then, in January the tide slowly turned as the idea of a Conservative victory changed from a long shot to a genuine possibility to a certainty. Discussion of the Conservatives increased with their momentum, clearly surpassing the Liberals only in the final week.

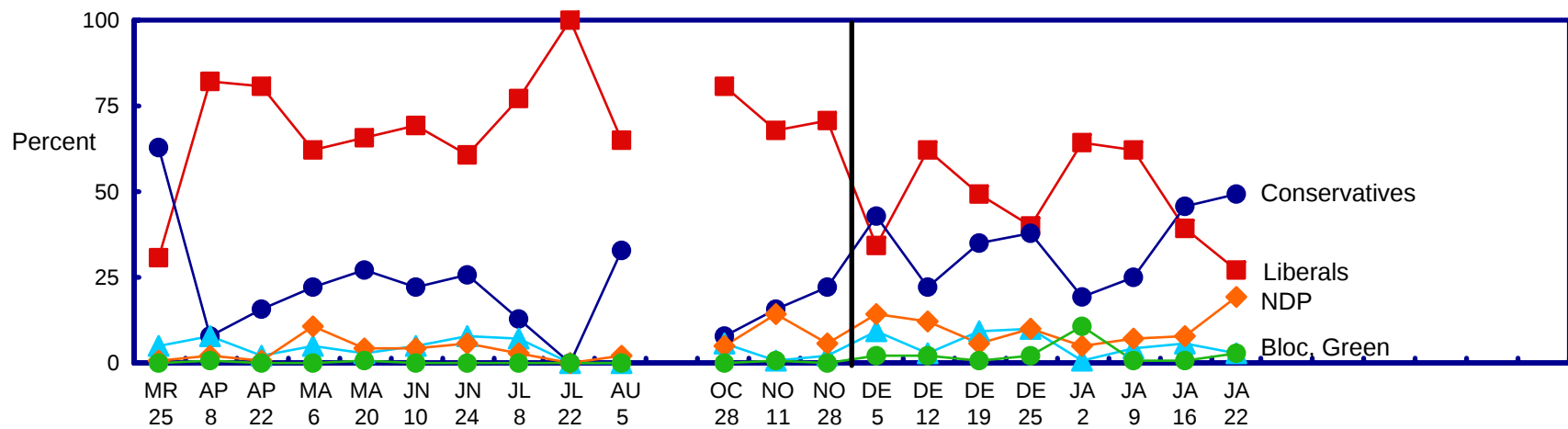
Some of this discussion took the form of attacks by other parties but the large majority reflected interest by journalists, analysts and other interviewees.

9. Proportion of statements that refer to each party

A. The National



B. CTV National News



10. Proportion of statements that refer to each major party

Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006

	The National	Sun. Night	World Report	World at 6	The House	CBC	CTV
Party	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Liberal	41	35	42	47	39	42	45
Conservative	33	28	30	33	29	32	37
Bloc Québécois	7	7	13	7	11	8	5
NDP	14	20	15	12	19	15	11
Green	5	7	<1	2	2	3	3
Other	–	3	–	–	1	<1	<1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base # statements	4,777	712	986	2,298	1,049	9,822	2,130

4. EVOLUTION OF PARTY STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

The charts in Figures 11 and 12 are based on the statements that each party makes about its own members and policies, and about the people and policies of other parties.

The charts do not include statements made by former party members, such as witnesses before the Gomery Commission.

Political figures make statements about topics other than the parties – about “Canadians”, about events in other countries, and so on. These statements are excluded from the present analysis.

Figure 11 shows the proportion of statements that each party has made about its own affairs and those of others over the course of the campaign.

OVERVIEW OF THE CAMPAIGN

Parties typically promote their own platform when they feel that momentum is with them, and attack others when they feel threatened.

The campaign began with the Liberals appearing confident in forming another minority government. Their positive approach is similar to the 2000 and 2004 campaigns (Figure 13), where their strong emphasis on self-promotion carried through the campaign from beginning to end, (but note their apprehension in the middle of the 2004 campaign, when the Conservatives appeared to be making real gains, only to slip back in the final stages).

Both the Liberal and Conservative campaigns in 2006 are strikingly similar to the 2000 and 2004 patterns. Only in the last 2 weeks of the current campaign do the Conservatives appear to sense

victory, and only in the final week do the Liberals switch to damage control (Figure 12).

**11. Proportion of a party's statements that refer to each other party:
Weeks 1 – 8, All CBC and CTV programs**

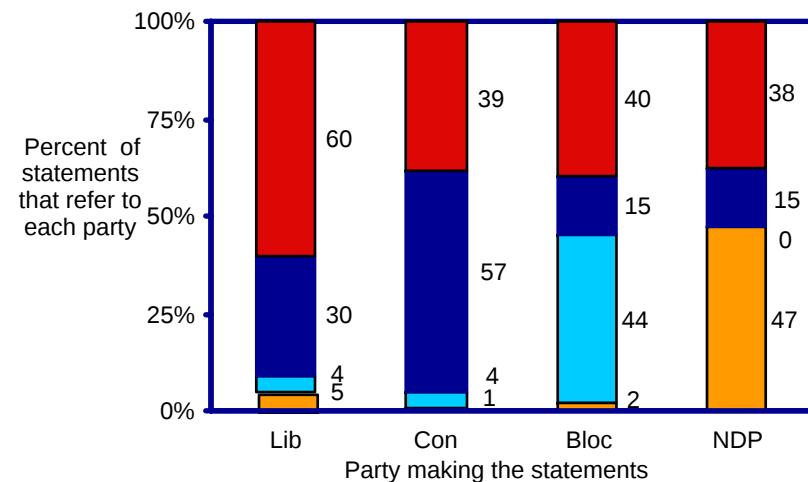
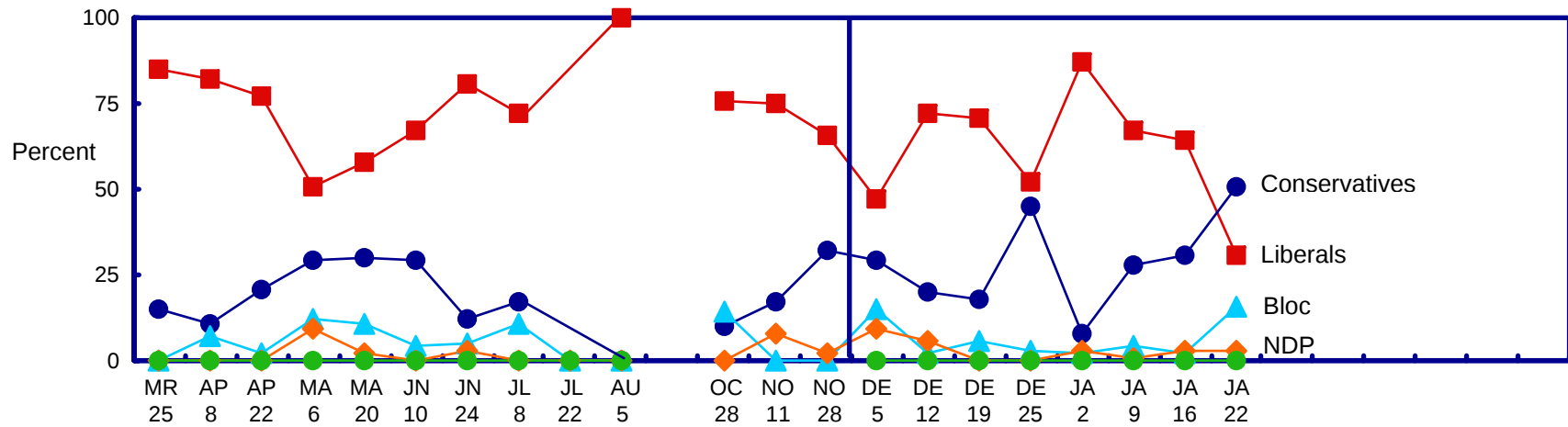


Figure 11 illustrates how each party focuses on a) its own message and b) its perceived threats and opportunities. As a result:

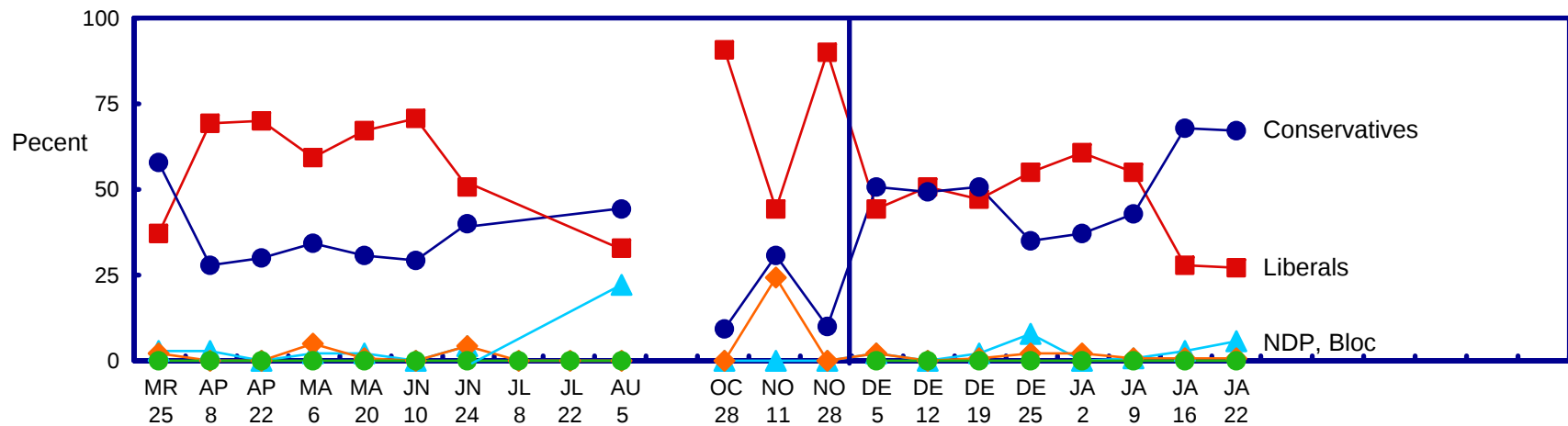
- Almost no party other than the Bloc talks about the Bloc (at least in the English media)
- Almost no party other than the NDP talks about the NDP
- Everyone talks about the Liberals.

12. Evolution of party strategies: Data are from The National and the CTV National News prior to the campaign, and from all six programs during the campaign
March 14, 2005 – January 22, 2006

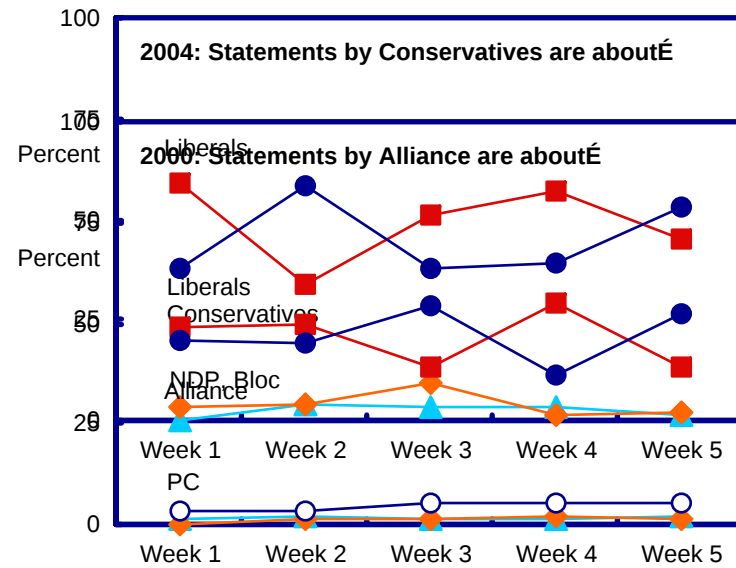
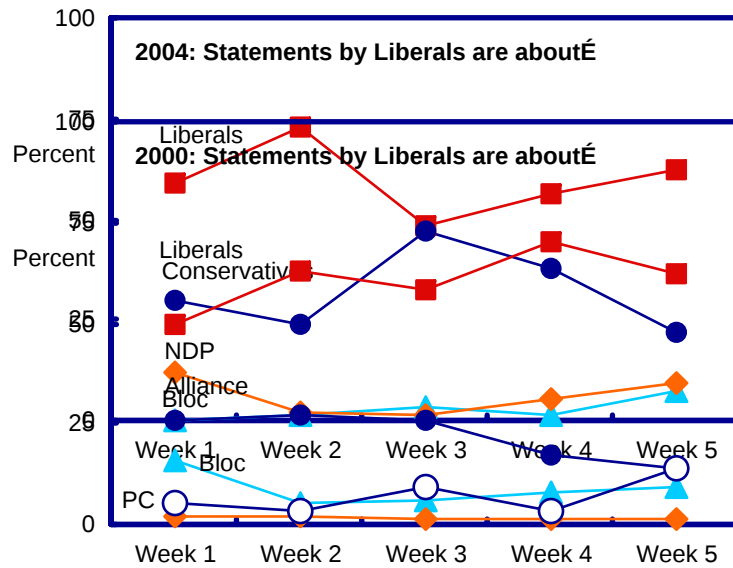
A. Reported statements by Liberals are about...



B. Reported statements by Conservatives are about...



13. Party strategies in 2000 and 2004

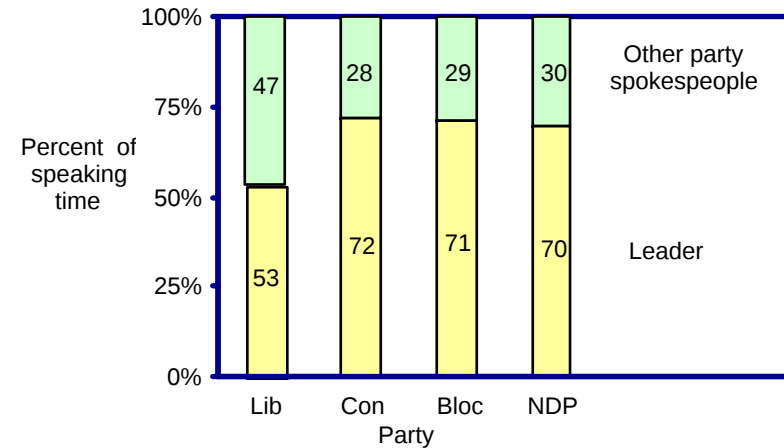


5. PARTY LEADERS

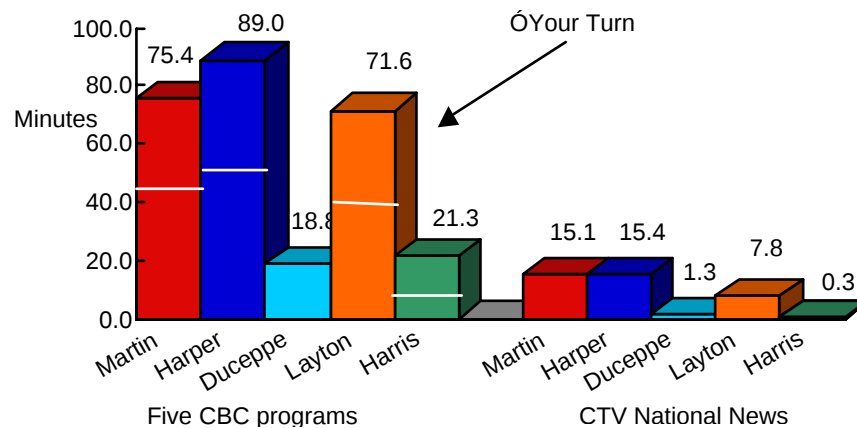
Figure 14 splits the total interview time for each party between the leader and other spokespeople such as candidates and party strategists.

Figure 15 shows the total number of minutes that each leader was heard in Weeks 1 - 8. For all parties except the Bloc, the portion above the white divider denotes "Your Turn" interviews, while that below the line is news stories.

**14. Proportion of speaking time for leader and other party spokespeople: "Your Turn" excluded
Weeks 1 – 8: All programs**



**15. Minutes of speaking time for party leaders
Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006**



16. Speaking time for party leaders ("Your Turn" excluded)

Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006

Party	The National %	Sun. Night %	World Report %	World at 6 %	The House %	CBC %	CTV %
Liberal	33	19	33	31	7	27	38
Conservative	33	13	30	38	33	33	39
Bloc Québécois	9	6	16	9	21	12	3
NDP	21	61	21	22	26	25	20
Green	3	1	–	1	14	4	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Base # statements	68.7	11.2	14.7	38.5	29.0	162.0	39.8

6. SPECTRUM OF INTERVIEWEES

The CBC programs take quite different approaches to the selection of interviewees. World Report, the shortest newscast, has the finest focus on leaders and candidates. The World at Six introduces more citizens, both representatives of business and social groups as well as “average citizens”. The National, the

longest newscast, has the greatest emphasis on analysts and citizens and the least on political figures. Sunday Night and The House focus on analysis, and each has its own perspective (Table 18).

17. Spectrum of interviewees (“Your Turn” interviews are included)						
Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006						
Type of interviewee	CBC: All programs		CTV		Total	
	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%
1. Leaders in news stories	162.0	24	39.8	58	201.8	27
2. MPs, candidates	81.8	12	6.7	10	88.5	12
3. Provincial MPs, MLAs	56.1	8	1.2	2	57.3	8
4. Party spokespersons	17.7	3	0.8	1	18.5	2
5. Analysts	102.1	15	6.8	10	108.9	14
6. Business and professional sector	22.2	3	2.0	3	24.1	3
7. Labour sector	2.2	<1	0.7	1	2.9	<1
8. Social sector	20.3	3	0.6	1	20.9	3
9. Ethnic & Aboriginal groups	15.5	2	–	–	15.5	2
10. Artistic community	20.7	3	1.2	2	21.9	3
11. Citizens	145.6	21	6.8	10	152.4	20
12. Civil servants	2.8	<1	1.5	2	4.3	1
13. Others: historical footage, The Insider, etc.	33.9	5	1.2	2	35.1	5
Total	683.0	100	69.1	100	752.1	100

18. Spectrum of interviewees (“Your Turn” interviews are excluded)										
Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, – January 22, 2006										
Type of interviewee	The National		Sunday Report		World Report		World at 6		The House	
	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%	Min.	%
1. Leaders	68.7	21	11.2	15	14.7	50	38.5	34	29	21
2. MPs, candidates	34.6	11	4.9	7	4	14	8.9	8	29.3	21
3. Provincial MPs, MLAs	17.7	5	13.4	18	0.4	1	5.4	5	19.2	14
4. Party spokespersons	4.8	1	–	–	1.1	4	2	2	9.7	7
5. Analysts	71.7	22	7.5	10	2.8	9	9.4	8	10.7	8
6. Business and professional sector	7.7	2	1	1	0.9	3	6.1	5	6.4	5
7. Labour sector	0.8	0	–	–	0.6	2	0.8	1	–	–
8. Social sector	6.6	2	4.8	6	0.4	1	5	4	3.5	3
9. Ethnic & Aboriginal groups	3.8	1	–	–	0.1	0	7.2	6	4.4	3
10. Artistic community	4	1	9.4	13	–	–	1.3	1	6.1	4
11. Citizens	80.1	24	20.9	28	3.7	13	26.8	24	14.2	10
12. Civil servants	1.8	1	0.1	0	0.3	1	0.5	0	0	0
13. Others: historical footage, The Insider, etc.	25.4	8	1.7	2	0.6	2	1.5	1	4.7	3
Total	327.7	100	74.9	100	29.5	100	113.6	100	137.2	100

GENDER AND RACE

As in previous years, the gender balance on CBC programs is distinctly more even than that on CTV news (Table 19). CBC presents a more balanced representation of white and visible

minority interviews among citizens, though the great majority of analysts are white.

19. Speaking time for female and male interviewees (in minutes)						
Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006						
Type of interviewee	%F	CBC %M	Minutes	%F	CTV %M	Minutes
Analysts	27	73	101.6	7	93	6.8
Citizens	40	60	247.2	25	75	10.2

20. Speaking time for visible minorities and whites (TV programs only - in minutes)						
Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006						
Type of interviewee	CBC (The National and Sunday Night)			CTV		
	%VM	%White	Minutes	%VM	%White	Minutes
Analysts	1	99	85.7	–	100	6.8
Citizens	37	63	163.4	9	91	10.2

7. DIRECTIONAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Approximately one-half of all statements in coverage of federal politics are explicitly about political parties – about their leaders or candidates or policies. These statements can be classed as either positive or negative or neutral in their description of the party and its fortunes.

Political platforms and promises such as, “We will spend one billion dollars on X”, are considered neutral. While the person making the promise hopes that voters will regard the statement in a positive light, some voters, as well as some analysts and the opposing parties, will not.

Examples of neutral statements

Conservative Leader Stephen Harper has promised to cut the GST to put more money in the hands of Canadians. (Journalist)
[Note: promises are generally considered neutral.]

Here's our quick look for tonight at the race, and we find the Strategic Counsel poll for CTV News and The Globe and Mail has the point spread between the frontrunners narrowing. (Journalist)

Examples of positive statements

I thought Mr. Layton had a good night tonight. I thought he was very effective at making things personal... and he communicated a lot of passion on the issues. (Analyst)

I think Mr. Harper has done a better job of listening to what we're interested in here. (Citizen)

Mr. Harper has also become the man to beat in French and in English. (Journalist)

Examples of negative statements:

Who told Stephen Harper that he's an actor? There's an absolute absence of passion, it's very staged, he never makes eye contact with the viewer at home. (Analyst)

I think the difficulty with the current government is that it obviously has been in office too long, grown too comfortable and too entitled to power. (Stephen Harper)

Look at the Liberals and how much they promise in the last ten years, but they never deliver anything, so that's the reason that we want some change. (Citizen)

Examples of attributed statements

Attributed statements are those in which a journalist paraphrases another person's comments. They are often negative, though they can be positive or neutral.

Canadian Auto Worker President, Buzz Hargrove, says people should vote for any party to stop the Conservatives. (Journalist)

Martin said the NDP leader has abandoned his political principles. (Journalist)

He's the leader of the relatively small Action Democratique Party and he announced that Quebecers should not waste their vote on the Bloc. (Journalist)

Direction and quality of coverage

It is important to note that the directional results assess one critical component of news coverage – the overall evaluative tone. Direction does not indicate whether the coverage is insightful or informative or accurate.

THE OVERALL PICTURE

Tables 24 and 25 present the overall balance in directional statements for each network and program. CBC and CTV are very close in the pattern of results for each party, as the overall ratio of negative to positive statements indicates (Table 21). In addition, there is a good degree of consistency among the five CBC programs (Table 25).

21. Overall ratio of negative to positive statements Campaign 2005 -- 2006		
Party	Ratio	
	CBC	CTV
Liberals	4.8:1	4.9:1
Conservatives	2.5:1	2.2:1
Bloc	1.5:1	2.0:1
NDP	0.7:1	0.8:1
Base no. of statements	9,766	2,161

Perfect consistency across programs and networks is not any journalist's goal. Programs differ in their format and objectives.

On a daily basis, any two news sources may differ considerably in the balance of directional statements that are made about a party. They may choose to cover different events or to analyze the same event from different perspectives.

Over the course of a campaign, matters should tend to even out. If two sources differed greatly after the 8 weeks of the present campaign, one would want to know why. Bias is one explanation, although there could be other reasons as well.

In fact, there are not startling differences among programs. This effectively rules out the possibility of systemic bias – unless one were to advance the unlikely hypothesis that all were biased in the same manner.

FINE POINTS

Tables 24 and 25 show that, across parties, there is a relatively large range in the proportion of negative statements and a smaller range in the proportion of positives. On the CBC programs, the range is 21 percentage points for the negatives and 5 points for the positives.

Part of the variation in negative commentary flows from the “attack factor”. The Liberals are on every party's hit list, while the Conservatives come second in this hierarchy and the NDP and Greens last.

The parties are not solely responsible for this hierarchy. Tables 29 and 30 show that the Liberal - Conservative - NDP sequence is also a result of discussion by “other interviewees” – i.e. by analysts and citizens.

Journalists play a role in producing the hierarchy only by virtue of their attributed statements. Journalists' unattributed statements are similar in tone for all parties.

A final point about Table 24 is the difference between CBC and CTV. While the differences are small, the CBC programs tend to be slightly more negative and slightly more positive than CTV. This follows from the greater role that citizens and analysts play on CBC. Statements by analysts and citizens are more directional than those by journalists. Because journalists carry more of the discussion on CTV, the overall tone is more neutral.

ARE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS NASTY BY NATURE?

It is common wisdom that once an election campaign begins, civility fails and nastiness becomes the norm. The analysis of The National and the CTV National News from March 2005 through to the election period allows a direct assessment of this claim. The facts are these:

- On The National, there is a slightly higher proportion of negative commentary about each party during the campaign, **and also** a slightly higher proportion of positive commentary about each party.
- The pattern on CTV is not identical but largely similar.

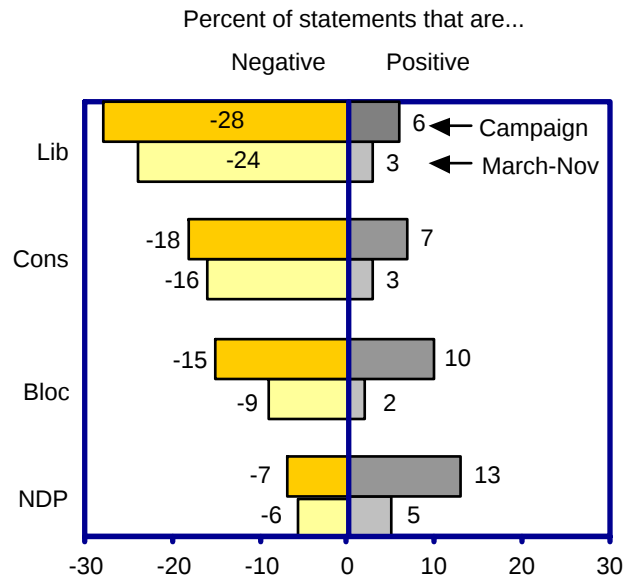
An increase in negative commentary might be expected, given the competitive nature of the process. The increase in positive

commentary may come as a surprise, but on reflection it is reasonable. Each party is saying as many good things about itself as it can manage, and citizens and analysts join in, praising what appears to have merit.

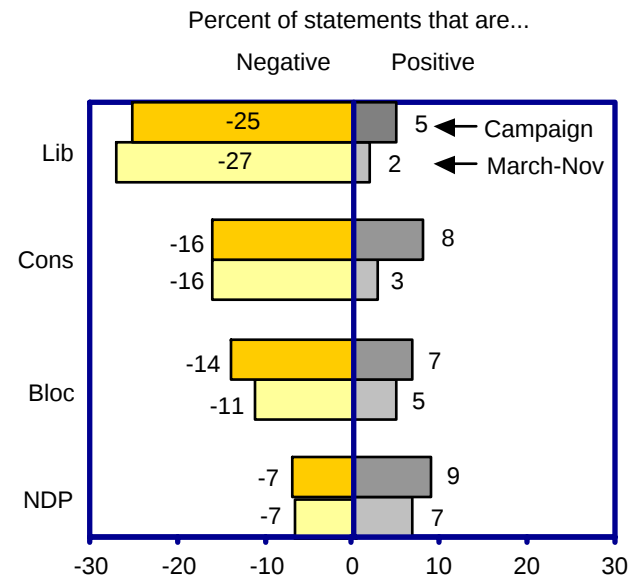
These results speak only to the volume of positive and negative comments that occur, and not their intensity. Some comments made during the campaign were personal and some were perhaps unusually offensive. Such exceptional events may fix in people's minds, creating the impression of greater nastiness.

On the other hand, the pre-election period saw its share of conflict and acrimony. Our conclusion is that overall, the campaign period is less neutral than the time leading up to it, but the heightened emotional tone is nearly equal parts positive and negative.

22. Statements about parties – all sources
March – November 2005 vs Campaign
The National



23. Statements about parties – all sources
March – November 2005 vs Campaign
CTV National News



24. Overall pattern of directional statements by both journalists and interviewees

Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, – January 22, 2006

Statements about	Five CBC programs Percent of statements				CTV National News Percent of statements			
	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base
Liberal	67	6	28	4,109	71	5	25	975
Conservative	74	7	19	3,108	76	8	16	789
BQ	79	8	13	765	80	7	14	117
NDP	82	11	7	1,447	84	9	7	226
Green	83	10	7	337	94	2	4	54

25. Overall pattern of directional statements by both journalists and interviewees

Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006

The National Percent of statements					The World at Six Percent of statements			
Statements about	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base
Liberal	66	6	28	1,966	64	7	30	1,072
Conservative	75	7	18	1,558	71	7	23	751
BQ	74	10	15	318	77	5	18	162
NDP	80	13	7	679	82	9	9	283
Green	83	9	8	225	70	21	9	43

World Report Percent of statements					The House Percent of statements			
Statements about	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base
Liberal	71	4	25	415	69	4	27	406
Conservative	69	11	20	297	75	6	19	300
BQ	91	5	4	124	77	12	12	113
NDP	89	7	4	146	82	9	9	196
Green	–	–	–	4	–	–	–	19

LEADERS AND PARTIES

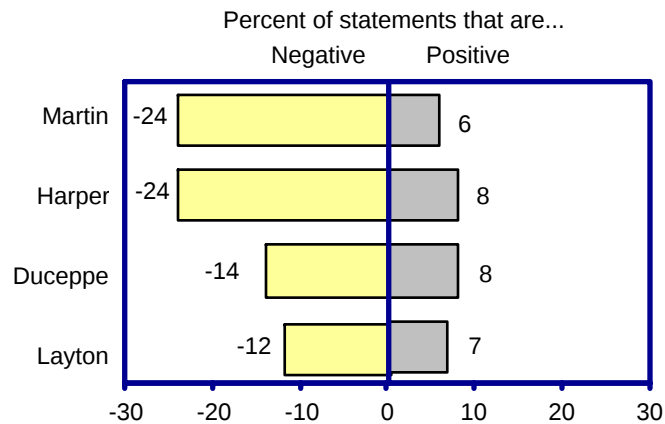
Figures 26 and 27 contrast directional statements about the leaders with other statements about the party – statements about the party in general and about other party members.

The leaders act to a certain extent as lightning rods, attracting more negative commentary than their parties. An alternative formulation is that the parties personalize their attacks on the competition, focusing to a large extent on the party leader.

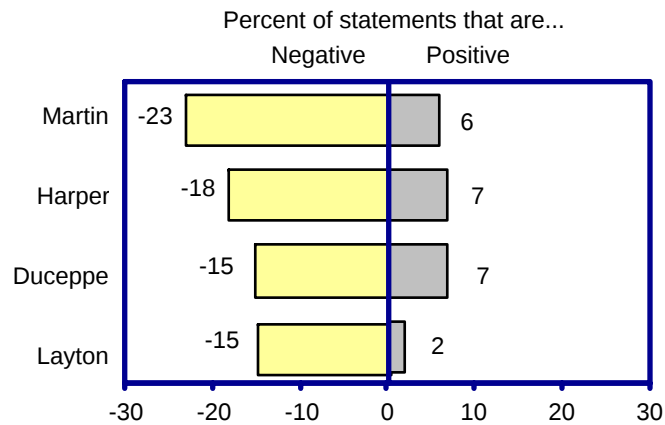
The exception to this rule is the Liberals, where the party receives a large proportion of negative comment as a result of the sponsorship scandal and the income trusts affair.

26. Statements about party leaders from all sources

A. Five CBC programs, Weeks 1 – 8

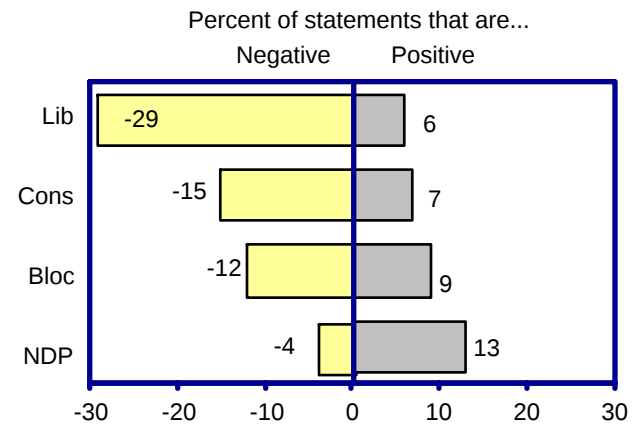


B. CTV National News, Weeks 1 – 8

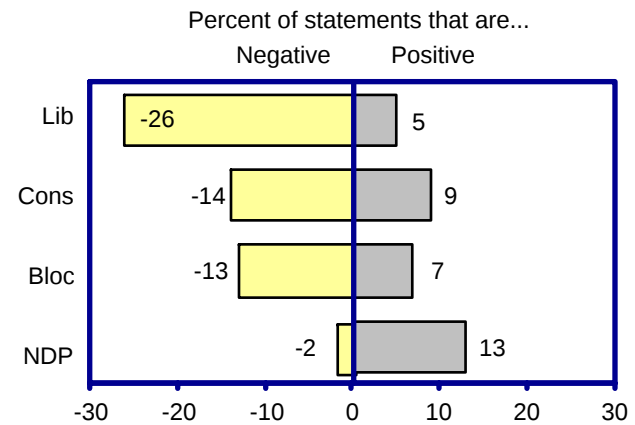


27. Statements about parties - leaders excluded, all sources

A. Five CBC programs, Weeks 1 – 8



B. CTV National News, Weeks 1 – 8



28. Sources of directional statements by journalists and interviewees: Statements about all parties and candidates

Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006

Statements by	CBC Percent of statements				CTV Percent of statements			
	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base
Journalists – attributed	45	10	45	1,420	38	13	49	293
Journalists – unattributed	95	1	3	4,333	92	3	6	1,287
Interviewees	56	13	31	3,676	54	12	35	527
Total	72	7	20	9,429	75	7	19	2,107

29. Directional statements about Liberals and Conservatives from four sources								
Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006								
Statements	Five CBC programs Percent of statements				CTV Percent of statements			
	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base
<i>About the Liberals...</i>								
By journalists, attributed	40	8	52	659	36	9	55	135
By journalists, not attributed	94	1	5	1,773	88	2	10	572
By all political parties	49	10	41	977	49	9	42	196
By other interviewees	47	9	43	700	54	10	36	72
Total	67	6	28	4,109	71	5	25	975
<i>About the Conservatives...</i>								
By journalists, attributed	41	11	48	492	37	20	44	117
By journalists, not attributed	96	2	3	1,417	93	3	3	474
By all political parties	65	9	27	730	56	8	36	151
By other interviewees	55	20	25	469	68	17	15	47
Total	74	7	19	3,108	76	8	16	789

30. Directional statements about Bloc and NDP from four sources								
Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006								
Statements	CBC Percent of statements				CTV Percent of statements			
	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base	Neut.	Pos.	Neg.	Base
<i>About the Bloc...</i>								
By journalists, attributed	57	18	25	114	–	–	–	19
By journalists, not attributed	96	2	2	388	95	5	–	85
By all political parties	64	13	24	135	–	–	–	12
By other interviewees	64	12	24	128	–	–	–	1
Total	79	8	13	765	80	7	14	117
<i>About the NDP...</i>								
By journalists, attributed	64	12	24	155	–	–	–	22
By journalists, not attributed	97	1	2	755	99	1	–	156
By all political parties	64	31	6	315	–	–	–	36
By other interviewees	66	17	17	222	–	–	–	12
Total	82	11	7	1,447	84	8	7	226

Note: Parentheses indicate fewer than 50 statements.

TRENDS IN DIRECTION

Three sets of charts show different aspects of the weekly trends in direction.

Figure 31 shows long-term trends on The National and the CTV news, beginning in March 2005. The period begins with the Liberals under fire as the most explosive revelations of the Gomery Inquiry come out (Charts A and B). The tenor moderates slowly as summer begins, but criticism builds again in the fall. Judge Gomery's first report was released in the period ending November 11.

The week preceding Christmas has the largest proportion of negative commentary. This is not due to any one cause. The amount of campaign coverage this week was small, and the parties did not make major policy announcements. It appears that sniping sometimes took the place of more substantive discussion. The following week, (Jan. 2 data point) was dominated by the income trusts investigation and negative discussion of the Liberals remains high.

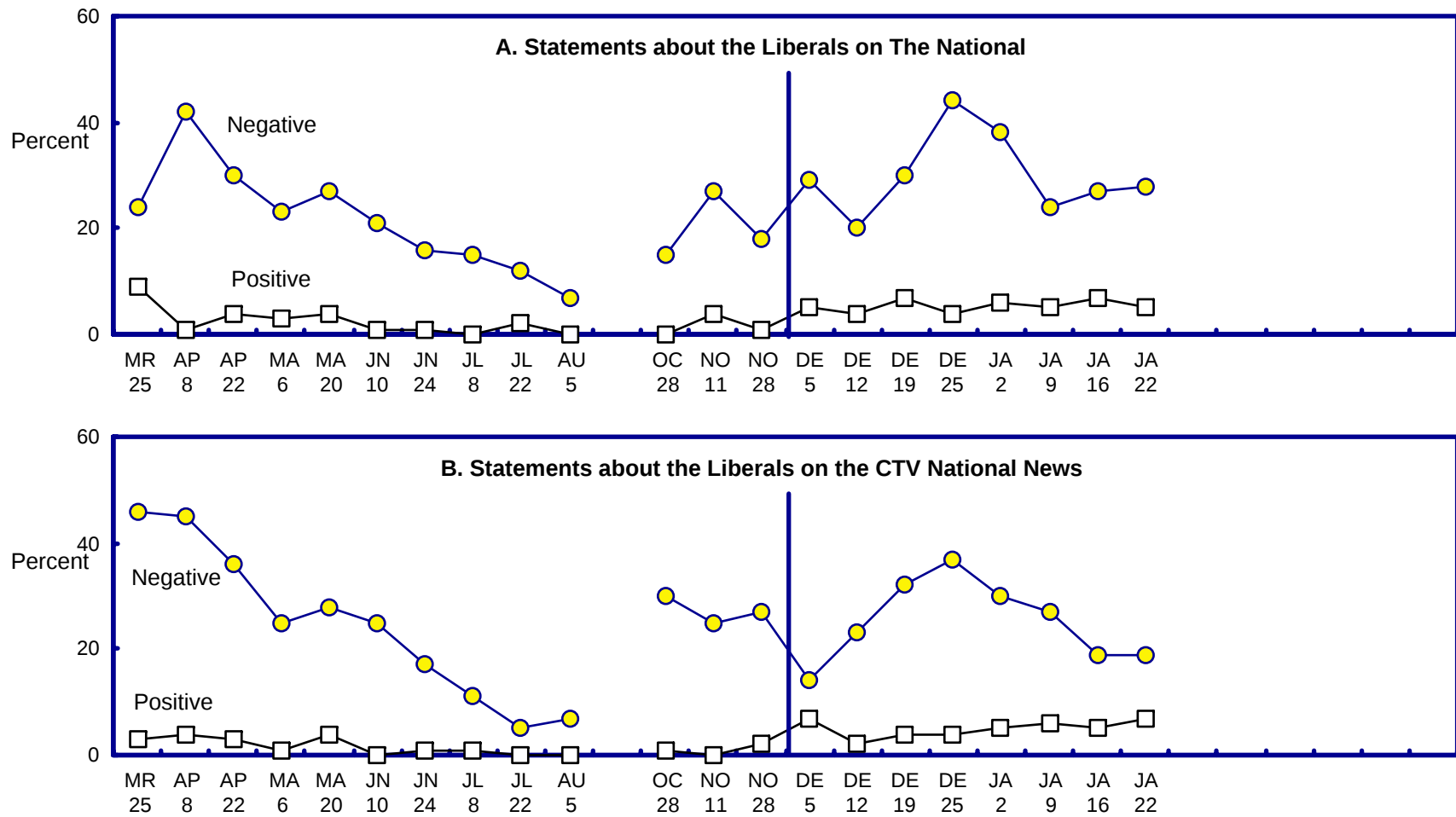
The Conservatives' profile is less negative overall and also more constant over time.

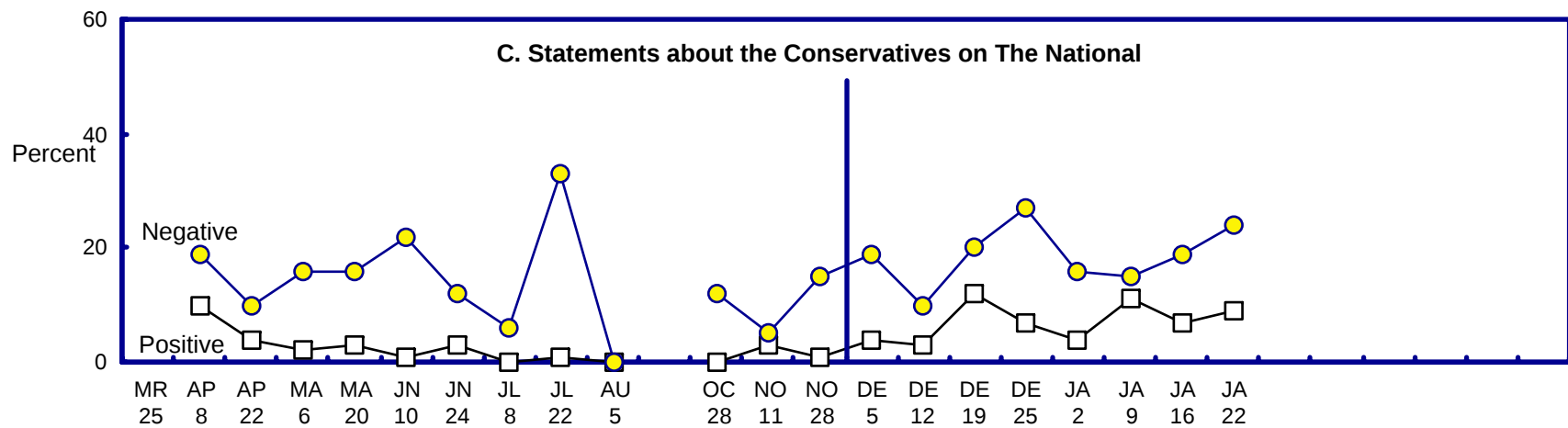
Figure 32 shows the trend over the campaign for all five CBC programs (the pre-campaign information is only available for The National). The CTV data is repeated for comparison.

Figure 33 removes the political parties from the equation.

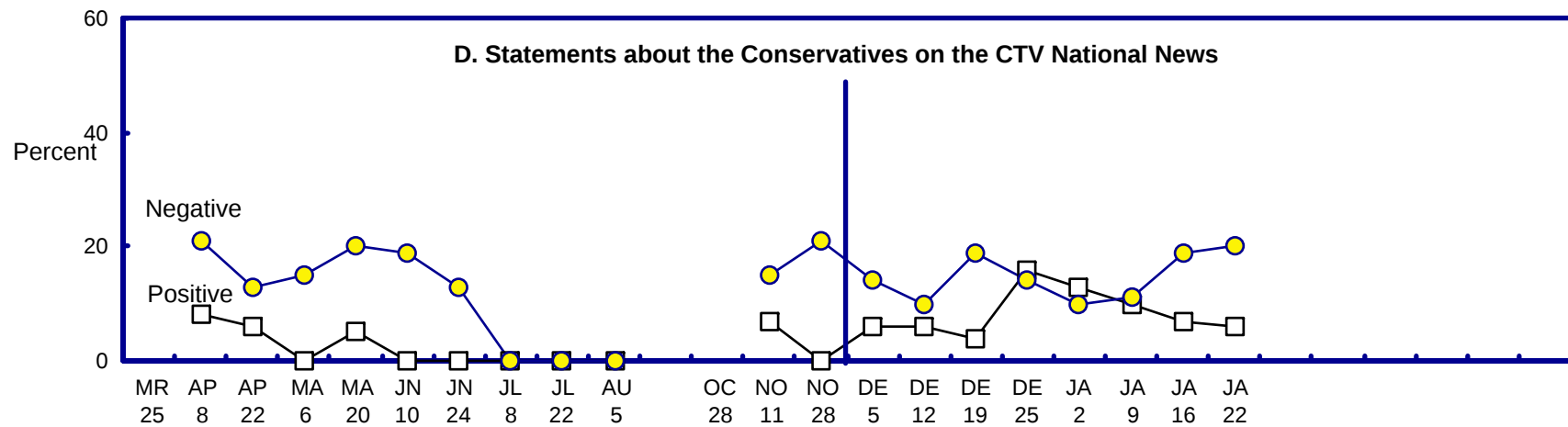
31. Trends in direction: Statements from all sources ("Your Turn" excluded)

March 14, 2005 – January 22, 2006





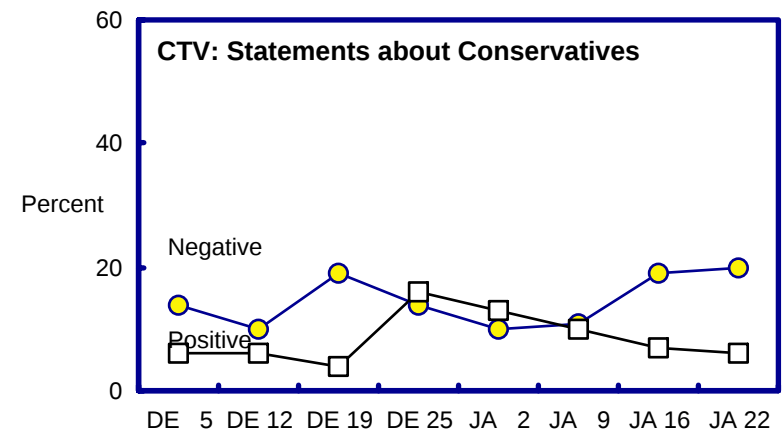
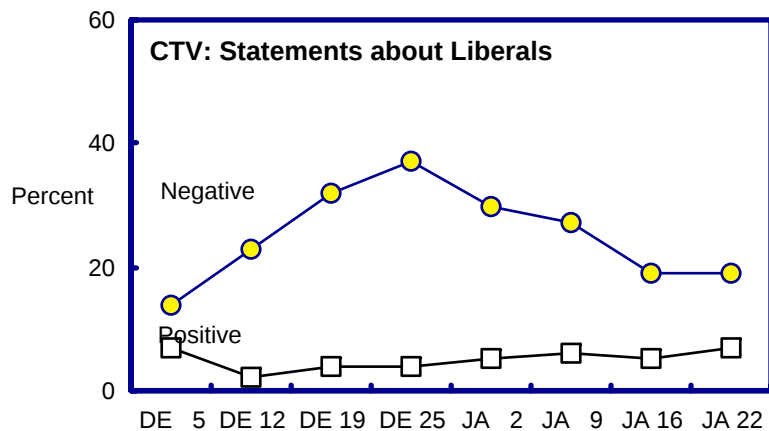
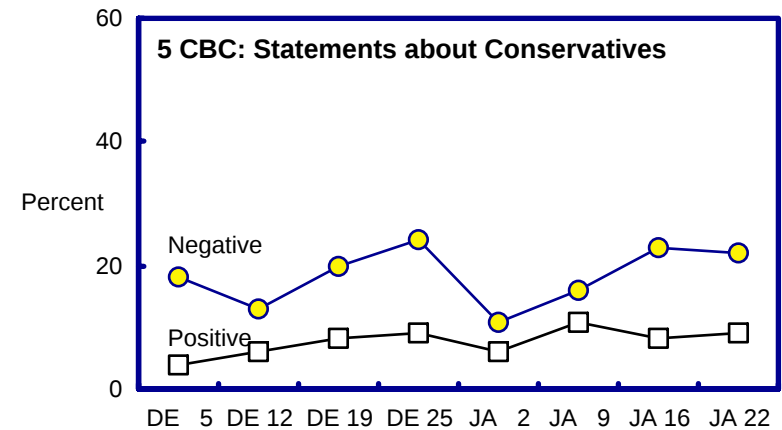
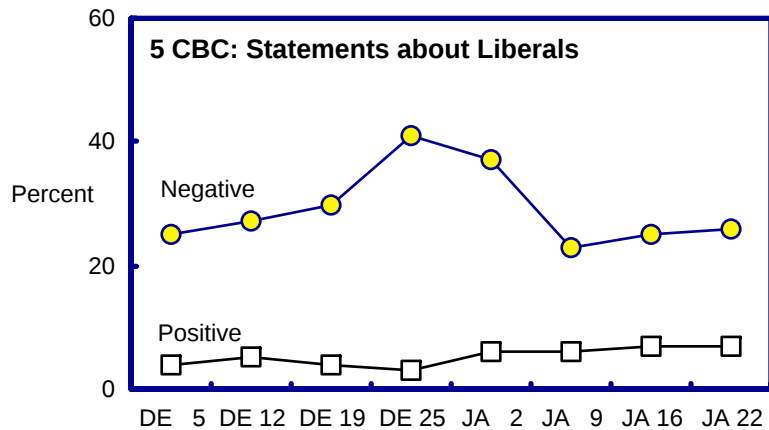
Note: The July 22 spike on CBC reflects coverage of Gurmant Grewal's alleged misuse of party funds. CTV did not cover this episode.



The following points are combined as there is too little data to show them separately:

- On The National: March 25 - April 8, 2005
- On The CTV National News: March 25 – April 8, 2005 and October 28 - November 11, 2005.

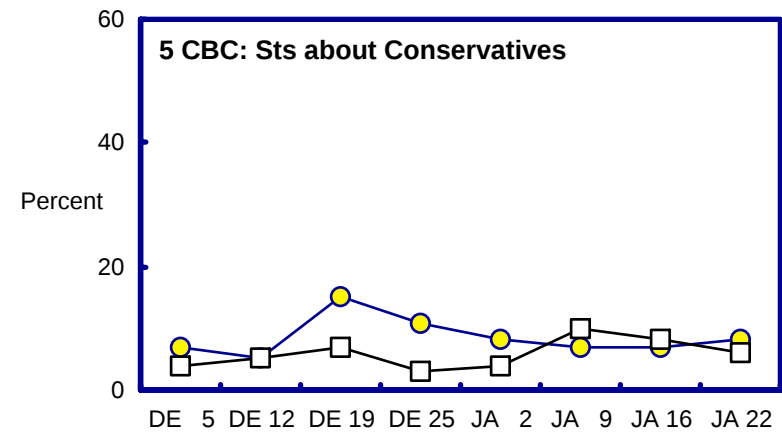
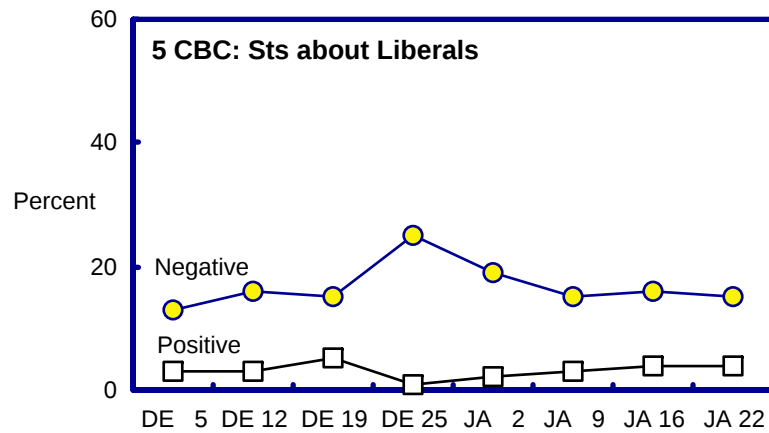
32. Trends in direction: All CBC programs
“Your Turn” segments are excluded
November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006



33. Trends in direction: Statements by journalists (unattributed), analysts, citizens
i.e. statements by the parties or attributed to the parties are removed

“Your Turn” segments are excluded

November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006



8. DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

Discussion can be divided into two large groups. “Policy issues” includes the set of substantive policy matters listed in Table 35. Two of these, the Gomery Inquiry and the income trusts probe, are not policy issues per se, but rather government leadership and accountability. The “Other” category is everything else – party strategies, personal attacks, polls, and so on.

DISCUSSION

There has been a tendency in the several previous campaigns for policy issues to be the smaller part of the discussion.

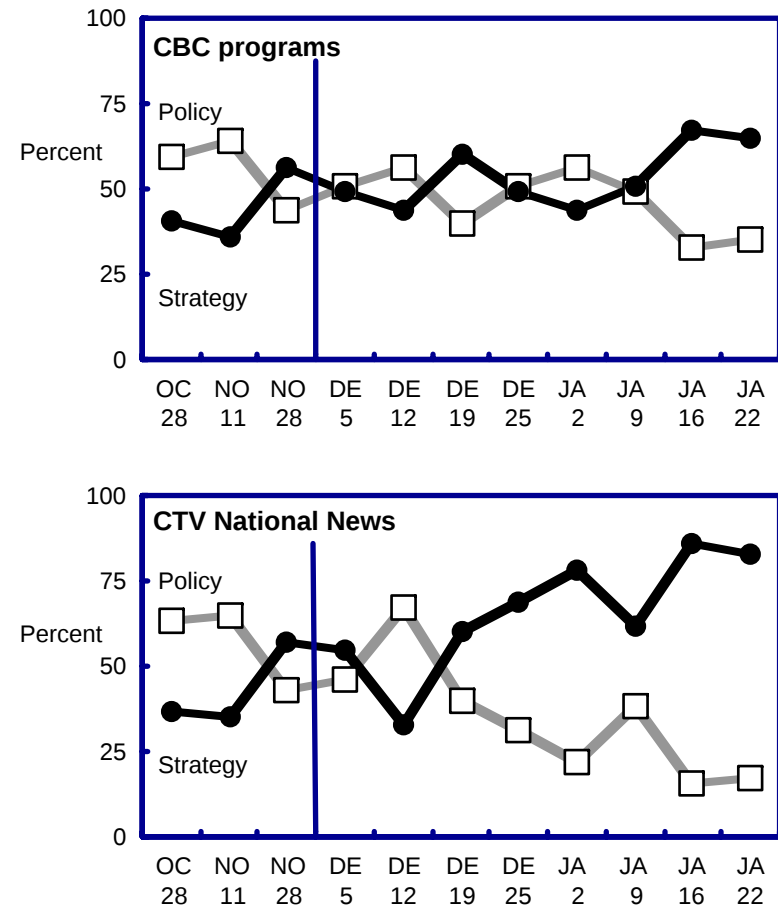
The present campaign breaks this pattern, at least on the CBC programs, presenting an even balance of policy and strategy discussion through to the final two weeks, when talk of shifting momentum and the final outcome prevails.

CTV shifted into horserace mode after the first few weeks.

ISSUES

Table 35 lists the 18 individual issues that make up the “policy” group.

34. Policy and strategy
October 14, 2005 – January 22, 2006



35. Issues in the news		
Weeks 1 – 8: November 29, 2005 – January 22, 2006		
Percent of statements		
Issue	Five CBC programs	CTV National News
1. The economy, employment, tax cuts, deficit.....	16	10
2. National unity, separation, the constitution	11	7
3. Federal-provincial relations.....	2	1
4. Health, Medicare	9	4
5. Social issues, education, social programs.....	14	10
6. Justice	7	10
7. Crime.....	5	10
8. Arts, culture	1	2
9. Resource management, fishing, agriculture	1	<1
10. Environment.....	5	4
11. Military issues	3	5
12. Aboriginal issues.....	1	<1
13. Foreign policy.....	3	5
14. Restructuring government	2	<1
15. Sponsorship issue and the Gomery Inquiry *	11	15
16. Other legacy issues	2	1
17. Terrorism and anti-terrorist activities	<1	–
18. Income trust investigation	6	15
Total	100	100
Base no. of statements	8,210	1,337

Note: * This also includes direct fallout from the Gomery Inquiry in the form of discussion of political corruptness and public cynicism.

TOP ISSUES

A great many issues have been briefly in the spotlight this campaign. Some that came and went include the environment, military affairs, crime, national unity and the income trusts investigation.

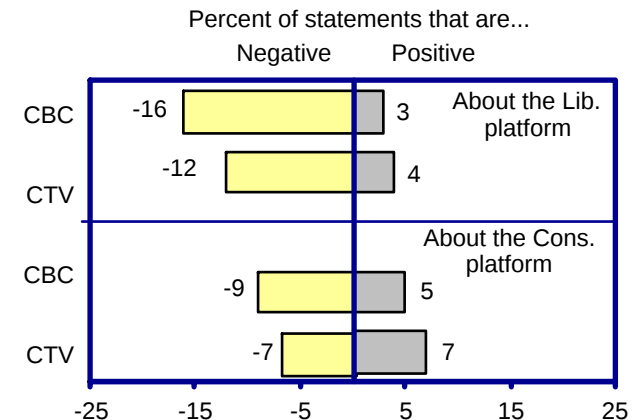
When the campaign ended, much the same set of issues were in the fore as in Week 1 – the economy, health care, social issues (e.g. childcare), and the sponsorship scandal.

DISCUSSION OF PARTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ISSUES

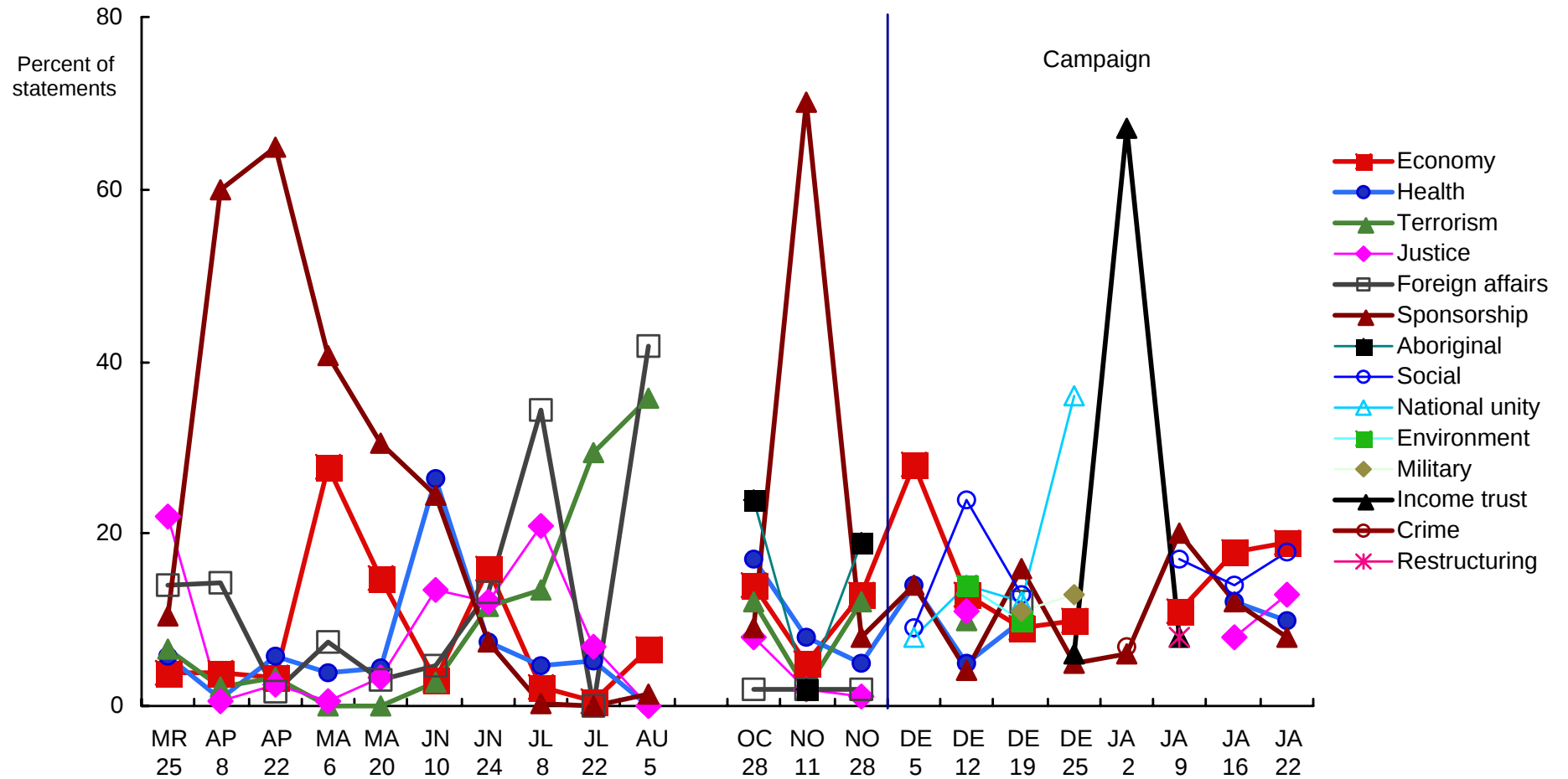
It was widely observed that the Conservatives did a better job of presenting their platform than the Liberals. Commentary on both CBC and CTV takes this perspective. Figure 36 shows direction in discussion of the Liberal and Conservative platforms. The tone of discussion is close to evenly balanced on the Conservative platform, and is tipped strongly to the negative on the Liberal platform.

The chart shows statements about the Liberal platform by analysts, citizens and journalists (unattributed) – i.e. the overtly partisan component is removed. The “platform” includes discussion of all issues in Table 35 except the Gomery Inquiry and the income trusts probe.

36. Discussion of platforms, Weeks 1 – 8
(statements by the parties or attributed to them are excluded)



37. Trends in discussion of prominent issues March 14, 2005 to January 22, 2006



The chart shows 2-week periods from March 25 to November 28, 2005 then single weeks for the campaign.

It is based on The National and the CTV National News to November 28, 2005 then the 5 CBC and 1 CTV programs for the campaign.

NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

The Observatory on Media and Public Policy at McGill University studied a set of 5 English and 2 French newspapers over the campaign. While the description of research procedures that is available in their Internet publications is rather thin, their analysis shares some basic similarities with this one.

The ranking of issues on the CBC programs and in print is very similar. The newspapers discussed a larger proportion of “Other” issues, presumably because the number of words that a newspaper can devote to the campaign on a given day is considerably greater than that which a television or radio program can.

38. Discussion of issues Weeks 1 – 8		
Issue	Percent of discussion	
	CBC	Newspapers*
Economy	16	18
Social issues	14	13
National unity, constitution	11	11
Sponsorship	11	7
Crime, justice (same sex, gun control)	12	9
Health care	9	6
Income trusts investigation	6	2
Environment	5	4
Foreign affairs, Defence	6	6
Others	10	24
Total	100	100
Base # statements/mentions	8,210	7,244

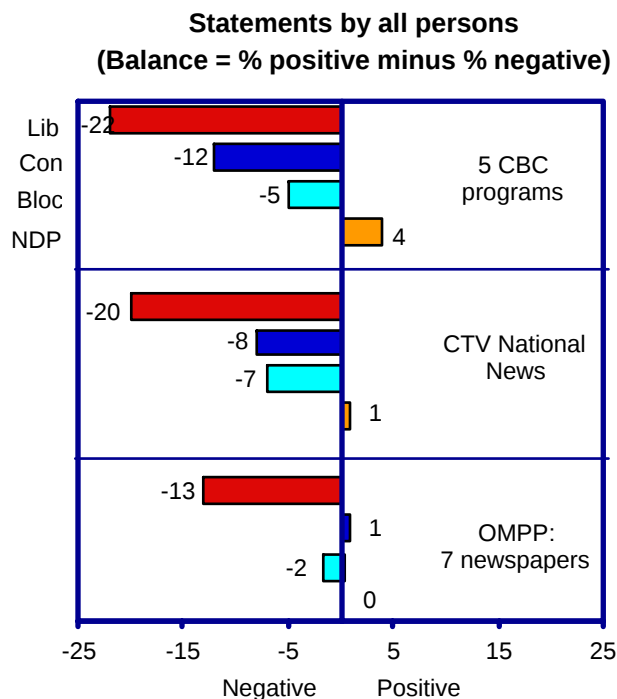
* McGill University Observatory on Media and Public Policy, <http://www.ompp.mcgill.ca/pages/2006election.htm>. Results are based on the number of “mentions” of each issue in “all news, editorial and opinion pieces related to the federal election” in 5 English and 2 French newspapers. The newspaper study defines a relatively large number of issue categories, and some have been combined to match the categories used in the present study.

DIRECTION IN BROADCAST AND PRINT NEWS

Subtracting the proportion of positive statements from the proportion of negative ones gives a one-number summary of the balance in direction. For example, if 10 percent are positive and 25 percent are negative, the balance is 15 points in the negative direction.

Figure 39 shows the overall balance in directional statements over the campaign for each party. For the Liberals on CBC programs, the balance was 22 percent more negative than positive (these data are from Table 29, which reports that 28 percent of all statements about the Liberals were negative and 6 percent positive).

39. Overall balance in directional statements, Weeks 1 – 8



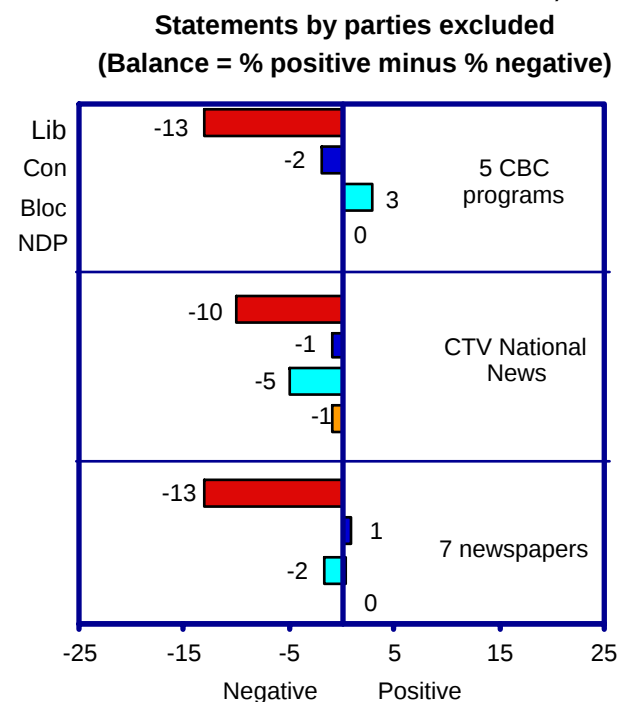
The pattern on CBC and CTV is very similar, with discussion of the Liberals being the most negative, followed by Conservatives, Bloc and NDP.

The main contrast in Figure 39 is that between broadcast and print coverage. In print, the balance across the 7 newspapers is decidedly negative for the Liberals but close to even for the other parties. Why should this be so?

The explanation is that the parties say it in their own words in the broadcast media, and what they say – or at least what is reported – tends to be highly partisan and directional.

Removing statements made by party members (and also statements that journalists attribute to them, which are often used to set up the direct interview), gives Figure 40.

40. Overall balance in directional statements, Weeks 1 – 8



The print and broadcast media are all within a couple of percentage points of each other. The biggest differences are for the Bloc, and this is because, on CTV especially, results are based on a rather small number of statements.

What the present results suggest is first, that the directional balance is different in print and in the broadcast media, and second, that interviews play a strong role in creating the characteristic balance of the broadcast media.

It is perhaps no surprise that print and broadcast media are different, however it is interesting to pinpoint one major source of difference and to quantify its effect.

A note on the Internet

Internet news shares elements of both print and broadcast media, but is different from both. The Internet plays an increasingly important role in Canadian journalism and in the public's participation in the campaign, and therefore it deserves consideration in any future campaign analysis.

APPENDIX: METHOD

MEASURES OF BALANCE

Two sets of measures are applied to each story, measures of time and measures of statement content and direction.

1. Analysis of time

Each time an interviewee speaks, the duration of their speech is recorded. If a person speaks on five occasions in the course of a story, each instance of speech is recorded separately. Times are measured to the nearest second using a stopwatch. Speaking times are recorded for all persons other than CBC journalists (i.e. program host, anchor, reporters).

The total length of the story is also recorded. Journalists are not timed directly, however their share of the program is the total length of the story minus the length of the interview segments it contains.

Interviewees are timed when the audience can hear and understand their speech. Applause and interruptions (e.g., people talking at once so that the conversation cannot be understood) are not counted as interview time.

Only full stories of campaign coverage are analyzed. Program introductions, billboards, and stories that do not describe the election campaign are omitted.

2. Analysis of statement content and direction

A complete transcript of each news story was prepared in order to analyze statements. All statements made by both journalists and interviewees are analyzed.

A statement is a single coherent expression. Very often it is a single sentence. When a speaker makes several independent assertions in the same sentence, several statements are recorded. Occasionally, speakers take more than a single sentence to produce one codable statement. The 2,229 minutes of campaign coverage in the study produced 21,868 statements, so a single statement represents, on average, 6 seconds of speech.

For each statement, researchers recorded:

- A description of the speaker including name, party affiliation if any, role (i.e. candidate, expert, citizen etc.) gender, race and geographical location
- The person or party spoken about
- The issue addressed
- The “direction” that the statement conveys (positive, negative or neutral).

Direction describes how the statement reflects on the person or party spoken about. Directional statements convey the tone of events and the tensions that exist among parties and individuals. As such, directional statements are an essential component of news.

Direction can take the form of praise or criticism, expressions of support or lack of support, and indications of success or failure.