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Citizen Orientation: replacing the market in the political landscape

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Sommaire

Avec la création de petits partis et l'explosion de l'offre en politique, le besoin pour les grandes organisations politiques de se différencier est devenu criant. Afin de tirer leur épingle du jeu, plusieurs organisations se sont tournées vers le marketing politique, une discipline particulièrement prolifique depuis quelques années. Au nombre des théories étudiées, le concept d'orientation vers le marché politique semble séduire un nombre croissant de partis (O'Cass, 2001; Ormrod, 2005, 2007). Pour être valide, cette approche doit considérer que l'électeur est un consommateur; un parallèle qui ne fait pas l'unanimité dans la littérature. Le présent article a été rédigé avec l'intention d'établir si le marketing est réellement applicable au niveau de la politique parlementaire en étudiant plus précisément l'orientation vers le marché politique. En bref, l'orientation vers le marché peut-elle être adaptée aux partis politiques? Pour répondre à ces questions, nous avons mené un terrain ethnographique dans le contexte du Parti libéral du Canada (PLC). Nos résultats montrent que, bien que les transformations mises en branle par le PLC sont très similaires aux résultats obtenus par Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) dans leur étude sur le changement culturel au sein d'entreprises commerciales, certaines différences fondamentales nous ont poussé à envisager cette approche sous un autre angle, à savoir une « orientation citoyenne ». Cette nouvelle vision, plus adaptée à un contexte démocratique, considère l'électeur comme étant un citoyen avant d'être un consommateur. Elle préconise aussi une compréhension des besoins de la population et une participation de celle-ci dans le processus de développement des politiques officielles et plateformes. Par ailleurs, nos résultats suggèrent que le processus menant à l'adoption d'une orientation citoyenne est le même que celui décrit par Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) dans le contexte de l'orientation vers le marché.

Mots clés: Marketing politique, orientation vers le marché politique, orientation citoyenne, Parti libéral du Canada, PLC, observation participante.

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I. Introduction

They [the members] like to think that politics is more noble than that, it's also they don't like the reduction of what we do to selling a product in the market... [And we] shouldn't be quite so precious as to think that somehow what we do has not been affected by what goes on in the marketplace.

- Bob Rae

Dans les démocraties représentatives modernes, la notion de parti politique ne requiert plus de définition. Les partis permettent l'agrégation de plusieurs valeurs et idéologies et, ce faisant, permettent à un plus grand nombre de citoyens de s'identifier à un courant donné ou de s'opposer à un autre (Seyd & Whiteley, 1992). L'exemple, dans l'Angleterre de la Révolution industrielle, des Whigs et des Tories, deux organisations farouchement opposées et retranchées dans leurs positions idéologiques, est éloquent pour présenter la notion de concurrence en politique.

Cette idée de concurrence entre les partis est certainement l'une des raisons qui a mené à l'avènement du marketing politique. Lors d'une entrevue qu'il nous a accordée quelques semaines avant de quitter la vie de député fédéral, l'Honorable Bob Rae nous révélait qu'il considérait que le marketing avait une grande influence sur la façon de faire des partis politiques. Ce qui se déroule dans le marché, disait-il, est lié aux nouvelles stratégies que développent les partis pour mieux performer lors des élections. Il est devenu essentiel pour les organisations politiques de se « connecter » avec l'électorat.

La littérature scientifique en marketing présente aujourd'hui de nombreux textes faisant état d'un net recul de la dimension idéologique dans la définition des partis politiques (Egan, 1999; Ormrod, 2005; Wring, 1997). Le marketing politique, en revanche, a pris son essor (Lock & Harris, 1996), notamment avec le concept

d'orientation vers le marché (O'Cass, 2001; Ormrod, 2005, 2007). Reeves & Chernatony (2006) avancent même que les partis politiques sont aujourd'hui principalement orientés vers le marché électoral plutôt que l'idéologie et la saine gouvernance. Cette approche considère l'électorat comme un marché qu'il est possible de desservir en répondant à ses besoins (énoncés ou latents) en passant par un processus pointu de collecte et de partage de l'information au sein de l'organisation. Cependant, le parallèle du marché est seulement possible si l'on considère que l'électeur vote selon le même processus cognitif que lorsqu'il consomme (et de là, que l'électeur est un consommateur). Ce raisonnement a d'ailleurs été abordé à profusion dans la littérature (Lock & Harris, 1996; Reeves et al., 2006; Smith & French, 2009; Tullock, Seldon, & Brady, 2002). Ceci étant dit, il faut rappeler qu'un parti ne vend rien, ni bien, ni service. L'objectif des partis politiques dans un système parlementaire est de représenter les citoyens. Le vote n'est pas une finalité en soi, dans la mesure où la saine gouvernance après avoir été élu n'est pas faite uniquement dans une perspective de service après-vente. L'analogie de la consommation est donc imparfaite.

Par le passé, plusieurs auteurs se sont concentrés sur la nature des partis ayant adopté une orientation vers le marché, et ont tenté de développer un modèle conceptuel de la collecte et du partage de l'information relative au marché électoral en s'inspirant principalement de la littérature commerciale (Ormrod, 2005; Ormrod & Henneberg, 2010b; Strömbäck, 2007). Notre article a été rédigé avec l'intention d'établir si le marketing est réellement applicable au niveau de la politique parlementaire en étudiant plus précisément l'orientation vers le marché politique. En bref, l'orientation vers le marché peut-elle être adaptée aux partis politiques? En étudiant la littérature provenant à la fois du marketing et des sciences politiques, une série de sous-questions ont été identifiées :

- Quel rôle le marketing tient-il au sein des partis politiques?
- Jusqu'à quel point les membres de partis perçoivent-ils l'existence de l'orientation vers le marché en politique, et dans quelle mesure y adhèrent-ils?

- Quelles différences y a-t-il entre l'adoption d'une orientation vers le marché dans un parti politique et dans une entreprise?

Pour répondre à ces questions, nous avons mené un terrain ethnographique dans le contexte du Parti libéral du Canada (PLC). Suite à sa pire performance électorale en 144 ans d'existence, le PLC a entrepris un grand chantier pour la reconstruction et la modernisation de son organisation et de sa base. Afin de recueillir des témoignages pertinents, nous avons suivi des membres de cette communauté dès l'élection partielle de 2012 dans la circonscription de Toronto—Danforth, puis lors d'un congrès, et des activités quotidiennes d'une association de circonscription, et nous avons aussi approché des candidats à la chefferie du parti en 2013.

Les résultats de cette recherche montrent que, bien que l'appui des membres quant à l'adoption d'une orientation vers le marché est inégale parmi les différentes instances du parti, les transformations mises en branle par le Parti libéral du Canada sont étonnamment similaires aux résultats obtenus par Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) dans leur étude sur le changement culturel au sein d'entreprises commerciales. Cependant, certaines différences quant à la nature de l'électorat nous ont poussés à réinterpréter nos résultats sous un nouveau jour. En fait, nous en sommes venus à la conclusion que la transformation prenant place au sein du Parti libéral visait plutôt la construction de ce que nous avons baptisé une « orientation citoyenne ».

Le présent mémoire se divise en cinq parties. Suite à cette introduction, le second chapitre présente un survol de la littérature existante dans les domaines connexes à l'étude. Cette revue de littérature couvrira notamment les concepts de la marque en politique, de la création d'une orientation vers le marché et fera aussi un survol des critiques face au marketing politique. Le contexte de la recherche est ensuite présenté au troisième chapitre, suivi des faits saillants tirés des résultats de l'article scientifique. La section suivante contient ledit article, et présente plus en détail notre méthodologie et nos résultats. L'article présente ensuite une discussion approfondie visant à répondre aux questionnements énoncés ci-haut, et les implications théoriques et managériales qui en découlent.

II. Revue de la littérature sur le marketing politique

A priori, il semble y avoir un consensus, en marketing, en ce qui a trait à l'existence de parallèles entre la promotion d'un parti politique et la vente d'un bien ou service comme produit de consommation. Le parallèle est d'ailleurs facile à faire : l'électeur possède une ressource limitée, à savoir son droit de vote, qu'il peut échanger afin de tenter de combler un besoin : une représentation au Parlement. Catherine Needham, dans son article de 2006, exprime d'ailleurs très bien ce postulat :

L'analyse en marketing politique s'appuie sur deux prémisses. Premièrement, que les choix que font les électeurs lors d'une élection sont analogues aux choix que les consommateurs font entre des biens ou services commerciaux. Deuxièmement, et par extension, qu'il existe des parallèles entre la mise en marché d'un service ou d'un bien de consommation et la promotion d'un parti politique. [traduction libre] (Needham, 2006).

Ce faisant, plusieurs théories ont été exportées du marketing conventionnel pour monter à l'assaut de l'électorat. Ultimement, bien sûr, les partis tentent de se rappeler au souvenir de l'électorat le jour du scrutin. Des stratégies tirées du marketing ont été proposées en abondance pour appuyer les partis politiques dans leurs efforts électoraux. Deux mémoires, documentent l'utilisation du positionnement (Deslauriers, 1986) et de l'orientation vers le marché (Delorme, 2010) en politique canadienne, ont notamment été rédigés à HEC Montréal.

Dans la littérature en général, deux concepts retiennent particulièrement l'attention : la marque politique (*political brand*) (Smith & French, 2009), et l'orientation vers le marché politique (*political market orientation*) (Ormrod, 2005). Dans les deux cas, l'objectif principal est de se rapprocher de l'électeur, d'un côté en tissant des liens mentaux avec lui, et d'un autre en bâtissant une connaissance approfondie de ses besoins et désirs.

a. La marque politique

Un parti politique pourrait se définir, si réduit à sa plus simple expression, comme étant « [la] réunion d'hommes qui professent la même doctrine politique » (Constant de Rebecque, 1817)). Similairement à une entreprise qui présente ses valeurs et principes au moyen d'une marque, le parti peut se doter d'une identité propre. En tant que personne morale, il est indépendant de ses membres individuels. Il doit être conscient de son image et de son message afin que cette identité soigneusement édifiée ne s'effondre pas dans la confusion ou le scandale. Cette façon d'envisager le parti politique est fort similaire à la définition de la marque, en marketing.

Avec les partis politiques, similairement aux organisations à but lucratif, la concurrence croissante a mené à la nécessité d'identifier des méthodes de communication plus efficaces (Stride & Lee, 2007). Parallèlement, Hankinson (2000) identifie plusieurs objectifs poursuivis par les organismes de charité, qui sont appuyés par l'adoption de la marque comme orientation principale : accroître la visibilité, renforcer la confiance, récolter des fonds, recruter des bénévoles et exercer une pression auprès des gouvernements. Ces objectifs sont similaires à ceux des partis politiques bien que, dans le cas à l'étude, le dernier point apporté par Hankinson (2000) devrait être remplacé par l'élection en bonne et due forme; le parti au pouvoir devenant le destinataire des actions de *lobbying*. L'objectif principal dans ce contexte est cependant axé vers la communication plutôt que la différenciation (Stride & Lee, 2007), ce qui est en contraste avec la marque comme stratégie commerciale.

Cette dernière a d'ailleurs été étudiée à profusion, et c'est principalement sous cet angle qu'elle a été appliquée aux sciences politiques (Needham, 2006; Reeves et al., 2006; Smith, 2001; Smith & French, 2009). Ceci est cohérent avec la prémisse selon laquelle l'électeur est assimilable au consommateur, en ce qu'il choisit, en échange d'une ressource limitée (son droit de vote), le fournisseur de services (un parti politique ou un candidat) qu'il trouve le plus adéquat pour combler ses besoins (un gouvernement qui le représente).

En ce sens, Needham (2006) présente explicitement l'action de voter comme étant « un achat important et peu fréquent » (*a large and infrequent purchase*), et traite de la nécessité de s'approprier les attributs d'une marque pour fidéliser l'électeur et minimiser les risques de dissonance cognitive. Le concept de loyauté est central à l'étude de la marque politique pour le parti, mais aussi plus spécifiquement pour son chef, qui est présenté comme une marque-personne distincte de son parti. Un chef dont la marque personnelle éclipse celle du parti peut cependant poser des problèmes, lorsque vient le temps de choisir un successeur.

L'image de marque des partis et chefs de partis est aussi employée comme baromètre d'une campagne électorale (Smith, 2001). La réponse des politiciens aux événements en cours de campagne (Smith, 2001), les politiques défendues en guise de points de différenciation (Needham, 2006), sont autant de facteurs qui peuvent jouer sur la réception du parti auprès de l'électorat.

En dépit des prémisses du marketing quant aux bénéfices de la marque, il existe une contradiction avec les objectifs des partis. D'une part la construction d'une marque politique est orientée à court terme vers l'électeur, et d'une autre l'optique idéologique à laquelle les partis cherchent à s'identifier est une stratégie de long terme (Reeves et al., 2006). L'omniprésence des marques dans la culture moderne a inévitablement une influence sur le processus de prise de décision des électeurs/consommateurs (Tullock et al., 2002). On va jusqu'à avancer que, puisque le marketing vise à accroître la satisfaction de l'électorat, l'assimilation des partis à des marques politiques serait bénéfique à l'ensemble de la société (Reeves et al., 2006). L'équilibre entre le long et le court terme est cependant souhaitable, quoiqu'il demeure à identifier.

Enfin, le parti est un raccourci mental pour l'électeur (Needham, 2006). Devant une offre complexe, le parti, à l'instar de la marque, facilite la compréhension des alternatives par la création d'un réseau de nœuds d'information (Keller, 1993; Seyd & Whiteley, 1992; Smith & French, 2009). Lorsqu'il visualise l'offre électorale, le citoyen se remémore le nom d'un parti et ce que ce dernier signifie en termes de valeurs et de positions sociales et économiques. Dans certains cas, il peut même y

associer des symboles (e.g. : la fleur de lys), des noms (e.g. : Tories), des individus (e.g. : Pierre Trudeau), des évènements (e.g. : l'Accord du Lac Meech) (Smith & French, 2009).

Les partis politiques, en dépit de la polémique entourant l'application du marketing aux enjeux gouvernementaux et électoraux, sont donc bel et bien comparables à des marques. La marque et le parti forment en effet un amalgame de symboles et de significations, et pourraient se définir comme un construit visant à faciliter l'interprétation et le choix par l'électeur ou le consommateur. Ils peuvent positionner, différencier et être invoqués pour communiquer et tisser des liens. Alors que le parti fait des promesses, la marque politique est une promesse. L'arrimage de ces deux concepts tend donc à mener le parti à devenir lui-même la promesse de ce qu'il défend dans sa plateforme, à incarner les promesses que ses concurrents ne font que *promettre*.

b. L'orientation vers le marché politique

L'orientation vers le marché (*market orientation*) est une approche visant la transformation de la culture organisationnelle des entreprises. L'un de ses buts est de redresser une marque déclinante en l'alignant sur le marché, ses besoins et ses attitudes, mais aussi en mobilisant toutes les parties prenantes de l'organisation (Gebhardt et al., 2006).

Certains auteurs la perçoivent comme l'implantation d'une culture marketing (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), alors que d'autres l'identifient comme étant le processus menant à cette implantation (Narver & Slater, 1990). Il est important de faire la distinction entre une orientation marketing (*marketing orientation*) et une orientation vers le marché (*market orientation*). La première traiterait plutôt d'une application fonctionnelle et ponctuelle du marketing, par exemple durant une campagne électorale, alors que la seconde serait axée vers une implantation perpétuelle et en mouvement des éléments qui seront la toile de fonds des relations entre tous les groupes impliqués (Gebhardt et al., 2006; Ormrod, 2005).

Similairement à l'application du concept de marques à la politique, le concept d'orientation vers le marché a pris une place de plus en plus grande au cours des dernières années dans l'interprétation des sciences politiques et, plus particulièrement, des partis politiques en Occident.

L'orientation vers le marché des organismes publics consisterait à comprendre, disséminer et répondre aux stimuli émanant du marché citoyen. Cette division du concept en trois étapes est d'ailleurs tirée de Kohli et Jaworski (1990), et est aussi reprise par O'Cass (2001) lorsqu'il raffine l'orientation vers le marché politique en l'appliquant plus spécifiquement aux partis. On suppose qu'un parti est plus susceptible d'être le choix des électeurs s'il comprend leurs désirs et besoins et s'il offre un produit cohérent et aligné sur ces derniers. Il s'agirait d'un phénomène reconnu par les décideurs au sein des organisations politiques (O'Cass, 2001).

Ormrod (2005) pousse plus loin, et intègre les concepts de génération et de dissémination de l'information de Kohli et Jaworski (1990), dans une « chaîne attitudinale » permettant la participation du *membership* dans l'élaboration d'une communication externe cohérente vers l'électorat. Il avance par ailleurs que la mise en place d'une orientation vers le marché politique passe par quatre sous-orientations distinctes, à savoir de l'électeur, des partis adverses, de l'interne (membres, candidats, professionnels, employés, etc.) et de l'externe (médias, lobbyistes, syndicats, fonction publique, etc.).

Néanmoins, cette approche n'est pas nécessairement adéquate pour toutes les organisations ou pour tous les partis politiques. Il est possible que les avantages d'une telle option ne soient pas significatifs, et qu'ils ne compensent pas les investissements en temps et en argent qui y seraient alloués. « [...] Le simple fait d'initier des actions orientées vers le marché ne garantit pas la qualité de ces actions. [Traduction libre] » ([...] *Simply engaging in market-oriented activities does not ensure the quality of those activities*) (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Cette idée est corroborée par Strömbäck (2007), qui a étudié les critères de succès d'une telle adaptation. Ceux-ci incluent notamment la densité et la perception du positionnement des partis sur le spectre Droite-Gauche, l'appui des membres, le

niveau de partialité des médias, etc. D'abord plus la position sur le spectre est ambiguë, plus il est facile pour un parti d'atteindre une orientation vers le marché. Dans le cas du *membership*, Strömbäck (2007) avance qu'un important bassin de sympathisants actifs risque de rendre plus difficile l'adoption d'une orientation vers le marché. Quant à l'arène médiatique, il semble plus crucial d'adhérer à cette orientation lorsque les médias ont un haut niveau de partialité.

Ormrod et Henneberg (2010a), enfin, approfondissent l'importance du niveau d'activité des membres de l'organisation politique et l'orientation vers le marché politique. L'adoption d'une telle orientation, à terme, vient placer les besoins et désirs de l'électorat au centre de l'élaboration du produit politique (la plateforme et les promesses inhérentes). La participation des membres permet de disséminer l'information émanant du marché électoral au sein du parti et d'y répondre de façon orchestrée et cohérente. La permanence du parti doit alors communiquer efficacement le produit au marché afin que la marque politique soit la plus facile à rappeler au souvenir de l'électeur une fois à l'isoloir. Le parti peut y parvenir au moyen de mécanismes adaptés à sa culture organisationnelle.

Au-delà d'attirer son vote, le parti doit aussi mener l'électeur à être satisfait de son choix (Lees-Marshment, 2001), tout en préservant un certain équilibre face aux quatre sous-orientations susmentionnées (Ormrod, 2005; Strömbäck, 2007).

Ultimement, le marketing demeure la science qui étudie les marchés et la consommation, alors que les partis politiques relèvent en théorie des sciences politiques. La position généralement adoptée par les chercheurs de ces dernières s'oppose à l'assimilation du processus électoral au marché. Les partis politiques semblent aussi officiellement s'opposer à cette pratique, mais il n'en reste pas moins que les observations effectuées par les chercheurs en marketing tendent à indiquer le contraire, ou du moins en partie. Reste à savoir si l'électeur adhère à cette vision des choses ou si, à la rigueur, il en perçoit les indices.

c. Une critique du marketing politique

Comme le mentionne Delorme (2010), il existe peu de littérature en marketing qui remette en question les bénéfices rattachés à la professionnalisation des campagnes électorales. Du côté de la communauté politique, en revanche, certains auteurs sont fortement opposés à l'existence-même du marketing politique. D'autres sont plus nuancés, et considèrent que cette approche est néfaste à la qualité de la politique (voir Henneberg (2004)). C'est le cas notamment de Savigny (2008) (dans Lilleker (2009)), qui écrit explicitement que « le marketing en politique est un problème ». Pour justifier ce propos, elle avance que l'adoption d'un modèle marketing par les organisations politiques favorise l'adoption d'une rationalité intéressée chez l'électeur. Cette transformation serait donc avant tout bénéfique aux partis et n'apporterait rien à la démocratie et à la société. On peut ainsi supposer que, converti en choix de consommation, l'action-même de voter devienne facultative, ce qui favoriserait le désengagement populaire.

D'autres auteurs voient le marketing politique comme une simple réinterprétation ou une adaptation de la théorie commerciale et n'est pas, à proprement dit, une discipline en soi (O'Shaughnessy, 2001). Enfin, d'autres voient une discipline clairement définie, indépendante de la politique et du marketing (Needham, 2006; Reeves et al., 2006). Scammell (1999) est vraisemblablement l'auteur qui résume ce débat le mieux, en avançant qu'il n'y a pas, à ce jour, de consensus sur la nature réelle de ce qui inclut ou non le marketing politique. De son côté, Henneberg (2004) conclut que la théorie présente de nombreuses lacunes, notamment l'absence d'un cadre conceptuel permettant de discuter des implications éthiques de cette approche.

Ceci étant dit, ce qui est généralement considéré comme du marketing politique est en partie erroné a priori. O'Shaughnessy (2001) considère que le terme « marketing », lorsqu'employé dans le contexte de la politique, est plutôt une généralisation bien hâtive: « En réalité le terme "marketing politique" serait plutôt un raccourci de convenance pour une multitude d'actions vaguement reliées. [Traduction libre] » (*In reality the phrase "political marketing" may appear to be*

used as a convenient shorthand for a host of loosely related activities). En fait, il s'agirait bien souvent de pratiques de communication plutôt que du marketing à proprement dit.

C'est là d'ailleurs une distinction importante. Slater & Narver (1998) notent une différence entre les entreprises dirigées vers le client (*customer-led*) et les entreprises orientées vers le marché (*market-oriented*), l'une s'inscrivant dans une stratégie de court terme, l'autre dans une stratégie de long terme.

Ceci étant dit, il peut être conclu que les critiques adressées à l'endroit du marketing politique sont surtout dérivées de la confusion existant entre le marketing théorique et les tactiques empruntées librement à la littérature marketing. L'orientation vers le marché politique, en revanche, va plus loin qu'un simple désir de communiquer à l'électeur qu'un parti est meilleur qu'un autre. L'objectif est d'aller au-delà des désirs exprimés par l'électeur pour identifier les besoins (exprimés ou non) (Gebhardt et al., 2006). Il s'agit en quelque sorte de mener l'électorat avec un programme qui le représente, plutôt que de se laisser mener par les sondages d'opinions (Reeves et al., 2006).

Cette confusion sur la nature du marketing politique a mené à la rédaction de l'article présenté dans ce mémoire. La question de recherche qu'il présente, à savoir si le marketing politique est bel et bien applicable à travers l'étude de l'orientation vers le marché politique, se veut en quelque sorte une nouvelle ouverture dans ce débat.

III. Contexte d'étude

Afin d'étudier l'orientation vers le marché politique, nous avons choisi le cas du Parti libéral du Canada (PLC). Cette organisation a été retenue pour deux grandes raisons. D'abord, le réseau de contact de l'un des auteurs permettait à l'équipe d'avoir accès à des entrevues auprès de répondants occupant des postes stratégiques au sein du parti (e.g. : chef intérimaire, exécutifs locaux, candidats à la chefferie, députés, etc.). Ensuite, et principalement, la situation délicate dans laquelle se trouvait le parti, ainsi que les réformes annoncées afin d'y remédier, étaient très prometteuses d'un terrain riche en résultats.

Lors de notre collecte de données, le PLC détenait 35 des 308 sièges de la Chambre des Communes, lui conférant le statut de tiers-parti pour la première fois de son histoire (De Grandpré, 2011; Sibonney, 2011). À peine sept ans avant l'élection du 2 mai 2011, où le parti a obtenu ce résultat, il en détenait 135 et formait un gouvernement minoritaire. Progressivement, sa position s'est dégradée, passant à 103 sièges en 2006, puis 77 en 2008. Une chute similaire lors des élections de 2015 signifierait, à toute fin pratique, l'extinction du Parti libéral du Canada. Certains croient même que ce déclin est irréversible (Newman, 2011).

Le contexte du Parti libéral était donc particulièrement intéressant. Afin de survivre, il lui fallait se réinventer et adopter un profond changement de culture organisationnelle. Ce scénario concorde justement avec la situation dans laquelle se trouvaient la plupart des entreprises étudiées par Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) avant qu'elles ne tentent de passer à une orientation vers le marché. La volonté de se renouveler s'est manifestée presque immédiatement après l'annonce des résultats de l'élection de 2011 (Liberal Party of Canada, 2011). Dès lors, les messages envoyés aux membres ont adopté un vocabulaire approprié, discutant de « renouveau », de « campagne permanente », de « *rebranding* », etc. (Apps, 2011; Rae, 2011)

Le passage à une orientation vers le marché politique pourrait cependant s'avérer difficile, considérant les grandes différences dans les habitudes de votes d'une province à l'autre. La complexité de la communauté libérale fédérale pourrait en

soi être la source de nombreux conflits entre les différents paliers et départements. Un aperçu de la structure du parti est fourni en quatrième annexe de l'article scientifique : nous ne nous y attarderons donc pas en détail ici. Quoi qu'il en soit, la gestion de la marque libérale et la capacité du parti à générer et utiliser l'intelligence de marché seront autant de défis que l'organisation devra relever si elle souhaite à nouveau être compétitive dans l'arène politique.

Cette tentative de renouveau est loin de garantir le succès du parti libéral lors d'élections futures, mais il s'agit assurément d'un terrain riche en matériel pour les auteurs et chercheurs en marketing et en sciences politiques.

IV. Apport original

a. La redéfinition de l'électeur : de consommateur à citoyen

Les résultats de l'article présenté ci-après montrent qu'il n'y a toujours pas de consensus quant à l'analogie « électeur-consommateur ». Si certains membres de la communauté politique sont prêts à adhérer avec enthousiasme à cette comparaison, d'autres la rejettent entièrement. Sans consensus, il nous a donc été impossible de généraliser cette prémisse du marketing politique.

Essentiellement, l'article est en accord avec les conclusions de la littérature issue des sciences politiques. Une orientation marketing (*marketing orientation*) ou une orientation dirigée vers le client (*voter-driven orientation*) peuvent avoir des effets néfastes sur la qualité à long terme d'un système démocratique. Puisque ces deux approches ne font que suivre les désirs exprimés par les électeurs et les considèrent comme des clients potentiels, elles ne génèrent pas de propositions ou de solutions innovantes à soumettre à l'électorat.

Cependant, nos résultats indiquent aussi que la communauté politique interprète souvent de façon erronée la nature du marketing. Plusieurs répondants attribuent des tactiques de communication ou de relations publiques au marketing, et mentionnent presque systématiquement la politique négative comme une externalité néfaste de la croissance du marketing politique. Le rejet du marketing

politique peut donc être basé sur le comportement de certains partis, et non sur les implications de la science elle-même.

Par ailleurs, il nous est apparu que si l'électorat, pris dans son ensemble, agissait de façon similaire à un marché, il était plus problématique d'effectuer la même comparaison au niveau de l'électeur individuel. L'électeur ne consomme pas de par sa fonction d'électeur; il est *aussi* consommateur, tout en étant électeur. Ces deux rôles font tous deux partie d'un concept plus général, à savoir celui de citoyenneté. L'acte de consommer et l'acte de voter sont en effet similaires, en ce qu'ils nécessitent une réflexion et une décision entre des options mutuellement exclusives. Ils peuvent aussi mener l'individu à tisser des liens avec l'une ou l'autre de ces options, or il n'est pas difficile de comprendre comment ils ont pu être assimilés l'un à l'autre.

b. L'orientation citoyenne : un construit natif au marketing politique

Malgré de grandes ressemblances entre le modèle conceptuel d'Ormrod (2005) sur l'orientation vers le marché politique et la structure que le Parti libéral du Canada semble vouloir adapter, le scepticisme des répondants était trop important pour être ignoré. Prenant cet aspect en considération, les résultats montrent qu'il s'agirait en fait d'un construit différent, quoique similaire.

Il n'y a pas de marché électoral en propre, du moins pas selon la communauté libérale. Les électeurs forment un tout similaire à un marché, mais est fondamentalement différent dans son rôle.

Cet article ne s'oppose pas à la proposition que l'orientation vers le marché politique existe, où qu'il s'agisse d'une approche valide pour certains partis politiques. Cependant, il la considère comme n'étant pas entièrement adaptée au concept de citoyenneté et à la politique partisane moderne. Comme l'avance O'Shaughnessy (2001), la politique et le marketing sont trop différents pour simplement appliquer l'adjectif « politique » après l'un ou l'autre des concepts issus du marketing conventionnel et en rester là.

Plutôt que de voir l'électorat comme un groupe de consommateurs payant en votes, il est préférable de reprendre le concept de citoyens qui expriment leurs opinions sur des enjeux tant au niveau de la politique que de la consommation, au moyen de leur droit de vote.

Puisque la mission de l'organisation à l'étude est d'aider les électeurs à atteindre leurs propres buts et objectifs en tant que citoyens canadiens, nous avons retenu le terme « orientation citoyenne » (*citizen orientation*) pour décrire le produit de la transformation culturelle prenant place au sein du Parti libéral du Canada.

Le concept d'orientation citoyenne semble avoir été converti depuis la littérature marketing avec succès. Il s'agit ici d'un phénomène marketing que les partis politiques peuvent considérer comme indigène à leur propre environnement, sans avoir à craindre qu'il ne corrompe leur structure où qu'il paraisse opportuniste.

Ceci signifie que les partis politiques s'appuient réellement sur des concepts marketing, et peuvent même en créer pour leur propre milieu. Il est avancé de surcroît que, pris sous cet angle, la communauté politique aurait moins de base pour rejeter unilatéralement le marketing politique.

c. La transformation culturelle des partis : l'adoption du citoyen comme cible

Bien que l'environnement légal des partis politiques soit différent de celui des entreprises commerciales, le processus menant à l'adoption d'une orientation citoyenne est étonnamment similaire à celui menant à l'orientation vers le marché.

D'abord, l'organisation doit reconnaître la précarité de sa situation. Dans le cas du Parti libéral, les besoins du public n'étaient plus adéquatement pris en compte. Tout comme dans l'étape d'Initiation de Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006), plusieurs membres de la structure occupant des postes clés devaient en venir à cette réalisation. De par son rôle de symbole et de figure rassembleuse, le chef de parti

doit prendre une part active dans la planification et la mise en place de la reconstruction.

Tout comme avec l'étape d'Initiation, la Reconstitution est aussi très similaire à sa contrepartie commerciale. Le « retranchement des dissidents et l'embauche de croyants » (*removal of dissenters and hiring of believers*) se fait en attribuant plus de pouvoirs aux associations locales et en valorisant l'engagement des membres et des sympathisants. Un chef fort est nécessaire afin d'empêcher des groupes aux intérêts divergents de semer la zizanie au sein du parti, et afin d'encourager la création d'une culture d'entraide et de collaboration. Cette collaboration est essentielle à une collecte d'information de qualité, ce qui permet au parti de mieux rétablir les liens avec l'électorat. Tel que mentionné plus tôt, l'électorat ne devrait pas être vu simplement comme une source potentielle de votes, mais bien comme le bénéficiaire des efforts du parti, en tant que citoyens canadiens. Établir de nouveaux liens, sur la base de valeurs, d'aspirations et de rêves communs, devrait ainsi s'avérer plus simple.

Enfin, il est primordial de montrer les transformations entreprises par le parti, tant aux membres qu'à la population. Les innovations et changements majeurs, qu'ils soient au niveau des politiques officielles, des processus de sélection ou de l'élection d'un nouveau chef, devraient devenir autant des bornes permettant d'évaluer le progrès du parti et d'en célébrer les succès. Il s'agit ici de rassembler une portion importante du *membership* afin de tenir des événements de Démarcation successifs, plutôt qu'un seul grand événement pour marquer le lancement du chantier de reconstruction. Ces événements, de surcroît, permettent de renforcer le concept de communauté, et la proposition selon laquelle le parti est ouvert et en pleine transformation.

Ultimement, la résolution de problème doit devenir un mécanisme universel et inclusif de toutes les parties prenantes. Ceci est vrai à l'intérieur du parti, mais aussi avec la population en général, considérant le nouvel accent placé sur le citoyen et sa contribution au futur de la nation.

d. Le rôle du leadership : exercer le pouvoir et mener le mouvement

La coalition menant le changement (*guiding coalition*) décrite par Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) est aussi présente dans le parti politique, à quelques différences près.

La coalition en environnement commercial n'a pas nécessairement à être visible, du point de vue du marché. Dans un environnement politique, par contre, le parti gagne à ce que sa transformation et ses architectes soient vus du public. En effet, si l'aile administrative du parti est bien souvent invisible, le chef du parti, lui, est toujours scruté à la loupe par les médias. Le rôle du chef au sein de la coalition et de la transformation, notamment en tant qu'instigateur de réformes, a été mentionné par des répondants tout au long de la recherche. Cette proposition est appuyée par Needham (2005), qui traite du rôle marketing de la marque personnelle du chef, et par Selznick (1943), quant à la visibilité du chef.

Nonobstant son rôle de premier plan dans le recrutement et l'unification du parti, le chef ne peut à la fois conceptualiser et implanter toutes les réformes nécessaires à l'avènement d'une orientation citoyenne. Le parti doit donc s'appuyer sur la coalition mentionnée précédemment, qui réunit des officiers de haut rang de tous les départements.

La coalition tire sa légitimité de la nature élue de ses membres. À l'exception du directeur national, qui est salarié, et de certains employés, la plupart des officiers formant la coalition sont bénévoles et traditionnellement élus par des délégués lors de congrès biennaux. La création de la coalition peut s'avérer problématique, particulièrement en temps de transition. Les officiers sont élus lors de congrès biennaux, alors que le chef est élu par un processus enclenché uniquement lors de l'annonce d'une vacance. Modifier ces processus requiert des amendements constitutionnels, qui ne peuvent être apportés que lors d'un congrès. La seule alternative est de passer par un intérim, dont les pouvoirs sont habituellement limités. Bâtir la coalition est donc difficile, surtout si l'appui du parti pour le chef est incertain.

Le parti a d'ailleurs souffert de l'absence d'un chef fort et unificateur au cours des dernières années. Pendant plus d'une décennie, des clans successifs se sont affrontés pour mener leur champion au poste de chef. Les transitions de 2003, de 2006 et de 2009 ne se sont pas faites sans heurt. Cependant, l'exemple du chef intérimaire Bob Rae a montré qu'il était possible de passer par une transition harmonieuse pour passer d'un chef sortant à un nouveau. Tel que mentionné plus tôt, le chef détient le rôle essentiel de symbole unificateur. Le Bureau du Chef détient la responsabilité de maintenir les divers groupes d'intérêts unis et de construire une vision qui peut être partagée, défendue et présentée de façon concertée et harmonieuse à l'électorat, d'un océan à l'autre.

Dans le contexte à l'étude, la période de deux ans entre l'élection de 2011 et la course au leadership de 2013 a donné suffisamment de temps au chef intérimaire pour entreprendre les diverses modifications nécessaires à la réinvention du parti.

L'article scientifique commence à la page suivante

Citizen Orientation: replacing the market in the political landscape

1. Abstract

With the creation of small parties and an explosion of the political offer, the need to differentiate became essential for political parties. To do so, many organisations turned to political marketing. In the last few years, a growing number of parties have specifically shown an interest in the concept of political market orientation (O’Cass, 2001; Ormrod, 2005, 2007). To be valid, this approach needs to consider the elector as a consumer. However, this parallel is still debated in the literature. The present article was written in order to determine if marketing could really be applied to parliamentary politics through the study of political market orientation. Can market orientation, in fact, be adapted to political parties? To answer this question, we studied the context of the Liberal party of Canada (LPC) as an ethnographic fieldwork. Our findings show that although the actions taken by the LPC in the course of the last two years fall remarkably close to the results highlighted by Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) in their analysis of creating a market orientation in Corporate America, certain fundamental differences led us to consider the Party’s approach from a new angle, namely a “citizen orientation”. This new vision, more adapted to a democratic context, considers the elector as being a citizen before being a consumer. It further recognizes the importance of understanding the population’s needs and its involvement in the development of policy and platforms. Moreover, our results also suggest that the process leading to citizen orientation is the same as the one described by Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) in the context of a market orientation.

Keywords: Political marketing, political market orientation, citizen orientation, Liberal Party of Canada, LPC, participant observation.

2. Introduction

To me, it's a problem to establish politicians as being salesmen and the electors as being buyers. [...] The underlying philosophy of our democracy is that politicians are the workers, and the citizens, they're the bosses¹.

- Justin Trudeau

Elected to the House of Commons in 2008, and again in 2011, Justin Trudeau was one of the 35 Liberal Members of Parliament to have kept their seats in the 2011 Canadian general election. At the time of this research, Justin was running to become the next leader of the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC); a race he would later win. We met in his riding office of Papineau, in November of 2012, where he exposed his views on political marketing and the rebuilding of the LPC. According to him, marketing was a huge part of modern politics, although not on the basis of consumption. Political marketing would then only be acceptable if used in an attempt to move beyond a buyer-seller relationship.

The awareness of marketing in political parties is hardly surprising, as it appears to be a trend in western politics (Needham, 2005; O'Cass, 2001; Strömbäck, 2007). For instance, political parties and other non-profit organisations have been encouraged in the literature to adopt branding strategies for many years (Needham, 2006; Reeves et al., 2006; Scammell, 2007; Stride & Lee, 2007). Journalists and commentators have also referred to the concept in the mainstream media (eg.: Cohen, 2012; Harris, 2013). Yet at the root of it all, most authors have assimilated the act of voting to an act of consumption, converting the electoral process to a political market (Needham, 2006).

¹ The interviews were carried out in the preferred language of the informant: either French or English. Interviews performed in French were then translated by the main author for the purpose of this research.

This raises a fundamental question: can there be a political market if, as Justin Trudeau suggests, there is no political consumer? And if not, can such a field as political marketing exist?

At the present, there is no clear definition of what political marketing is (Scammell, 1999). However, a growing number of authors have been addressing the notion of political market orientation (ie.: market orientation applied to politics) (Lees-Marshment, 2001; O’Cass, 2001; Ormrod, 2005). This concept, in essence, refers to the organization-wide adoption of the market (ie.: electorate) as the main focus of all party activities (rather than the brand or the product), through the generation and dissemination of market intelligence (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; Ormrod & Henneberg, 2010b). In order for such an overhaul to take place, any organization must go through a heavy transformation process in which meanings and values become increasingly shared across departments, and where shifts in power are inevitable (Gebhardt et al., 2006).

In short, political market orientation aims to move beyond marketing and consumption to concentrate on the electorate as a market, creating grounds for reconciliation between the political marketing literature and the idea of Justin Trudeau’s proposition.

This research explores the applicability of marketing in the context of parliamentary politics through the study of political market orientation in the recovering Liberal Party of Canada. It further analyses the evolution of definitions and symbols within the organization, in regards to the electorate and the political market. It also introduces the level of awareness of the studied party, as to the nature of its own cultural transformation. To do so, we adopted a qualitative approach based on ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews with members of the federal liberal community.

Our findings show that although support for political marketing is uneven in the membership and in the executive and parliamentary wings of the party, the actions taken in the course of the last two years fall remarkably close to the results

highlighted by Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) in their analysis of creating a market orientation in Corporate America. However, differences in the nature of the electorate led us to rethink the applicability of political market orientation. In fact, what we uncovered were the foundations of what we would call a “citizen orientation”.

Our results allow for a separation between marketing practices and citizen orientation, the former being used for communication purposes, and the latter for developing the style and direction the organization wishes to adopt as an option for government. This research differs from the previous literature on political market orientation by offering a model for reconciling marketing, market orientation and political science, through the creation of the citizen orientation approach.

3. Review of the literature on political marketing

At first glance, there appears to be a consensus in marketing as to the existence of parallels between the promotion of a political party and the sale of goods and services. The parallel is easily made: the elector has a limited resource (his vote), which he can exchange in order to satisfy a need (parliamentary representation). Catherine Needham presents this analogy in her 2006 article:

Political marketing analyses are premised on two assumptions. [First] that the choices voters make at election time are analogous to the choices consumers make between commercial products or services. Secondly, and by extension, that parallels exist between marketing a consumer product or service and promoting a political party (Needham, 2006).

Deriving from this proposition, we have assembled the literature on political marketing in general, as well as political market orientation and change more specifically.

3.1. Political marketing, brands and communities

In the dominant political marketing framework, party behaviour is interchangeable with the concept of a “product” to be metaphorically “sold” to voters. This perception is embraced by Needham, who describes the act of voting as “large and infrequent purchases” to justify the use of marketing in politics (Needham, 2006).

Similarly, Parties can be assimilated to brands. Branding in the non-profit sector in general (Hankinson, 2000; Stride & Lee, 2007), and more specifically to the field of political marketing (Smith & French, 2009), has become the focus of a growing number of academic papers. The ubiquitous nature of brands in modern consumption made it inevitable that it would spread to politics (Tullock et al., 2002).

Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, as early as 1817, defined a party as a “group of men who profess the same political doctrine” (Constant de Rebecque, 1817). This

definition outlines the existence of a shared set of values or aspirations between members of political organizations. This is the main similarity between parties and brands, as O'Shaughnessy (2001) explains: both party and brand can be used as vehicles to promote values.

Buying a consumer product is not value neutral either: with the ascent of branding, values have become more important as products/brands cease (if ever they were) to be defined by their utility function alone, and became endowed with the symbolic meanings and lifestyle associations that advertising has poured into them. Values enter many purchase decisions – for example, environmental ones. (O'Shaughnessy, 2001)

In fact, brand image and party leaders' personal brands can be considered a viable barometer of electoral campaigns (Smith, 2001). Likewise, policy has been deemed similar to points-of-difference (Needham, 2006; Smith, 2001). Indeed, political branding is considered to be a mental shortcut for the elector, and is far from being seen as detrimental to the quality of the electoral system (Needham, 2006; Smith & French, 2009), although this claim has been challenged (Moufahim & Lim, 2009; Savigny, 2008).

This challenge resonates with Reeves, de Chernatony & Carrigan (2006), who postulate that parties find themselves at a cross-road, having to choose between a short-term exercise in branding, and a long-term, sustainable policy-driven approach. In short, parties have to choose between “following” and “driving” the electoral market. Yet, from a “consumer perspective”, electors would be more likely to find motivation to learn and interact with different political options as brands, rather than parties; voting with their emotional intelligence, rather than with sheer rationality (Smith & French, 2009).

Smith & French base their findings on the premise that electors are becoming ever more similar to postmodern consumers. As such, they are said to be searching for a deeper connection, a greater sense of community and authenticity, as well as a redesign of the role and definition of political brands. This is in line with the postmodern consumer concepts of brand tribalism (Cova, 1997; Cova & Cova, 2002; Mitchell & Imrie, 2011) or brand communities (McAlexander, Schouten, &

Koenig, 2002; Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau, Muniz Jr, & Arnould, 2009). The notion of tribalism in the political field isn't new, as mentioned by Duffy when describing the early days of Canada.

[...] in the 19th century most voters were what would today be called "tribal" Tories or "tribal" Grits attached to parties by religious, racial or class interests and unlikely to change vote from one election to another (Duffy, 2002).

Tribes and communities tend to assemble more and more around brands in the post-modern market. Such also appears to be the case with political brands. Members interact with one another in the context of the party, but at the same time they also interact with the party brand (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001). They share their experience, feel greater attachment and loyalty (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011) and become ambassadors as well as co-creators of the political brand (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001).

Of course, there are instances in which some members of the community are more prominent than others. Indeed, instances where celebrities from other fields become candidates are far from rare. One has only to think of Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger in the United-States, or of Ken Dryden and Marc Garneau in Canada. This can be linked to celebrity endorsement of brands (McCracken, 1989), considering the previously established brand analogy (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Needham, 2006). The concept of person brands, here, becomes even more relevant.

In terms of decision making and leadership, Needham considers that charismatic leaders can be beneficial to the electoral results of a party (Needham, 2006). Yet, she states that although parties can "thrive" under such leader brands, they should also be wary of managing their succession, for popular response to a person brand can easily dissolve once the leader steps down. The examples of John Turner, following Pierre Trudeau, or Al Gore, following Bill Clinton, come to mind. Needham's findings are that if a party chooses to rely on its leader's brand, its gains will likely be short lived; on the other hand, sustaining a party brand would allow for long term gains and, as she puts it, repeat sales. Likewise, "Parties as a

whole” have been identified as most influential of voting behavior in Canada, as opposed to party leaders and local candidates, which supports Needham’s findings. On the other hand, party leaders have been picking up steam ever since the 1988 election (Pammett & Dornan, 2011).

Finally, political marketing offers a broader theoretical basis to evaluate party and elector behaviour than political science alone (Scammell, 1999). Used adequately, marketing science can provide parties with the means of developing an overall, encompassing strategy to push for the realization of their goals, rather than to rely on disseminated communication tactics. This is the basis of political market orientation.

3.2. Political market orientation and change

Political party orientations have evolved at a fast pace over the last decades. As an example, in her 2001 paper, Lees-Marshment describes the evolution of the UK Labour Party, moving from a product-oriented party in 1983 to a sales-oriented party in 1987, and finally to market orientation in 1997 (Lees-Marshment, 2001). In another article, she describes the marketing process of market-oriented parties by highlighting the reversal of “product design” and “market intelligence”, putting the latter first rather than last (Lees-Marshment, 2001). “Product adjustment” and “product implementation” (where “product” should be understood as platform and behaviour) were further added before the party could communicate and launch its campaign. According to this vision, market intelligence is paramount to the success of a market orientation philosophy.

Yet, if the customer is king, can it also be said of the elector? There is something noble in the thought that electors fully control their destiny and, to be sure, representative democracy is based on relative majority at the constituency level. Even so, it is fairly rare in systems with over two parties that any single formation obtains popular support above the overall majority level of “fifty percent plus

one”². Although collectively the assembled electorate has the final word, the individual elector isn’t quite king, as we will see shortly (Lock & Harris, 1996). This counters the suggestion that the use of marketing or market orientation would stifle political debate. Furthermore, the distinction between the business definitions of “customer-led” and “market orientation” is crucial to understanding the role of the post-modern organization. Customer-led firms aim to answer desires explicitly voiced by their customers, whereas market-oriented firms aim at satisfying needs, both expressed and latent (Slater & Narver, 1998). Shortly put, the difference lies between listening and understanding.

Adapting the works of Narver & Slater (1990) and Kohli & Jaworski (1990) on market orientation, a number of authors have worked on developing a conceptual model for its application in the political field. The most complete is arguably the one presented by Ormrod (2005), in which the author presents a behavioural chain

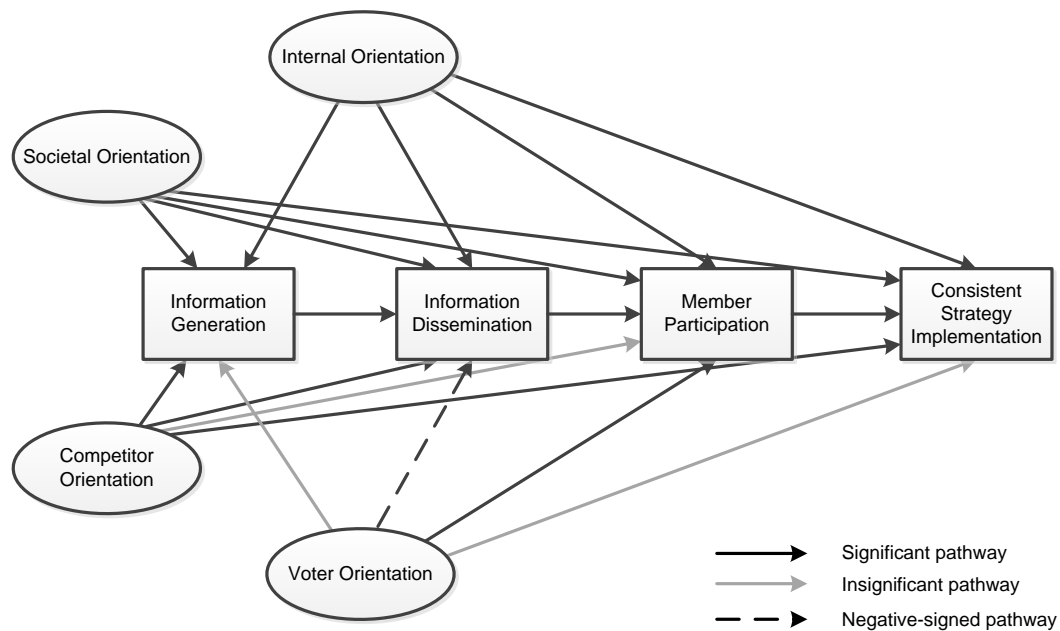


Figure 1 - Political market orientation model
(Ormrod & Henneberg, 2010b)

² Instances have also occurred, although rare, in which an election was won by a Party without winning the popular vote (e.g.: 1876, 1888 and 2000 United-Sates presidential elections; 1896, 1926, 1957, 1979 Canadian federal elections; 1886, 1890, 1944, 1966, 1998 Quebec provincial elections.)

of four successive steps in the strategy development of market oriented Parties: 1) information generation, 2) information dissemination, 3) member participation and 4) consistent external communication. He then proceeds to identifying four stakeholder groups, which serve as underlying orientations to Political Market Orientation: 1) Voter, 2) Internal, 3) Competitor and 4) Societal orientations.

Ormrod & Henneberg, expanding on these findings, suggest that voter orientation, as presented in figure 1, does not significantly influence political market orientation, arguing instead that parties are and should be “looking beyond the customer” (ie.: the elector)(Ormrod & Henneberg, 2010b). This effectively decreases the risk of a populist approach, and supports the distinction between a market orientation and a customer-led approach, as postulated by Slater & Narver (1998) in the corporate sector. Their findings show that focusing on internal and societal concerns have the greatest impact on all four steps of the behavioral chain. To a lesser extent, concerns about competitors will influence information generation and dissemination, as well as strategy implementation, while voter-wise concerns will have a relative impact on member participation (Ormrod & Henneberg, 2010a).

The findings of Needham and Lees-Marshment describe the intelligence gathering process as an extension of the business market research model in market-oriented firms, and Ormrod & Henneberg’s work develop the adaptation of behavior and communications derived from it. In the literature, two problems arise, when using this approach. First, the use of marketing might not be fully adapted to the realm of politics (e.g.: the participation of the media as stakeholders in the political debate) (Lock & Harris, 1996; O’Shaughnessy, 2001; Savigny & Temple, 2010). Realizing this, it is important to understand that the successful conversion of business practices is not guaranteed, and could even backfire, for instance in case of negative advertising. Secondly, this approach has more to do with the behaviour of political market-oriented parties, rather than the process that allowed them to adopt such an orientation. This makes it difficult for other organizations to benefit from the literature.

To understand the needs and criteria of an organisation in the context of a market-centered cultural overhaul, we relied on business literature. Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr. (2006) broke the process into four stages namely: 1) Initiation, 2) Reconstitution, 3) Institutionalization and 4) Maintenance. This process is presented in the figure below.

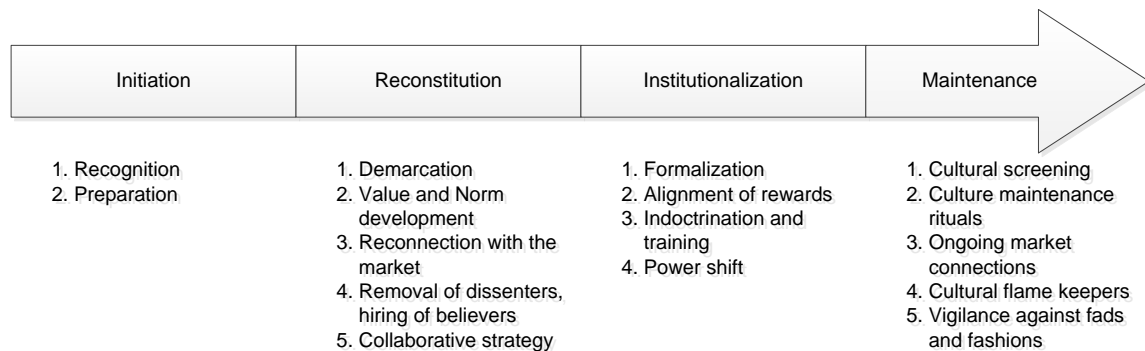


Figure 2 - Process of Creating a Market Orientation
(Gebhardt, Carpenter, Sherry Jr (2006))

The Initiation stage describes the first steps required for any true overhaul to occur, namely the recognition of past failures, and the preparation leading to the transformation. Reconstitution comprises formal demarcation, the development of new values and norms, reconnection with market, assembling and purification of a dedicated team and implementation of a collaborative strategy. Institutionalization can be defined by the formalizing of the newly adopted processes and values, through alignment of rewards, “indoctrination” and training. Lastly, Maintenance includes cultural screening and maintenance through rituals, perpetuation and renewal of market connections and forecasting. Requirements for a cultural transformation such as this include the assembling of a guiding coalition strong enough to effectively bring about the changes needed to go forward. Selznick (1943) suggests that any transformation within an organization such as a political party should be led by the leadership. Another requirement is the mass-awareness and sharing of the purpose of the organization: to understand and provide an answer to a need. This mass-awareness can be initiated locally or across the organization, as Zald & Berger (1978) have described in their work on social

movements. Nevertheless, the shared meaning advocated by Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr. (2006) must eventually encompass all levels and departments for the transformation to take hold.

3.3. Validity and Research question

The concept of political marketing is still frowned upon by many scholars and creates a certain level of unease in the general population. The morality of identifying voters as consumers and parties as brands has been challenged by authors from both political science and marketing.

Some scholars are strongly opposed to the very existence of political marketing. Some consider it detrimental to politics – if not immoral – (see Henneberg (2004)), while others define it only as an approximate adaptation of the business marketing theory (O'Shaughnessy, 2001). Others yet mention a clearly defined field, independent from the mainstream business marketing literature (Needham, 2006; Reeves et al., 2006). Lock & Harris (1996), for their part, consider that political marketing and mainstream marketing are different enough that “direct transference of techniques or solutions [is] less obvious than is often assumed”, although many marketing theories tend to show great potential in the fields of politics. The only certainty appears to be the lack of a consensus around the very definition of what is political marketing (Scammell, 1999).

Be that as it may, what is generally perceived as political marketing is often a misinterpretation to begin with. O'Shaughnessy challenges the validity of using the term “marketing” to describe political tactics: “In reality the phrase “political marketing” may appear to be used as a convenient shorthand for a host of loosely related activities” (O'Shaughnessy, 2001).

In the business literature, Slater & Narver (1998) also made a distinction between customer-led firms and market-oriented firms, one being short term oriented (which would, in politics, entail a certain level of populism), the other long term oriented (involving innovation and the identification of needs).

This being said, we postulate that most criticism of “political marketing” comes from the inability to distinguish loosely adapted marketing and communications tactics – as is currently the mainstream approach – from market orientation. Giving the elector what he desires is one thing, and could be assimilated to political marketing if we reduced it to its basic definition. Looking beyond the elector’s desires to identify and answer needs – latent or expressed – is something different altogether. It aims at driving the electorate rather than being driven by it (Reeves et al., 2006).

Previous papers have concentrated on the nature of market-oriented parties, and tried to design a conceptual model for parties who gather voter intelligence and adapt it into policy and communications. This research aims at clearly identifying the applicability of marketing to politics through a study of political market orientation. **In short, can market orientation be adapted to political parties?** Concerning the moral and managerial questions highlighted earlier, we will also try to answer the following questions:

- What role does marketing hold in political parties?
- How do party members perceive the concept of political market orientation?
- What differences are there between the adoption of a market orientation in a firm and in a political party?

In order to answer these questions, we studied the case of the Liberal Party of Canada, a party whose decade-long struggle for relevance compelled it to engage in a vast reform of its culture and electoral philosophy. More specifically, we will use the process documented by Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) in the business literature as a benchmark to highlight the similarities and differences in the application of market orientation in the market versus political contexts.

4. Methodology

4.1. Context

In the wake of its electoral defeat on May 2nd 2011, which reduced the Liberal Party of Canada to third party status behind the Conservatives and the NDP, (De Grandpré, 2011; Sibonney, 2011), the party decided it was time to rebuild (Liberal Party of Canada, 2011). This wish to renew itself was apparent in the communications emanating from the party in the following months (Apps, 2011; Rae, 2011). Words such as “permanent campaign”, “grassroots”, “community” and “rebranding” were thrown around a lot.

This study concentrates on the efforts of the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) to acquire a new orientation in order to take back the ground lost, in and prior to the 2011 general election. The LPC, formerly known in Canadian popular culture as the “Natural governing Party of Canada” (CBC, 2006; Clarkson, 2005) is one of the five active federal parties in Canada to be represented in the House of Commons. It is also one of the two political traditions (ie.: Liberal and Conservative) to have been in government, and the only remaining party of those to have contested in the original election of 1867. Having governed for over 69 years in the 20th Century, it has inevitably shaped Canadian politics (Harper & Flanagan, 1997). The abundance of literature surrounding it, as well as the personal contacts of the research team, further motivated this choice.

At the time of this research, the LPC held 35 seats out of the 308 being contested, putting it in third place for the first time in its history, falling from 77 in 2008 and 103 in 2006. When last in power, from 2004 to 2006, it held 135 seats and had been in power, uninterrupted since 1993. This was a sharp decrease from Jean Chrétien’s three previous consecutive majority governments (177 in 1993, 174 in 1997, 155 in 2000). Shortly after the election of Paul Martin as leader in 2004, the Sponsorship Scandal broke out and pulled down the lead the Liberals had maintained in the polls. This scandal involved fraudulent misallocation of public funds to promote Canadian federalism. Simultaneously, dissent and infighting

further damaged the party's standings, leading to the party's defeat at the hands of Stephen Harper's Conservatives in 2006. Paul Martin resigned, and the two following leaders, Stéphane Dion and Michael Ignatieff, were never able to reunite the party (for further details on the events that occurred during that period, please refer to Appendix 1, 2 and 3).

The context of the LPC is particularly interesting in that it had been a successful electoral machine in the past (Clarkson, 2005), but it is now struggling for relevance. Although no organisation wishes to fail and to hit rock bottom, the party's position in 2011 was strategically ideal to start anew. There was a lack of consensus as to its future. In his 2011 book, Newman (2011) claims the party is facing imminent extinction. However, polls indicate relative steadiness in elector voting intentions, with a sharp increase in popularity since the election of Justin Trudeau as leader in 2013 (Three Hundred Eight, 2013).

The adoption of a political market orientation (Ormrod, 2005; Strömbäck, 2007) by the party might yet prove difficult, considering the wide disparity of voting habits, culture and values between the Canadian provinces. For instance, during the 1980 general election, while most provincial results amounted to more or less of a tie between Conservatives and Liberals, all 21 Alberta seats were won by Joe Clark's Progressive-Conservatives, whereas 74 out of 75 Quebec seats were won by Pierre Trudeau's Liberals. On another note, the very organisation of the party could prove a challenge to this transition. Parties in Canada are composed of a National Headquarters and as many local electoral district associations as there are ridings (i.e.: 308 in 2012, to be updated to 338 by 2015). In the case of the Liberal Party, provincial and territorial associations also serve as a buffer between the two other levels (to better understand the structure of the Liberal Party, please refer to Appendix 4). The authors wish to caution the reader not to confuse the provincial associations with the provincial parties; in most provinces, the provincial parties (e.g.: Quebec Liberal Party, Ontario Liberals, BC Liberals) are independent from their national counterpart and sometimes have diverging ideological alignments. To add to this confusion, there are instances in which both provincial and federal

parties are integrated: the four Atlantic Provinces Liberal parties are still affiliated with the national organization.

The complexity of the liberal community in Canada is likely to be the source of several conflicts. At the very least, the LPC will be facing organisational challenges in revamping its branding, outreach and market intelligence approaches. This renewal attempt, far from guaranteeing success in future elections, is nonetheless a rich laboratory for scholars in both marketing and political science.

4.2. Method

4.2.1. Data gathering

This research was carried out between March 2012 and June 2013, in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. The first author, a member of the Liberal Party, participated in various political events, ranging from day to day operations of a riding association in the Greater Montreal Area, to volunteering in a by-election in the riding of Toronto-Danforth. The objective was to conduct in depth interviews with members of the Liberal community.

This paper takes for premise that Liberals, as members, volunteers and electors, form a politically-driven community whose goals are to: 1) see to the good performance of their party; 2) improve the country by pushing an aggregate of values and principles towards government (Needham, 2006; Reeves et al., 2006). Since a party cannot perform without its volunteers (Lock & Harris, 1996) (eg.: canvassing, telephone campaigns, lawn/post signs distribution, etc.), the success of any streamlining strategy inevitably affects members in all circles of this community, and all levels of involvement (Gebhardt et al., 2006).

In order to explore the community formed by the liberal membership, various data collection activities were adopted, mostly derived from ethnographic fieldwork (Beaud & Weber, 1997; Tilley, 2001). Such activities included participant observation and long interviews in informal (McCracken, 1988; Woodside & Wilson, 1995) and semi-structured contexts (d'Astous & Daghfous, 2000). Participant observation was used during a fundraising dinner, a policy-oriented event, two biennial conventions (one national, one provincial), a riding association board meeting, a by-election campaign and the 2013 leadership race.

Ideally, initial interviews were performed in person. In five instances, due to geographical constraints, they were done via telephone. Most interviews ranged from 50 to 90 minutes. However, two of them lasted over 140 minutes, due to the fact that they were being given in a casual, informal context.

In most cases, we first met with informants during party gathering and events, at which time they were recruited for the research. Some were also approached later, through previously interviewed members. All were card-carrying members at the time of the interviews. In total the first author conducted fifteen interviews, in French and English (sometimes both), at which point we had achieved an acceptable level of saturation, as prescribed in both Material Culture Studies (Tilley, 2001) and Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). While restraining participation to liberal members, we attempted to cover as many offices as possible within the party. Among the interviewees were several riding executives and two 2013 leadership candidates. Two participants were liberal candidates in previous elections, while four others were present or past Members of Parliament. Finally, we were able to obtain an interview with the interim leader of the party from 2011 to 2013. A list of our informants is provided in Figure 3.

The guideline of the interviews was usually the context in which we first met the informants. The pace depended both on the interests of the participant and the need for clarifying questions asked by the author. Follow-up interviews were carried out after the initial meetings to obtain further details on relevant issues. The setting for the interviews was chosen mainly in terms of practicality. As most members are volunteers and, therefore, hold jobs independently from their involvement with the party, most were held during evenings or weekends. Those given in-person were conducted in various locations, including cafés, a terrace, homes and a pub. For those given over telephone, participants were either home or, in one case, at work (self-employed).

Being a member of the studied community allowed the author to approach informants more easily. Immersion in the research context through fieldwork further allowed us to understand the vocabulary, symbols and values of the Liberal Party's membership.

The first author also attended live events over the Internet, on the Liberal website, in order to familiarize himself with other facets of the rationale behind the party. Secondary data was also reviewed, including modern Canadian political analysis

(Duffy, 2002; Fraser, 1989; Pammett & Dornan, 2011), former liberal prime ministers biographies (Chrétien, 2008; Martin, 2009), Liberal Party documentation (Liberal Party of Canada, 1997, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012a).

Name, Age	Riding	Role in the party
Alexandra Mendes, 48	Brossard-Laprairie	LPC(Q) president, 2012-present Liberal MP, 2008-2011
The Hon. Bob Rae, 64	Toronto-Center	Interim Leader, 2011-2013 (LPC) Liberal MP, 2008-Present Premier of Ontario, 1990-1995 Leader, Ontario NDP, 1982-1996 NDP MP, 1978-1982
Brad Lister, 36	Toronto-Danforth	Volunteer
Carmen, 20-30	Pierrefonds-Dollard	Local Executive Student
Grant Gordon, 48	Toronto-Danforth	By-election Liberal candidate, 2012 President, Key Gordon Communications
Harry, 25-35		Employee at the National Headquarters
Jean-Dominic Lévesque-René, 28	Pierrefonds-Dollard	Provincial candidate, Union Citoyenne Municipal candidate, Projet Montréal Local executive
John Aspler, 22	Lac-Saint-Louis	Former local executive Student
Justin Trudeau, 40	Papineau	Leader, Liberal Party of Canada, 2013 Liberal MP, 2008-present
Louis-Philippe Champagne, 24	Hull-Aylmer	Assistant to the Liberal leader LPC(Q) executive board candidate, 2012
Marc, 55-65	Lac-Saint-Louis	Local Executive Retired public sector executive
Maria, 25-35	Trinity-Spadina	Local Executive
Martha Hall-Findlay, 53	Willowdale	Liberal MP, 2008-2011 Leadership candidate, 2013
Michael Broeders, 26	Ottawa-Center	Assistant, Ontario Liberal MPP
Michel, 25-35		Employee at the National Headquarters

Figure 3 - Informants profile

4.2.2. Data processing

As stated earlier, oral accounts were given by informants during a series of in-depth interviews. All discussions were audiotaped using a SONY ICD-PX312 digital voice recorder, and verbatim were typed by the author.

A hermeneutic approach was adopted to navigate through the accounts and isolate patterns and common grounds between informants. Hermeneutics have been widely used in consumer and marketing research to derive pertinent insight from consumption stories, thoughts and personal beliefs (Arnold & Fischer, 1994; Thompson, 1997; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1990). Indeed, this method is based on the premise that testimonies interlock in a complex, cultural, ideological or philosophical system shared by the members of a group or community. This process was done using QSR International's NVivo 7. Themes repeated across participant material were iteratively coded and accumulated. Outlying opinions were also coded to circumscribe the community's thoughts and concerns.

Interviews were coded and analyzed in the language in which they were given, as words and expressions are thought to lose meaning and subtlety through translation (Temple, 2008). Relevant quotes and excerpts were translated by the first author for the purpose of this article.

After initial analysis of the transcripts, fieldwork observations and journal entries were used to put statements and comments into context, as well as to add more meat to the developed structure. Historical documents and party material were also called upon to further strengthen claims and suggestions made by informants and authors alike.

Once preliminary findings were written, a copy of our manuscript was submitted to key informants. A "native" perspective was therefore provided anew to validate ideas and concepts relevant to the community, and further insight was provided when available.

5. Results

5.1. The Guiding Coalition

5.1.1. Building the Coalition

Our results were consistent with the first two stages of the process of creating a market-oriented organization documented by Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr. (2006), namely *Initiation* and *Reconstitution*. The guiding coalition, theoretically active throughout these stages, presented itself under a specific form, which we will discuss independently from the role of the leadership, a subject more related to Needham (2005)'s contribution to the literature.

In order for substantial reforms to be implemented, a group of individuals wielding sufficient power was required to assemble in key positions across the party. Such a group would be known as a guiding coalition, in the work of Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006).

The structure and processes of the party being codified and strictly tied to its convention-adopted constitution, it appeared much more difficult for a guiding coalition to effectively spearhead any organization-wide transformation. The double nature of the organization was also a challenge, as the party and its parliamentary caucus are considered distinct organizations, which accounts for the existence of the National Headquarters (81 Metcalfe street) and the Leader's Office (202 Sparks street).

Interestingly, elements from our discussions with members of the National Headquarters suggest that in the two-year period following the 2011 election, a form of quiet bureaucratic revolution took place within various units of the party. The identification of such a coalition is essential, as it was responsible for preparing the party for the transformation. This eclectic group of staff members from across the National Headquarters came forward with individual reform propositions. Our informants described the movement as a collection of "champions" which drove the changes. This movement resembled Zald & Berger

(1978)'s bureaucratic insurgency, in that it comprised only a limited number of individuals in scattered departments. It is however noteworthy that the National Executive (ie.: formal authority) received the proposed changes with an open mind and authorized the implementation of most of them (thus weakening the analogy to insurgency in this context).

In time, some of these reforms led to the creation of a formal Department of Engagement. Such a department did not exist prior to a mass-realization that the risks of an impending doom were very real, as Michel, an employee, said: "So yeah, if... if you approached the party a year ago, there wasn't any department called... mobilisation or engagement... So..." (Michel). Harry added: "The tasks were there, but were divided between different people".

This reform, among a number of others, including the creation of the supporters category and the adaptation of the leadership selection process, were made possible by propositions coming from everywhere within the party. Arguably, this example goes along the lines of increased collaboration, identified as a part of the reconstitution stage of Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr. (2006), as we will see further.

I think, in my personal opinion, that it was made in an "organic" sort of way, not to say chaotic; that there wasn't necessarily a group, [but I like my colleague's expression], that there were individuals that acted as champions, where different initiatives came from different people, that taken as a whole, contributed to renewal. (Michel)

To work efficiently, the transformation could not only come from various individuals within the National Headquarters. All levels of the organization needed to take part in the movement. Surprisingly enough, considering the perceived history of centralization expressed by our informants, there was a massive convergence of ideas and resources across ridings and associations. Members of the National Headquarters gave credit to the Leader's Office and the National Executive for some of the innovations they put forward; members attached to the Leader's Office were impressed by the work of several riding associations in terms of local branding; informants from the LPC(Q) praised the Leader's initiative and

vigorousness... Many Liberals felt like they were part of a growing movement; that they were participating in something bigger than simply volunteering.

Trying to associate the cultural transformation to any of the three social movements from Zald & Berger (1978)'s work would unfortunately prove fruitless. The need for a complete overhaul appears to have come as a realization in every group from the grassroots to the executive. In a way, they joined a party-wide, informal coalition of reformers. Perhaps this was the result of a massive shared feeling of desperation, as hypothesised by John, an informant from Montreal. Maybe it was just luck, or maybe a genuine feeling that it was time to adapt. However, this vision was consistent with the work of Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr. (2006) on cultural transformation, in that it presented problem solving as a shared and agreed-upon mechanism after the organization was confronted with a clear threat to its existence.

More formally, the party also judged it required to proceed to massive changes. While the studied transformation fell strikingly close to the process described by Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006), the guiding coalition could not be complete without someone at its head.

We had a kind of, I think, an agreement in the party that we needed a new... a chief restructuring officer for a period of a couple of years. That was unique too, we didn't have to go through the leader: the leader was defeated, so the leader was gone. And nobody particularly wanted to race right into a leadership race. So we all agreed that we'd do a restructuring and that I would be the Chief Restructuring Officer, and I would do this on the basis that I would not run for the leadership. (Bob Rae)

Bob Rae's comment was interesting, as it introduced the idea that for the first time, all the conditions were met for the party to really start rebuilding: there was no putsch to organize and everyone was on the same page as to the need to renew. The choice of words, regarding the expression "Chief Restructuring Officer", also spoke of the understanding that the party didn't function properly anymore as a vehicle for change. The party needed someone in charge of its growing and effervescent coalition. And who better to lead than a leader?

5.1.2. The Leadership

As described earlier, many changes were brought by members of the national executive and the staff, which formed a group fitting with the description of a guiding coalition. Yet as Selznick (1943) explained, in the case of political parties, internal transformations are unlikely to have a significant impact on the outcome of a general election, being too distant from the voters. Therefore, changes must be brought, indeed internally, but also in view of the electorate. Enter: the party leader.

A strong leader, many members have said, is essential to a strong performance in elections (and, ever since the “permanent campaign” was popularized, *between* elections as well). For instance, Brad told us he had joined because he “connected to” Jean Chrétien. Similarly, Maria joined under the leadership of Paul Martin, and John related to the policies of Stéphane Dion. All three joined based on the personalities of three different leaders, yet all three remained members under a fourth and were still volunteering under a fifth, at the time of this research. The “aura” of the leader first attracted them to the party, yet the party itself had managed to sustain their loyalty.

Martha Hall-Findlay ran for the leader’s position in 2006 and 2012. Her experience with the leadership cycles gave her a sharp understanding of the dynamics of the Liberal Party. The following testimony is a reminder that for years, the party was unable to walk in the same direction, making it impossible to promote a single, constant idea to the electorate.

It’s unbelievable how, how lacking in discipline, how lacking in drive, how lacking in, [...] you know, dare I say leadership, to actually move forward. (Martha Hall-Findlay)

The use of the word “leadership” was quite interesting, as it implied that the recently elected leaders failed to captivate and unite the entire party. When comparing the performance of the Conservatives, Liberals and New Democrats in the 2011 election, one of the major differences was the weakness of the Liberal Party’s leadership. At the opposite ends of the spectrum, both the Conservative

Party and the New Democratic Party were perceived as being led by powerful (ie.: strict and/or charismatic) figures. In this, party brand and leader brand were intertwined very strongly, unlike with the Liberal Party.

It's very difficult to imagine the Conservative Party with anyone else than Stephen Harper, because the amount of energy that has gone into defining the brand around the person has been so intense! (Michael Broeders)

You know, and wonder about, "oh! Crossing out the moustache!", and now you know, and I remember hearing stories of people who'd left the polling station because they couldn't find the moustache on their ballots, and they just left... "Oh, I can't vote for the moustache"... and then other people who knew that the moustache was NDP, and voted NDP[...] (Brad Lister)

Canadian ballots only show candidate and party names; no pictures are given to the elector. Brad's anecdote only goes to show that some electors were only interested in then NDP leader Jack Layton, whom they recognized because of his mustache.

In 2012 and 2013, the Liberal Party put substantial hope on its leadership race. In all aspects, it could be argued that the announcement would serve as a demarcation event, in the market orientation vocabulary (Gebhardt et al., 2006). But the fear of many was now that the next leader would win without a real contest. This concern was explicitly picked up by Deborah Coyne's campaign. Supporters and members were sent an email where a simple question was asked, in regards to Justin Trudeau's lead in the polls: "Do you want a contest or a coronation?" The expected answer, of course, was the former.

In truth, the acclamation of Michael Ignatieff as leader in 2009 was vastly criticized by members, for it did not allow the party to rally around freshly debated ideas. Jean-Dominique Lévesque-René, a past candidate at the municipal and provincial levels in the west-end of Montreal, said he was particularly disappointed. He explained that such events were meant to allow members and electors in general to witness how candidates behaved under fire and, more generally, to get to know the candidates. Justin Trudeau and Martha Hall-Findlay agreed with that vision, considering debates and the clash of ideas as essential to a

healthy race and an effective renewal process. Every informant who expressed themselves on this subject wanted the next leader to fight his way to victory.

When Bob Rae, who had led the party since the 2011 election, announced he would not run for the permanent leadership, all eyes (media and party), turned to Justin Trudeau. Jean-Dominique hoped that other strong candidates would run in order to avoid a situation such as the 2009 leadership. Time would see his wish granted, as other MPs, former and present, joined the race. Martha Hall-Findlay told us this was one of the reasons that led her to run: she rejected the idea that a messianic coronation would instantly solve the party's image and policy problems.

I have real concerns. It's not personal. But to see so many Liberals saying: "We'll get this celebrity. That's our path back to power", you wouldn't believe what I hear... (Martha Hall-Findlay)

Martha's comment doesn't mean that the party leader shouldn't be charismatic or popular. It simply means that the leader's influence and vision should also be taken into account. Without a doubt, the leader should be as popular as possible within its own party as well as in the electorate. A leader without a real base of committed supporters could hardly be expected to bring his party to victory. Traditionally, to be considered legitimate and worthy, a candidate needed to convince as many delegates or members as possible. On paper, by opening the election to supporters, the Liberal Party asked the candidates to prove their legitimacy by convincing as many *electors* as possible.

Needham (2006) described the process of retaining "political consumers" (ie.: repeat sale) in much the same way, in the context of general elections. Although the effort required to recruit supporters is far inferior to that of recruiting a members, they still hold an important place in the organization. The supporters and members who joined because of the leadership race need to be led and encouraged along the way to greater (or sustained) involvement, and that task falls partly on the winning leadership candidate. A party leadership race is no general election, but it emulates it in many ways. Nurturing a sense of belonging and loyalty early

on in the years leading to an election is the safest path, when it comes to performing well after an election is called.

As previously stated, in order for the party to take a single direction and to maintain course, the newly elected leader needs to hold sufficient power. The hope is that, at last, the 2013 Leadership race will have proven to be an event of such importance that warring factions will be forced to lay down their weapons and join the ranks – or break camp and quit. Failure to do so would only result in new factions taking arms against the leader, perpetuating the sadly famous internecine wars of the 1990's and 2000's (Brooke, 2010).

5.1.3. Taking full power

The slow collapse of the Liberal Party, ever since the general election of 2000, was punctuated with leadership crises. Various clans were fighting each other in order to maintain or gain power within the organization. In her assessment of Stéphane Dion's 2006-2008 leadership, Martha Hall-Findlay described a chapter of this era.

I would argue [Stéphane Dion] could've been an incredibly good Prime Minister, but our own party wouldn't let him get there. I mean, the day he was elected, Bob [Rae]'s camp was out, you know, the knives were out. Michael [Ignatieff]'s camp, the knives were out. Michael and Bob's camp had their knives out for each other [...] (Martha Hall-Findlay)

The reunification of the party under a single leader was judged essential by the members we interviewed. The organization can't operate efficiently while the leadership is constantly under attack. No leader can rally electors and members around him either if he doesn't have the support of the organization. When he took the role of interim leader of the party in 2011, Bob Rae had had enough of the infighting. He considered that this behaviour was hurting the entire party.

We'd allowed some bad things to get into our culture, a lot of rivalries between camps, between individuals, between clans, and so... when you put all that together you create a really unhealthy corporate culture, party culture. And I identified it, named it and talked about it and said 'it's over. It has to end'. And we pretty well succeeded in being able to beat that out. Instead of having people for Mr. Chretien's camp, and Mr. Martin's camp, but we're all going to

work together, and we're not going to talk about the past so much except to learn from it. (Bob Rae)

As leader, Bob Rae tried to unite the clans and bring about greater collaboration: the new leader, as of April 2013, would be leading all Liberals, and not his clan alone. In his acceptance speech after winning the 2013 Liberal leadership, Justin Trudeau held the same message:

Well, I don't care if you thought my father was a great or arrogant. It doesn't matter to me if you were a Chretien-Liberal, a Turner-Liberal, a Martin-Liberal or any other kind of Liberal. The era of hyphenated Liberals ends right here, tonight (Wherry, 2013).

The transition between Bob Rae and Justin Trudeau was a good example of a coalition between interim and permanent leaders. Unlike previous successions, there were no open conflicts between clans. Journalists and commentators have massively reported that the Liberal Party's success in the polls was either the result of Bob Rae's tenure as interim leader (Goar, 2013; Kay, 2013), or that of Justin Trudeau's aura (Caplan, 2013; Coyne, 2013). Managerially speaking, the tandem between the two was essential to the party's revival.

This division of tasks was acknowledged by the interim leader. Rae's responsibility, as mentioned earlier, was to restructure and renew the party for whoever would follow him as permanent leader.

But I have to admit that as the interim leader, you don't have all the persuasive powers, and all of the ability to force people to make changes that they otherwise might not want to change... I'm just saying you can't do it without being the permanent leader... [T]he permanent leader has a mandate to do these things that I didn't have. (Bob Rae)

This collaboration was well received by the party. Bob Rae, who ran for the leadership race in 2006, was also expected to run in 2013. His decision not to run gave the party an occasion to reunite behind its leader until such a time as a permanent leader was elected. The "Thanks a Million, Bob!" tour was set in this context, as the interim leader travelled from coast to coast to partake in various celebratory events. The interim leader was given the status of a celebrity

throughout the last month of his tenure. This “gift” of Rae’s person to the masses was reminiscent of the social function of sacrifice as described by Mauss & Hubert (1897). Although the honorable member for Toronto–Danforth was not sacrificed in the way described by the authors, his quest for leadership was *destroyed* in the process of achieving unity. Although well beloved during his tenure, the words of love and gratefulness for the interim leader only really came upon his announced resignation, just as the sacrificed-to-be is sacralised during the ceremony that will end his life.

From the ashes of this sacrifice, however, came a renewed faith in the Liberal leadership. The newspaper columns mentioned earlier indicate that the party’s transformation was made possible in part by Bob “the Rebuilder” Rae (Taber, 2011), and that its regain in popularity was made possible by Justin Trudeau’s leadership campaign. The two of them together gave more to the party than what either could have provided individually. In that, the leadership and its transition mechanism appear to have been successfully integrated to the guiding coalition leading the actual transformation of the Liberal Party of Canada.

5.2. A party-wide cultural transformation

5.2.1. Initiation stage

Creating a market orientation requires an organization-wide understanding of shared meanings and objectives (Gebhardt et al., 2006). Informants from the Liberal Party of Canada were not ready to say that such cohesion in meaning and purpose was present in their party during the last decade. Holding power had been motivation enough to stick together. Nevertheless, testimonies show that the 2011 election was a powerful wake-up call to many, which triggered a series of transformations in philosophy and culture, as well as in marketing activities.

After the 2011 election, members assembled across the country to discuss their predicament. Their party was without a leader and in third place for the first time since Confederation. The number of members, officially confidential, was lower

than ever according to reporters (De Grandpré & Bellavance, 2012). Many thought that the party needed to identify the real reasons behind the difficulty it was experiencing. According to Alexandra, president of the Quebec Association for the LPC (LPC(Q)), one of the reasons was that:

[the] citizen obligation to participate in the act of voting is not seen at all like an obligation anymore. [It's] an option. People don't associate it either with the results they will get in terms of governance. (Alexandra Mendes)

Cynicism towards politics and politicians was also repeatedly mentioned during our interviews. Yet this phenomenon is well documented across the world (see for example Cross & Young (2004) and Seyd & Whiteley (1992)), and is generalized to all parties; it couldn't explain why the Liberal Party specifically fell behind over time. A second reason, more precisely directed at the organization, was its loss of relevance in the mind of the elector: the party wasn't connected anymore. Explaining it was a good start, but it wasn't enough. The party now needed to act.

Carmen is an active member of the Liberal's youth community, a member of a liberal school club and a volunteer in several riding associations. Politics is an important part of her life, and her commitment to the party was impressive, but her involvement and her belief in the Liberal Party didn't blind her.

Part of me is thinking about it, just realizing your defeat! [...] Denial can only last for so long before you actually have to wake up. (Carmen)

The first step to start rebuilding the party was to recognize the dramatic situation it was in, but Carmen's statement introduced the idea of moving further than simple retroaction. Going beyond acceptance some informants, including the Hon. Bob Rae, went so far as to claim that the electoral defeat of 2011 was a good thing.

The first thing is that... the defeat was good. Because it convinced people that we hit the bottom. And the first thing that needs to happen to create a climate for change is that people have to understand that there is no alternative... that you can't pretend you've done well. You can't say, you know 'it's just a bad day'... You can't take the result that we had and say it was an accident. So

you have to accept the result. You have to accept the defeat. And accept the need for change. (Bob Rae)

Having realized the direness of their situation, party members devoted much time to introspection. As expressed by Mr. Rae, the reflection prompted by defeat led to an actual desire for change and for a full renewal of how the party worked, and of what it had to offer. The transformation had begun.

The idea, once it was decided that the party should rebuild, was to go back to its roots while still showing its relevance as a parliamentary group.

And then we began to look at what's deeper inside the values of the Liberal Party. Any liberal party anywhere, and talk about that, bring it together. And then keep our presence in the House of Commons. (Bob Rae)

The revitalization of what the party stood for was needed to define a stronger, clearer *raison-d'être*. The party attempted to identify what old habits were toxic and what shortcomings were alienating the electorate. Informants, especially those who had been elected to Parliament, were far from tender towards their party's record as an open and connected organization.

Arrogance. We just assumed that we'd get back to power... We assumed that Canadians would come to their senses and realize what an awful person Harper was and then vote for us again. Unbelievable arrogance in the Liberal Party!! (Martha Hall-Findlay)

The party weakened when the party was in government, when we were in government. And the party didn't become as strong as it needed to be, in my opinion, in creating new ideas. (Bob Rae)

I know that the Liberal Party realized that we're not connected with our electors, our potential electors, that's why we're... we're not relevant anymore as a party, in terms of numbers. (Justin Trudeau)

These three testimonies describe an unhealthy culture for any organization: arrogance, shallowness and irrelevance. The presumption of being the natural governing party of Canada was a recurrent theme throughout our interviews, and was thoroughly criticized, along with the feeling of superiority and elitism usually attributed to the party. As mentioned by Bob Rae, as the organizational wing weakened, and since no other political group was seen as strong enough to take

power from the parliamentary wing, the government became complacent. This behavior allegedly led to a loosening on the policy front at the party level, which failed in supplying the governing parliamentary group with the ideas it needed to remain competitive in subsequent elections. The assumptions of superiority mentioned by Martha Hall-Findlay blinded the party when it needed to renew its policy offer, which eventually brought electors to feel they didn't connect with the party anymore.

Failure to adapt would likely carry the organization to being fully irrelevant in the eyes of the electorate, to use the same terms as Justin Trudeau. The comments of these three informants were consistent in their idea that the Liberal brand diverged from those it meant to seduce. Before being successful in an election, the party would need to reconnect with the electorate, first by listening to its concerns in a humbler fashion, and then by offering new policy ideas relevant with the gathered intelligence. To do this, the party culture would need to change.

The guiding coalition, at the Leader's Office and the National Headquarters, worked within the powers it was able to garner.

We did a lot within the constitution, without making big changes, we did a lot to create more cooperation, to force more cooperation between sections of the party, but we still got a way to go, to do that.
(Bob Rae)

Among these changes and propositions were: the creation of a Department of Engagement, the launch of a national outreach campaign to send Members of Parliament in ridings without Liberal representation, the development of an online Liberal Community, etc. Other propositions, such as delaying the leadership election, creating a new category of "free" membership known as supporters, and holding open nomination meetings in all ridings were further submitted to the membership's approval during conventions. While the two first propositions were adopted unanimously, the last one was defeated. Bob Rae, interim leader at the time, and Justin Trudeau, his permanent successor, decided to go through with the proposition regardless, as was their prerogative as leaders.

All these preparations were meant to set the table for a new beginning, a real revitalization of the party based on openness, relationship and engagement. The actual reconstruction, however, was only just beginning.

5.2.2. Reconstitution stage

In a 2012 speech before the assembled delegates at the Federal Liberal biennial convention, the then Ontario Premier, Dalton McGuinty, gave a warning to Liberals who wanted to deviate from the core Liberal values.

I believe our party's best years are in front of us. And to those who would have us merge with another party, I say: 'Get behind us. This party will move forward, with or without you'.³

In retrospect, this short quote was heralding several large changes that the party would attempt, most of which can be associated with Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr. (2006)'s reconstitution stage: 1) the demarcation event, 2) the development of values and norms, 3) reconnecting with the market, 4) the removal of dissenters and the hiring of believers and 5) the implementation of a collaborative strategy.

Although not performed by the party's leader or its executive (which we would identify as the guiding coalition), this speech was given during the same convention that saw the creation of the supporter status. This event could be seen as the first attempt at a formal Demarcation (ie.: Demarcation event (Gebhardt et al., 2006)). Indeed, the very expression of the party "moving forward" was strikingly similar to the train metaphor of the literature. Furthermore, the coming together of over 3000 members (Fitzpatrick, 2012) for this event made it a good occasion to discuss change et revitalization, as well as celebrate the party's ethos.

The values underlying a party's definition are adopted by its members and its parliamentary caucus. Yet, even though every one of our informants could explain why they were Liberals and what the symbols of the party were, every answer

³ CTV, "McGuinty warns federal Liberals about long road ahead", http://www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/CP24Home/20120114/120114_McGuinty_Liberals/, page consultée en ligne le 10 mars 2012.

differed. Alexandra Mendes and Martha Hall-Findlay, both former MPs, gave hints of what could cause such haziness.

We lost our convictions. We tried to be everything for everyone. It doesn't work! It doesn't work at all... especially coming from a party that already has its own history, good and bad. (Alexandra Mendes)

We are sending very different signals, and confusing signals because we don't actually know where we stand ourselves. We've been so focused in the last decade on leadership battles that we've been all over the place. I mean I know that sounds really harsh, but I lived through it, and it's been tough. (Martha Hall-Findlay)

The Liberal Party presented multiple and changing faces to the electorate, not because of real changes in positions at the individual level, but because of power shifts along the political spectrum. As a result, to maintain internal coherence, the organization needed to agree on increasingly vague positions, which ended up being indistinguishable from those of competing parties. This was a concern for Martha.

It simply isn't enough to say, you know... fiscal prudence, social you know... progressive social justice values, right? You can't! The NDP says that. The Conservatives almost say that... You know, you can't say [...] we stand for jobs, jobs, jobs, because everybody says that, right... (Martha Hall-Findlay)

Informants clearly expressed the need for debate and the clash of ideas in order to develop a set of values (ie.: values and norms development (Gebhardt et al., 2006)) that would be encompassing enough for the membership to rally behind, and precise enough for the electorate to identify and relate to. Bob Rae brought up this subject, when he described the revitalization process he had led.

Hum, and you know, when you do that, you have to kind of figure out what's permanent in... what's deep and permanent and important in what we are, what we've become, and what is kind of... temporary. (Bob Rae)

The idea is to reformulate the ideas that brought the membership together in the first place, in order to strengthen the party. Although the Ottawa offices can suggest ideas and policy propositions, values and norms are formally adopted by

the membership during conventions, through votes on policy and constitution amendments. For instance, in 2012, the party adopted a resolution in favor of legalizing and regulating marijuana (Liberal Party of Canada, 2012b).

Indirectly, members can rally around policy platforms put forward by leadership candidates. While these platforms have no formal, direct weight on the party's stance, they can create massive momentum around specific ideas. Joyce Murray's campaign, for instance, was largely built around the concepts of electoral cooperation and electoral reform. This position allowed her to differentiate from the other candidates; mainly from frontrunner Justin Trudeau. In the end, her supporters formed the second largest group in the race.

Although members come together to decide collectively what the party believes in, the organization can also face heavy challenges in attempting to attain shared purpose and full collaboration. Despite their own willingness to innovate and cooperate, several informants complained about a resistance to the change and modernization advocated by the guiding coalition. The most important reasons hypothesized by informants were: the balancing of careers and jobs with risk taking, and the generalized aging of the party's membership.

Grant was concerned with the relative importance of jobs versus progress. John, a former youth vice-president on a local executive board, was shocked by the apparent placidity of some of the ridings that survived the 2011 onslaught. He vehemently criticized their rationale, which according to him, was that if they won, then status quo was the way to go.

A great deal of politics is controlled and influenced by people who are managing their own career. So when you got careers involved, they will do whatever it takes to win, to keep their career running. Which I think is a big problem. (Grant Gordon)

[Impersonating board members]: "Why should there be any difference?" "Why should we engage people differently?" And we should. Regardless of, like – we barely hanged on! Why would we just say "well, we won..."? (John Aspler)

Legitimate or not as the wish to preserve one's career might be, there was a growing consensus around the need to remove or replace the dissenting factions (removal of dissenters, hiring of believers (Gebhardt et al., 2006)). While on one side members were overall in favor of renewing the riding-level management, they were still uneasy with the idea of replacing long-time volunteers. In some situations, though, there appeared to be no hope for adaptation. Since members and elected officers are not hired employees, the processes of "removing" and "hiring" was proving more problematic.

One solution was provided indirectly. It consisted in granting more powers to local members to allow each riding to deal with dissenters through elections and nomination meetings. The goal would be to force the incumbent officers and candidates to adapt to the evolving electorate.

This course of action was perceived by some as necessary to ensure legitimacy to the party at the local level. Failure to provide the riding associations with enough power over their destiny could result in desertion or local protest movements that could destroy the party's support in some constituencies. To reinforce the reality of those risks, Louis-Philippe gave us examples such as the deserted riding of Charlesbourg, the betrayed riding of Mégantic—L'Érable and the rebelling riding of Hull—Aylmer. Although the last still boasted a strong riding association, the other two lacked the manpower to bring the party's message to the electors.

Reconnecting with the electorate (ie.: Reconnection with the market (Gebhardt et al., 2006)) is, to some extent, the main objective behind attaining market orientation, and we have seen earlier that this was one of the objectives that party members voiced explicitly. Power shifts and renewal at the local level can allow ridings to move their focus from long-time decision-taking members to constituents in general, increasing the quality of democratic involvement at the same time.

Furthermore, granting more responsibilities and powers across the organization was also in line with increased member participation (Ormrod, 2005). It confirmed

the idea of collaboration (ie.: Collaborative strategy (Gebhardt et al., 2006)), put forward earlier with the description of intelligence gathering and the introduction of the cross-department coalition. Bob Rae, when describing his two years as leader, told us he had made this issue one of his priorities.

The collaboration and coming together of members from across the country are also pertinent. Yet, if as we've seen earlier, the 2012 biennial convention was indeed a turning point for the party, it is likely that the real Demarcation event will prove to have been the presentation of the new Leader, on April 14th, 2013.

5.3. Political market orientation

5.3.1. Gathering and dissemination of electoral intelligence

The literature on political market orientation focuses mainly on the gathering and dissemination of electoral intelligence, a very straightforward adaptation of the mainstream business definition (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). A portion of the literature also concentrates on the stakeholder groups within a market-oriented party. One of these groups, derived from Narver & Slater (1990)'s "interfunctional coordination" construct, was discussed by Ormrod (2005) as an "internal orientation". All of our informants were members inside the Liberal Party, from its leader to volunteers at local ridings.

In a way similar to Customer Relationship Management systems (CRM) in the business environment, political parties rely on voter databases to assist campaign teams in their efforts to get the vote out. These systems are also used in the parties' day to day interaction with voters (Delorme, 2010) and are a key tool for the dissemination of market intelligence within the party. The Liberal Party, for instance, uses a system called Liberalist⁴ to manage references to every interaction it has with any registered elector. The analogy has its limits, as a CRM software is

⁴ <http://liberalist.liberal.ca/>

designed to manage interactions with current and potential customers, and not a market as large as 24 million electors (Elections Canada, 2013).

Over time, the Liberal Party realized that they had lost touch with the electors, as we will see in the section on cultural transformation. One of the major problems was that, at the time, the party lacked the numbers to effectively fill in the data.

In order to provide its campaign volunteers with electoral intelligence, the party adopted an attitude of openness. Throughout the 2012 summer, the party massively promoted a program called “Liberalist Champions”, an initiative meant to train as many members in as many ridings as possible on data collection and analysis via Liberalist. The objective behind this initiative was to make up in manpower for what the party lacked in funding. Louis-Philippe, a member of the Leader’s Office in Ottawa, said as much during an interview.

It’s the vocation of Liberalist. It’s that a member in a riding – that’s not an employee of the party, that’s a volunteer, not too involved, that has an account of, say, level 1 – can collect information from the people on his street, and then enter them in the system. (Louis-Philippe Champagne)

This collaborative approach was described as very positive, greatly diminishing the need for central call centers and massive national campaigns. Intelligence was and will still be gathered at every level of the organization, but much hope was given to increasing the quality, quantity and accuracy of the information available.

In an effort to diversify the source of electoral intelligence, the party bombarded the Internet with online petitions. These were seen as a means of adding to the flow of information coming from the ridings by using the email addresses of supporters as well as their social networks to identify the policy priorities of members and non-members alike. The next two excerpts come from discussions we had with members from the Leader’s Office and the National Headquarters, respectively.

Petitions – and outreach in general – it’s about obtaining a maximum of information on our electors, on our potential electors, in order to know what they’re interested in, and to size the interests of the electors. (Louis-Philippe Champagne)

So [...] however bigger our email list is; you can put pressure on issues of the day through a petition or whatever it is, and [...] we want to be there in the moment that they're concerned about this issue, giving them a way to express their position. (Michel)

This approach has the benefit of providing a podium to electors to express their opinions on specific issues, while providing the party with much needed electoral intelligence. It's an eloquent example of a party-led initiative that can be actively promoted and carried-out by the grassroots movement.

In terms of information flow within the organization, these accounts are consistent with Ormrod's behavioral chain, as they include and promote membership participation in decoding the data (Ormrod, 2005). Indeed, the party provided its membership with tools and formation to pursue intelligence gathering on their own. Higher level users at the riding and provincial level could, in turn, extract reports on the electorate, which allowed redistribution and dissemination of the information with higher efficiency, as well as better responsiveness to signals coming from the electorate.

Increased collaboration was also described in terms of sharing best practices and methods of outreach. The Lac-Saint-Louis riding association, for instance, was greatly influenced by the riding of Kingston and the Islands in developing its own membership action plan. Marc, a retired manager in the public sector and presently a strong supporter of renewal in outreach methods, was optimistic about the revival of both electoral data gathering and outreach initiatives.

Information is starting to circulate better than they used to, best practices we might be starting to pick up, but to answer your question about riding associations [...], they have a unique responsibility to really bring the party to the people, and represent the people in the party. (Marc)

This conversation was particularly interesting, as the riding associations (ie.: the local members) were seen as so many information brokers and ambassadors, which is in agreement with the role described by Ormrod (2005). Marc's words on best practices also brought us back to managerial science and marketing. Historically the LPC has been perceived as overly centralizing. Our discussions with members

suggest that, although keeping a hold on national branding issues, media relations and national events coordination (eg.: conventions and national campaigns), the party has begun devolving more and more of its groundwork to the riding associations and to its grassroots movement.

5.3.2. Internal orientation and Member participation

As our informants were members of the party, much of our results were organized around the internal orientation described by Ormrod (2005). Recruiting and maintaining the masses of members is an important task within political parties. Through our interviews, we discovered that the membership was considered important beyond the level of attention given to it in the marketing literature (besides Ormrod (2005), Ormrod & Henneberg (2010b)). Two new concepts were identified during our research, namely *member experience* and a *sense of community*. These are in line with Smith & French (2009)'s proposition that voters evolve in a post-modern consumption dynamic.

Awareness of member experience management appears to be fairly new to the party. An example was given during an interview in Ottawa:

So the innovation never stops, and it can be really small, like... I'll give you a tangible example... the debate we had last week-end. After the Vancouver debate, there was someone saying on the live chat [...] that they didn't know which candidate was talking, and that it would be cool if there were subtitles with the names of the candidates. So at that point, I gave him the link to the leadership race website, and "meet the official candidates". That's how it works. But then I took that idea – it was a legitimate, good idea – and I brought it to my colleagues; again we're tearing down silos and we're collaborating more. Now, in Winnipeg, you could see a nice, professional red banner with the names of the candidates. And even then, during the Winnipeg debate, someone said it would be fun if the red banner was there more frequently. So I sent a message to my colleague, and we increased the frequency of the banner. It's small, commonplace, but it helps. It gives a better experience to Canadians, and to members and supporters. (Michel)

This excerpt, taken from a discussion with an informant at the National Headquarters, shows that the relationship with the member is becoming increasingly important. The example provided by our informant was relatively

small, but the central idea was that all departments had started to work together in providing the members with a better political experience. This is consistent with the literature, as cross-department collaboration and intelligence dissemination are both at the root of market orientation (Gebhardt et al., 2006; Ormrod, 2005) .

Member experience was also mentioned by Marc and Carmen when speaking of their involvement as active Liberal members. Both attended the 2012 biennial convention in Ottawa and were not short of praises for the event.

That was electrifying! (Carmen)

I go to a place like that, [and] I'm buzzed because everyone is a political junkie and a Liberal... I'm at the washroom: "where're you from?" "I'm from Alberta!" "Oh! What's going on out there?" I end up sharing documents and stuff. It can be incredibly powerful.
(Marc)

This vision highlighted a will to engage the member through emotion and relationship, and to be proactive in enhancing the member's experience. Creating excitement around gatherings, as described by Marc and Carmen, also fits into the notion of "Community", or "Movement", as well as developing tools to enable members (and potential members) to interact together and with the party. This behavior was in sharp contrast with the historical "Liberal Family", deemed too exclusive and restrictive by many.

An example of the above-mentioned sense of community presented itself fortuitously to one of the authors, when he returned to his vehicle to find a city employee holding a statement of offence. The employee, seeing the author wearing a red liberal t-shirt, stopped and apologized thoroughly, explaining that, had he known, he wouldn't have issued the statement. This anecdote is in agreement with the idea of a consciousness of kind, as outlined by Muniz Jr & O'Guinn (2001) in their work on consumer brand communities.

In many regards, the "Liberal Community" is in line with Muniz Jr & O'Guinn (2001). In an effort to support the building of relationship between Liberals, the party provided its members with a formal online community directly accessible

from its homepage. Similarly as with the recognition of the supporter category, the Liberal Party of Canada tried to innovate and to be the first political organization to open up discussion with a broader public.

This platform can directly feed the organization's decision makers with instant grassroots intelligence, feedback and knowledge, which is a fertile ground for future innovation (Füller, Matzler, & Hoppe, 2008). It is also noteworthy that both online and physical communities interact. The policy propositions voted at the 2012 biennial convention were previously discussed, debated and voted online by the members of the community. This gave a chance to those who couldn't make it as delegates to participate in some way.

The sense of belonging and the relationships forged between members and with the party seem to represent an important incentive, perhaps not in joining, but in retaining, renewing and engaging the grassroots. This suggests that electoral victory might not be the single most important objective behind political involvement. Working on a campaign might be a goal of itself for the volunteers if, as Marc suggested, "the essence of participating [is] participating". The party's position on relationship and experience seems to be in agreement with this proposition.

Yet, if victory and votes aren't the sole reasons for member participation on election campaigns, the party itself needs votes in order to survive. However, by concentrating solely on getting more votes, it could neglect its membership. To some extent, it could be argued that the quest for votes is analogous to the quest for higher profits in a business environment. Focusing on higher profitability can render a firm blind to the source of its income. Likewise, focusing on votes alone could make a party blind to the needs of its members, thus losing their support and, ironically, the election. By keeping in mind the needs of the member as part of its structure, the party can access and reconnect with the broader electorate more easily (Ormrod, 2005; Ormrod & Henneberg, 2010b; Seyd & Whiteley, 1992).

The thought that the member might not solely be giving time and money for the ultimate goal of winning an election would be in line with both the brand community literature and the market orientation literature, as it highlights needs that are not expressed by a portion of the electorate (ie.: the membership base). The forging of relationships, the quest for self-accomplishment are but examples of what members can find in an electoral campaign.

Understanding this, the party will be better equipped to comprehend the electoral market, its needs and aspirations.

5.4. The electoral market

5.4.1. The ladder of engagement: from elector to volunteer

In an attempt to reduce the mental implication of formal political involvement and increase internal participation, the party created the “supporter category”, a status granting voting rights in Liberal leadership elections for free, without having to register as a member. This concept wasn’t new, as it has already been used in other countries (eg.: Socialist Party of France (Bourmand, 2011), United-States presidential primary elections, etc.). However, in Canadian politics it was a first. In relation to signing up as a member, the act of signing up as a supporter could be compared to a low-involvement decision. The only conditions for any elector are to provide their full name, email address and postal code, and to certify being in general agreement with the Liberal official policies.

The main objective behind this innovation was to supply the party’s voter database, Liberalist, with fresh intelligence on Liberal-leaning electors for recruiting purposes, but also to make political involvement more accessible to the general population. This approach was further meant to fend off voter cynicism with a new image of transparency and approachability. Naturally, it was also a publicity effort destined to show the electorate that the party was opening up and listening to its concerns.

To become a supporter is also the political equivalent of a test drive. The leadership candidates we interviewed all said they were strong advocates of this new level of involvement. They considered that it allowed them to interact with ever more Canadians. By introducing the party to previously undecided electors, this could in time lead to an increase in the party's membership. Justin Trudeau's position, presented below, was shared by Martha Hall-Findlay and a third candidate who wished to remain anonymous:

So, I think it's a nice door we're opening, to say... "OK... every Canadian has the opportunity, for free, to choose the leader, but for the details, it simply takes that little extra step". (Justin Trudeau)

Liberals perceived this initiative as an *entrée* to joining the Liberal Party but also, more broadly, as a means of revitalizing political life in general. Indeed, the supporters group was created in order to promote the idea that the party was "[a] vehicle for Canadians' involvement".

Supporters were presented as an intermediate stage of engagement between the elector and the member, just as the member could be placed between the supporter and the donor. This perception of the citizen, as occupying different places on a continuum, was mentioned briefly by Jean-Dominique. Himself a past candidate on the provincial and municipal scene, he described himself as being at the "third-level" of engagement within the Liberal Party of Canada, although he considered sitting at far higher levels in his other political endeavours.

Jean-Dominique's intuition was echoed by decision-makers in Ottawa. The notion of successive levels was indeed brought forward during our interview at the National Headquarters. Informants there described the communications and the outreach process as being more and more focused on accompanying the elector through his interactions with the party, as expressed by the following quote:

When we take the bigger picture, [...] it's also to find yourself on [a] ladder of engagement... You want to reach all Canadians, whether they be male, female, geographically separated, age groups, all that... and then encourage them to become supporters, encourage them to become members; supporters, where you have the least

barriers to entry, specifically. And then, the supporters, you write to them, you work with them, you engage them so that they become members... and all of them, so that they become donors. (Michel)

As with the supporters, the notion of “ladder of engagement” isn’t new altogether: the party always preached higher involvement to its members, whatever level they might have already “achieved”. According to the literature, sustaining the levels of membership is crucial to the effectiveness of the party on its day to day communications at the ground level (Cross & Young, 2004; Lock & Harris, 1996; Ormrod, 2005). Accounts of higher membership involvement were linked to electoral success in the past (Lock & Harris, 1996; Seyd & Whiteley, 1992), and informants agreed with that vision.

Managerially speaking, finding innovative ways to increase the party’s numbers through involvement is encouraging. Informants from both the National Headquarters and the Leader’s Office agreed that the elector had to be considered under a different light, which required a different approach. In the case of the National Headquarters, the philosophy was now that the party was there *for* the electorate, “to help them achieve their goals”...

... and not the other way around.

5.4.2. Scepticism towards political marketing

When the subject of marketing or the electoral market came up in our interviews, we could sense uneasiness in most answers. When pressed to explain their unease, informants were hesitant. They seemed to be struggling with the definition of the elector and what their relationship to the party should be. Some described the elector as a consumer, but most agreed that political involvement went beyond consumption, although it had a lot in common with it. Brad Lister, for instance, clearly assimilated voting to consumption, considering that “it’s a consumer world we live in”. In that, he echoed Gordon Tullock’s take on the electoral process (Tullock et al., 2002).

Martha Hall-Findlay and Michael Broeders were more nuanced, arguing that “as crass as it is” (Martha) and although “there is no social compulsion to go vote”

(Michael), the only way to express one's preferences and achieve the goal of a good government was to actually go out and vote. Both Michael and Martha used consumption analogies, respectively detergent and cola. There appeared to be a certain belief that the consumer's behavior, when faced with an electoral choice, was similar to a consumption choice, which is consistent with Smith & French (2009) and Needham (2006). The party and its brand, and by extension politicians and their riding associations, were in some regards compared to a sales team, whose objective was to sell their product to consumers.

However, most informants flatly rejected this proposition, although some were unable to express where their uneasiness came from. John Aspler, a former youth executive in a Montreal riding association, rejected the type of negative marketing he claimed the Conservative Party of Canada was using, but stated mostly spin doctoring, attack ads and *ad hominem* reasoning as examples. This suggests that political marketing is rejected by members because of a generalization of what they consider negative practices to the entire field, and not following a full analysis of the impacts of marketing on politics.

In some cases, as with Grant Gordon, party behaviours really associated with marketing were also criticized. In the following excerpt, Grant voiced his opposition to what could be identified as a marketing orientation.

So I think it's disingenuous of parties to poll and then modify their platform according to their polls, instead of according to what's right and what their political orientation is and what their values are.
(Grant Gordon)

Grant's position reflects a disdain for pandering, a model that, albeit similar in certain regards to marketing orientation, differs from market orientation.

Some of our informants outlined an interesting variation on the consumer analogy. Marc, for instance, explained that parties were not businesses. Thus, considering the electorate in terms of consumption was inadequate. Even the act of voting wouldn't necessarily be equivalent to buying, as the ballot isn't exchanged for a

product, tangible or not. Justin Trudeau reversed the analogy, proposing instead that the elector wasn't buying, but was in fact a decision maker.

To me, it's a problem to establish politicians as being salesmen and the electors as being buyers... The underlying philosophy of our democracy is that politicians are the workers, and the citizens, they're the bosses. (Justin Trudeau)

This opposes the foundation of the consumer analogy. As Marc put it, a party is "not a business". This claim is supported by O'Shaughnessy (2001) and Lock & Harris (1996)'s conclusions: a party has other goals, a different structure, a different role. On the other hand, this is in contradiction with Needham (2006), who describes the act of voting in terms of purchase, which is one of the key elements supporting the validity of political marketing. In fact, Michael thought that considering elections in such a way was a very cynical way of thinking.

Voting is not buying, and the second you equate a monetary investment in a product to a mental, or an emotional investment in a political party or in the act of voting itself, I think that's a little bit of a stretch, because like I mentioned, voting isn't involve money, it doesn't involve a product per se. It certainly involves an emotional attachment, or a mental process that isn't necessarily "what am I going to buy", you know, and "which one of these politicians am I going to believe more". I wouldn't say that most people think that way. Cynical people think that way. (Michael Broeders)

Members like Michael were willing to say that there were aspects of consumption in the overall concept of "the elector". The party system provides a mechanism to pursue change through choice (ie.: voting), yet this analogy shouldn't be the full extent of a party's vision. Despite the similarities, Carmen clearly expressed that Canadian electors didn't think of themselves as consumers, when called to the voting office.

I don't feel like a consumer. Hum, I don't think Canadians feel like consumers either. I don't think Canadians are politicized enough to feel like consumers, because I don't think they, I don't think most Canadians see differences in parties and platforms, especially when they come into government to feel like they're consuming one thing over the alternative thing that they could be consuming... (Carmen)

The elector would then be a social construct similar but not equivalent to the consumer. Engaging in a relationship with the elector should therefore be different, as his environment wouldn't be a market *per se*. Nevertheless, this is the members' perception of the citizen's self-awareness as an elector. Recognizing that there were, in fact, similarities from an organizational standpoint, Bob Rae's position was that there was more to political marketing than cheap tactics to win a vote, although he agreed that in certain regards, critics of political marketing were right.

They [the members] like to think that politics is more noble than that, it's also they don't like the reduction of what we do to selling a product in the market. And they think that that diminishes the political engagement. And I think they're right, in some important respects, but I also think that they're wrong in not understanding that there are some things we've learned from both public opinion research as it relates to political parties, and marketing research as it applies to a whole bunch of other sets of issues and, selling products in the marketplace; that it's important to understand the connexion between the two. And... that we shouldn't be quite so precious as to think that somehow what we do has not been affected by what goes on in the marketplace. (Bob Rae)

This last proposition was more nuanced than previous accounts. It acknowledged the existence of a relationship between the marketplace and political organizations, without assimilating or subordinating one to the other.

6. Discussion and Implications

6.1. The Guiding Coalition and the Leader

The guiding coalition described in Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006) is still very present in the context of political organizations. Our results showed that the structure of the coalition assembled in the Liberal Party had a particular complexity due to the party constitution and legal restrictions.

The coalition in a business environment doesn't necessarily have to be visible to the market. In a political environment as well, the administrative head of the party is seldom in the spotlight, but the parliamentary leader, for his part, is constantly in the media's scope. The importance of the leader in bringing about massive changes in the party was recurrently stressed by members throughout our research. This is consistent with both Needham (2005)'s view of the marketing role of the leader brand, and Selznick (1943)'s arguments on the leader's visibility.

Despite its essential responsibility in uniting members and supporters around the party as well as policy and transformation propositions, the leader can't both conceptualize and implement the cultural transformation alone. The political party must therefore rely on a coalition spanning two distinct offices. The first one, the national headquarters (named National Office in the case of the Liberal Party of Canada), has an administrative mission very similar to the one described in Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006). The leader on the other hand is more symbolic and can even be a fascinating figure for both electors and members. The Leader's Office is therefore best equipped to push for the transformations implemented by the National Headquarters. Thus, one office is more administrative, while the other is more mediatized due to its role in Parliament. Both are required in order to successfully push for change within the party.

The legitimacy of the coalition comes from the elected nature of the higher offices of the party. With the exception of the national director (a paid executive) and various staff members, most of the high-ranking members of the guiding coalition are traditionally elected by members or delegates during conventions. This

includes the positions of party leader and national president, two roles that were mentioned as being responsible for many changes. This composition is restrictive of course, as the guiding coalition was supported by elements from all departments.

Electing members of the coalition might very well prove challenging, especially in times of transition. Officers are elected at biennial conventions and the leader is elected when there is a vacancy or if the current leader announces he will step down. To modify the selection process, the party needs to pass amendments to its constitution, which requires a convention. The only alternative for the party is to name interim successors, sometimes with limited powers. Building the coalition can therefore be tedious, even more so if there is a lack of support for the leader or if opposing interest groups fail to agree on who to support.

Similarly to the analysis of the leader in the context of the permanent campaign by Needham (2005), the party suffered from a lack of a strong leader brand after the resignation of the Hon. Paul Martin in 2006. Already embattled following the decade-long feud between the Martin and Chrétien clans, the party remained torn between opposing clans for some years.

However, the example of interim leader Bob Rae opens up the possibility that harmonious transitions can occur. As mentioned earlier, the leader has an essential role as a rallying symbol for the party. The Leader's Office has a clear responsibility to unite dissenting components of the organization and to build a vision that can be shared, defended and promoted by all units of the party, across the country. In our research context, the two-year period between the 2011 election and the 2013 leadership election can be considered a crucial buffer that allowed the reorientation of the party leader's role as a Chief Restructuring Officer (CRO).

Consensus building and collaboration are powerful drivers of the market orientation literature. Thereafter, the transition to the permanent leader is facilitated if the party recognizes that a change in culture was essential, and that the party leader as CRO accomplished his mission. The ensuing mission of the next leader

(whom we will call the leader as CEO) is then to lead the party to electoral victory, while perpetuating the changes brought by his predecessor.

The leader as CRO and the leader as CEO are not to be considered as two distinct individuals, but rather as two successive roles of a same office. In the case of the Liberal Party of Canada, the role of CRO was assumed by Bob Rae, whereas the role of CEO was taken up by Justin Trudeau, following the 2013 leadership race. Had Bob Rae run and won, both roles could have been held successively by the same person.

As political parties rely massively on their membership to perform in elections, it is paramount that the leader maintains the support of the grassroots movements. This is, in part, why the selection process of the Liberal Party was revamped.

6.2. The role of the membership

In the latest leadership races of Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party (respectively in 2004 and 2012), the entire membership were allowed to cast a vote. Prior to its 2013 race, the Liberal Party elected its leaders through delegates at conventions. Recognizing the importance of membership, the party adopted a “one member, one vote” stance after the 2009 election of Michael Ignatieff, but moved to a “one supporter, one vote” model before having a chance to work with the earlier reform.

As we’ve seen, granting a right to vote to non-members was a new concept in Canada. The attempt to grow one’s base of support by encouraging electors to sign up to a low-involvement subscription shows a certain level of listening on the party’s part if, as Smith & French (2009) have proposed, voters are looking for new ways of having an impact on social issues. The ladder of engagement becomes even more relevant here, as it proposes a mechanism to turn low-level supporters into members, volunteers and donors. The key still lies with the members, however.

The growing importance of the membership's implication in the gathering and interpretation of the electoral intelligence also agrees with the findings of the literature, which indicate that an internal orientation significantly influences the overall good functioning of a [political] market-orientated party (Ormrod & Henneberg, 2010b). To a certain point, the political science literature agrees: the findings of Seyd & Whiteley (1992) in their analysis of the UK Labour Party membership clearly indicate that the members' role is essential in a number of party activities, such as transmitting the values and ideas of the party to the population, policy-making and mobilization.

The importance of the membership was highlighted throughout our results. The growing similarities with a post-modern community of brand followers were reminiscent of the findings of Smith & French (2009). Seeing the electorate as a group with broader aspirations than simply expressing preferences in terms of government also leads to seeing members as more than simple adopters of a specific "political brand".

Indeed, expression, self-actualization or meeting new people can all be regarded as valid motives for political involvement. The shared beliefs system necessary for a political party to survive, as well as the awareness of kind, are similar to that of a community of consumers. Understanding the social organization of the members is necessary to better provide them with innovative and adapted answers to their needs.

6.3. Scepticism and citizenship

Our research suggests that although political party members are reluctant to make the analogy between elector and consumer, the similarities between the electorate and the market are striking. Some even referred to the electorate as a political market, yet all agreed that the analogy was imperfect.

But even as the sum of all electors is considered by many as being similar to a market, to the party member, the elector isn't a consumer. The elector is also a

consumer, and both roles are similar but distinct faces of citizenship, as they involve decision making between conflicting options. This would account for the variety of answers from our informants, ranging from flat-out rejection to enthusiastic embrace, as well as the ambivalent remarks on shared characteristics.

Marketing is expected in consumption and business: it rarely dissuades people from buying some bread. Consumers won't consume less detergent either if firms fight for greater market shares. Electors on the other hand can become disillusioned if they begin perceiving the electoral process as a quest for maximizing votes rather than maximizing their own best interest.

In essence, this research is in agreement with the political science literature. A marketing orientation applied to political parties (voter-driven orientation) can be detrimental to the long-term survival of a democratic system (of a Westminster-style system, at least), as it yields no or few innovative policies to propose to the electorate.

However, this paper sheds some light on a misinterpretation of marketing practices by the political community. This confusion is present in O'Shaughnessy (2001), where the author downsized the reach of political marketing. He argued that any communication practice was labeled as "marketing" by political organizations, most often without realizing that it was not, in fact, proper marketing. Similarly, we suggest that the alleged destructiveness of marketing is based on a generalization of specific tactics to the entire field. Our results suggest that marketing was taken as an arsenal of "public relations" and "communication" tools or as a philosophical framework to bring a higher share of the "voting market". This rejection would therefore be based on the role and use of marketing within specific political organizations, and not as an applicable science *per se*.

The idea that the concept of political marketing is still unclear in the literature makes for a vast opening for further research, especially if the principal target is not based on the mental pattern of consumption, but rather on the higher principles

of citizenship. Political market orientation, consequently, would need to be revisited to account for the specific nature of the electorate as citizens.

6.4. Citizen orientation

6.4.1. A definition

The party appears to be following the theoretical concepts attached to the literature on political market orientation. Indeed, the transformation of the Liberal Party of Canada seems to be bringing the organization ever closer to the conceptual model developed by Ormrod (2005).

Despite these resemblances, however, the scepticism expressed by our informants was too strong to ignore. Consequently, it would have been inappropriate if we had force-fit the concept on the organization. Although we strongly believed that there was a burgeoning political market orientation in the Liberal Party of Canada, evidence shows that we uncovered something different, albeit similar.

There is no electoral market as such, at least in the eyes of the Liberal Community. As expressed by Mr. Rae in the last section of our results, there is something similar to a market in the assembled electorate: something similar, yet fundamentally different in regards to the role played by those who compose it.

We do not oppose the proposition that parties have attempted to adopt a more market-oriented stance. What we suggest is that, based on O'Shaughnessy (2001)'s vision of political marketing, the fields of business and politics are too distinct to simply add "political" to a marketing theory and call it a day. This research describes a reticence in active political members to describe the electorate as a market of voting consumers. Instead, it sees it as citizens expressing their views both on political and consumption issues through voting.

That is not to say that the vast majority of voters who are non-members don't see themselves as consumers. This paper concentrates on active members, and on their

vision of the cultural transformation they were living within their political organization.

Seeing the voter as a consumer was generally considered negative, as the act of voting was given more importance than an exchange of currency and goods, or to the very least, they were considered fundamentally different.

Going back to the literature, we found a piece on Citizen Relationship Management (CzRM), an approach adopted by a growing number of governments in their everyday interactions with the people they provide services to (Kannabiran, Xavier, & Anantharaaj, 2004). As the ultimate objective upheld by our studied organization was to help the elector achieve their own goals, we determined that “citizen orientation” was an appropriate term to describe the nascent orientation being adopted by the Liberal Party of Canada.

6.4.2. As opposed to Political Market Orientation

Previously, market orientation applied to politics was often based on the assumption that the electorate is a market (Lees-Marshment, 2001). This premise was thoroughly challenged throughout our interviews. Further taking into account the conclusions of the sceptic portion of the political science literature, we concluded that what was occurring in the case of the Liberal Party of Canada wasn't the creation of a market orientation.

Citizen orientation is more in line with the notion of community mentioned earlier, as it acknowledges the idea that the electors are more complex than simply political consumers. Electors are citizens before anything else, and they assemble, organize and share their interests and concerns. A citizen orientation means that the party is attempting to provide citizens with means to express themselves and generate solutions to their needs and wants.

In adopting a "citizen orientation" the main focus of the party is, first, to understand the needs, wants and desires of citizens, not electors as consumers. With the gathered and interpreted intelligence, the party can then attempt to

develop policy as potential solutions for the largest proportion of the electorate, while taking into account the hopes and aspirations of the entire population.

Political parties can sometimes be perceived as elitist, arrogant and as promoting the idea that “they know better”. As opposed to the more traditional “top-bottom” stance of political parties, this “bottom-up” approach is, idealistically, more in line with the fundamental ideas underlying a representative democratic system.

One of the distinctions comes from the role of marketing itself within the organization. In the case of a market orientation, marketing is to some extent the underlying philosophy of the firm. In the case of a citizen orientation, marketing is used more as a means to gather intelligence and communicate policy propositions to the electorate in order to get elected.

Indeed, unlike most consumption experiences, in the election context the actual exchange only occurs if, and only if the option selected by the elector wins the election. Although in terms of fundraising, one can speak of efficiency and productivity, at the end of the day the party needs to obtain a simple majority in a simple majority of ridings, a condition that no commercial firm is required to observe.

6.4.3. Adopting citizen orientation

The legal context and the objectives of political parties are different than those of an organization evolving in a business environment. While we outlined key differences between market and citizen orientations, the process leading to the adoption of both orientations are remarkably similar.

Both have been known to occur in times of hardship for the focal organization. This was certainly the case of the Liberal Party of Canada. There is a need to first recognize the direness of the situation, but especially that what the organization had been doing was inappropriate in regards to the needs of their audience. In the case of Canadian federal political parties, said audience is composed of citizens eligible to vote in a federal election.

The realization must be made by key elements of the structure. Considering that the parliamentary wing and the administrative wing of political parties in Canada are distinct, high-ranking officers from both offices are required in order for any organization-wide overhaul to occur. The reality of modern politics is that the leader is an essential part of the party image or brand. The leader must therefore be an active part of the reconstruction planning, which coincides with the Initiation Stage of Gebhardt, Carpenter & Sherry Jr (2006).

As we've seen earlier, the Guiding Coalition shows legal and constitutional differences with what would likely happen in the business world. However, the end result is the same, as similar changes are carried out in what resembles the Reconstitution Stage.

The removal of dissenters is done through increased powers at the local level, and the hiring of believers is done through a greater emphasis on the ladder of engagement and the magnetism of the leader. Adopting a collaborative strategy can be achieved similarly, but requires a strong and steady leadership to prevent specific interest groups from fighting each other. Developing values and norms is done incrementally, as interaction between members and electors is encouraged in order to gather quality intelligence. This is strongly linked to a renewed connection to the electorate (ie.: market in the literature), as it becomes the main focus of the party.

Finally, there is a need to show what direction the party is taking. Key changes and innovations need to be presented massively to the membership and the population in general. Demarcation events are therefore not restricted to launching the transformation, but should be held at every major milestone. Such milestones can be the adoption of ground-breaking policy propositions, a reform of the candidate nomination process, or the election of a new leader. Whatever the occasion, events such as these need to assemble a large number of members in order to reinforce the notion of community, and to uphold the idea that the party is open and moving.

Ultimately, problem solving becomes a shared and agreed-upon mechanism. This is true, of course, inside the party, but as the new focus is on the citizen and their participation to the destinies of the nation, it is also true for the entire population.

6.5. A Marketing Concept Native to Politics Rather Than a Rejection

There is no doubt that marketing has had an impact on the structure of political parties and the way they interact with citizens. Why wouldn't it? The marketplace is a fertile ground for innovation, and communicating with citizens, although different than communicating with consumers, still consists of conveying meanings and ideas to an individual or a group.

There are limits to the adaptability of marketing concepts, however, if we consider the previously identified differences between citizenship and consumption. Adapting business literature to political parties suggests that such organizations work in similar ways, with a similar mission and similar resources. Adding "political" before a concept does not make it so.

Political market orientation is a valid, existing construct; far from us to claim otherwise. Yet we consider that it isn't fully adapted to the reality of citizenship and of modern political parties. This being said, the concept of citizen orientation appears to have been fully converted to the political world. It is a marketing construct that political parties can claim their own and develop without fear of sounding "corrupt".

This implies that political parties do indeed rely on marketing constructs, and can even make them their own, given that they adapt these concepts to the reality of the political world, and not the other way around. We suggest that, approached from this angle, the political community would have no cause to reject political marketing as a whole.

7. Limits and further research

This research concentrates solely on the Liberal Party of Canada. As a case study, our findings don't prove the existence of an orientation native to political parties. However, they provide a new platform from which researchers can explore the reach of political marketing, and highlight the fact that the political community is, at least in part, sceptical towards the simple application of a marketing framework to their environment.

Expanding the scope of this analysis to other parties in similar environments could significantly contribute to the literature by helping shape a new angle to political marketing. Comparing our results with political parties in systems other than Westminster-style parliamentary systems would also provide valuable information to expand the concept of citizen orientation to representative democracies in general.

Given the length of the hypothesized adoption process, we also limited our research to the first two years of the transformation, choosing the long awaited milestone – the election of a new leader – to conclude our data collection. Further research into the later stages of the cultural transformation leading to citizen orientation would prove to be rich contexts for both marketing and political science scholars.

We began this research by highlighting the links between the marketing literature on political parties and non-profit organizations. We believe that this relationship could also be studied in regards to citizen orientation, as charities, governments and political parties all aim (theoretically) at increasing the quality of life of citizens.

8. Conclusion

Despite the abundant literature praising market orientation in the business field, and the growing number of articles arguing in favor of its political adaptation, it would be irresponsible to disregard the aversion of political science authors and the visible scepticism of the political community. The objective of this research was to determine if political parties could effectively adapt market orientation, as opposed to what is usually considered “political marketing”. Contrarily to what we expected, our results made it clear that market orientation was not a perfect match for political parties. The notion of “citizen orientation” was better suited to the context.

Our findings concur with the political science literature, in proposing that negative campaigning and the use of hot button issues are perceived as being detrimental to the overall quality of representative democracy and accentuate voter cynicism. The major reason for the poor reputation of political marketing appeared to be the generalization of those practices.

On the other hand, striving to identify needs in order to help the electorate achieve their own goals through political involvement was deemed positive and beneficial to a healthy parliamentary system. Such criteria are in line with the literature on market orientation and political market orientation, but informants who voiced this behaviour were not necessarily conscious of the resemblance between their values and the studied phenomenon. The strong rejection of political consumption and the lack of a consensus on the existence of a political market, however, led us to shift the focus of our analysis to a higher level; that of citizenship.

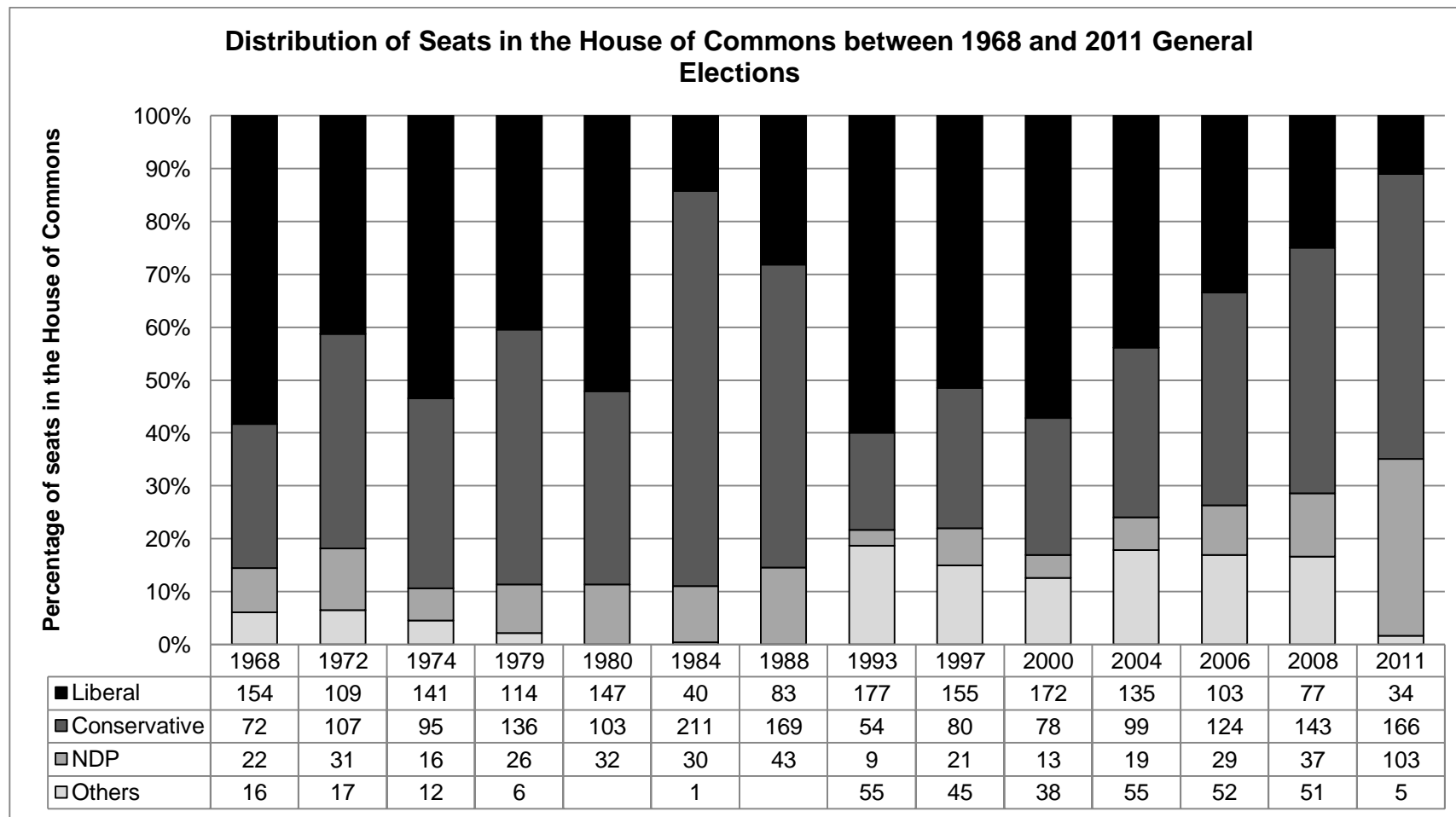
Citizen orientation differs from market orientation, as political parties are not attempting to sell a product per se, but rather use marketing tools to collect and disseminate citizen intelligence within the organization in order to develop policy and behaviour. Similarly to market orientation, the identification of party-wide, defining values and norms was seen by Liberals as essential to the survival of their organization.

A surprising point, however, was the social groups of members assembling within the party, and that appeared to be the equivalent of a nascent party brand community. Further studying the importance of this phenomenon, of its own, could outline major development in nurturing and sustaining grassroots movements. Furthermore, the role of the leader was identified as central to the complete adoption of a citizen orientation, as it allowed the party community to rally around a construct with greater visibility and symbolism than any corporate guiding coalition could muster.

In conclusion, this research suggests that citizen orientation could prove to be a successful approach to redefining the way political parties manage and develop their organization. Although strikingly similar to market orientation in its inception and mechanisms, this model would be native to the political sphere, and would therefore be unlikely to corrupt the democratic process. Indeed, citizen orientation, encourages the creation of new connexions and relationships between the leadership, the membership and the electorate, all the while concentrating on providing answers to needs, rather than calculating the optimal “political market share” needed to win.

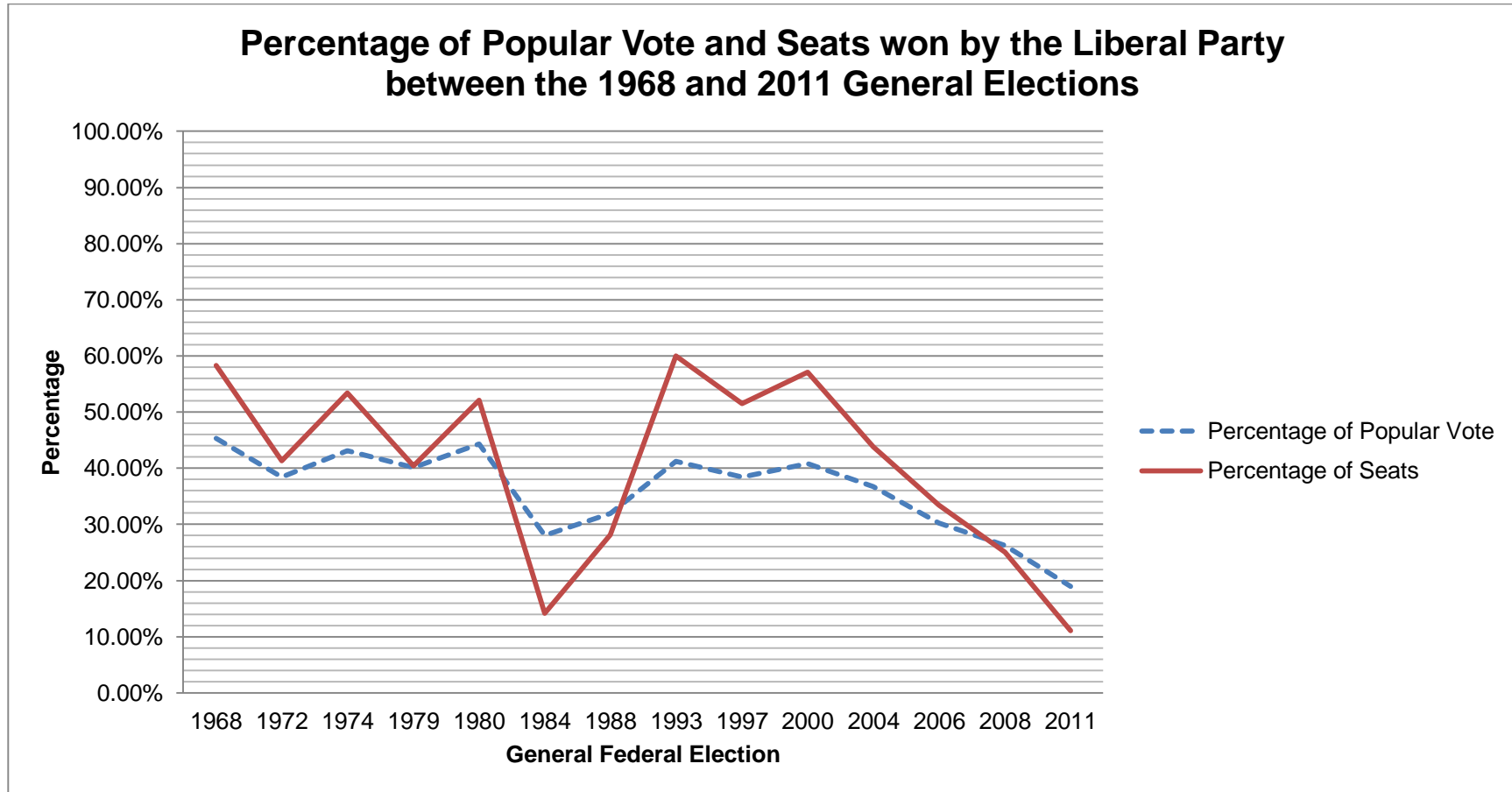
9. Appendix

9.1. Appendix 1 – Distribution of seats in the House of Commons between 1968 and 2011 General Elections⁵

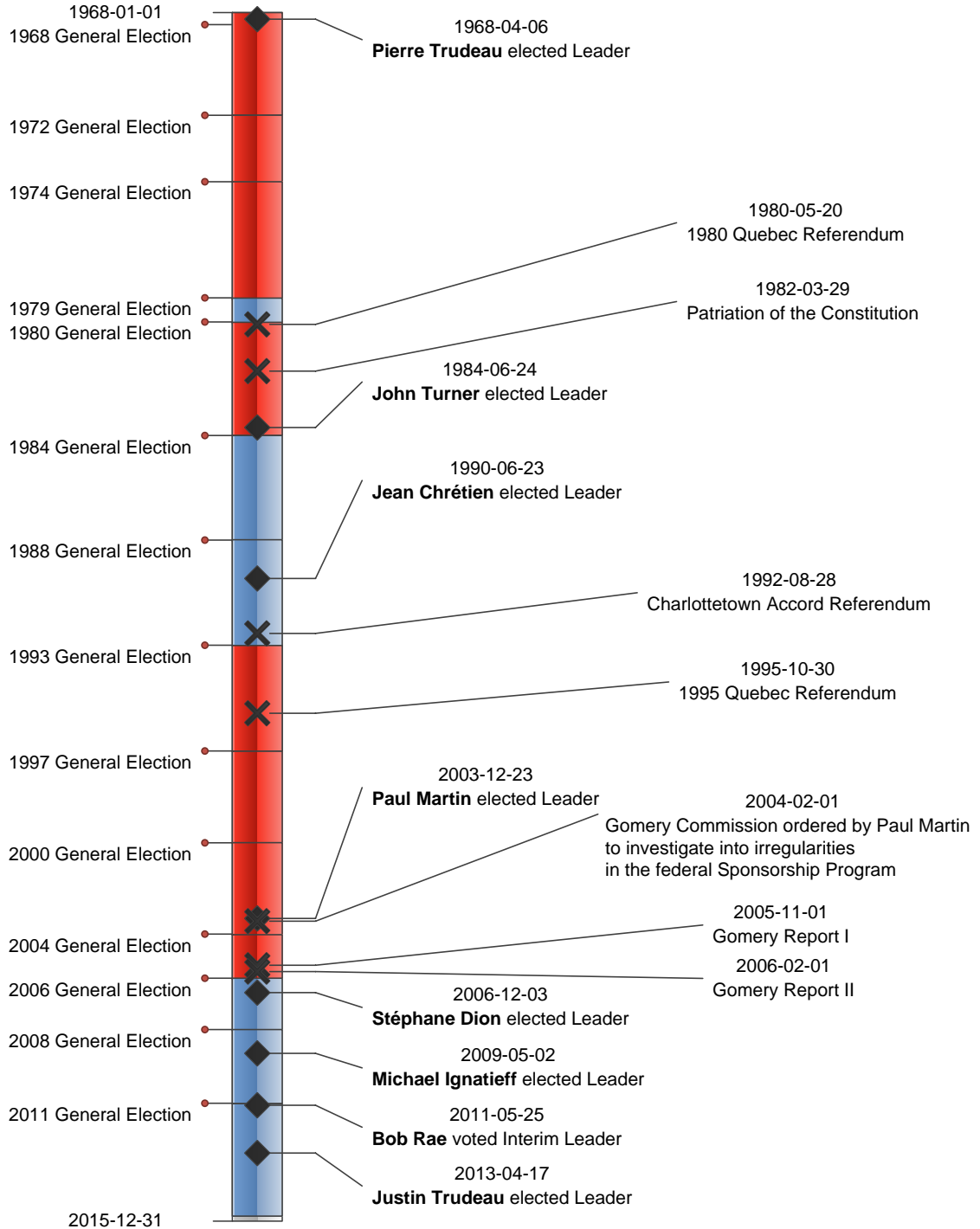


⁵ "Conservative" includes the Progressive-Conservative Party†, the Reform Party of Canada†, the Canadian Alliance† and the Conservative Party of Canada. "Others" include the Social Credit Party of Canada†, the Bloc Québécois, the Green Party of Canada and Independents.

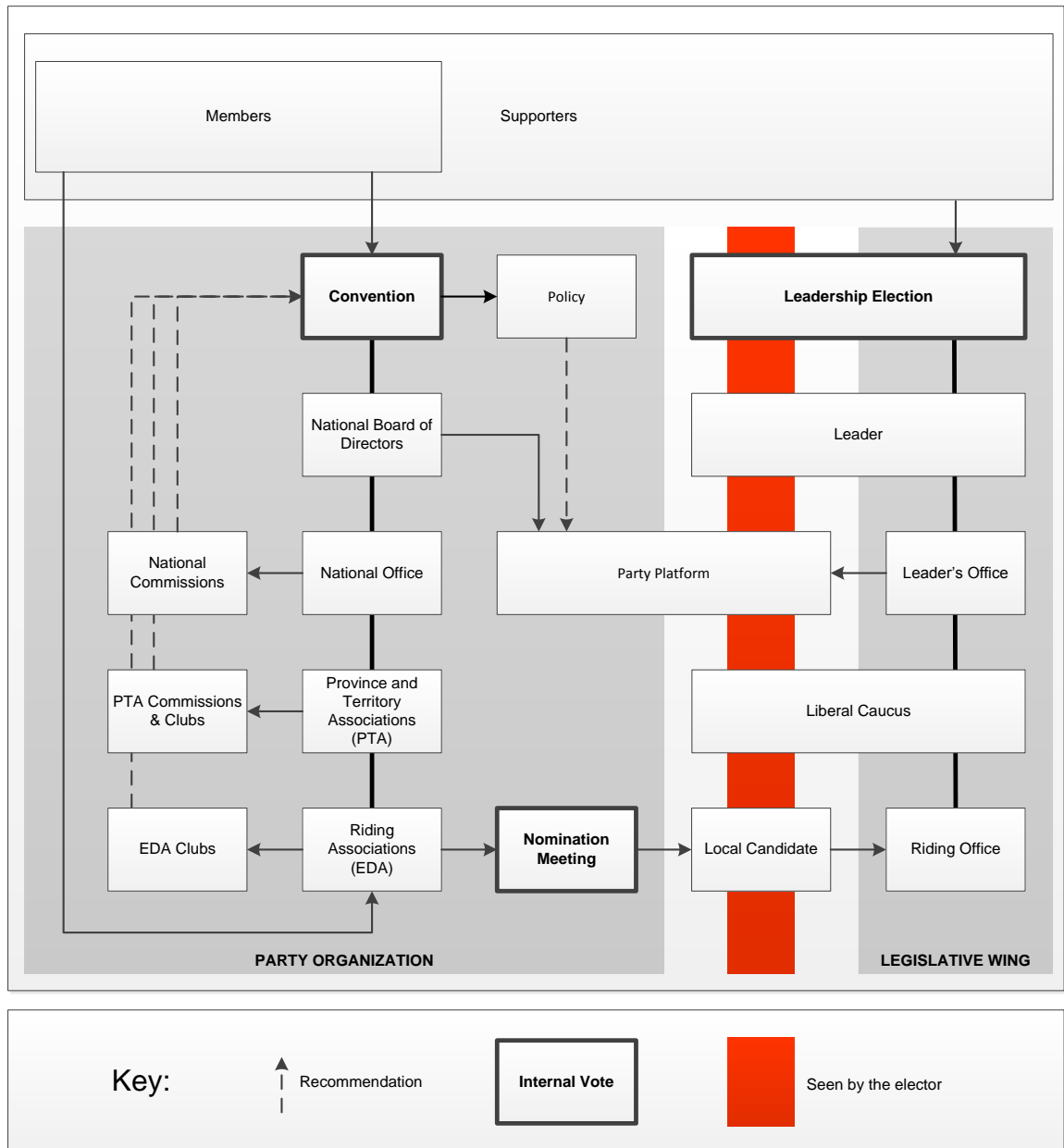
9.2. Appendix 2 – Percentage of Popular Vote and Seats won by the Liberal Party between the 1968 and 2011 General Elections



9.3. Appendix 3 – Timeline of the Liberal Party of Canada, 1968-2015



9.4. Appendix 4 – Simplified structure of the Liberal Party of Canada



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