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Les promesses électorales: Mise en oeuvre, perceptions et couverture médiatique

Thèse

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Résumé

Cette thèse est composée de trois articles qui portent sur les promesses électorales au Canada. Dans le premier article, nous illustrons l'importance de tenir compte du temps dans l'étude de la tenue des promesses électorales. Nous ajoutons ainsi un élément important aux discussions académiques en cours sur les facteurs qui influencent la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales. Contrairement aux études précédentes, qui supposent que la réalisation de promesses est un processus qui se produit de façon uniforme au fil du temps, nous analysons la mise en œuvre des promesses en utilisant une approche *BTSCS* (*Binary Time-Series Cross-Section*) qui met en évidence de nouvelles dynamiques. Plus précisément, nous constatons que si le gouvernement ne tient pas ses engagements électoraux dans la première moitié de son mandat, la probabilité que ceux-ci soient tenus diminue drastiquement. L'approche de modélisation discrète du temps (*discrete time* model) nous permet également d'étudier de plus près les relations existant entre le solde budgétaire et la réalisation des promesses. Notre recherche étend également l'étude de la mise en œuvre des promesses à un nouveau cas, la province de Québec, pour la période de 1994 à 2014. Enfin, nous effectuons également des analyses similaires sur les données canadiennes couvrant sept gouvernements successifs de 1993 à 2015. Cette étude analyse un total de 1431 promesses électorales codées manuellement.

Dans le second article, nous examinons les évaluations que font les citoyens de la tenue des promesses électorales en utilisant les données de l'Étude électorale canadienne de 2015. Nous observons que l'exactitude de ces évaluations augmente en présence de facteurs liés aux connaissances des citoyens, à savoir les connaissances politiques et l'importance relative de chaque promesse. Par ailleurs, nous constatons que les évaluations des citoyens reposent souvent sur des facteurs non fondés sur les faits, tels que leur identité et des croyances a priori, y compris l'identification partisane et la confiance politique. La présence de ces facteurs n'augmente pas la probabilité de répondre correctement. Nous

constatons également, à l'aide d'une expérience par sondage divisé, qu'un changement dans la formulation des questions affecte le ton de l'évaluation des promesses, mais pas leur exactitude.

Dans le troisième article, nous étudions la couverture des promesses électorales dans les médias. Plus précisément, cet article cherche à savoir si les médias alertent les citoyens lorsqu'une promesse électorale est rompue. Cette étude porte sur les 244 promesses faites par le Parti conservateur, lors des élections canadiennes de 2008 et de 2011. Notre période d'étude s'étend du déclenchement de l'élection de 2008 (07/09/2008) jusqu'à la fin du mandat de 2011 (08/04/2015). Cet article révèle que les médias alertent les citoyens lorsqu'un engagement est rompu. Nous constatons également que le «modèle d'alarme antivol» (*Burglar Alarm*), issu du domaine de la communication politique, fournit une description adéquate des dynamiques entourant la couverture médiatique des engagements électoraux.

Abstract

This doctoral dissertation is composed of three articles related to electoral pledges in Canada. In the first article, we highlight the importance of accounting for time in the study of pledge fulfillment, effectively adding a significant element to the ongoing academic discussions of the factors that influence the fulfillment of party promises. Unlike previous analyses in which pledge fulfillment is assumed to be a uniform process occurring over time, we analyze party pledge fulfillment using a discrete time approach: doing so highlights yet unobserved dynamics. More precisely, we find that if the government does not enact pledges within the first half of its mandate, the probability of these pledges ever being fulfilled drops drastically. The discrete time modeling approach also allows us to investigate the relationships existing between the budget balance and pledge fulfillment more thoroughly. Our research also extends the study of pledge fulfillment to a new case, the province of Quebec, for the period of 1994–2014 encompassing six governments. Finally, we also conduct similar analyses on Canadian pledge fulfillment data spanning seven successive governments from 1993 to 2015. This study analyzes a total of 1431 manually coded election pledges.

In the second article, we examine citizens' evaluations of specific campaign pledge fulfillment using data from the 2015 Canadian Election Study. We find that the accuracy of these evaluations increases in the presence of factors related to citizens' informed judgments, namely political knowledge and the relative importance of each pledge. On the other hand, we find that citizens' evaluations often turn on factors not based on informed judgments but rather on group identities and a priori beliefs, including partisan identification and political trust. The presence of these factors does not to increase the likelihood of accuracy of pledge evaluations. We also find, through a split ballot experiment, that even though a change in question wording affects the tone of pledge evaluations, it does not affect their accuracy.

In the third article, we investigate the portrayal of electoral pledges in the news media. We know very little about the portrayal of electoral pledges in news media which is problematic because we do know the majority of citizens do not read electoral platforms, budgets, bills, etc. and as such obtain the information they need from the media. More precisely, this article investigates whether the media alert citizens when a pledge is broken? This study covers the 244 pledges made by the government party, the Conservative Party, during the 2011 and 2008 Canadian elections. Our period ranges from the 2008 election (07/09/2008) to the end of the 2011 mandate (08/04/2015). This study finds that the news media do alert citizens when a pledge is broken and that what is often described as the "Burglar alarm model" in political communication provides an apt description of the dynamics at play in the coverage of electoral pledges.

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Avant-propos

Conformément aux règles de la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales, les trois articles contenus dans cette thèse ont été acceptés ou soumis auprès de revues scientifiques.

Le premier article, *Time and the Fulfillment of Election Pledges*, a été accepté pour publication dans la revue *Political Studies* le 12 février 2018 et est disponible en ligne depuis le 21 mars 2018.

Le second article, *Citizen's evaluations of campaign pledge fulfillment in Canada,* a été accepté pour publication dans la revue *Party Politics* le 17 juin 2018 et est disponible en ligne depuis le 19 juillet 2018. La version présentée dans cette thèse correspond au manuscrit tel qu'il était au moment de la soumission initiale, soit avant la deuxième ronde de révisions demandée par l'editeur de *Party Politics*.

Le troisième article, *Ringing the Alarm : The Media Coverage of the Fulfillment of Electoral Pledges*, a été soumis pour évaluation à la revue *Electoral Studies* le 25 juillet 2018. L'article est en évaluation depuis. Lors de la soumission initiale de cette thèse le 12 juin 2018, l'article était en évaluation auprès d'une autre revue.

Je suis l'auteur principal des deux premiers articles et seul auteur du troisième. J'ai réalisé l'ensemble des étapes liées à la production de tous ces articles, exception faite de la collecte des données pour le premier article lors de laquelle j'ai eu la chance de bénéficier de l'aide d'auxiliaires de recherche. Mon coauteur pour les deux premiers articles est mon directeur de recherche François Pétry.

Introduction

Le 5 octobre 2015, Justin Trudeau dévoile la plateforme électorale du Parti libéral du Canada en vue des élections qui devaient avoir lieu un peu plus tard le même mois. Celle-ci contient plus de 350 promesses. On peut notamment y lire que la formation politique était déterminée « à faire en sorte que l'élection de 2015 soit la dernière élection fédérale organisée selon un scrutin majoritaire uninominal à un tour » (PLC, 2015 : 29). Un an après son élection, soit en octobre 2016, Trudeau annonce qu'il n'envisage plus la réforme du mode de scrutin et rompt par le même fait sa promesse électorale.

Au cours de l'année qui s'écoule entre le dévoilement de la plateforme électorale libérale et l'abandon de la réforme du mode de scrutin par le parti, 320 articles abordant cette réforme sont publiés dans les trois plus grands quotidiens anglophones canadiens[1]. L'année suivante, la couverture médiatique sur cet enjeu augmente et 446 articles apparaissent dans les trois périodiques[2]. Le sujet est aussi régulièrement abordé au parlement fédéral, alors que l'expression « *electoral reform* » est mentionnée 371 fois dans les Débats de la Chambre des communes lors de cette même période[3]. L'ampleur de cette couverture médiatique illustre bien l'importance que peuvent prendre les promesses électorales lors d'un mandat.

Cette anecdote semble corroborer l'idée fort répandue voulant que les politiciens soient des menteurs qui rompent régulièrement leurs promesses. Cependant, contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait croire, le gouvernement Trudeau a tenu, en date du 22 mai 2018, la grande majorité (78 %) des 353 promesses que l'on retrouve dans sa plateforme électorale[4].

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[1] Recherche Factiva: "(vote system OR vot* reform* OR electoral reform) AND Trudeau" de la
[2] Recherche Factiva: "(vote system OR vot* reform* OR electoral reform) AND Trudeau" de la période du 9 octobre 2016 au 9 octobre 2017 dans le Globe and Mail, le National Post et le Toronto Star.
[3] Recherche LIPAD: "electoral reform" de la période du 9 octobre 2016 au 9 octobre 2017.
[4] Polimètre Trudeau (https://www.poltext.org/polimetre) consulté le 22 mai 2018.

0.1 Problématique

Le scepticisme semble plutôt répandu lorsqu'il est question des promesses électorales. Par exemple, dans 31 des 33 pays sondés dans le cadre de l'*International Social Survey Program* (2008) plus de la moitié des répondants affirmaient être en désaccord avec l'affirmation «*People we elect as MPs try to keep the promises they have made during the election*». Au Canada, 44 % des personnes interrogées étaient en désaccord ou en profond désaccord avec cette affirmation. Ces résultats ont ensuite été corroborés par l'enquête *Samara Citizen's Survey* en 2012. Dans ce sondage, les répondants devaient évaluer la performance du gouvernement fédéral (sur une échelle de 0 à 10, où zéro signifiait une performance très faible et 10 une excellente performance) par rapport à un ensemble d'items. Sur le point «*Those elected to Parliament keep most of their election promises*», le score moyen des 1791 participants était de 5 (Pétry, 2014).

Historiquement, l'opinion des politologues à l'égard des promesses électorales n'est pas non plus consensuelle. Dès les premiers balbutiements de la science politique contemporaine, bien avant les premières études portant spécifiquement sur les promesses électorales, on recense des opinions assez dures à l'égard des plateformes et des promesses qu'elles contiennent. Ostrogorski écrivait en 1902, dans son livre *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties,* que les plateformes n'étaient ni plus ni moins qu'une farce qui n'a pour but que d'appâter les électeurs et que la mise en place des éléments contenus dans celles-ci était loin d'être garanties (1902 : 138-139). S'inscrivant dans la même vision, Schattschneider énonçait quarante ans plus tard : «*party platforms are fatuities; they persuade no one, deceive no one, and enlighten no one.*» (1942 : 567)

Plus récemment, dans les années 1980 et 1990, certaines études ont commencé à aborder le sujet de la tenue des promesses électorales. À ce titre on peut citer les études de Rose (1980), Pomper et Lederman (1980), Kalegeropoulo (1989) et Royed (1996). Mais malgré ces études, l'idée que les partis ne tiennent pas leurs

promesses persiste. Mentionnons par exemple Manin qui dans son ouvrage séminal *The Principles of Representative Government*, affirmait : « […] *electoral pledges are not binding and those who are elected often fail to keep them.* » (1997 : 180).

Toutefois, cette opinion voulant que les hommes et les femmes politiques ne remplissent pas leurs promesses électorales ne résiste pas à l'épreuve des faits. En plus des quelques études brièvement mentionnées ci-dessus, plusieurs chercheurs se sont penchés sur la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales et dans tous les cas les résultats de leurs recherches soulignent que les partis élus tiennent la majorité de leurs promesses électorales. Ces travaux ont culminé avec la publication en 2017 d'un article comparatif dans le *American Journal of Political Science* et d'un livre à paraître sous peu chez *Michigan University Press* dans lesquels quelques 20 023 promesses électorales formulées lors de 57 campagnes électorales dans 12 pays sont analysées. Des 9133 promesses émises par les formations politiques qui ont ensuite remporté l'élection, 5439 — soit 60 % — ont été tenues (Thomson et al., 2017, Naurin et al., à paraître). La moyenne de promesse tenue au Canada est de 68 % pour la période de 1993 à 2015 (Pétry et Duval, à paraître).

Il y a cependant passablement de variation de pays à pays. Le tableau 0.1 synthétise l'état de la recherche sur la tenue des promesses électorales. Ce tableau n'entre pas dans les détails de chacune des études, mais présente somme toute un bon aperçu de l'état des connaissances dans le domaine.

Tableau 0.1 : Survol des études sur la tenue des promesses électorales

Pays	Période	Pourcentage des promesses tenues au moins en partie	Source
Allemagne	1990-2013	61	Praprotnik, 2017
Autriche	2003-2007	56	Schermann et Ennser-Jedenastik, 2012
Bulgarie	1997-2005	60	Kostadinova, 2013
Canada	1945-1978	72	Rallings, 1987
Canada	1984-1988	74	Monière, 1988
Canada	1993-2015	68	Pétry et Duval, 2015 et à paraître
Espagne	1993-2000	55	Artés et Bustos, 2008
États-Unis	1912-1976	71	Krukones, 1984
États-Unis	1932-1964	80	Bradley, 1969
États-Unis	1944-1966	72	David, 1971
États-Unis	1944-1978	67	Pomper et Lederman, 1980
États-Unis	1976-2000	65	Royed, 2007 et 1996
États-Unis	1960-1980	61	Fishel, 1985
États-Unis	1997-1999	73	Ringquist et Dasse, 2004
France	1997-2007	60	Holmqvist, 2008
France	2007-2012	50	Bouillaud et al, 2017
Grèce	1981-1985	74	Kalogeropoulo, 1989
Irlande	1977-2007	52	Mansergh et Thomson, 2007
Italie	1996-2006	57	Moury, 2011
Norvège	2001-2005	60	Sandvold, 2008
Nouvelle-Zélande	1972-2005	73	McCluskey, 2008
Pays-Bas	1986-1998	57	Thomson, 1999 et 2001
Portugal	1995-2011	62	Moury et Fernandes, 2016
Québec	1994-2012	60	Pétry, Duval et Birch, à paraitre
Royaume Uni	1945-1979	64	Rallings, 1987
Royaume Uni	1970-1979	82	Rose, 1980
Royaume Uni	1974-1997	85	Royed, 1996
Suède	1994-2010	83	Naurin 2011, 2014 et 2016
Turquie	1983-2011	51	Toros 2015

Ce tableau consiste essentiellement en une mise à jour des tableaux présentée dans l'ouvrage de Naurin (2011 : 40) et dans le chapitre de Pétry et Collette (2009 : 71-72). Il est bon de noter que les données sous-jacentes à ces études ne se retrouvent pas toutes dans l'article comparatif de Thomson et al. (2017), on peut ainsi dénombrer 17 pays étudiés alors que l'article comparatif n'en étudie que douze. Il est aussi bon de souligner que, contrairement à l'article comparatif, toutes

les études citées dans le tableau 0.1 n'ont pas nécessairement les mêmes standards méthodologiques.

En somme, bien que la majorité des citoyens et certains politologues soient plutôt sceptiques quant à la volonté des politiciens élus de tenir les promesses qu'ils ont faites lors de leur campagne électorale, l'ensemble des études ayant mesuré la tenue des promesses électorales conclut que la majorité de celles-ci sont tenues par la suite. Naurin (2011) appelle cette divergence entre les opinions et la réalité observée le « *pledge puzzle* ». C'est ce casse-tête qui nous a amenés à nous intéresser à l'étude des promesses électorales.

0.2 L'importance théorique des promesses électorales

Le rôle des promesses électorales ne se limite pas à mesurer leur tenue. Elles ont aussi une importance théorique en science politique, notamment dans le débat théorique qui s'inscrit dans les *théories de la représentation*. Les débats théoriques qui entourent les théories de la représentation et du bon fonctionnement de la démocratie représentative font usage des concepts de mandats (*mandate*) et de l'imputabilité (*accountability*), ces deux concepts emploient à leur tour les promesses électorales. Dans cette section nous aborderons les rôles des promesses quant à ces deux aspects de la démocratie représentative. Ensuite, nous présenterons le cadre théorique de « représentation promissoire » (*promissory representation*) tel que proposé par Mansbridge (2003).

0.2.1 Le mandat

Les promesses électorales jouent un rôle important dans les théories du « mandat » en science politique (*mandate theories/approaches*). L'idée générale du mandat est que l'élection donne un laissez-passer (*license*) aux élus pour qu'ils mettent en œuvre leur programme politique tel que présenté lors de l'élection (Mulgan, 1998). Dans ce modèle, les citoyens choisissent un parti en fonction des

promesses de politiques publiques que celui-ci propose. Il s'agit cependant d'une définition très restreinte de ce qu'est un mandat. Tel que discuté par Mansergh (2003) et Naurin (2011), la définition d'un mandat varie passablement d'un politologue à l'autre. Certains adoptent une vision beaucoup plus large, tel que Birch (1971), qui voit l'élection comme un gage de confiance avec peu de contraintes. Autrement dit, les citoyens, lors des élections, s'en remettent à un parti et à son jugement davantage qu'à sa plateforme. Dans ce type d'approches, le rôle des promesses électorales est un peu moins clair. Certains auteurs imposent toutefois certaines limites aux libertés que peut se permettre un parti. Birch (1971) souligne que si le gouvernement se veut représentatif, celui-ci doit avoir des intérêts et caractéristiques communs avec les électeurs. D'autres, comme Hofferbert et Budge (1992), avancent que le mandat se doit d'être idéologiquement cohérent avec la campagne menée.

La conception plus large du mandat est souvent celle que nous présentent les politologues qui s'inscrivent dans une approche rétrospective du vote. Contrairement au premier modèle présenté qui propose qu'un citoyen vote en fonction de ce qu'il désire pour le prochain mandat, le modèle rétrospectif avance que les citoyens sont centrés sur le passé et qu'ils votent plutôt en fonction de leur évaluation de la performance du gouvernement sortant (Key, 1966). Dans la conception plus contemporaine de l'approche rétrospective du vote, il est postulé que les électeurs ne sont pas complètement myopes, mais qu'ils se basent sur les performances passées pour prédire les performances futures des élus (voir par exemple Fiorina 1981). Cette distinction est cependant un peu artificielle en ce qui a trait aux promesses électorales. Nous reviendrons sur ce point dans la section sur la représentation promissoire.

Il existe cependant une école de pensée qui s'inscrit à l'encontre des approches du mandat dans laquelle les promesses électorales ne jouent pas un rôle important. Cette école rassemble des chercheurs qui remettent en doute la capacité des partis à mettre en place des politiques publiques. L'un des arguments récurrents des penseurs souscrivant à cette approche est que les partis sont à la merci des

facteurs socioéconomiques et que ce sont ces facteurs qui déterminent les politiques publiques qui seront adoptées par un gouvernement (Castles, 1982). D'autres, comme Budge et Keman (1990), prétendent que les nombreux éléments qui font consensus entre les partis façonnent davantage l'agenda des politiques publiques que les quelques éléments où il y a désaccord (voir aussi : Klingemann, Hofferbert, Budge, 1994). Certains affirment que ce serait plutôt l'administration publique qui dicterait le programme politique (Castles, 1982 ; Clarke et al., 1996). Bien que de nombreux facteurs peuvent influencer les politiques publiques, les recherches subséquentes ont démontré que les partis ont néanmoins la capacité de mettre en œuvre leur programme de politiques publiques et qu'ils le font (voir par exemple : Klingemann, Hofferbert, Budge, 1994; Schmidt, 2002; Laver and Shepsle, 1993; Bevan and Greene, 2016; Bevan et al., 2011). Qui plus est, tel que nous l'avons vu plus tôt, les partis politiques tiennent la majorité de leurs promesses électorales, ce qui implique forcément qu'ils ont la capacité et la volonté de respecter leur plateforme et de mettre en œuvre les promesses qui s'y retrouvent.

En résumé, les promesses électorales sont au cœur des théories du « mandat » en science politique. Les promesses définissent le mandat que les partis proposent aux électeurs lors des campagnes électorales et qu'ils mettront en œuvre si élus.

0.2.2 L'imputabilité

Plus qu'un simple signal aux électeurs lors des campagnes électorales, les promesses jouent un rôle important dans l'imputabilité et la reddition de comptes une fois la prochaine élection venue.

Tel que proposé par Downs, la présence de partis fiables, c'est-à-dire de partis dont l'action future est prévisible et vérifiable, est une condition au vote dit rationnel (1957 : 105-109). Si les partis s'avéraient imprévisibles, voter rationnellement ne serait pas possible. Cette idée a été reprise et raffinée par Manin, Prezeworksi et Stokes qui, dans leur ouvrage *Democracy, Accountability and Representation,*

affirment : « *After all, voters want their choice to have consequences; hence, they want to be able to predict the behaviour of politicians from their campaign platforms, rhetoric, or identity* ». (1999 : 38). La tenue des promesses électorales est un des nombreux postulats de Downs dans son ouvrage *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957 : 108). Chez Downs, les acteurs formant les partis seraient motivés par leur désir de réélection. L'idée est fort simple : les politiciens et formations politiques se doivent d'entretenir leur image d'intégrité et de fiabilité s'ils comptent être élus pour plus d'un mandat. Manin, Prezeworksi et Stokes expriment bien cette idée : « […] *a politician who stuck to promises will be more likely to be believed next time around. In turn, voters may want to punish politicians who renege on their promises* ». (1999 : 38).

Laver et Shepsle définisse l'imputabilité d'un parti élu de façon similaire. Pour eux, les partis seront jugés en fonction de la cohérence entre leur mandat et leur position dans l'espace politique lors de l'élection. Leur position dans l'espace politique est définie par leur historique, les membres du parti, les discours et ce qui nous intéresse davantage, leur plateforme électorale (1994, 1999). Dit autrement, les citoyens jugeront de la performance du gouvernement sortant sur la base de la cohérence entre sa campagne et son mandat.

La reddition de compte basée sur les performances passées prend différentes formes dans la littérature. L'approche la plus étudiée dans la littérature est sans doute l'évaluation des compétences économiques des candidats, aussi appelée l'approche du vote économique (voir par exemple, Alesina et Rosenthal, 1995, Erickson, 1989 ; Fiorina 1981). L'économie n'est cependant pas le seul facteur qui a été étudié. D'autres indicateurs de la performance gouvernementale, par exemple l'historique de vote des membres du Congrès (Jacobson 1996) ou les décisions en politique étrangère (Yantek, 1982) ont reçu de l'attention. Dans cette ligne d'idée, la tenue ou non tenue de ses promesses électorales peut représenter un indicateur de la performance du gouvernement sortant. Cependant, les travaux portant sur cette dimension des promesses électorales en sont encore à leurs premiers pas. En effet, il n'existe que quelques articles qui mesurent la capacité

des citoyens à évaluer la tenue des promesses, mais aucun liant ces jugements à leur choix de vote (Thomson, 2011, Naurin 2017, Pétry et Duval 2017, Thomson et Brandenburg 2018).

En résumé, bien que cet aspect soit moins étudié, on peut affirmer que la tenue ou non tenue des promesses électorales peut représenter un indicateur de performance gouvernemental au même titre que par exemple l'état de l'économie.

0.2.3 La représentation promissoire

Les promesses électorales auraient donc un double rôle, d'une part elles permettent aux partis de présenter un mandat aux électeurs et d'autre part elles représentent un indicateur de performance à partir duquel les électeurs peuvent juger leurs réalisations une fois leur mandat terminé. De prime abord, ces deux rôles peuvent sembler s'inscrire dans des approches contradictoires en science politique. La première adhère à une vision du vote prospectif et la seconde dans une vision du vote rétrospectif, la présente section présente le modèle de représentation promissoire, théorisé par Mansbridge dans son article *Rethinking Representation* (2003), qui allie ces deux aspects en un seul cadre théorique.

La représentation promissoire suit le format classique du modèle principal agent. En somme, il s'agit d'un cadre théorique qui tente d'expliquer comment le principal, c'est-à-dire le citoyen, exerce un contrôle sur l'agent, c'est-à-dire l'élu, lorsque celui-ci le représente une fois au gouvernement. Plus précisément, les électeurs veulent s'assurer que leurs intérêts seront bien représentés par leurs élus ; "*The normative understanding of accountability in promissory representation is that the representative is "responsible to," "answerable to," "bound," and even "bound by [the] voters."* (Mansbridge, 2003 : 516). Cette approche s'inscrit dans une optique « Dahlsienne » du pouvoir dans laquelle « *A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do* » (Dahl, 1957 : 202-203 tel que cité dans Mansbridge, 2003 : 516).

Plus concrètement, la représentation promissoire peut s'expliquer de façon linéaire en trois temps : T_1 -> T_2 -> T_3. T_1 représente la première élection, dans laquelle les citoyens choisissent la plateforme (ie. le mandat) qui leur correspond le mieux. Tel que mentionné ci-haut lors de l'explication du modèle principal agent, c'est à ce moment que les électeurs exercent leur pouvoir sur le gouvernement au T_2. T_2 représente le mandat, c'est le moment où les représentants élus doivent mettre en place leur programme électoral, c'est-à-dire tenir leurs promesses. Finalement, T_3 représente la deuxième élection dans laquelle les citoyens peuvent punir, ou récompenser, les élus sortant selon qu'ils ont tenu au T_2 les promesses qu'ils ont formulées au T_1. Tel qu'annoncé plus tôt dans le survol des approches du mandat et de la reddition de compte, ce cadre théorique propose que les électeurs ont une vision à la fois prospective et rétrospective lors du vote. En effet ceux-ci tentent d'exercer leur pouvoir sur le gouvernement lors du T_2 subséquent, mais évaluent aussi les performances du gouvernement lorsqu'il était au pouvoir au T_2 précédent. Cette définition des différents moments de la représentation promissoire nous permet de voir clairement que les approches prospective et rétrospective s'inscrivent toutes dans les dynamiques entourant les promesses électorales. Celle-ci sera aussi très utile quand viendra le temps de situer les études existantes et les trois articles contenus dans cette thèse.

En résumé : « *Promissory representation* […] *focuses on the normative duty to keep promises made in the authorizing election (Time 1), uses a conception of voter's power over the representative that assumes forward-looking intentionality, embodies a relatively unmediated version of the constituent's will, and results in accountability through sanction [Time 3]* ». (Mansbridge, 2003 : 516).

0.3   Les études existantes

Les études existantes portant sur les promesses électorales se situent principalement aux T_2 et au T_3 de la représentation promissoire. On peut diviser la littérature sur les promesses électorales en trois groupes. Le premier regroupe les

recherches mesurant la tenue des promesses dans différents contextes et les facteurs qui influencent celle-ci. Le second, beaucoup plus petit, englobe les études qui mesurent la capacité des citoyens à évaluer la tenue des promesses électorales et les facteurs qui affectent cette capacité. Le troisième et dernier groupe, composé de seulement deux études, se situe au T_1 et porte sur la couverture médiatique des promesses lors de l'élection initiale.

0.3.1 L'évaluation de la tenue des promesses électorales par les experts

Le premier groupe, l'étude de la tenue des promesses électorales, a gagné beaucoup de popularité ces dernières années. De nombreux pays ont été étudiés, tels que : les États-Unis (Pomper et Lederman, 1980 ; Royed, 1996), l'Allemagne (Praprotnik, 2017), le Royaume-Uni (Rallings, 1987; Royed, 1996), le Canada (Monière, 1988 ; Pétry, 2014 ; Pétry et Duval, 2015 ; Rallings, 1987 ; Pétry et Duval, à paraître), la Suède (Naurin, 2011, 2014, 2016), les Pays-Bas (Thomson, 2001), la France (Holmqvist, 2008 ; Bouillaud et al., 2017), l'Irlande (Mansergh, 2004 ; Mansergh et Thomson, 2007 ; Costello et Thomson, 2008), l'Espagne (Artés, 2013; Artés and Bustos, 2008), la Grèce (Kalogeropoulou, 1989), la Bulgarie (Kostadinova, 2013), la Norvège (Sandvold, 2008), le Portugal (Moury and Fernandes, 2016), l'Italie (Moury, 2011), l'Autriche (Scherman et Ennser-Jedenastik, 2012), et la Turquie (Toros, 2015).

Outre le fait qu'elles s'inscrivent dans différents contextes nationaux, certaines études vont au-delà de la simple mesure des promesses tenues et testent un certain nombre de facteurs l'affectant. Par exemple, Artés et Bustos (2008), ainsi que Sandvold (2008), observent la capacité de petits partis au sein de coalitions à tenir leurs promesses. Costello et Thomson (2008) ajoutent une variable qui capte la couverture médiatique reçue par chacune des promesses. Praprotnik (2017) et Pétry, Duval et Birch (2018) évaluent l'impact de la juridiction sous laquelle se

retrouvent les promesses. Naurin (2016) met quant à elle l'accent sur l'augmentation de la quantité de promesses dans le temps.

La portée de ces différentes études varie aussi passablement. Certaines n'étudient qu'un seul parti lors d'un seul gouvernement (Kalogeropoulou, 1989 ; Bouillaud et al., 2017 ; Sandvold, 2008) alors que d'autres couvrent 20 ans, voire 30 ans de promesses électorales (Royed, 2007 ; Pétry et Duval, à paraître ; Mansergh et Thomson, 2007 ; Rose, 1980 ; Naurin, 2016 ; Thomson, 2001). Ces analyses ont aussi en commun qu'elles sont effectuées de façon transversale (*cross-sectional*), c'est-à-dire qu'elles examinent la tenue des promesses à un moment précis, moment qui correspond à la fin d'un gouvernement. Autrement dit, ces recherches n'accordent pas d'importance aux dynamiques ou aux mécanismes qui mènent à la tenue ou à la non tenue des promesses, elles étudient plutôt le résultat final, à savoir si les promesses ont été mise en œuvre ou non.

Il est bon de noter que la majorité des chercheurs s'intéressant à ce domaine de la science politique font partie d'un même groupe de recherche, le *Comparative Party Pledge Group*, et partagent des standards méthodologiques et des variables communes. Par exemple, des variables de performance économique caractérisant le gouvernement, le type de promesse et l'accord entre les partis se retrouvent dans presque toutes les études. Les travaux de ce groupe de recherche ont culminé par la publication, en 2017, d'un article comparatif paru dans le *American Journal of Political Science* et dans lequel 20 023 promesses électorales émises lors de 57 campagnes électorales dans 12 pays sont analysées manuellement (Thomson et al., 2017). Les principaux résultats de cette étude comparative sont que les partis tiennent la majorité de leurs promesses une fois au gouvernement, que certains facteurs institutionnels (le gouvernement est-il majoritaire, minoritaire, formé par une coalition) et contextuels (croissance économique versus stagnation) affectent le taux de tenue des promesses électorales. Mais aussi, que les caractéristiques des promesses elles-mêmes peuvent affecter leur probabilité d'être tenue (s'agit-il d'une promesse de maintenir le statu quo ou d'apporter un

changement ? La promesse est-elle en accord ou entre-t-elle en désaccord avec une promesse de l'opposition ?).

En résumé, ce premier regroupement d'études sur les promesses électorales s'intéresse à la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales au T_2 ainsi qu'à un certain nombre de facteurs socioéconomiques, institutionnels ou propres aux promesses qui sont susceptibles d'affecter leur tenue.

0.3.2 L'évaluation de la tenue des promesses électorales par les citoyens

Le second groupe d'articles portant sur les promesses électorales se compose d'études qui évaluent la capacité des citoyens à distinguer les promesses tenues des promesses non tenues. Ces études sont réalisées à l'aide de sondages d'opinion dans lesquels les chercheurs incorporent certaines questions demandant aux répondants s'ils croient que certaines promesses spécifiques du gouvernement sortant ont été mise en œuvre durant le mandat qui vient de se terminer. Cet axe de recherche s'inscrit au T_3 de la représentation promissoire et l'objectif y est d'évaluer dans quelle mesure les citoyens ont les connaissances nécessaires pour émettre des sanctions sur la base de la tenue (ou non tenue) des promesses électorales par le gouvernement au pouvoir.

Thomson, dans son article *Citizens' Evaluations of the Fulfillment of Election Pledges: Evidence from Ireland* (2011) a initié le mouvement. Dans cette étude, l'auteur se concentre sur le ton des évaluations (si les évaluations sont positives ou négatives) que font les citoyens de la tenue des promesses électorales. Pétry et Duval (2017) ont pris un angle légèrement différent. Plutôt que d'évaluer le ton, ils testent si les évaluations faites par les répondants sont correctes ou erronées. Pétry et Duval testent aussi l'importance que les raccourcis cognitifs (*heuristic shortcuts*) jouent dans ces jugements. Naurin et Oscarsson (2017) amènent quant à eux un peu de nuance en démontrant que les promesses spécifiques et précises sont mieux évaluées par les citoyens que les promesses plus vagues. Ils avancent

que la précision des promesses réduit la place que peut prendre l'identification partisane dans le raisonnement des répondants (*motivated reasoning)*. Finalement, Thomson et Brandenburg (2018) effectuent une expérience par sondage divisé (*split survey experiment*) dans laquelle ils demandent à un groupe de répondants d'évaluer « une proposition de politique publique » et à l'autre groupe d'évaluer « une promesse électorale ». Leur principal résultat est que le groupe ayant reçu le traitement « proposition » a tendance à évaluer plus positivement la tenue des promesses électorales.

Ce résumé illustre surtout les particularités de chacune ces études. Toutefois, elles ont toutes les quatre beaucoup de résultats en communs. Ainsi, on remarque notamment que l'identification partisane, le niveau de confiance politique et le niveau de sophistication politique ressortent toujours comme des facteurs explicatifs de grande importance. En effet, ces trois facteurs ont habituellement un pouvoir explicatif, en termes de taille de leurs effets (effect size), bien supérieur aux autres facteurs

Le chapitre 7 de Naurin (2011) représente la seule étude qui s'inscrit dans une approche différente. En effet, Naurin a effectué 17 entrevues auprès de citoyens suédois afin de comprendre leurs opinions entourant la tenue des promesses électorales. Cette étude révèle que souvent, lorsque les répondants émettent des opinions assez dures à l'endroit des politiciens, ils ne pensent pas seulement aux promesses qui ont été faites lors de la campagne électorale, mais plutôt aux politiques publiques qu'ils croient que les politiciens auraient dû mettre en œuvre. C'est probablement ce qui explique que les sondages posant des questions très générales [par exemple : « *People we elect as MPs try to keep the promises they have made during the election* » posées par le ISSP (2008)] ont des réponses beaucoup plus négatives que les études utilisant des questions portant sur des promesses spécifiques [par exemple l'étude de Thomson utilise le libellé suivant : *Before the 2002 General Election, the following promises were made by one or both of the parties who afterwards formed the government. For each of these, do you think the promise was fully met, partially met, or not met at all? 1) A Promise to*

increase the numbers of Gardai [police officers] by 2,000 […] (Thomson, 2011 : 192)]. L'idée générale serait que la précision des questions affecte le niveau de «*motivated reasoning*» auquel les répondants s'adonnent. Cette thèse est similaire à celle de Naurin et Oscarsson (2017) qui démontrent que la spécificité des promesses contenu dans les questions affectent aussi cette tendance des dépondants.

En résumé, ce second groupe d'étude sur les promesses électorales s'intéresse à la capacité des citoyens à distinguer les promesses tenues des promesses non tenues. Cette capacité des citoyens est essentielle afin de leur permettre de sanctionner (ou récompenser) le parti sortant lors du T_3 de la représentation promissoire.

0.3.3 La couverture médiatique des promesses électorales

Avant la mise en route de la présente thèse de doctorat, il n'existait que deux études sur la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales, le troisième groupe d'étude portant sur les promesses électorales. Ces deux articles, de Costello et Thomson (2008) et Kostadinova (2015), étudient la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales lors de l'élection initiale (T_1).

Costello et Thomson se penchent sur la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales lors de l'élection de 2002 en Irlande. Leurs résultats indiquent que les promesses électorales des deux principaux partis, le Fianna Fáil et le Fianna Gael, reçoivent une bonne couverture médiatique et que respectivement 50 % et 92 % de leurs promesses électorales se retrouvent dans la presse écrite au moins une fois durant la campagne. Cependant, seulement 31 % et 18 % des promesses sont couvertes à plus d'une reprise (Costello and Thomson, 2008: 246).

Kostadinova obtient quant à elle des résultats moins positifs. Son étude couvre sept élections successives en Bulgarie et les pourcentages de couverture médiatique qu'elle obtient sont beaucoup plus bas, même pour les principaux

partis du pays. Selon ses observations, le *Parti socialiste bulgare*, qui a obtenu la plus grande part du vote en 1990, 1991,1994 et 2005, a seulement vu 6 %, 2,8 %, 35,7 % et 20 % de ses promesses électorales couvertes au moins une fois dans les journaux lors de ces quatre campagnes. Le *Mouvement national Siméon II* (plus grande part du vote populaire en 2001) et les *Citoyens pour le développement européen de la Bulgarie* (plus grande part du vote populaire en 2009) ont vu 47,9 % (2001) et 22,4 % (2009) de leurs promesses couvertes dans les médias (Kostadinova, 2015). L'étude de Kostadinova va aussi au-delà des analyses descriptives et démontre que les promesses de nature économique reçoivent davantage d'attention et que les promesses plus complexes, comme celles touchant à l'adhésion à l'Union européenne qui ne reçoivent que très peu de couverture médiatique.

0.4   Les articles

Grâce aux sections précédentes, qui clarifient l'approche théorique et dressent un portrait de la littérature portant sur les promesses électorales, il est maintenant possible d'expliciter la contribution des articles qui composent cette thèse et de souligner les liens entre ceux-ci.

Le premier article, *Time and the Fulfillment of Election Pledges* approfondit l'étude de la tenue des promesses électorales au T_2 du modèle de la représentation promissoire. Tel que mentionné précédemment, les études existantes sont effectuées de façon transversale et n'accordent pas d'importance aux dynamiques ou aux mécanismes qui mènent à la tenue des promesses. À ce titre, on pourrait même affirmer que ces études se situent à la jonction entre T_2 et T_3 davantage qu'à la mise en œuvre (au T_2) — à proprement parler. L'article ici présenté s'inscrit en opposition à cette pratique. L'approche transversale se base sur plusieurs présuppositions. Celle qui pose particulièrement problème dans notre contexte est de supposer que la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales est un processus uniforme à travers le temps. Ce problème est particulièrement bien illustré dans

l'étude comparative de Thomson et al. qui inclut une variable « *duration* » (opérationnalisé comme variable continue dénotant le nombre de mois au pouvoir de chacun des gouvernements) avec comme justificatif que plus de temps au pouvoir devrait se traduire par davantage de promesses tenues (Thomson et al., 2017). Outre le fait que ces présuppositions ne sont pas testées, la littérature sur le comportement législatif des partis semble indiquer que la mise en œuvre des politiques publiques n'est pas constante dans le temps. En effet, les recherches dans ce domaine démontrent que les partis ont tendance à mettre en œuvre leurs « priorités électorales » (*electoral priorities*) rapidement lorsqu'ils accèdent au pouvoir (Huber, 1996) et que passé une certaine période initiale, la capacité des partis à mettre en œuvre leurs agendas de politique diminue de façon non négligeable (voir par exemple : Bevan et Greene, 2016; Bevan et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2011a; 2011b).

Afin de combler ces lacunes théoriques et empiriques, le premier article de cette thèse privilégie une approche *BTSCS* (*Binary Time-Series Cross-Section*). Celle-ci permet d'observer comment le temps affecte la tenue des promesses électorales à travers la durée du mandat. Les résultats corroborent les arguments retrouvés dans la littérature sur les comportements législatifs et illustrent les lacunes relatives à la façon de conceptualiser et modéliser la tenue des promesses électorales qu'emploient les études existantes. De plus, l'article rapproche les champs d'étude de la tenue des promesses électorales et celui des comportements législatifs qui jusqu'à présent opéraient en silos malgré leurs nombreuses similitudes.[5]

Le second article, *Citizen's evaluations of campaign pledge fulfillment in Canada*[6], s'inscrit quant à lui au T_3 de la théorie sur la représentation promissoire. Plus spécifiquement, cet article étend l'étude des perceptions qu'ont les citoyens de la tenue des promesses électorales au cas canadien. Cela a été rendu possible

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[5] Cet article a été accepté pour publication dans la revue *Political Studies* le 12 février 2018 et est disponible en ligne depuis le 21 mars 2018.
[6] Cet article est présentement en révision, après deux rondes de « *Revise and resubmit* » (R&R) auprès de la revue *Party Politics*. Le second R&R a été reçu le 20 mai et ne demandait que deux modifications assez mineures.

grâce à l'ajout de sept questions portant sur la tenue de promesses du gouvernement Harper dans l'Étude électorale canadienne (ÉÉC-CES) de 2015.

Cet article propose une réplication l'expérience que Thomson et Brandenburg ont fait en Angleterre (2018) et l'étude de Pétry et Duval au Québec (2017). Premièrement, le questionnaire contenait une expérience par sondage divisé (*split survey experiment*) dans laquelle il était demandé à un groupe de répondants d'évaluer « une proposition de politique publique » et à l'autre groupe d'évaluer « une promesse électorale ». Deuxièmement, les effets des facteurs objectifs et des raccourcis heuristiques employés par les citoyens sont aussi évalués. Au-delà de la réplication dans le contexte canadien, cet exercice s'est avéré plus intéressant que prévu, car nos résultats ne corroborent pas tout à fait ceux de Thomson et Brandenburg (2018). En effet, le second article illustre que les différents libellés produisent de la variation statistiquement significative dans le ton (positif ou négatif) des évaluations, mais pas dans leur précision.

Cet article s'insère dans un débat théorique important qui oppose les théories rationnelles du comportement des électeurs aux théories mettant en avant les identités sociales des électeurs. D'un côté les théories du choix rationnel proposent que les évaluations des électeurs doivent se baser sur les faits (voir par exemple Downs, 1957 ; Key, 1966 ; Page et Shapiro, 1992) et de l'autre côté les approches des identités sociales proposent que les électeurs se basent plutôt sur leur identité, et la proximité des élus à cette identité afin d'émettre leurs jugements (voir par exemple Achen et Bartels, 2016 ou Feldman et Conover, 1983). Nos résultats se situent quelque part entre ces deux approches. D'une part nous observons que les faits observés ont bel et bien un effet sur les évaluations que font les citoyens de la tenue des promesses électorales et d'autre part nous remarquons que les citoyens utilisent aussi un certain nombre de raccourcis heuristiques mettent en jeu leur identité sociale. Nos résultats semblent corroborer l'approche mitoyenne de Brady et Sniderman qui veut que les citoyens tentent d'équilibrer deux « désirs cognitifs » (*psychological objectives*) soit le désir d'être

précis et factuel et le désir de « cohérence » entre leurs perceptions et leurs émotions (1985, 1068).

Le troisième article représente à notre sens le plus original des trois. Contrairement à l'ensemble des études existantes, celui-ci évalue les ressources d'information auxquels les citoyens ont accès afin d'émettre leurs jugements au T_3 de la théorie de la représentation promissoire. Cet article, *Ringing the Alarm : The Media Coverage of the Fulfillment of Electoral Pledges*[7], étudie la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales au T_2. Plus spécifiquement, il mesure empiriquement si les médias alertent les citoyens lorsque le gouvernement rompt ses promesses électorales. Cette approche ne s'inscrit pas dans le même cadre que les deux études existantes. En effet, les recherches de Costello et Thomson (2008) et de Kostadinova (2015) étudient la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales seulement lors de l'élection initiale (T_1).

Les recherches en communication politique ont établi que les citoyens ne lisent pas les plateformes, les budgets, les projets de loi, etc., et obtiennent l'information qu'ils utilisent pour leur choix de vote des médias (voir par exemple : Andersen et al., 2005; Walgrave and de Swert, 2007). Cependant, ces médias peuvent être biaisés. Par exemple ; la couverture médiatique peut être disproportionnée et favoriser certains partis (Hopmann et al., 2011) et la couverture médiatique des promesses peut être inégale tel qu'illustré par Costello et Thomson (2008) et Kostadinova (2015). Il importe donc de se questionner sur qualité de la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales non seulement lors de l'élection au T_1, mais aussi lors du mandat au T_2, car les citoyens y puiseront leur information pour leur choix de vote au T_3.

Cet article tente d'établir si le modèle théorique du *Burglar Alarm* peut expliquer la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales. Ce modèle de Zaller (1990 ; 1992 ; 2003) affirme qu'il n'est pas raisonnable de demander à l'ensemble des

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[7] Il s'agit du dernier article rédigé dans le cadre de cette thèse. Celui-ci a été soumis pour une première évaluation à la revue *Political Communication* le 12 avril 2018 après le congrès annuel du *Midwest Political Science Association* où il a été présenté pour une première fois. L'article est en évaluation depuis.

citoyens de s'informer constamment et parfaitement sur l'ensemble des actions du gouvernement, et que conséquemment ce sont plutôt les journalistes qui se doivent d'alerter les citoyens lorsqu'un évènement politique d'importance se présente. Transposé à notre sujet la question que soulève cette approche se résume comme suit : les médias alertent-ils les citoyens lorsqu'une promesse est rompue? Les résultats de cet article corroborent l'approche théorique du *Burglar Alarm* que l'on retrouve en communication politique. C'est-à-dire que les médias alertent les citoyens lorsqu'une promesse est rompue. Ce résultat est encourageant eu égard à la représentation promissoire, car, tel que discuté dans le paragraphe précédent, la bonne qualité de la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales n'est ni plus ni moins qu'une condition de son bon fonctionnement (Mansbridge, 2009).

Au-delà de la représentation promissoire et du *Burglar Alarm* on peut aussi souligner que les recherches de Costello et Thomson (2008) et de Kostadinova (2015) ne s'attardent qu'à l'attention (*priming*) accordée aux promesses électorales et non pas à la façon dont les promesses sont abordées (*framing*). Ce qui pose problème étant donné que la façon dont un enjeu est abordé dans les médias peut affecter l'opinion que les gens s'en font (voir à ce titre Iyengar, 1996 ; Quattrone et Tversky, 1988). Contrairement à ces deux articles, la dimension du *framing* est abordée dans le troisième article, car celui-ci s'interroge, en opérationnalisant le modèle du *Burglar Alarm,* sur la qualité de la couverture médiatique.

En résumé, les liens entre les trois articles et leur rôle dans la littérature s'illustrent bien à travers le cadre théorique que fournit la représentation promissoire. Le premier article raffine l'analyse de la tenue des promesses électorales au T_2. Le second article étend les connaissances entourant les évaluations des citoyens au T_3. Et finalement le troisième article évalue la couverture médiatique des promesses effectuée au T_2, mais dont les citoyens ont besoin au T_3 afin de faire leur choix lors des élections.

1 Time and the Fulfillment of Election Pledges

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous illustrons l'importance de tenir compte du temps dans l'étude de la tenue des promesses électorales. Nous ajoutons ainsi un élément important aux discussions académiques en cours sur les facteurs qui influencent la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales. Contrairement aux études précédentes, qui supposent que la réalisation de promesses est un processus qui se produit de façon uniforme au fil du temps, nous analysons la mise en œuvre des promesses en utilisant une approche *BTSCS* (*Binary Time-Series Cross-Section*) qui met en évidence de nouvelles dynamiques. Plus précisément, nous constatons que si le gouvernement ne tient pas ses engagements électoraux dans la première moitié de son mandat, la probabilité que ceux-ci soient tenus diminue drastiquement. L'approche de modélisation discrète du temps (*discrete time* model) nous permet également d'étudier de plus près les relations existant entre le solde budgétaire et la réalisation des promesses. Notre recherche étend également l'étude de la mise en œuvre des promesses à un nouveau cas, la province de Québec, pour la période de 1994 à 2014. Enfin, nous effectuons également des analyses similaires sur les données canadiennes couvrant sept gouvernements successifs de 1993 à 2015. Cette étude analyse un total de 1431 promesses électorales codées manuellement.

Abstract

In this article, we highlight the importance of accounting for time in the study of pledge fulfillment, effectively adding a significant element to the ongoing academic discussions of the factors that influence the fulfillment of party promises. Unlike previous analyses in which pledge fulfillment is assumed to be a uniform process occurring over time, we analyze party pledge fulfillment using a discrete time approach: doing so highlights yet unobserved dynamics. More precisely, we find that if the government does not enact pledges within the first half of its mandate,

the probability of these pledges ever being fulfilled drops drastically. The discrete time modeling approach also allows us to investigate the relationships existing between the budget balance and pledge fulfillment more thoroughly. Our research also extends the study of pledge fulfillment to a new case, the province of Quebec, for the period of 1994–2014 encompassing six governments. Finally, we also conduct similar analyses on Canadian pledge fulfillment data spanning seven successive governments from 1993 to 2015. This study analyzes a total of 1431 manually coded election pledges.

1.1 Introduction

In this article, we highlight the importance of accounting for time in the study of pledge fulfillment, effectively adding a significant element to the ongoing academic discussions of the factors that influence the fulfillment of party promises. It is generally accepted that government decision makers, constrained by limited attention and resources, must prioritize certain issues ahead of others (e.g. Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Jones and Baumgartner, 2005; Kingdon, 1984). This process occurs in cycles as policy-making is not continuous but rather structured around decision points where the agendas are aggregated and priorities are established (Bevan et al., 2011). One recurring key aggregation moment is when party platforms are made public during election campaigns. Election platforms are a key element in the establishment of policy priorities because they are the transmission belt between party promises and subsequent government action. Bevan et al. (2011) state as follows:

"Transmission [between policy promises and statuses] is not perfect since legislative priorities and outputs are susceptible to changes in public opinion or media coverage, unanticipated events in the external world, backbench rebellions, changes in the political parties, and the practical constraints of administering policies or programmes" (Bevan et al., 2011: 395).

One approach in the promise-to-policy linkage literature looks at the congruence between the emphases that parties place on different policy issues in their election platforms and the number of programs enacted on those issues by the party that wins the election (see, for example, Klingemann et al., 1994). Meanwhile, the approach subscribed to in this article looks directly at the promise-to-policy linkage, one specific promise at a time (Naurin, 2011; Petry and Collette, 2009; Royed, 1996; Thomson et al., 2017). Previous studies have considered the influence of time on the fulfillment of specific party promises, either as a resource that works in favor of longer-lasting governments (Thomson et al., 2017) or as a long-term trend through which parties appear to be making (and fulfilling) ever larger numbers of election pledges (Hakansson and Naurin, 2016). But as far as we know, no published study has ever documented the timing of the fulfillment of specific pledges for the duration of a given government and correlated it with other determinants of pledge fulfillment.

This study is innovative as it takes into account the moment at which individual pledges become fulfilled during a mandate. The traditional methods of logistic and linear regression used in previous pledge fulfillment studies are not well suited to incorporate the timing of pledges. That is why we use a discrete time duration approach to pledge fulfillment. This approach aims to discover whether and explain why some pledges are more likely to be fulfilled than others during a government mandate. The research question is not only whether or not a pledge has been fulfilled but also when the fulfillment occurred. The discrete time approach that we use highlights yet unobserved dynamics. More precisely, we see that if the government does not enact pledges quickly, the probability of these pledges ever being fulfilled drops drastically. The drop in the probability of pledge fulfillment after the first half of the mandate seems understandable in view of the various institutional and political factors that may erode a government's policy-making capacity.

The discrete time approach also allows us to conduct a more detailed analysis of the importance of a key explanatory variable in the pledge fulfillment literature:

budget balance. Our research also extends the study of pledge fulfillment to a new case, the province of Quebec, for the period of 1994–2014, a period which encompasses six successive governments. We also conduct analyses of pledge fulfillment by Canadian parties over seven successive governments from 1993 to 2015. This study analyzes a total of 1431 manually coded election pledges. The rest of the article is organized as follows. First, we briefly cover the scientific literature on pledge fulfillment and then discuss the importance of the timing of election pledges, before moving onto the methods and data utilized in the study. We then discuss the results and their implications before concluding with our general remarks and takeaways.

1.2 Background

The fulfillment of electoral pledges by elected officials is a key aspect of the mandate theory of elections and of the responsible party model (American Political Science Association [APSA], 1950; Downs, 1957; Friedrich, 1963; Klingemann et al., 1994; Powell, 2000). According to Mansbridge (2003: 515), "the idea that during campaigns representatives made promises to constituents, which they then kept or failed to keep" is the focus of the traditional model of democratic representation which she labeled "promissory representation." Whether politicians fulfill their campaign pledges is not only relevant to theory but also to politics and policy-making, as politicians often claim that they fulfill their pledges (Grossback et al., 2005) and media coverage of election campaigns (Costello and Thomson, 2008; Kostadinova, 2015; Krukones, 1984). Scholarly attention to campaign pledge fulfillment has been growing over recent years and as such researchers have studied variations in pledge fulfillment and the determinants thereof in a large number of countries including the US (Pomper and Lederman, 1980; Royed, 1996), the UK (Railings, 1987; Royed, 1996), Canada (Moniere, 1988; Petry, 2014; Perry and Duval, 2015; Railings, 1987), Sweden (Naurin, 2011, 2014), the Netherlands (Thomson, 2001), Ireland (Mansergh, 2004; Mansergh and Thomson, 2007), Spain (Artes, 2013; Artes and Bustos, 2008), Greece (Kalogeropoulou,

1989), Bulgaria (Kostadinova, 2013), Portgual (Moury and Fernandes, 2016), Italy (Moury, 2011), Austria (Scherman and Ennser-Jedenastik, 2012), and Turkey (Toros, 2015). In 2009, the Comparative Party Pledge Group (CPPG) was created by researchers interested in the comparative study of pledge fulfillment to unify coding standards and create truly comparative results across several countries. Their research led to a comparative article regrouping some 20,000 pledges made in 57 election campaigns in 12 countries (Thomson et al., 2017) and an edited volume (Naurin et al., in press). The main findings of this comparative study are that parties tend to keep most of their electoral promises after they are elected. Cross-national variations in pledge fulfillment are mostly explained by institutional factors (Is the government a majority government, a minority government, or is it part of a coalition?), economic factors (economic growth or stagnation), and individual pledges' characteristics (Is it a pledge to keep the status quo or to change things? Is it in agreement or in disagreement with a pledge from the opposition?).

1.3   Theory and Hypotheses

None of the above studies account for time dependence. It is possible that the timing of pledge fulfillment is a uniform or random process that does not affect the likelihood of fulfilling specific pledges as these studies implicitly assume. However, there are theoretical reasons to believe that the time passed since the government has been elected affects pledge fulfillment although it is not clear at the outset whether these effects should delay pledge fulfillment until later or accelerate it at the beginning of a government's mandate. One theory, inspired by the political budget cycle approach, suggests that governmental policy outputs should accelerate as the next election draws closer. Political budget cycle scholars assume that voters are myopic: they base their retrospective policy evaluations of candidates more on late changes than on earlier changes in the electoral cycle (see Campbell and Garand, 2000; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000 for reviews). With near-sighted voters, vote-maximizing politicians have a clear incentive to manipulate the political budget cycle to delay the implementation of popular

macroeconomic and transfer policies until the last year of an electoral cycle (Nordhaus, 1975; Tufte, 1978). The same reasoning can be easily transposed to campaign pledge fulfillment. Assuming that near-sighted voters tend to better remember the fate of the most recent promises, rational vote-maximizing parties have an incentive to manipulate the policy cycle to delay the fulfillment of their popular promises until the year that immediately precedes the next election.

However, the political budget cycle theory has important limitations when it comes to explain the timing of pledge fulfillment. First, not all campaign promises are popular with the electorate. By the theory's own logic, unpopular pledges should be fulfilled early, not later, in the cycle. Second, several studies cast doubt on the plausibility of the assumption that voters are myopic (Hibbs, 1989; Wlezien, 2015). If voters react to what happens over the entire cycle, the incentive for politicians to delay policy change until later in the cycle is removed, and so is the incentive to delay the fulfillment of campaign promises. More directly relevant to pledge fulfillment is a finding by Petry and Duval (2017) that the accuracy of Quebecers' perception of the fulfillment of specific pledges is not correlated to the time at which they were fulfilled during the cycle.[8] Third, in contrast to claims by the political budget cycle literature, the policy agenda-setting literature indicates that governments intending to enact policy changes typically do so shortly after the election and not later in the cycle.

Reasons why one could expect a drop in the rate of pledge fulfillment with time are related to likely changes in the political and societal environment (change in public opinion, change of the economic circumstances, and change of political leader abroad) during the course of a mandate. We elaborate on these reasons, drawing from the legislative policy-making literature, in the following paragraphs.

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[8] They find that more than 90% of Quebecers accurately perceived as fulfilled a pledge to limit political donations that their government had fulfilled in the weeks following the election while only 55% accurately perceived as fulfilled a pledge to abolish a tuition fee increase that was fulfilled at the end of the mandate.

There is evidence from the policy agenda literature that governments perform the most extensive policy changes soon after their transition to power and not toward the end of their mandate. Bevan and Greene (2016) show that most dramatic policy changes occur immediately following a party's transition into power, especially when economic conditions are bad. After this initial period of change, things tend to stabilize (Mortensen et al., 2011). Researchers generally agree that a party's policy agendas are typically consistent throughout a government's duration but that their partisan goals can sometimes be mitigated by political and economic conditions (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen, 2010). They generally emphasize the role of institutional structures that limit parties' ability to fulfill their preferred policies (Bevan et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2011a, 2011b). A good example of this is Bevan and Greene's (2016) recent article that highlights the effects of different predictors (party organizations, economic conditions, and size of the parliamentary delegation) on the timing of issue attention. Even more telling, given our interest for electoral pledges fulfillment, is Huber's (1996) finding that new governments focus on their electoral priorities early in the new legislative cycle. In short, parties are not always capable of creating the policies that they desire past an initial period of dramatic policy change. Essentially, we expect a government's capacity to enact policies, and to fulfill its election pledges in particular, to be higher at first and then decrease for external reasons (Bevan and Greene, 2016) and/or for institutional reasons (Bevan et al., 2011; Jennings et al., 2011a; 2011b).

Furthermore, the legislative decision-making literature also highlights that parties are not immune to demands from multiple groups both internal and external to the party (Ceron, 2015; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Greene and Haber, 2016), and that it is highly unlikely that these demands remain unchanged throughout the full mandate. The pledges contained in electoral platforms are said to have important intra-party functions (Rose, 1984; Thomassen, 1994; Thomson et al., 2017), but these pledges can't be retrospectively changed to address changes in the demands of the groups pressuring the government party. These demands will cause a change in the present policy agenda and the pledges that were not

enacted when change occurs will become irrelevant when weighed against new priorities. This is amplified by the fact that parties have limited resources and that they will not attach those resources to issues they hold unimportant or that would require significant ideological compromise (e.g. Doring, 2003). Disagreement within a party is also a key factor that affects the timing of the legislative process. Disagreements slow down the enactment of legislative proposals already in the pipeline (Haber, 2015), which can mean that some pledges will die on the order paper. Intra-party demands also become more important at later points in the government's mandate, as shown by Ceron, as the impact of the preferences of intra-party groups constrains party leaders closest to the election (Ceron, 2015). Looking at inter-party legislative dynamics, Martin and Vanberg's (2011) demonstrate that less ideologically contentious legislation is often passed before more contentious politics. Greene (2016) adds that this has implications for coalitions' ability to maintain their majority in parliament.

All those factors, and their possible combinations, highlight the diminishing return of pledge fulfillment throughout the mandate. Circumstances in which governments will prefer to fulfill promises later rather than sooner in their mandate do not easily come to mind, which leads us to hypothesize as follows:

H1. *The likelihood of election pledges being fulfilled is higher at the beginning of a mandate than at later stages.*

1.4   The Cases

Canada. This article analyzes the pledge fulfillment record of the seven most recent governments in Canada: (1) the Liberal Party (LPC) government from 1993 to 1997, (2) the LPC government from 1997 to 2000, (3) the 2000–2004 LPC government, (4) the 2004–2006 minority LPC government, (5) the 2006–2008 minority government led by the Conservative Party (CPC), (6) the 2008–2011 minority CPC government, and (7) the 2011–2015 CPC government. The sample includes   minority   and   majority   governments,   Liberal   and   Conservative

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governments over an extended period (22 years). This represents an addition of 224 pledges over two governments (1993 and 1997) since Canada was last analyzed in the pledge fulfillment literature (Perry and Duval, 2015).

Quebec. This article also examines pledge fulfillment by the six most recent governments in Quebec: the Parti Quebecois (PQ) government from 1994 to 1998, and 1998–2003, the governments of the Liberal Party of Quebec (LPQ) from 2003 to 2006, 2007–2008, 2008–2012, and finally the government led by the PQ from 2012 to 2014. Again, the Quebec sample includes minority and majority governments, by two parties with distinct ideologies, and it does so over a relatively long period of time (20 years). Recent comparative research has focused exclusively on pledge fulfillment at the national level. There is to date no published research in English on the determinants of pledge fulfillment at the sub-national or regional level, leaving unanswered the questions of whether regional-level parties keep their promises as much as national parties and whether the determinants of pledge fulfillment are the same at both levels.

1.5   Methods

First, we manually coded each individual election pledge. We identified election pledges as defined by Thomson et al. (2017). All members of the CPPG also employ this method. Election pledges are statements that contain unequivocal support for proposed government policy actions or outcomes that are testable. The "unequivocal support" part of the definition stipulates that a statement must imply an explicit promise to do something. Some language is too soft to be considered "unequivocal support." Statements in which parties promised to "consider" or "look into" specific policy actions do not qualify as pledges under Thomson et al.'s (2017) definition. The second part of the definition stipulates that pledges contain "proposed government policy actions or outcomes" that are testable. This clause demands that pledges describe the proposed policy or outcome in an explicit way so that a criterion is provided on the basis of which the fulfillment of the pledge can

be judged. Regarding actions, these criteria consist of the passing of particular legislation or executive orders. Pledges may also refer to outcomes: for example, statements such as "we will strive toward reducing inflation," or "our program will reduce unemployment by 100,000" are considered pledges. In other words, the writers of election programs provide the criteria used to judge the fulfillment of pledges, not the researcher (see also Thomson, 2001).

The coding scheme is the same as the CPPG's. At first, pledges are classified in three categories: (1) pledges kept, (2) pledges kept in part, and (3) broken pledges. To be classified as "kept," a pledge has to be followed by a subsequent government action (a law, a regulation, a treaty, or an agreement) that has been passed. A pledge is rated as "kept in part" when the corresponding action is a compromise (the action is completed, but it does not go as far as what was initially promised). A pledge is classified as "broken" when it is not followed by a governmental action. Those categories are then regrouped as 1 = "At least kept in part" or 0 = "not carried out" for analysis purposes and for comparability with other members of the CPPG. All of this was done manually for every government in the study.

To account for the timing of pledge fulfillment, we opted for the Event-History Analysis approach (Allison, 1984; Yamaguchi, 1991). Event-History Analysis seeks to explain the likelihood that certain subjects (pledges) will experience an event of interest (fulfillment), determine when this interest will occur, and determine what are the covariates influencing that likelihood (Gottman, 2013). Following Beck et al. (1998), we chose to model the fulfillment of pledges under a time-series cross-section analysis with a binary dependent variable (Binary Time-Series Cross-Section [BTSCS]). In essence, modeling the fulfillment of pledges in this way allows us to show not only when a pledge is fulfilled or not but also to identify when the series "switches" from not fulfilled to fulfilled, how long does it take for the fulfillment to happen, and what are the covariates associated with this change. This means that we are looking at the "status" (fulfillment) of each pledge at a given time. In this case, quarters for the duration of the mandate. Our first dataset

consists of 603 pledges made over six governments over the period of 1994–2012, resulting in a total of 8100 temporal observations for Quebec. Our second dataset consists of 828 pledges made over seven governments between 1993 and 2015, resulting in a total of 10,052 temporal observations for Canada.

This means that our model includes a time spell variable, which is a count of the number of quarters since the mandate started or since the fulfillment (event) occurred, whichever is most recent. This time spell is included in the model under the form of a cubic polynomial approximation following Carter and Signorino (2010).[9] Including the cubic polynomial approximation is a trivial implementation; it simply consists of including the time spell, time spell squared, and time spell cubed in the regression models *(ts, ts^2, and ts^3).* Most of the work that comes with the choice of using a BTSCS approach instead of the regular pledge fulfillment modeling is the manual addition of a fulfillment date to every pledge coded as *at least kept in part* in the datasets; the rest can be automated very straightforwardly. The fulfillment date corresponds to the day (which is later recoded as quarter) when the condition to be coded as either kept or kept in part were achieved. For example, promises that required a law to be passed were coded as kept and dated the day of the assent. Promises that required an investment were coded as kept the day the budget was passed and so on.

We also control for factors found in the pledge fulfillment literature: namely, the type of government—majority or minority, whether the government party is an incumbent government or not and, at the pledge level, whether each specific pledge was in agreement with the opposition's campaign pledges and the type of pledge.

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[9] Beck et al. (1998) suggest including time dummies (dummies for each of the different values of the time spell) or to use a temporal spline (low-degree of freedom B-spline). We tested both the B-spline approach and the cubic polynomial, and the results were practically the same, we then opted to present the cubic polynomial approximation given its simplicity of implementation and interpretation with the hope that the other scholars working on the topic of pledge fulfillment will adopt this approach. Another nice aspect of the cubic polynomial approximation is that we do not have to select knots for the spline, a procedure that is often problematic in practice as noted by Carter and Signorino (2010).

Majority and Minority Governments. It is unclear if the absence of a formal coalition in a minority context makes it harder to create policy. While some assume that minority governments are ineffective, others such as Strom (1990) provide evidence that this is often not the case; minority governments in Europe are surprisingly effective. In Canada, Godbout and Hoyland (2011) show that *informal voting coalitions* are a common occurrence under minority governments. In fact, evidence indicates that Canadian minority governments fulfill as many if not more pledges as majority governments while they last. They appear to fulfill fewer pledges than majority governments simply because majority governments last longer (Perry and Birch, 2016; Perry and Duval, 2015). Nonetheless, majority governments are coded 1 and minority governments are coded 0.

First and Recurring Mandates. Reelected parties are often better positioned than newly elected parties to fulfill their election pledges. This is due in part to the fact that they have "the opportunity to obtain public-service advice and expertise in the day-to-day operations of government" as well as "within the process of drafting their election platforms being partially responsible for these outcomes" (Flynn, 2011: 249). They may also take advantage of the projects in the legislative "pipe-line" that died on the order paper when the election was called. These elements benefit reelected parties once they return to government relative to newly elected governments. We argue that first mandate governments are at a considerable dis-advantage and will therefore fulfill fewer pledges than recurring governments. The variable for first mandate governments is coded 1 for first governments and 0 for returning governments.

Inter-Party Agreement. Agreement between government and opposition indicates that the pledge is in response to widely shared societal demands, rather than reflecting narrow partisan interests. It also seems likely that the government will find very little opposition when the time comes to enact these pledges. Previous research on pledge fulfillment found that pledges made by the party in government were more likely to be acted upon when they were in agreement with pledges by opposition parties (Perry and Duval, 2015; Thomson et al., 2017). Agreement is a

categorical variable with the following two levels: 0 = "No agreement or disagreement" and 1 = "in agreement with at least one party." For Canadian pledges, the comparisons were made among the electoral pledges of the LPC, the *Progressive Conservative Party* (PCPC), and the *New Democratic Party* (NDP) from 1993 to 2004 and the CPC, PLC, and NDP from 2006 to 2015. For Quebec pledges, the comparisons were made among the *Parti Quebecois* (PQ), the *Parti Liberal* (PLQ), and *Action Democratique du Quebec* (ADQ) from 1994 to 2008 and among the PQ, PLQ, and *Coalition Avenir Quebec* (CAQ) for 2012.

Type of Proposed Change. One property of pledges likely to affect their fulfillment is the type of change they promise. Pledges that promise change may be more difficult to fulfill than pledges that promise to maintain the status quo, given the incrementalism of large governments. There is evidence from past studies that pledges to initiate change are less likely to be fulfilled than pledges to maintain the status quo (see, for example, Thomson, 2011). The variable for the type of proposed change has four categories aside from maintaining the status quo (the reference category): (1) to expand governmental spending, (2) to contract governmental spending, (3) to introduce other non-budget-related changes, and (4) to achieve any type of policy outcome not related to governmental spending or taxation (e.g. to create jobs).[10]

Budget Balance. Budget balance is our key economic indicator reflecting governments' financial capacity to fulfill their election pledges. This is operationalized as the previous year's budget (expressed in $B). This variable is often absent from existing pledge fulfillment studies; however, we think it is an important factor as the surplus or deficit generated in previous years directly relates to their pledge fulfillment capacity. One anecdotal illustration is the first Liberal government of Jean Chretien elected in 1993. Chretien's "Red Book" election program contained several promises to expand social programs (childcare,

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[10] Pledges to increase taxes are regrouped with pledges to expand government spending, and pledges to cut taxes are regrouped with pledges to contract government spending. This change was necessary due to the very few pledges in the tax increase and tax cut categories.

social security); however, the fact that the Liberal government was facing a budget deficit forced Jean Chretien to abandon several of these promises during his first mandate (Prince, 2006). The data were collected through the *Institut de Statistique du Quebec's* website for Quebec and through *Statistics Canada s* website for Canada.

1.6   Results

We coded a total of 828 government pledges for Canada with levels of fulfillment ranging from 53% for the first Chretien government elected in 1993 to 84% for the third Harper government elected in 2011. Of those pledges, 565 were fulfilled at least in part, with a relatively high overall fulfillment rate of 68%. The low pledge fulfillment score of the first Chretien government stands as an exception here. The low score can be attributed to the fact that the 1993 elections were essentially an adjustment period for the Liberal Party, which made several very ambitious promises that it could later not fulfill (Flynn, 2011).[11]

For Quebec, we coded a total of 603 pledges in the six electoral platforms in our data. Of those pledges, 362 (60%) were at least partly fulfilled and 241 (40%) were not. The PQ made 99 pledges during the 1994 election campaign and fulfilled 71 at least in part (fulfillment rate of 72%). The PQ government elected in 1998 fulfilled 94 of the 127 pledges made during the election campaign (fulfillment rate of 74%). The fulfillment score for the PLQ government elected in 2003 is 53% with 56 pledges at least partly fulfilled out of 106; the PLQ government fulfilled 55 of the 98 pledges made during the election campaign of 2007 (with a fulfillment rate of 56%). The score for the PLQ government elected in 2008 was 47% (29 out of 62 pledges at least partly fulfilled). The PQ government elected in 2012 fulfilled at least in part 57 pledges out of its 113 campaign pledges (50%; see Figure 1.1).

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[11] See Petry and Duval (2015) for a more detailed account of programs to policy linkage in Canada from 2000 to 2015.

**Figure 1.1 Histogram of Pledges Fulfilled by Government**
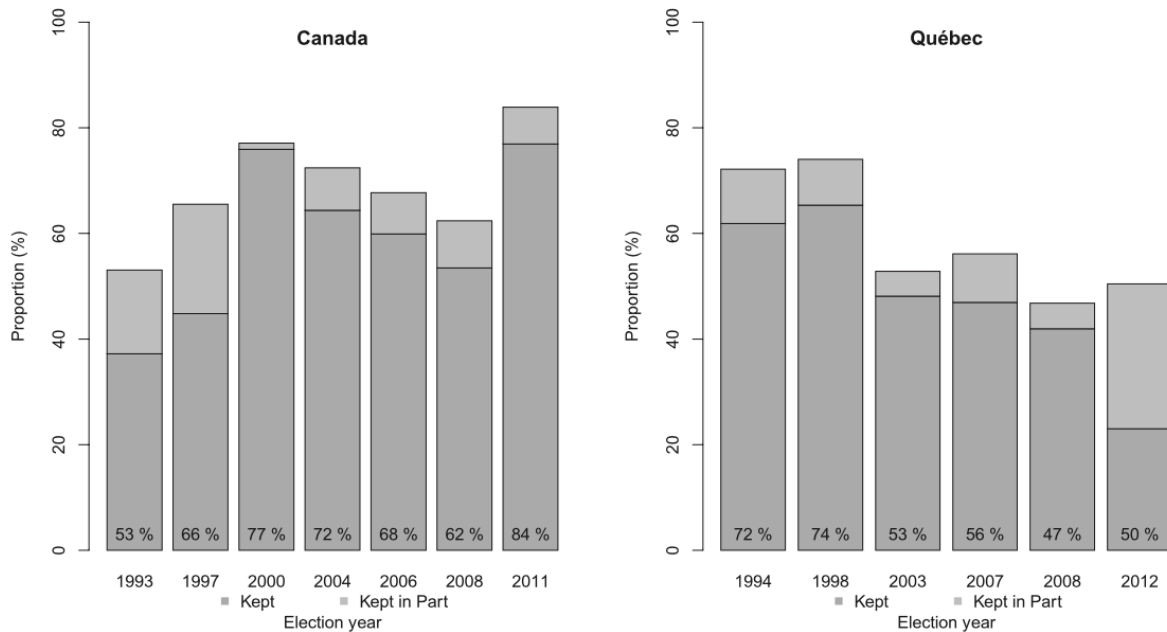
The federal context is quite comparable to the provincial one given that we are in the presence of the same electoral system and that there were three relatively short-lived minority governments during the period (2004, 2006, and 2008). Despite the many similarities, Quebec's scores are significantly lower, the difference being 8% points (or 12% points if we exclude the 1993 federal government). We can also compare these results with other countries; the proportion of fulfillment in the United States from 1976 to 2000 was 64.4%, 85.4% in the United Kingdom from 1974 to 1997, and 50.3% in Ireland from 1977 to 2007 (Thomson et al., 2014).

1.2 illustrates the variation in the rate of fulfillment of pledges as time unfolds for the duration of a mandate. It can be seen that the fulfillment of pledges during a mandate is far from uniform. As expected, there is a concentration in the fulfillment of pledges early on in the mandate, followed by a significant drop. Of our 565 fulfilled pledges in Canada, 286 (51%) were fulfilled within the first year of their respective governmental mandate and 165 (29%) were fulfilled the following year. Only 86 (15%) were fulfilled in the third year, and the remaining 5% of the pledges were completed in the last year. For Quebec, out of 362 fulfilled pledges, 151

(42%) of the pledges were fulfilled in the first 12 months of their respective governmental mandates, 124 (34%) were fulfilled in the second government year, 62 (17%) in the third year, and 25 (7%) after that.

Figure 1.2 Pledges Fulfilled Through Time
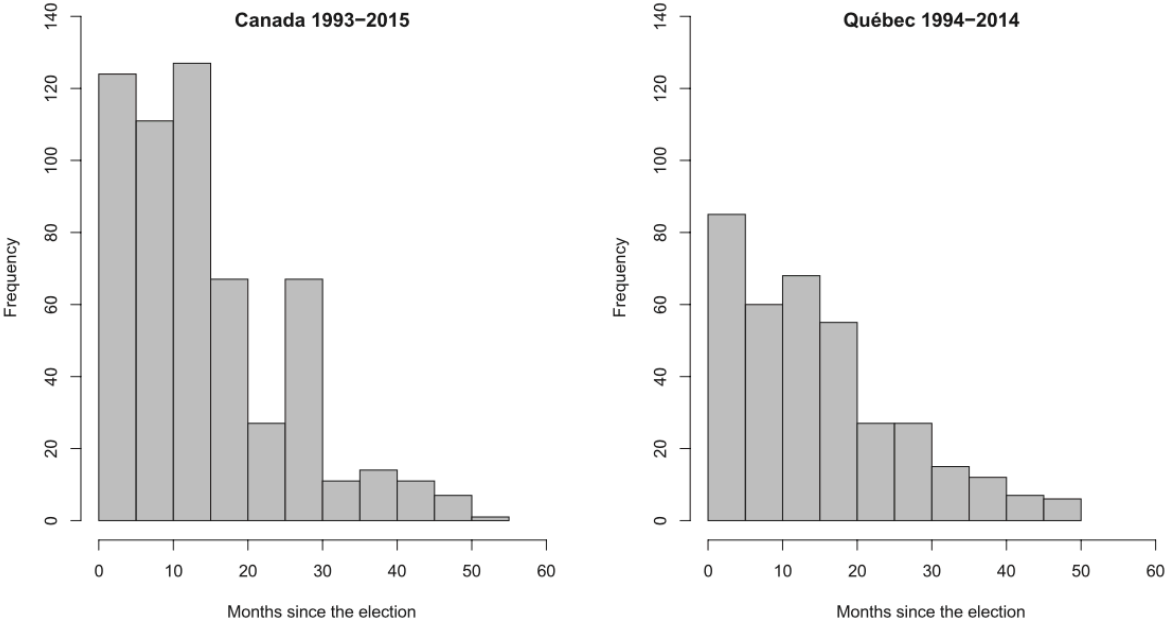
This suggests that the traditional way of accounting for time in the pledge fulfillment literature so far (e.g. Thomson et al., 2017) as the number of months that a government lasted only unveils a small part of the story. While it is true that governments that last longer typically fulfill more pledges, the difference once the 20-month threshold in mandate duration has been reached is marginal. The asymmetrical nature of the fulfillment of pledges through time is well captured by the skewness of our two distributions; both are heavily skewed to the right with a skewness of 1.02 (with a kurtosis of 3.56) for Canada and 0.90 (with a kurtosis of 3.22) for Quebec.

The bivariate results that have been presented so far strongly suggest that our expectation regarding the changing likelihood of pledge fulfillment through time is well founded. We now turn to a multivariate model, in which the variables relating to budget balance, first mandate, majority governments, and inter-party agreement are added. As mentioned above, we do so using BTSCS regressions models with

a cubic polynomial approximation of time where our dependent variable is the fulfillment of pledges (1= fulfilled, 0 = unfulfilled). The results are displayed in Table 1.1, with Model 1 for Canada and Model 2 for Quebec.

Table 1.1: Determinants of the Pledge Fulfillment in Canada and Québec

	Canada	Québec
	(1)	(2)
Party CAN: CPC	1,105***	
	(0.063)	
Party QC: PQ		0,752***
		(0,052)
Budget Balance	0,009***	0,153***
	(0,001)	(0,017)
First Mandate	−0.321***	−0.108
	(0.051)	(0.056)
Majority Gov.	1,227***	0.532***
	(0.070)	(0.069)
Agreement	0.724***	0.015
	(0.083)	(0.052)
Type (Reference: Status Quo)		
Type: Expansion/Tax Cut	−0.061	−0.327*
	(0.182)	(0.145)
Type: Contraction/Tax Inc.	−0.461***	−0.264***
	(0.129)	(0.087)
Type: Other	−0.895***	−0.010
	(0.126)	(0.089)
Type: Outcome	−0.802***	−0.288**
	(0.136)	(0.100)
ts	−0.080*	−0.082*
	(0.040)	(0.038)
ts^2	−0.015*	0.024***
	(0.007)	(0.006)
ts^3	0.001	−0.002***
	(0.000)	(0.000)
Intercept	1,103***	−0.751***
	(0.148)	(0.107)
N	10,052	8100
Log Likelihood	-5429	-5171
AIC	10,886	10,370

AIC: Akaike information criterion; CPC: Conservative Party; PQ : Parti Quebecois. *p <0.05, **p <0.01, ***p <0.001

This brings us to the central point of the article, time. As Carter and Signorino (2010) point out, trying to interpret the time-spell coefficients in 1.1 directly is a rather futile enterprise. To facilitate interpretation of our results, we draw a hazard plot (Figure 1.3). This is essentially a graphical representation of the probability of pledges being fulfilled as time passes. As we can see in Figure 1.3, time matters. Holding everything else constant, the likelihood of election pledges being fulfilled will be higher at first and then decreases substantially as hypothesized. More specifically, after roughly 2 years in power if a pledge has not been fulfilled its probability of later being fulfilled drops at a fast rate. Canada's slope is constantly dropping whereas Quebec's remains stable for about 2 years before dropping at a faster rate. In Canada, the predicted probability of a pledge being fulfilled dropped by 0.02 (from 0.96 at QO to 0.94 at Q3) the first year, 0.07 the second year (from 0.93 at Q4 to 0.86 at Q7), 0.11 the third year (from 0.86 at Q8 to 0.75 at Q11), and subsequently dropped to 0.52 by our last time point (Q14). In short, a very slow decrease for the first half of the mandate followed by an abrupt one for the second half. In Quebec, the predicted probability of a pledge being fulfilled remains pretty stable, hovering around 0.58 for the first 2 years (from 0.59 at QO to 0.57 at Q3 and 0.59 at Q7) and then drops by 0.05 the third year (from 0.59 at Q8 to 0.54 at Q11), and by 0.49 subsequently to find itself at 0.10 at our last time point (Q17). Essentially, the drop in probability is quite dramatic as the next election approaches, highlighting what we believe could be a pledge fulfillment cycle. The probability of a pledge being fulfilled is relatively stable at the beginning of a mandate, but at later stages of the mandate, each quarter that goes by is accompanied by a drop in that probability. This supports our hypothesis.

Figure 1.3: The Probability of Pledges Being Fulfilled Through Time (Hazard)
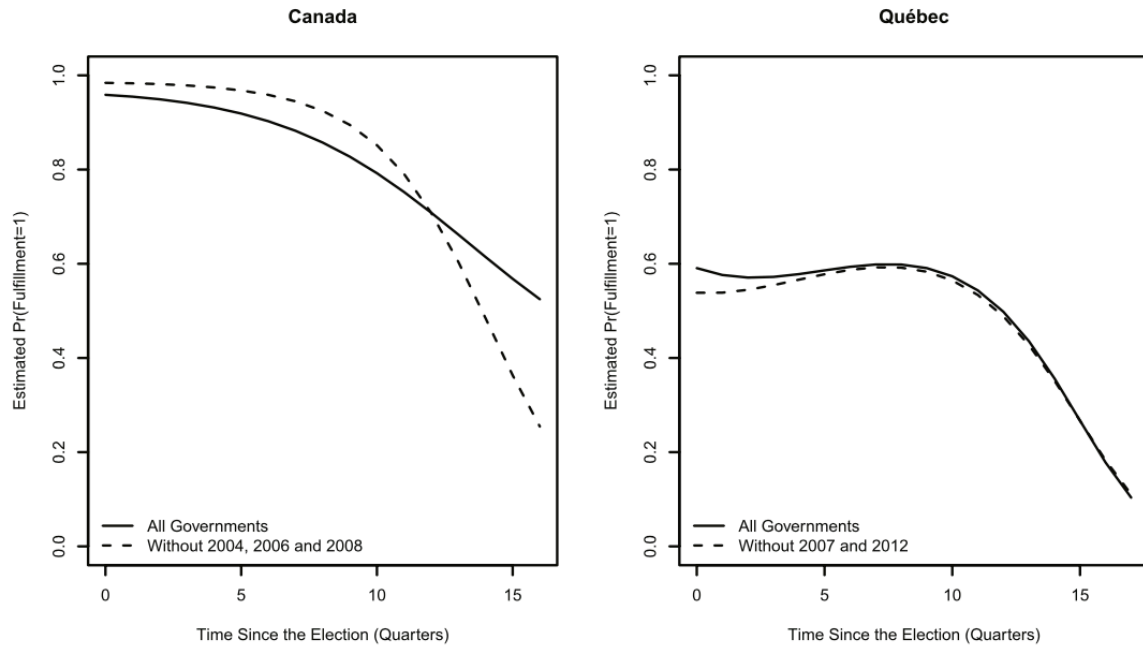
The dotted lines in Figure 1.3 present the same probability if we run the models without our minority governments. This is done to show that our results are not mere artifacts of having a few shorter minority governments in our data. The shape of the distributions is highly similar, the only difference being that the probability for majority governments is slightly higher at times. The probability of pledges being fulfilled looking only at majority governments is slightly higher at first in Canada but only by 0.04 on average for the first 2 years (0.93 compared to 0.97 for the same Q0-Q7 period), after which the probability drops much more quickly for majority governments. At Q12, both curves are at the same probability (0.71) but the majority government only estimates drop to 0.25 and meanwhile the curve regrouping all governments only drops to 0.52. Meaning majority governments tend to shift their focus away from election pledges quicker than minority governments. In Quebec, there are barely any differences.

Overall, we find strong support for HI in both cases. The likelihood of election pledges being fulfilled is much higher at the beginning of a mandate than at later stages.

Figure 1.4: The Probability of Pledges Being Fulfilled Through Time Given Varying Economic Conditions
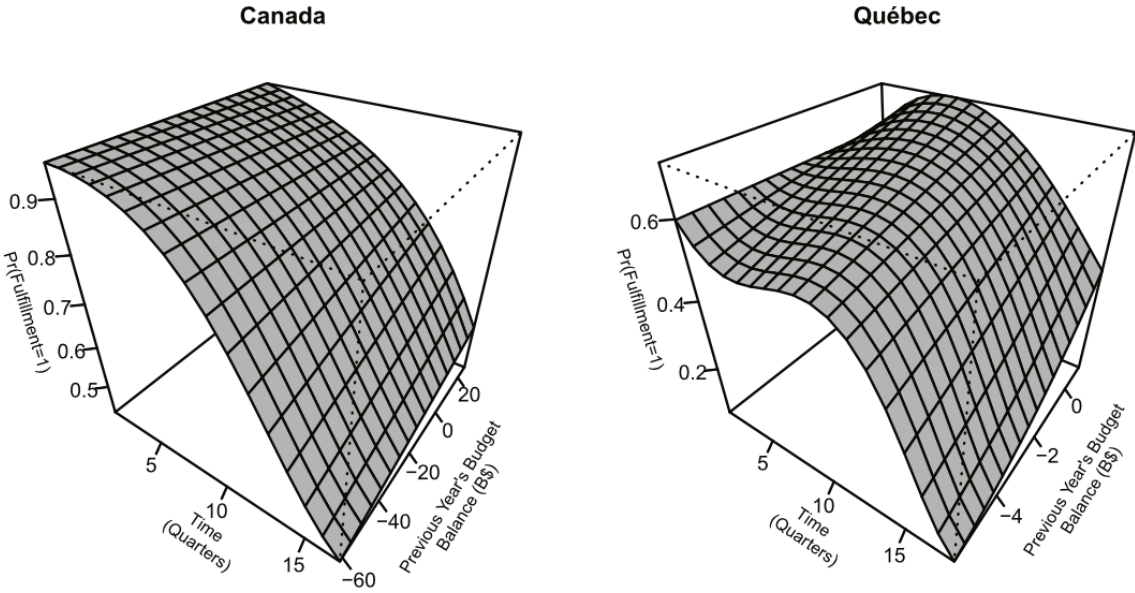
Figure 1.4 presents the results for the interaction between the effects of time (measured by our cubic polynomial terms), the budget balance. In Canada, higher budget balance correlates with much more stable and higher odds of fulfillment. When the previous year budget surplus is at its highest, the likelihood only drops from 0.96 to 0.54; meanwhile when it's at its lowest, it drops to 0.42. In Quebec, we find a similar effect, only stronger. When the budget balance is at its highest, the probability of a pledge being fulfilled increases for the first 2 years (0.60 at Q0 to 0.70 at Q8) before it drops to 0.37 over the rest of the period. With the biggest deficit, the probability drops fairly quickly from 0.60 to 0.51 (Q4) and then hovers around that value until Qll (0.50) after which it drops to nearly 0 by the end of the period (0.05). Both the Canadian and the Quebec cases support our expectation that the likelihood of pledge fulfillment drops faster over time when the budget balance is low than when it is high.

1.7 Conclusion and Discussion

Time is an integral part of the phenomenon we are trying to explain. As highlighted in the policy agenda-setting literature and legislative behavior literature, policy-making is not a continuous process (e.g. Bevan et al., 2011). In this article, we show that the probability of pledges being fulfilled is high at first and then drops considerably during the mandate. More specifically, our results indicate that the drop in probability occurs around the middle of a typical Canadian/Quebec mandate that runs its full 4-year course. Whether our broad expectation of a decrease in probability over time and the more specific findings we uncover in Canada and Quebec are supported in general is still unknown. Further studies are needed before we can know if there is in fact such a thing as the pledge fulfillment cycle that was described here.

Whether our findings about the importance of time are generalizable or not, our way of accounting for time allowed us to unveil interesting and not so obvious findings. First, the likelihood that governments fulfill their campaign pledges decreases over time as previous findings in the policy agenda-setting literature suggest and contrary to what the political budget cycle literature would lead us to believe. Second, the finding that there is little difference between the hazard plots for minority and majority governments in Canada and in Quebec (Figure 1.3) sheds light on the somewhat puzzling finding in previous studies of pledge fulfillment that minority governments do not fulfill fewer pledges than majority governments (Artes and Bustos, 2008; Naurin, 2014; Thomson et al., 2017). Third, our research design allows us to uncover new and interesting interactions between pledge fulfillment and budget balance.

This first foray in the topic of the relationship between time and pledge fulfillment raises more questions than it answers. One interesting avenue of research left unexplored so far is whether certain types of pledges are more likely than other types to be fulfilled at a particular time in the cycle. Are pledges that appear more important to the government (or to the public) likely to be fulfilled early in the cycle? Another avenue of research would be to examine whether the timing of pledge

fulfillment behaves differently in single-party governments such as Canada and Quebec and in coalition or divided governments. A definitive answer awaits further tests of the timing of pledge fulfillment to see if it remains constant or even increases over time in coalition and divided governments. However, the possibility appears unlikely. Our general argument is that the unpredictability of future political developments motivates elected politicians to fulfill campaign pledges early in their mandate. As this article shows, the argument is well supported by the evidence in single-party governments in which there is a relatively small degree of political unpredictability. It logically follows that the argument should be supported at least equally if not better in coalition or divided governments in which the level of political unpredictability is usually larger (Lupia and Strom, 1995; Warwick, 1994).

2 Citizen's Evaluations of Campaign Pledge Fulfillment In Canada

Résumé

Dans cet article, nous examinons les évaluations que font les citoyens de la tenue des promesses électorales en utilisant les données de l'Étude électorale canadienne de 2015. Nous observons que l'exactitude de ces évaluations augmente en présence de facteurs liés aux connaissances des citoyens, à savoir les connaissances politiques et l'importance relative de chaque promesse. Par ailleurs, nous constatons que les évaluations des citoyens reposent souvent sur des facteurs non fondés sur les faits, tels que leur identité et des croyances a priori, y compris l'identification partisane et la confiance politique. La présence de ces facteurs n'augmente pas la probabilité de répondre correctement. Nous constatons également, à l'aide d'une expérience par sondage divisé, qu'un changement dans la formulation des questions affecte le ton de l'évaluation des promesses, mais pas leur exactitude.

Abstract

We examine citizens' evaluations of specific campaign pledge fulfillment using data from the 2015 Canadian Election Study. We find that the accuracy of these evaluations increases in the presence of factors related to citizens' informed judgments, namely political knowledge and the relative importance of each pledge. On the other hand, we find that citizens' evaluations often turn on factors not based on informed judgments but rather on group identities and a priori beliefs, including partisan identification and political trust. The presence of these factors does not to increase the likelihood of accuracy of pledge evaluations. We also find, through a split ballot experiment, that even though a change in question wording affects the tone of pledge evaluations, it does not affect their accuracy.

2.1 Introduction

This paper is structured around two research objectives; first, we replicate a split ballot experiment by Thomson and Brandenburg (2018) designed to test whether citizens are predisposed to believe that party promises are broken due to their reliance on the stereotype of promise-breaking politicians. Contrary to Thomson and Brandenburg, we do not find evidence that avoiding the "promise-breaking politicians stereotype" leads to more accurate evaluations of pledge fulfillment, only positively biased ones. Second, in a related exercise, we successfully replicate and extend Pétry and Duval's (2017) findings that citizens' reliance on heuristic shortcuts to arrive at a verdict on pledge fulfillment questions often has a distorting effect on the accuracy of these verdicts.

The fulfillment of election pledges is at the heart of democratic accountability. If parties are responsive to societal demands, there should be a substantial level of congruence between their policies in government and the promises found in their election programs. A strong program-to-policy linkage is central to the mandate theory of democracy and the responsible party model (Downs 1957; Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994). There is a vast literature on citizens' evaluation of government performance and the factors affecting those evaluations (see e.g. Fiorina, 1981; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000; Powell and Whitten, 1993). Generally speaking, the idea that citizens can hold their representatives accountable is at the heart of the many approaches dubbed as "retrospective voting". One particular application is captured by Mansbridge's "promissory representation." Promissory representation is essentially a three-step process. Voters select parties based on what they promise they will do if elected. Parties fulfill their promises once elected. At the next election, voters reward the parties that fulfilled their election pledges by re-electing them, and they sanction the parties that fail to fulfill their election pledges by not re-electing them (Mansbridge 2003, 516).

The promissory representation approach has two important theoretical implications that need to be tested empirically. The first implication is that elected

representatives fulfill their election pledges once elected in office. Researchers from various countries have measured pledge fulfillment, and contrary to popular belief, it turns out that politicians tend to keep most of their election promises. This has been demonstrated in Canada (Pétry and Duval, 2015) in Quebec (Pétry 2002, 2012) and in most countries where scholars have measured pledge fulfillment (Pomper and Lederman, 1982; Royed, 1996; Rallings, 1987; Royed, 1996; Rallings, 1987; Monière, 1988; Pétry & Duval, 2015; Naurin, 2011; 2014; Thomson, 2001; Mansergh, 2004; Artés, 2004; 2011, Artes and Bustos 2008; Kalogeropoulou, 1989; Kostadinova, 2013; Moury and Fernandes, 2016; Moury, 2011; Scherman and Ennser-Jedenastik 2012; Toros, 2015; see Thomson et al. 2017 for a comparative account). The other implication of promissory representation is that citizens are able to evaluate the fulfillment of party pledges; more specifically that they are able to distinguish specific party pledges that have been fulfilled from unfulfilled ones.

This is where there seems to be a malaise. Despite the evidence that parties keep most of their promises, citizens largely believe that politicians do not fulfill their promises. This discrepancy between expert verdicts and citizens' views is present in numerous contexts. The 2006 ISSP survey found that in 31 of the 33 surveyed countries more than half of the respondents answered that they strongly disagreed with the statement that their Members of Parliament keep their election promises (ISSP, 2008). In Canada 44% of respondents strongly disagreed with that statement. More recently, in the 2012 Samara Citizen Survey, respondents were asked to rate the government's pledge fulfillment performance, from 0 to 10, which resulted in a mean score of 5.04 (Pétry, 2014). The stereotype that politicians break their electoral pledges is omnipresent and raises important questions about citizens' ability to evaluate whether pledges are fulfilled or not, which as mentioned is central to promissory representation. The contrast between the fulfillment rate and citizens' perceptions is particularly stark given that the 2011–2015 Harper Government that we are studied in this paper fulfilled 84% of its electoral pledges (*Forthcoming author citation*). This paper aims to measure the effect of that stereotype on the accuracy of citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment. To do so

we need to move away from aggregate results presented above and focus on citizens' evaluations of specific electoral pledges.

Citizens' evaluations of specific electoral pledges have received very limited scholarly attention so far. Thomson's (2011) research on citizens' evaluation of the fulfillment of election pledges in Ireland has focused on explaining the tone (positive or negative) of citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment rather than on whether these evaluations are accurate or not. Thomson's study was, however, extremely helpful in assessing which objective and subjective factors affect citizens' evaluations of electoral pledges. As such, it paved the way for Pétry and Duval's test of the impact of heuristic shortcuts on the accuracy of citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment, in which they find that heuristic shortcuts do not compensate for the lack of knowledge of respondents and can even mislead them (2017). Naurin and Oscarsson (2017*)* offer a bit of nuance showing that specific pledges tend to be evaluated more accurately than their vague counterparts and that this precision reduces the effects of partisanship (i.e. motivated reasoning). Directly related to our goal of testing the effect of the "promises breaking stereotype", Thomson & Brandenburg (2018) shows that asking British survey respondents about "policy proposals" instead of "election promises" leads to more positive answers. However it is unclear whether survey questions worded in the form of policy proposals elicit more accurate answers than questions worded in terms of election promises.

Citizens are often unaware about the actual level of pledge fulfillment (Thomson, 2011; Pétry & Duval, 2017*;* Thomson & Brandenburg, 2018; Naurin and Oscarsson, 2017). This calls into question the second implication of the theory of promissory representation. One possible escape is the so-called low-information rationality argument (Popkin 1991). According to the argument, people may alleviate their lack of political information through the use of heuristic shortcuts (such as party ID) that allow them to make political judgments that are not different from those by fully informed people. In line with previous research, we argue that the low-information rationality argument has limits when applied to citizens'

evaluations of pledge fulfillment. Researchers have pointed out that heuristic shortcuts may generate misinformation (Tversky and Kahneman 1974; Nadeau and Niemi 1995; Kuklinski and Quirk 2000; Kahneman 2003). Duch, Palmer and Anderson (2000) have shown that the use of heuristic shortcuts can lead to worse voting choices than if citizens made uninformed evaluations. The related idea of "motivated reasoning" (Kunda 1990) holds that people who know about social and political facts often prefer to ignore those facts while holding to their prior emotions or beliefs even if they are contradicted by the facts. Lodge and Taber (2000) show that when citizens learn new negative information about a candidate they support during an election campaign, they often operate as "motivated reasoners," ignoring the negative information in an effort to maintain their positive evaluation of that candidate. This is essentially what we found in our previous study (Pétry and Duval 2017), generally, the same heuristics that lead citizens to accurately evaluate fulfilled pledges mislead them into making inaccurate evaluations of pledges that are actually unfulfilled. Conversely, heuristics that lead citizens to accurately evaluate unfulfilled pledges mislead them into making inaccurate evaluations of pledges that are actually fulfilled. We do not find that heuristic shortcuts compensate for the lack of political knowledge. Instead, we find that heuristic shortcuts either positively or negatively bias respondents in ways that have little to do with the pledges' actual level of fulfillment (Pétry & Duval, 2017).

2.2 Hypotheses

The "Promises breaking politicians" stereotype. The existence of the stereotype shapes the views of the group in question for those who employ this stereotype. Which leads to that trait, characteristic—whichever aspect is being stereotyped—to be seen by the stereotyper whether it is present or not (Lippmann 1997 [1922], 54–55). As far as pledges go, there is a general widespread perception that politicians are liars and promises breakers. This stereotype was proved to be false in the vast majority of contexts (see Thomson & al. 2017). However, the stereotype is still present. Brandenburg and Thomson show that the word "party promises" itself

invites negative answers. In their study, they used a split sample design to measure the effect of the "politicians-as-liars stereotype". One half of the survey sample received questions asking about the adoption of "government proposals" while the other half received questions asking them to evaluate the fulfillment of "promises made by parties" and found that respondents receiving the "promises" treatment had more negative answers. We replicate their approach and propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Citizen who received the "policy proposal" treatment will have more positive answers than citizens who received the "party promises" treatment, regardless of the actual level of pledge fulfillment.

Party identification. A rational choice approach to party identification would suggest that citizens make accurate evaluations of the government's performance and that party identification is merely a consequence of these evaluations (Downs 1957, Fiorina 1977, 1981). Citizen's party identification would function as a "running tally" of present and past evaluation. Citizens identify with the governing party as a reward for good performance, and they identify with the opposition as a punishment for bad performance. In Achen's (1992) formalization of the running tally, citizens base their expectations about future benefits on their past political experiences and those benefits expectations drive party identification. Transposing the running tally model to citizens' evaluation of pledge fulfillment, we would expect citizens to identify with the governing party as a reward for fulfilling campaign pledges, and to identify with the opposition party as a punishment for not fulfilling campaign promises.

On the other hand, the "Michigan school" approach states that party ID is a stable affective attachment between citizens and their preferred party that raises a "perceptual screen" through which citizens interpret political events in ways that are favorable to their party of choice (1960, 133; Belknap and Campbell 1951). Bartels (2002) convincingly argues that party ID is not so much a consequence of objective assessments of past party performance than a subjective force that influences citizens' perceptions of party performance. Transposing this model to citizens'

evaluation of pledge fulfillment, we would expect citizens that identify with the governing party to have positively biased evaluations, to answer that pledges were fulfilled even when they were not. Meanwhile we expect that citizen identifying with the opposition party to have a negatively biased perception, to answer that pledges were broken regardless of their actual level of fulfillment.

Thomson (2011) finds that government party identification leads to more positive evaluations and that opposition party identification leads to more negative evaluations. Thomson does not investigate the effect of party identification on the accuracy of citizens' evaluations. Pétry and Duval (2017) investigate this by showing that people who identify with the governing party tend to evaluate pledges as fulfilled irrespective of actual government performance in pledge fulfillment, and that people who identify with the opposition tend to evaluate pledges as unfulfilled irrespective of actual performance.

H2: Citizens identifying with the government party tend to evaluate its pledges as fulfilled even when they were not. Citizens who identify with the opposition party tend to evaluate pledges by the governing party as unfulfilled even when they are fulfilled.

Trust. Respondents who are insufficiently knowledgeable to provide political judgments based on facts use political trust as a heuristic shortcut to overcome their lack of knowledge of politicians' performance (Parry 1976; Brewer 2004; Hetherington 2006). People who trust politicians are more likely to evaluate their performance positively, and people who distrust politicians are more likely to give negative evaluations. Hetherington (2006) shows that citizens' reliance on political trust sometimes lead them to misinterpret politicians' performance. More specifically, he shows that while the performance of the US government sometimes warranted a distrustful reaction from the electorate, in recent years, American citizens have responded to politics with distrust even when it was not justified (see Rosanvallon and Goldhammer 2008 for a similar demonstration outside the US). The fact that the use of the political distrust heuristic can lead people astray in choice situations that do not require a high level of political sophistication (e.g.

judging the overall economic performance of a US President) makes it all the more likely that people will be led astray by the use of the political distrust heuristic in choice situations that require a high level of political sophistication (e.g. evaluating the level of fulfillment of campaign pledges). Therefore, this approach suggests that trusting citizens are more likely to evaluate that pledges are fulfilled, even when they're not. Conversely, it is expected that distrusting citizens are more likely to evaluate that pledges are unfulfilled, irrespective of whether they are actually unfulfilled or fulfilled.

In line with the finding by researchers in the cultural theories' tradition, Thomson (2011) shows that high levels of trust are correlated with more positive evaluations and that low levels tend to yield more negative evaluations. Pétry and Duval (2017) obtain mixed results; they find that high trust correlates with more accurate answers in the case of fulfilled pledges but find no effects in the cases of unfulfilled pledges (see Thomson and Brandenburg [2018] for a more extensive discussion about political trust).

H3: Citizen with higher levels of trust will make positively biased evaluations of the fulfillment of electoral pledges. Trusting individuals will rate pledges as fulfilled even when they are not and citizens with lower levels of trust will rate pledges as unfulfilled even when they are fulfilled.

2.3   Methods

Our hypotheses are tested with data on Canadian's evaluations of seven specific pledges written in the platform of the Conservative Party (CP) during the 2011 election campaign. After the election, the CP governed with a majority[12] until the Governor General issued the writs of election on August 4, 2015. The data on evaluations of pledge fulfillment come from the 2015 Canadian Election Study.

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[12] Previous studies looked at citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment in coalition governments (Thomson, 2011; Naurin and Oscarsson, 2017) and a short-lived single party minority government (Pétry & Duval, 2017).

Respondents were asked to evaluate the extent to which pledges made in the previous election were fulfilled. To our knowledge, this is the first time specific party pledge questions were asked at the federal level in Canada.

Dependent variable. The respondents were asked to classify the following seven pledges as "broken," "fulfilled" or "not sure". Accurate evaluations were recoded as [1] and inaccurate ones as [0], "note sure" answers were omitted. The pledge to create a tax credit when children do arts and cultural activities was fulfilled as part of the Conservative's first budget on June 6, 2011, when they established the Children's Arts Tax Credit, covering up to $500 per child in qualifying expenses for eligible arts or cultural activities. The pledge to allow students with student loans to work part-time was also enacted as part of the Conservatives' June 6, 2011, budget. The Federal government expended the eligibility criteria for federal student loans. The promise to end the long-gun registry was fulfilled through Bill C-19, which came into effect on April 5, 2012, effectively ending the Long-gun Registry Act.[13] The promise to end government subsidies to political parties was gradually enacted between 2012 and 2015 as the federal government phased out political party subsidies as part of the Keeping Canada's Economy & Jobs Growing Act. The subsidy was gradually reduced in April 2012, 2013, 2014 and then eliminated in April 2015. The pledge to allow income splitting on tax returns for couples with children was fulfilled in October 2014 when the Federal Government introduced the Family Tax Cut, a federal tax credit that allows a spouse to transfer up to $50,000 of taxable income to a spouse in a lower tax bracket. While the resulting tax relief is capped at $2000, this fulfills the Conservative electoral pledge. One of the two broken pledges was a promise to purchase CF-35 fighter jets for the Armed Forces. Despite much talk and many rumors, the CF-35 were never purchased. And lastly, our second broken pledge was a promise to pass a law to limit the terms of federal Senators. In 2014 the Supreme Court rejected Harper's senate reform plan in a unanimous decision. The court ruled that making the proposed

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[13] Québec then demanded the records of its citizen, a demand that was denied by the Supreme Court of Canada in May 2015. All records of the long gun registry have since been destroyed.

changes, one of which was limited terms, to the Senate would require the agreement of 7 provinces plus 50% of the Canadian population, an avenue that the government did not pursue.

The independent variables. To assess the effect of the "promise-breaking politicians" stereotype, a split sample design was used to evaluate whether respondent attach a more negative connotation to the wording "Conservative party promise" than to the wording "government policy proposal." One half of the survey sample was asked about the fulfillment of "party promises made by the Conservative Party" while the other half was asked about the "adoption of policy proposals"[14].

Party identification was measured by asking respondents: "In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Conservative, Liberal, NDP, Bloc Québécois, Green, or none of these?" The answers were recoded in one dummy variable; respondents identifying with the government party. This operationalization of Party identification as a category rather than continuously is consistent with Miller's (1991) and also in line with previous research concerned with party identification in Canada.

Trust was measured through respondent's answers to questions asking how well do the term "honest" describe the different party leaders. The index was constructed attributing 2 points every time respondents answered "very well" and one point when they answered "fairly well" and we subtracted 1 point when they answered, "Not well at all". This yielded a 10-point scale ranging from -3 to 6 with a median value of 1, we added 4 to the variable to obtain a 1–10 scale, although

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[14] One half of the sample was given the question: "Right before the 2011 federal election, the following promises were made by Stephen Harper's Conservative Party who afterwards formed the government. For each of these, do you think the promise was fulfilled, partly fulfilled, broken, or are you not sure?" The other half was given the question: "The following policy proposals were made by the federal government in 2011. For each of these, do you think it was adopted, partly adopted, not adopted, or are you not sure?"

this changes nothing but the aesthetics of the scale. Our measure taps into one of Maloy's (2009)[15] definition of trust, trust as discretion.[16]

There are three control variables. *Political knowledge* is measured through the respondents' answers to four factual questions. Respondents were asked to give the name of the last minister of finance, the family name of the Governor General, the name of their province's prime minister and the last name of the president of Russia. This measure is similar to what other studies use (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Marsh and Tilley 2010; Zaller 1992). We treat this variable as a control variable in the context of this paper but based on previous studies (Thomson 2011, Thomson and Brandenburg 2018, Pétry et Duval 2017) we expect that the accuracy of evaluations of pledge fulfillment increases as the level of political knowledge increases.

Media exposure is constructed with a question asking respondents, on average, how long each day they usually spend watching, reading, and listening to news. Although media exposure can sometimes reinforce people's dissatisfaction with politicians' performance in office (Patterson 1993, Soroka 2014) the balance of evidence strongly suggests that exposure to news media has a positive impact on Canadians' perception of politicians' performance (Pétry 2014). This is in line with the "virtuous circle" hypothesis, which holds that consumption of news media reinforces political interest and results in more political engagement (Norris 2003). It is also to be noted that this variable is absent from the previous studies (Thomson and Brandenburg, 2018) and that we treat it as a control variable.

Lastly, *pledge salience* measured by the intensity of coverage of each pledge by the three main Canada newspapers, the Globe and Mail, the National Post, and

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[15] It should be noted that Thomson (2011) and Thomson and Brandenburg (2018) use a slightly different definition of political trust that focuses on "encapsulated interests," the belief that representatives will act benevolently with the interests of the represented without the latter having to monitor the former (Hardin 2002).

[16] The available survey questions in the CES 2015 survey did not allow us to operationalize political trust this way.
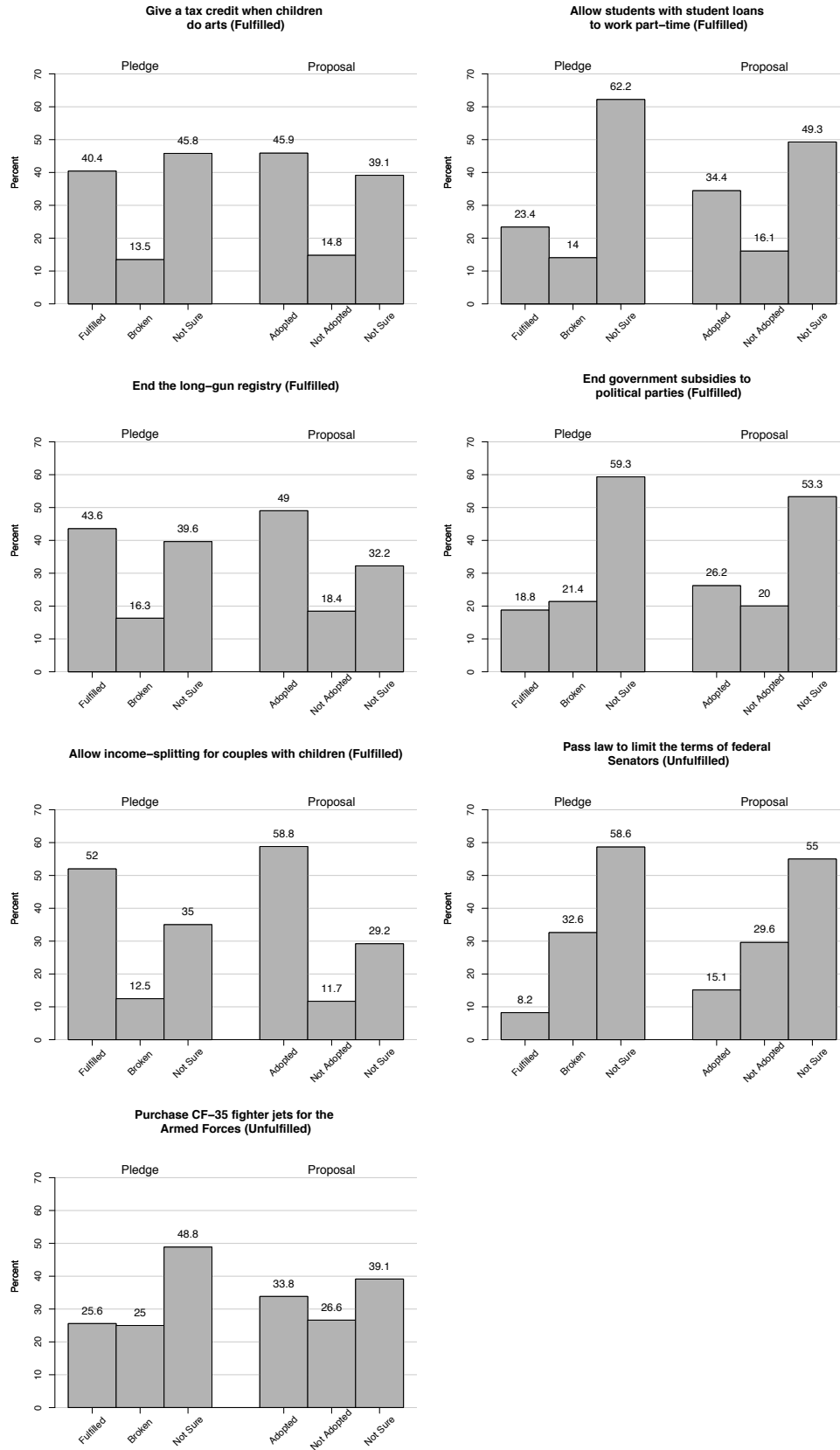
the Toronto Star during the 2011–2015 mandate. More precisely, we counted the articles discussing specifically each pledge from the dissolution of Parliament by Governor General to the next dissolution. Our 4 pledges that received more news coverage were recoded as salient [1] in order to not impose an effect linear to the articles count, which varied wildly. This dummy is also a control variable. [17] It is also to be noted that none of our unfulfilled pledges were coded as [0] so this variable will be dropped from the unfulfilled pledges models.

2.4   Results

2.1 shows the evaluations of the seven pledges under analysis. The first thing we notice is that as expected from H1 survey respondents who receive the proposal treatment give more positive evaluations than those who receive the pledge treatment; this is true for all seven pledges. For five out of seven pledges, the "government proposal" treatment leads to more accurate evaluations than inaccurate ones if we ignore the "not sure" responses. The two exceptions are the pledge to purchase CF−35 fighter jets and the pledge to end government subsidies to political parties where there are more accurate than inaccurate evaluations under the "party promise" wording.

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[17] Our three non-salient pledges were discussed in 4, 20 and 83 news articles and our 4 salient pledges were discussed in 153, 193, 194 and 514 news articles. We thank the anonymous reviewer for their suggestions related to this variable.

Figure 2.1: Citizen's Evaluations of the Fulfillment of Seven Pledges

Give a tax credit when children do arts (Fulfilled)

Allow students with student loans to work part–time (Fulfilled)

End the long–gun registry (Fulfilled)

End government subsidies to political parties (Fulfilled)

Allow income–splitting for couples with children (Fulfilled)

Pass law to limit the terms of federal Senators (Unfulfilled)

Purchase CF–35 fighter jets for the Armed Forces (Unfulfilled)

2.2 shows the aggregation of respondents' evaluation regrouped by fulfillment verdict (fulfilled pledges and unfulfilled pledges) and by whether respondents received the proposal or the promise treatment. For fulfilled pledges, respondents who receive the government proposal treatment make accurate evaluations in 73% of the cases, 3% more than accurate evaluations by those who receive the party promise treatment. The difference goes the opposite direction when we look at unfulfilled pledges. Respondents who receive the government proposal treatments are 10% less accurate on average than respondents who receive the party promise treatment. Respondents who receive the "government proposal" treatment are more likely to make positive evaluations but they are no more likely to make more accurate evaluations than those who receive the "party promise" treatment.

Figure 2.2: Pledge Evaluation by Treatment
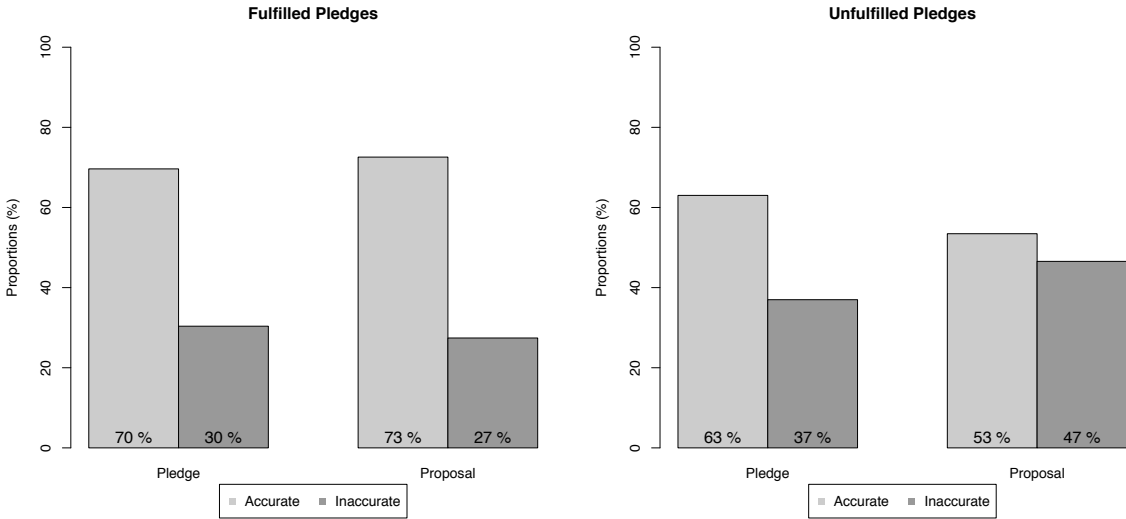
Let's now move onto the multivariate analysis to test H2 and H3 and to validate the descriptive results of H1. 2.3[18] graphically displays the results of the multivariate analyses of the determinants of evaluations of pledge fulfillment for all pledges. The dependent variable is coded 1 for accurate evaluations and 0 for inaccurate ones. Positive coefficients (above zero in Figure 2.3) denote positive effects on accuracy whereas negative coefficients (below zero) denote negative effects. As in

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[18] The full table is included in Appendix A.

Thomson (2011), Thomson and Brandenburg (2018) and Pétry and Duval (2017*)*, the units of observation are the individual pledges answers and the standard errors are clustered by respondent. Respondent appear in the dataset a maximum of seven times if they answered all seven pledges questions in the survey. There are 20,119 observations in the models for fulfilled pledges and 6083 in the models for unfulfilled pledges after subtracting missing values. The "not sure" answers are excluded as they were in Thomson (2011), Naurin and Oscarsson (2017*)* and Pétry and Duval (2017*)*.

Figure 2.3: Coefficient Plots and 95% Confidence Intervals for Logits Models of Voters' Evaluations of Specific Pledges
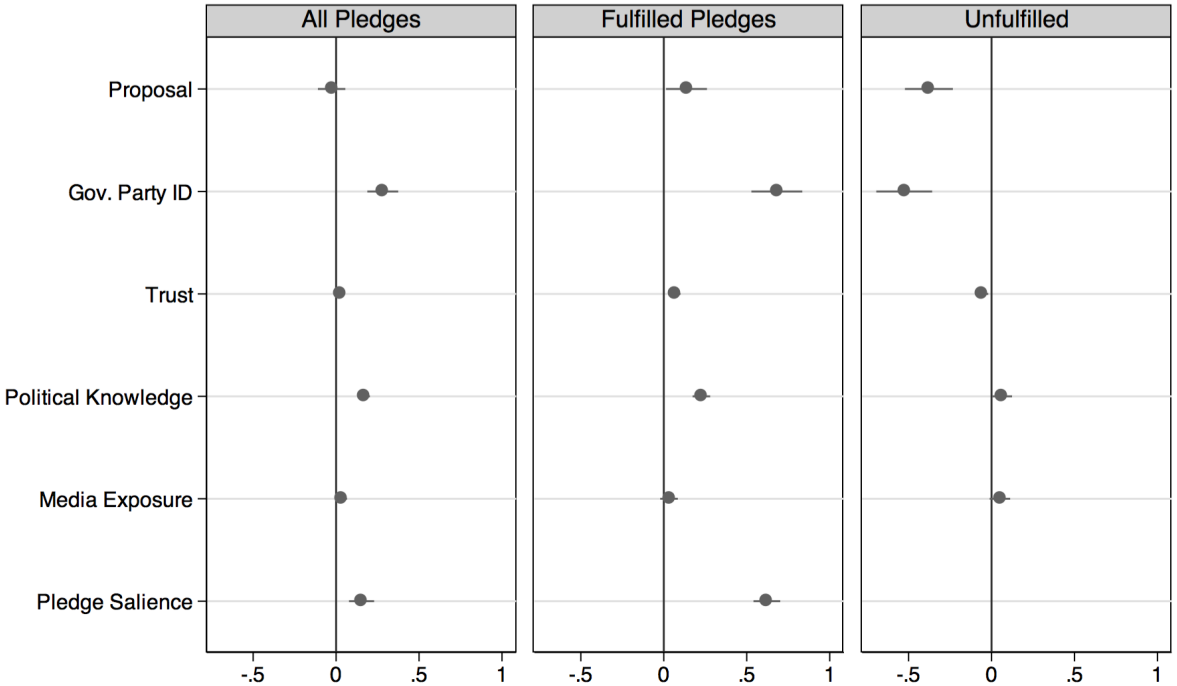
As we can see from 2.3, the descriptive results about the government proposal treatment are confirmed. The proposal treatment does not lead to more accurate results overall (left panel) but it has opposite effects depending on whether pledges are fulfilled (center panel) or not (right panel). The proposal coefficient is significantly positive in the model for "fulfilled pledges" but it is significantly negative in the model for "unfulfilled pledges".

Identifying with the government party leads to positively biased answers that are accurate for fulfilled pledges but inaccurate for unfulfilled pledges. Our second hypothesis is supported. Citizens with higher degrees of trust are more likely to give accurate answers to questions regarding fulfilled pledges and less accurate answers to questions regarding unfulfilled pledged. Or to put it otherwise, trust positively biases our respondent's answers. This supports the third hypothesis. Note, however, that while the influence of trust is statistically significant, the effects size is barely perceptible in Figure 2.2 but nonetheless present as detailed in Appendix A. Consistent with the "misbehaving heuristics" results by Pétry and Duval (2017), we find that Canadian citizens who evaluate pledges positively tend to do so irrespective of actual performance, misleading them into making inaccurate evaluations of pledges that are actually unfulfilled. Vice versa, citizens evaluate pledges negatively irrespective of actual performance, misleading them into making inaccurate evaluations of pledges that are actually fulfilled.

Looking at the results for the control variables, we see that political knowledge increases the accuracy of evaluation of both fulfilled and unfulfilled pledges. Moving on to pledge salience, a variable mostly absent from the pledge evaluation literature, we find that respondent evaluate salient pledges more accurately when they are fulfilled. However, we must be careful in our interpretation as we only have variation in salience for our fulfilled pledges. As mentioned above, both of our unfulfilled pledges are salient and this variable had to be dropped from the unfulfilled pledges model. Without information about accuracy of evaluations of salient unfulfilled pledges, we cannot assess the impact of pledge salience on the likelihood of accurate evaluations of unfulfilled pledges.

At the request of one anonymous referee, we ran a robustness check with multinomial models that include the "not sure" responses as reference category in the dependent variable.[19] Tables 2.1 and 2.2 display the results for accurate and

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[19] A positive coefficient in the model for accurate responses signifies a higher likelihood of making an accurate evaluation than of responding "not sure". A positive coefficient in the model for

inaccurate evaluations, respectively. How do the results in the multinomial setup compare with those in the binomial model? Aside of minor differences, the multinomial models of Tables 2.1 and 2.2 closely replicate the binomial models of Figure 2.1. Citizens are more likely to give a verdict than to say "not sure" if they received the "proposal" wording. However, and in line with the findings of Figure 2.1, they are more likely to give accurate verdicts than to state that they are "not sure" only when pledges are fulfilled. When pledges are unfulfilled, they are more likely to give inaccurate verdicts. Similarly, Citizens who identify with the government party are more likely to give a verdict than to say "not sure, and, although they are more likely to give accurate verdicts when pledges are fulfilled, when pledges are unfulfilled, they are more likely to give inaccurate verdicts.

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inaccurate responses signifies a higher likelihood of making an inaccurate evaluation than of responding "not sure".

Table 2.1: Multinomial Logit Models of Voters' Evaluations with "Not Sure" as the Reference Category

1. Accurate (the reference category is "not sure")

	All Pledges	Fulfilled Pledges	Unfulfilled Pledges
Proposal	0.448***	0.424***	0.708***
	(0.0459)	(0.0500)	(0.0696)
Government Party ID.	0.438***	0.585***	-0.0113
	(0.0545)	(0.0599)	(0.0859)
Trust	0.0661***	0.0799***	0.0245
	(0.0133)	(0.0143)	(0.0205)
Political Knowledge	0.244***	0.255***	0.239***
	(0.0199)	(0.0216)	(0.0296)
Media Exposure	0.199***	0.182***	0.273***
	(0.0191)	(0.0208)	(0.0289)
Pledge Salience	0.375***	0.979***	
	(0.0260)	(0.0304)	
Constant	-2,130***	-2,209***	-2,498***
	(0.0890)	(0.0970)	(0.137)

2. Inaccurate (the reference category is "not sure")

	All Pledges	Fulfilled Pledges	Unfulfilled Pledges
Proposal	0.360***	0.278***	0.528***
	[0.0585]	[0.0700]	[0.0697]
Government Party ID.	0.140*	-0.0836	0.464***
	[0.0669]	[0.0869]	[0.0793]
Trust	0.0417*	0.0153	0.0921***
	[0.0171]	[0.0207]	[0.0197]
Political Knowledge	0.0750**	0.0244	0.174***
	[0.0249]	[0.0303]	[0.0293]
Media Exposure	0.174***	0.147***	0.237***
	[0.0246]	[0.0295]	[0.0285]
Pledge Salience	0.284***	0.326***	
	[0.0331]	[0.0373]	
Constant	-2,127***	-1,743***	-2,677***
	[0.121]	[0.140]	[0.132]
N	24,154	17,570	6584
pseudo R-sq	0.033	0.055	0.043
Log lik.	-24,118.2	-16,974.9	-6411.8
Chi-squared	916.6	1526.8	419.8

Standard errors, clustered by respondent, in parentheses
* =p <0.05, **= p <0.01, *** =p <0.001"

2.5   Discussion

Are citizens able to accurately detect broken and kept election promises? Figure 2.2 indicates a 68% of accurate responses overall vs 32 percent inaccurate responses on average. This finding suggests that Canadian citizens are able to accurately detect broken and kept promises as assumed by the theory of promissory representation. Note, however, that the "not sure" responses are not counted in the calculation. The method of not including "note sure" responses is akin to the method of distributing the "undecided" proportionally to the "decided" responses in voting intention surveys. Another method would be to count the "not sure" responses as inaccurate (a method akin to counting "don't know" responses as incorrect in political knowledge questions). Counting the "not sure" as inaccurate responses would produce an accurate/inaccurate response ratio of 31/67, considerably less than the above 68/32 ratio, and even below the 50/50 ratio if responses were given at random.

Assuming that all "not sure" respondents are ignorant and would have been incorrect if they had given a verdict is unrealistic, however. Research has shown that "not sure" responses to recall survey questions are a mixture of many factors, including low motivation, personality, gender, etc. not just ignorance (Krosnick 1991, Lupia 2015, Miller and Orr 2008). It is likely that many respondents who know the answer still give a "not sure" response to pledge fulfillment questions. As our results on the effect of heuristic shortcuts suggest, pledge fulfillment questions provoke psychological reactions that may taint the way respondents use their declarative (factual) memory. For example, government party identifiers who know the correct answer to a pledge fulfillment question may end up declaring that are "not sure" not because they don't know what the correct answer is but because they experience cognitive dissonance between their factual knowledge (this pledge was broken) and their belief based on motivated reasoning (I want to believe that the party I identify with fulfilled the pledge).

The data analyzed here suggest that the percentage of citizens capable of accurate verdicts lies somewhere between one third (counting the "not sure" as incorrect verdicts) and two thirds of all responses (ignoring the "not sure" in the calculation), probably closer to the higher value. The very wide range of possible values (which by the way includes the ratio 50/50 that would be observed if citizens were responding randomly) suggests that there is still too much imprecision in the data to draw a reliable conclusion about the level of accuracy in citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment. Future research could investigate how changing the way the undecided are operationalized ("don't know", "not sure" or "seen but not answered") influences the results. A related question for future research would be to determine more precisely why respondents give "not sure" or "don't know" responses.

Could the accuracy of evaluations be improved? We know that changing the wording of the pledge fulfillment questions from "party promise" to "government proposal" has a positive effect on the tone of pledge evaluations but it has no effect on their accuracy. This is not surprising in light of the fact that evaluations are being distorted by the use of "bad heuristics". Improving the tone of evaluations is not always conducive to an improvement in their accuracy. If all the pledges are fulfilled, then improving the tone of evaluations will increase their accuracy. Conversely, if all the pledges are unfulfilled, then improving the tone of evaluations will decrease their accuracy proportionally. The significance is that using a less partisan wording in survey questions, and more generally framing political issues in less partisan terms, will not automatically improve accuracy of evaluations.

The accuracy of Citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment is positively affected by political knowledge and to a certain extent by pledge salience. The impact of these two factors suggests that although citizens' evaluations often turn on considerations based on subjective biases and political stereotypes, they are also based to an extent on citizens' rational examination of facts.

We believe part of the puzzle surrounding citizens' ability to accurately evaluate electoral pledge fulfillment can be answered through the study of the resources at

the disposal of the citizens. More precisely, we do know that the majority of citizens do not read electoral platforms, budgets, bills, etc. and as such obtain the information they need for their vote choices from the media (Andersen et al. 2005; Walgrave and de Swert 2007) and our results seem to highlight that the quality of the coverage might have some importance. We found that some highly salient pledges received more inaccurate evaluations than their non-salient counterparts, which is troubling and raises questions about the quality of the coverage of electoral pledges. This is another research avenue worth pursuing.

Table 2.2: Regression Tables for Logit Models of the Accuracy of Voters' Evaluations of Specific Pledges (Appendix A of the Article)

	(1) All Pledges	(2) Fulfilled Pledges	(3) Unfulfilled Pledges
Proposal	-0.0269	0.137*	-0.378***
	(0.0421)	(0.0628)	(0.0737)
Government Party ID.	0.281***	0.681***	-0.526***
	(0.0474)	(0.0782)	(0.0858)
Trust	0.0273*	0.0670***	-0.0585**
	(0.0111)	(0.0172)	(0.0198)
Political Knowledge	0.170***	0.226***	0.0642*
	(0.0175)	(0.0270)	(0.0303)
Media Exposure	0.0307	0.0313	0.0505
	(0.0179)	(0.0270)	(0.0315)
Pledge Salience	0.153***	0.621***	
	(0.0386)	(0.0411)	
Constant	0.0411	-0.444***	0.669***
	(0.0900)	(0.128)	(0.150)
N	13,455	9913	3542
Pseudo R-sq	0.013	0.048	0.019
Log lik.	-8344.0	-5651.3	-2366.8
Chi-squared	172.4	392.7	78.24

Standard errors (clustered by respondent) in parentheses
 * = p <0.05, ** = p <0.01, *** = p <0.001"

Table 2.3: Regression Tables for Logit Models of Accuracy of Voters' Evaluations of Specific Pledges by Pledges (Appendix B of the Article)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Proposal	0.00728	0.245*	0.00350	0.403***	0.138	-0.210*	-0.680***
	(0.105)	(0.110)	(0.0971)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.0907)	(0.121)
Government Party ID.	0.652***	0.729***	0.474***	1,132***	0.523***	-0.390***	-0.766***
	(0.133)	(0.130)	(0.119)	(0.126)	(0.135)	(0.104)	(0.130)
Trust	0.102***	0.0588*	0.0606*	0.0746*	0.0456	-0.0307	-0.119***
	(0.0286)	(0.0288)	(0.0265)	(0.0290)	(0.0297)	(0.0243)	(0.0316)
Political Knowledge	0.201***	0.114**	0.380***	0.233***	0.245***	0.0235	0.151**
	(0.0436)	(0.0434)	(0.0421)	(0.0435)	(0.0457)	(0.0374)	(0.0475)
Media Exposure	0.0874*	-0.0431	0.0782	0.0815	-0.0184	0.0634	0.0543
	(0.0431)	(0.0450)	(0.0404)	(0.0459)	(0.0450)	(0.0385)	(0.0500)
Constant	-0.150	-0.0419	-0.363	-1,495***	0.720***	-0.0217	1,724***
	(0.196)	(0.201)	(0.188)	(0.216)	(0.204)	(0.182)	(0.239)
N	2063	1574	2294	1557	2425	2001	1541
pseudo R-sq	0.035	0.026	0.048	0.072	0.024	0.008	0.052
Log lik.	-1109.6	-983.7	-1274.7	-1000.4	-1106.4	-1369.8	-857.9
Chi-squared	79.41	52.98	127.8	154.6	53.57	23.21	93.40

Standard errors (clustered by respondent) in parentheses
* = p <0.05, ** = p <0.01, *** = p <0.001"

3 Ringing the Alarm: The Media Coverage of the Fulfillment of Electoral Pledges

Résumé

Cet article étudie la couverture des promesses électorales dans les médias. Plus précisément, cet article cherche à savoir si les médias alertent les citoyens lorsqu'une promesse électorale est rompue. Cette étude porte sur les 244 promesses faites par le Parti conservateur, lors des élections canadiennes de 2008 et de 2011. Notre période d'étude s'étend du déclenchement de l'élection de 2008 (07/09/2008) jusqu'à la fin du mandat de 2011 (08/04/2015). Cet article révèle que les médias alertent les citoyens lorsqu'un engagement est rompu. Nous constatons également que le «modèle d'alarme antivol» (*Burglar Alarm*), issu du domaine de la communication politique, fournit une description adéquate des dynamiques entourant la couverture médiatique des engagements électoraux.

Abstract

This article investigates the portrayal of electoral pledges in the news media. We know very little about the portrayal of electoral pledges in news media which is problematic because we do know the majority of citizens do not read electoral platforms, budgets, bills, etc. and as such obtain the information they need from the media. More precisely, this article investigates whether the media alert citizens when a pledge is broken? This study covers the 244 pledges made by the government party, the Conservative Party, during the 2011 and 2008 Canadian elections. Our period ranges from the 2008 election (07/09/2008) to the end of the 2011 mandate (08/04/2015). This study finds that the news media do alert citizens when a pledge is broken and that what is often described as the "*Burglar alarm model*" in political communication provides an apt description of the dynamics at play in the coverage of electoral pledges.

3.1 Introduction

Theories of representation rely on the ability of citizens to sanction or reward their elected officials. The traditional model of representation focuses on the idea that representatives are held accountable for their promises to constituents, this is often dubbed as *promissory representation* (Mansbridge, 2003). The process by which this occurs is fairly linear, voters select representatives during elections (T1), elected representatives enact (or do not enact) their pledges during their mandate (T2) and then constituents reward or sanction based on their enactment (or lack thereof) during the next election (T3; Mansbridge, 2003: 516). Whether politicians fulfill their campaign pledges is not only relevant to theory but also to practical politics and policy-making, as politicians often claim that they fulfill their pledges (Grossback et al., 2005) and there is abundant media coverage of election campaigns (Costello and Thomson, 2008; Kostadinova, 2015; Krukones, 1984). Scholarly attention to campaign pledge fulfillment has been growing over recent years and as such researchers have studied variations in pledge fulfillment and the determinants thereof in a large number of countries including the US (Pomper and Lederman, 1980; Royed, 1996), the UK (Rallings, 1987; Royed, 1996), Canada (Monière, 1988; Pétry, 2014; Pétry and Duval, 2015; Duval and Pétry 2018, Rallings, 1987), Sweden (Naurin, 2011, 2014), the Netherlands (Thomson, 2001), Ireland (Mansergh, 2004; Mansergh and Thomson, 2007), Spain (Artés, 2013; Artés and Bustos, 2008), Greece (Kalogeropoulou, 1989), Bulgaria (Kostadinova, 2013), Portgual (Moury and Fernandes, 2016), Italy (Moury, 2011), Austria (Scherman and Ennser-Jedenastik, 2012), and Turkey (Toros, 2015). In 2009, the Comparative Party Pledge Group (CPPG) was created by researchers interested in the comparative study of pledge fulfillment to unify coding standards and create truly comparative results across several countries. Their research led to a comparative article regrouping some 20,000 pledges made in 57 election campaigns in 12 countries (Thomson et al., 2017) and an edited volume (Naurin et al., In press). The main finding of this growing body of work is that parties tend to keep most of their electoral promises after they are elected.

What's less clear about the process by which promissory representation occurs are the questions related to the level of political information and knowledge that citizens possess. More specifically, while scholars are aware that most electoral pledges are fulfilled given the extensive body of work on the topic, how do we expect citizens to know about such specific items? Contrary to what we might believe, citizens do know a good deal about electoral pledges. There are a few studies that tested the knowledge of citizens on various specific electoral pledges and, generally speaking, citizen fare pretty well at evaluating whether these pledges are fulfilled or not. This is the case of Ireland (Thomson, 2011), Sweden (Naurin, and Oscarsson, 2017), Québec (Pétry and Duval, 2017) and Great Britain (Thomson and Brandenburg, 2018). The results suggest (but do not test directly) that citizens had access to the factual information that is required to reward or sanction their officials at T3 of promissory representation.

How are constituents made aware of what their representatives are doing during their mandate (T2)? The answer might seem evident; it's the role of the media to make them aware. The existing studies investigate the news coverage of electoral pledges during the initial electoral campaign (Costello and Thomson, 2008; Kostadinova, 2015), that is T1, but none of them look at the coverage of electoral pledges during the mandate, that is T2. The existing studies are important given that they measure the information resources at the disposal of citizens to make their initial vote choice, but they do not address the questions related to the information at the disposal of citizens to reward or sanction their elected officials when the next election rolls in, T3 in Mansbridge's theorization (2003).

This is the gap this study aims to fill. Also, unlike news coverage at T1, the subsequent coverage has an evaluative component. By which we mean that unlike the news coverage of electoral pledges during the campaign, which only reports the pledges as they are made, the news coverage of pledges during the mandate should assess, at least minimally, whether or not those pledges are being carried out. In short, we are not only concerned by the presence or not of electoral pledges

in news but also by their framing. To investigate this, we use pledge fulfillment and news coverage data from two Canadian governments spanning over 7 years (2008–2015). This study shows that the media do alert citizens when elected officials do not fulfill their electoral pledges. This suggests that media coverage of pledge fulfillment contributes to increase citizens' accuracy of pledge fulfillment.

3.2   The Role of the Media

According to the mandate approach to democracy citizens vote for the party that proposes the program that best answers their own preferences (Downs 1957, Klingemann et al. 1994, Powell 2000). And once the mandate is over, voters also have to sanction or reward elected officials for their enactment—or lack thereof—of said pledges (Mansbridge, 2003: 516). However, we do know that the majority of citizens do not read electoral platforms, budgets, bills, etc. and as such obtain most of the information they need for their vote choices from the media (Andersen et al., 2005; Walgrave and de Swert, 2007). This holds true for the different stages of promissory representation, citizens need information for the initial selection (T1) as well as the reward/sanction stage (T3).

The role of the media is critical and twofold, first they should provide "balanced/unbiased" information regarding the policies in the different parties' program during the election and second, once a party is elected they should monitor its activities in order to provide citizens with sufficient information for them to assess whether or not they are implementing what they promised. I write "unbiased" because the different media have to make choices since it's impossible to report everything contained in each of the main parties' platforms and these choices are not without consequences. And also because we do know that the media reporting during the campaign is not unbiased, an example is that incumbent parties get more coverage during the campaign than their opponents do (Hopmann et al., 2011). And, more importantly, we do not know if the media evaluate pledge fulfillment in an accurate and unbiased fashion.

Studying the political information provided by the media is not new. The agenda-setting literature has a vast body of work studying how news media shape the conversation between parties and citizens. Media, through their coverage choices, have an important role in determining which topics are being discussed and viewed as important by the public (e.g. Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Given those conditions it is not surprising that parties try to stress and emphasize their favored topics leading to what Budge and Farlie (1983) labeled the saliency theory of party competition. Typically, different parties will emphasize different topics and issues in their respective platforms (e.g. Klingemann et al., 2006) and managing to get them covered in the media is a key aspect of their campaign efforts as it brings the attention, so to speak, to their stomping grounds.

Attention alone (*priming*) does not fully cover the importance media can take during campaigns; the way issues are presented (*framing*) by the media during the campaign is not without consequences. Shifting frames, discussing different topics and using a different language can influence the way people think about issues (Iyengar, 1996; Quattrone and Tversky, 1988). As Young and Soroka (2012, 207) put it: "Shifting frames can change the affective composition of the media, creating narratives that construct and shape perceptions of social and political and reality (e.g., Johnson-Cartée, 2005; Shenhav, 2006). "A strong example is that we know that the negative coverage of candidates can affect vote intentions during electoral campaigns (Soroka et al., 2009, Young and Soroka, 2012). Those studies raise yet unresolved concerns about the way, or rather, about the tone employed to cover pledges in the media. We know that there is a widespread myth that politicians do not keep their electoral promises and perhaps parts of the answer as to why this myth is so pernicious can be found in the portrayal of electoral pledges by the media.

3.3 Existing Studies

As I mentioned two studies focus on the news coverage of election pledges during electoral campaigns. The results vary quite a bit as far as how thoroughly covered the pledges are. Costello and Thomson found that the pledges by the main parties in the 2002 Irish election, the Fianna Fáil and the Fianna Gael, were well covered in the media. With respectively 51% and 92% of their pledges mentioned at least once. These percentages, however, dropped considerably when they looked at pledges mentioned more than once, only 31% and 18% of their pledges were covered on more than one occasion (Costello and Thomson, 2008: 246). Kostadinova's provide an outlook that's a bit grimmer. Looking at 7 elections in Bulgaria, she reports very low percentages of pledges being covered by the media, even for the top contenders. The *Bulgaria Socialist Party*, who had the highest share of the popular vote in 1990, 1991 and 1994 and 2005, only had 6%, 2.8%, 35.7% and 20% of their pledges covered at least once by the media during those four campaigns. The *National Movement Simeon the Second* (highest share of the popular vote in 2001) and the *Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria* (highest share of the popular vote in 2009) had 47.9% and 22.4% of their promises covered by the media (Kostadinova, 2015). Going beyond the descriptive analysis Kostadinova also finds that some pledges are more likely to get coverage than others. She finds that economic pledges are more likely to be reported by the media, and that more complex ones—like EU membership or economic transition—are seldom reported (Kostadinova, 2015).

3.4 This Research

Extending the study of the coverage of electoral pledges beyond the election is critical. Existing research focused on how often the media portrayed the pledges of each party during election campaigns. As mentioned above this is important as more media coverage of campaign pledges can only improve the likelihood that voters make informed vote choices. However, looking only at media coverage during election campaigns is probably too restrictive because it ignores the

possibility that voters may reward or punish the incumbent for the enactment or neglect of their past pledges (Mansbridge, 2003). Therefore, it is important to look at media coverage between the elections, a yet unobserved part of the equation.

Media coverage of pledges made during the previous campaign needs to be critical and judge whether those pledges were fulfilled or not and provide that information to citizens. Citizens are not encyclopedias or pundits. It is not realistic, given the sheer number of pledges made during the election by the party that formed the government, to expect citizens to remember them and evaluate their fulfillment by themselves. This is a task that needs to be carried out by the media (Zaller, 1990; 1992; 2003). Essentially, do media alert citizens when a pledge is broken? This also represents a departure from the two studies mentioned above since we will investigate the *framing* of the coverage of electoral pledges and not only the *priming* of theses items.

As "hinted" in the theory section, this paper investigates whether the "burglar alarm model" that is that journalists should alert busy citizens when matters of importance arise, works when it comes to electoral pledges being broken (Zaller 2003). Opponents of the "burglar alarm" approach to news media highlight two major flaws with that proposition. The first is that the news media is growing incessantly more negative and sensationalist (Patterson, 2003) making it so we have an alarm that just keeps ringing. The second is that sometimes the alarm doesn't ring when it should (Bennett, 2003). Those "errors" in the burglar alarm model of journalism can be essentially described as false negatives and false positives. [20]

The coverage of electoral pledges is particularly well suited to test those claims. Not unlike when one needs to test a statistical model's performance, we can rely on a dataset for which we know the "true" parameters. More precisely, we have a dataset containing a number of Canadian electoral pledges and whether they were fulfilled or not. So what needs to be done is to compare each pledges' fulfillment with the news coverage of the same pledges. Considering that the majority

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[20] It is to be pointed out that the Burglar Alarm standard was proposed as an alternative to the Full News standard, which was deemed too demanding (see: Zaller 2003)

electoral pledges are fulfilled the coverage of those is arguably less crucial to a functional model of electoral pledges reporting. The key aspects will be to observe if news media do indeed ring the alarm and alert citizens when pledges are broken or if the coverage is extremely negative all the time regardless of the actual level of pledge fulfillment.

3.5   Research Design

This paper focuses on the news coverage of electoral pledges made by the last two Canadian governments during each electoral campaign. The Conservative Party of Canada won the 2008 and 2011 Canadian elections and made a total of 244 pledges during their electoral campaigns. Of those, 183 were fulfilled at least in part and 61 were broken. The coding of those pledges followed the Comparative Party Pledge Group guidelines (see e.g. Thomson et al. 2017 and Naurin et al. *In Press*). For more details on the coding of those pledges and the fulfillment of electoral pledges in Canada see Pétry and Duval's work on the topic (2015).

We collected the news articles that mentioned these pledges during the election campaign and the length of the subsequent government. For the 2008 governments the period of analysis lasts from the dissolution of the parliament by the Governor General on September 7 2008 to the following dissolution of the parliament on March 26th 2011. That date also marks the beginning of our collection period for the 2011 election, the end date the 4th of August 2015 when the parliament was dissolved once more marking the beginning of the 2015 electoral campaign that led to the Trudeau Government currently in office. The newspaper articles are from the three main Canadian newspapers, those are The Globe and Mail, The National Post and the Toronto Star. The corpus was created using Factiva. A Boolean string of keywords for each pledge was used to identify the news articles discussing each pledge. Here are two examples: for the pledge to "phase out the direct subsidy of political parties over the next three years" the keywords "per-vote subsidy" were used, for the pledge "We will forgive a portion of

federal student loans for doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners who agree to practice in under-served rural or remote areas" the search terms were: Student Loan* AND forgiveness AND (doctor* OR nurse*) and for the pledge to "end the long-gun registry once and for all" the search consisted of: long-gun registry OR Bill C-19. A total of 1646 news stories was collected for the 101 pledges of the 2008 government and 5110 news stories covering the 143 pledges for the 2011 government. Overall out dataset consists of 6756 news articles.

In order to capture whether the media alert citizens when a pledge is broken we compare the tone of the news coverage before and after the status of a pledge changes. To do so, we employ the *Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary (LSD)* created by Young and Soroka (2012). The *LSD* is a lexicon created to measure to the tone of the news coverage. It is composed of over 6000 words scored as either negative or positive tone. Using the package *Quanteda* (Benoit, 2018) we ran this dictionary on all of our news articles to obtain the number of positive and negative words per documents. The actual tone variable is just the proportion of positive words minus the proportion of negative words [(# of positive words—# of negative words)/total number of words in the article]. The *LSD* is the most precise way to measure the tone of news articles, when compared against the nine other existing content-analytic dictionaries it produced results that were systematically closer to those of human coders (Young and Soroka, 2012).

Our test required the addition of a "breaking" date for pledges. The breaking date corresponds with the day when the condition to be coded as "broken" was met. This took the form of governmental actions that went against a pledge, a self-imposed deadline passing by (ie. In the first year we will […] this will be done by 2013 […]) or the government announcing it was no longer considering enacting that election pledge. This coding is similar to the one used in Duval and Pétry (2018) with the obvious difference that it is applied to broken pledges and not only to fulfilled pledges. However, this led to a complication; some of the broken pledges had to be excluded from this part of the analysis since they were not broken during the mandate, but rather through complete inaction during the full

period and as such a before/after comparison was proved impossible. Of our 38 broken pledges for 2008, 11 were broken during the mandate and out of our 23 broken pledges for 2011, 14 were broken during the mandate. The news coverage of those 25 pledges consists of 449 news articles. For the part of our test concerned with the tone of the fulfilled pledges we used the dates from the Duval and Pétry (2018) article. In this case the *status quo* pledges had to be dropped for the same reason as above. Pledges to maintain the *status quo* on certain policies were dated as fulfilled when the government ended, which makes a before/after comparison impossible. Of our 183 fulfilled pledges, 13 were *status quo* pledges.

With our two parameters of interest now clarified, we can map our theoretical expectations for the burglar alarm model. Figure 3.1 represents those expectations. The "alarm ringing" should coincide with a drop in the tone of the news coverage after the pledges were broken; this is represented in the left panel. Under the burglar alarm model, we have no reason to expect the tone of fulfilled pledges to vary after they were fulfilled. As highlighted in the theory section, an ill-performing burglar alarm could have two issues. The first is that news could be negative all the time (Patterson 2003). Luckily we can compare the tone of the fulfilled pledges (post-fulfillment) with the tone of the broken pledges (post-breaking) and get an idea of whether this is a problem or not. The second potential issue raised in the literature is that sometimes the alarm doesn't ring (Bennett 2003). We can get a sense of whether or not this is an issue by looking at the coverage of broken pledges and check if some of them received no media coverage.

Figure 3.1: Theoretical Expectations for the Distribution of the News Coverage Tone
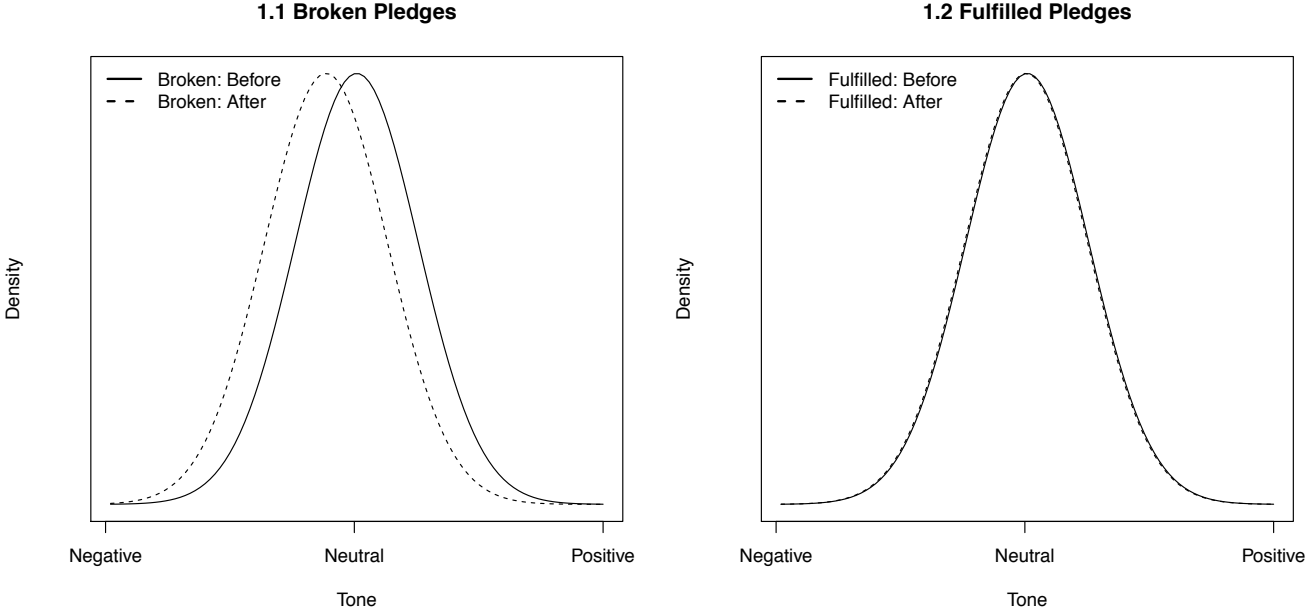
The theoretical expectations in Figure 3.1 are not entirely our design but rather an adaptation of Stuart Soroka's work on news media (Soroka 2012; Soroka, 2014).[21]
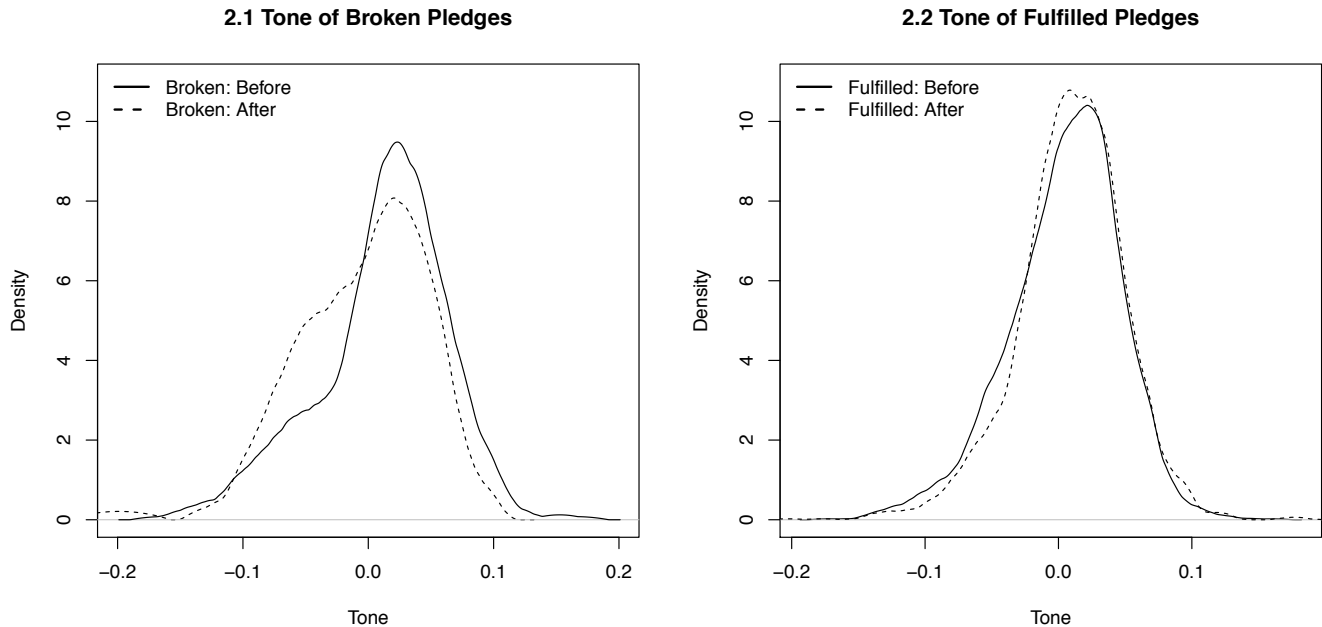
3.6 Results

The news coverage of electoral pledges gets more negative when pledges are broken. Before they are coded as broken, the mean tone of the 25 broken pledges in our sample is -0.011, with a minimum value of -0.219 and a maximum value of

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[21] This work is mostly concerned with gatekeeping effect, which is how the news differs from the real world events and it uses a distributional perspective to measure this gap; this logic translates easily to our cases. Soroka compares the tone of the news coverage when certain conditions, such as crime (2014) or the economy (2012), vary; meanwhile we compare the tone of the news coverage when the status of electoral promises switches (which can be understood as a sort of *stimulus*). To borrow Soroka's terms, our "*real-world phenomena*" is the fulfillment of electoral pledges and we aim to measure how the media coverage varies following these phenomena.

0.195. After they are declared broken, these values drop to -0.063 for the mean, -0.246 for the minima and 0.120 for the maxima. Figure 3.2 better illustrates this.

Figure 3.2: The Distribution of the News Coverage Tone

While the result are not as clean-cut as our theoretical expectations depicted in figure 3.1, they nevertheless confirm that the tone of the news coverage gets more negative when pledges are broken by elected officials. Interestingly, the distribution of the news coverage after pledges are broken does not simply shift to be more negative than before pledges are broken but it becomes more platykurtic, flatter, indicating that the coverage is more divided, less concentrated around the same values, compared to before the pledges were broken. A simple student's t-test reveals that the tone of these two groups is statistically different and that this difference is significant (t=2.68 and p <0.01). Meanwhile, as expected, the tone of the media coverage of fulfilled pledges does not vary when these pledges are fulfilled. This supports the idea that when the government breaks a pledge, the media send an alert signal to the citizens. As Zaller and Chiu proposed, journalists do alert busy citizens when matters of importance, in this case an electoral pledge being broken, arise (Zaller and Chiu, 1996).

The media covers broken pledges more often than fulfilled pledges. Our 61 broken pledges, that is all of our broken pledges irrespectively of when they are broken, are found in 29.0 news articles on average while our 183 fulfilled pledges, again this is all of our fulfilled pledges regardless of when they were fulfilled, are found in 25.0 news articles on average. This supports what has been labeled the *negativity bias* (see e.g. Soroka 2014) in news stories selection, the idea that negative events are more likely to be covered and typically receive more attention seems to hold here.

As highlighted above, there are two potential caveats with the burglar alarm model. The first is that news could be negative all the time (Patterson 2003). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, fulfilled pledges receive more attention than broken one and when compare the compare the tone of the fulfilled pledges post-fulfillment with the tone of the broken pledges post-breaking we find no evidence that could support this perspective. The tone of broken pledges post-breaking is more negative (-0.063) than the tone of the fulfilled pledges post-fulfillment (-0.015) which demonstrates a tangible difference between the two coverage, things are not negative all the time regardless of what happened. The second potential issue raised in the literature is that sometimes the alarm doesn't ring (Bennett 2003), as mentioned before we can get a sense of whether or not this is an issue by looking at the coverage of broken pledges and checking if some of them received no media coverage. Of our 25 pledges broken during our two mandates, 23 received media attention.

In order to assess the robustness of our finding, our analysis was reproduced using three other sentiment lexicons. Those three dictionaries are Hu and Liu's sentiment lexicon (2004), Mohammad and Turney's NRC *EmoLex* (2010) and Årup Nielsen et al.'s *AFINN* (2011). They are generally regarded as very good lexicons in the *Natural Language Processing* field. Much like the *Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary*, they are composed of lists of negative and positive words. The Tone variable was computed in the same way as before [(# of positive words—# of negative words)/total number of words in the article] for the Hu and Liu (2004) and the

Mohammad and Turney (2010) dictionaries. The Årup Nielsen et al.'s dictionary is slightly different as the words have an associated weighting that corresponds to their negativity-positivity score (the values range between -5 and 5) that we had to take into account [(# of words * their respective weights/total number of words in the article].

Figure 3.3 presents those results. It is clear that what we observe is not an artefact of our dictionary choice as the results are consistent across all four dictionaries. It is also to be noted that while the *Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary* was built from nine other tone dictionaries (and then compared to those nine dictionaries: see Young and Soroka, 2012) and that the three we selected are not part of that list, which makes the exercise a more parsimonious test.

Figure 3.3: The Distribution of the News Coverage Tone Using Three Alternate Lexicons
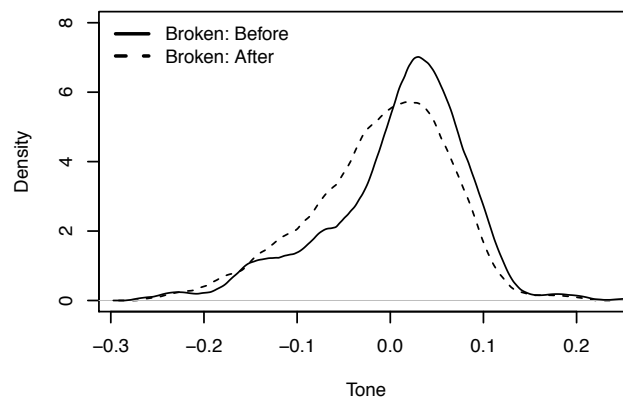
Hu and Liu (2004)
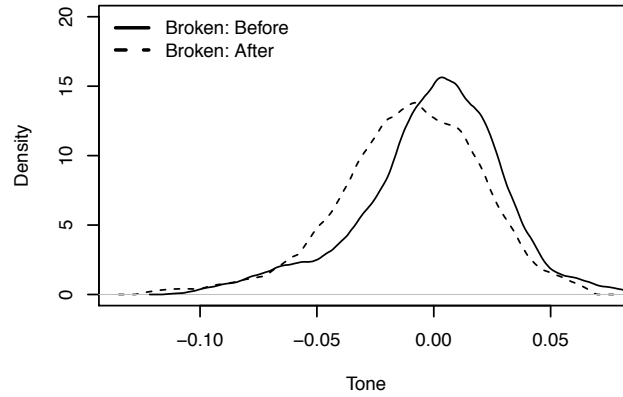
Mohammad and Turney (2010)
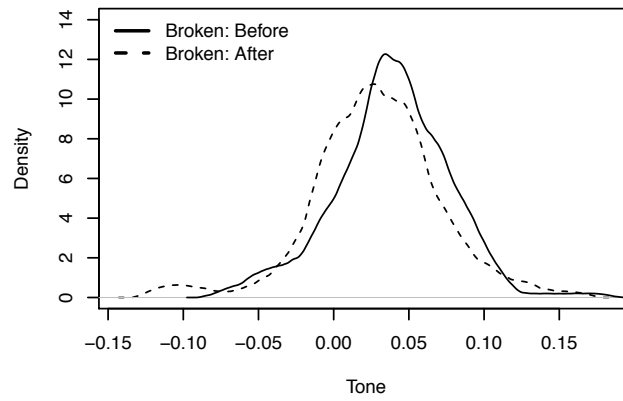

Årup Nielsen et al. (2011)

3.7   Discussion

This study aimed to narrow one existing gap in the pledge fulfillment literature by looking at the news coverage of pledges not only during election campaigns but also between elections. This first foray provides some interesting results as to what information resources are available to citizens when it comes time to reward or sanction their elected officials, a key aspect of promissory representation and retrospective voting in general. This manuscript shows that the media do send an alert signal when the government party breaks one of its electoral pledges. Our comparison illustrates that when the government breaks an electoral pledge the tone of the news coverage of that pledge gets significantly more negative.

Can the results be generalized? We recently reproduced the analysis presented here in the context of a short vulgarization piece. This replication covers the pledges broken by the *Liberal Party* in Québec since the 2014 election. A total of 17 pledges were broken when the news articles collection took place (October 1st 2017). The tone was analyzed using the French version of the *LSD* (Duval and Pétry, 2016) and the news articles were collected on *Eureka.cc*. The analysis is overall very similar to what we presented in this paper. The resulted are represented in Figure 3.4 as they were in Figure 3.2 and 3.3.

Figure 3.4: Coverage Tone for the Pledges Broken so far (April 7, 2014—October 1st 2017) by the Couillard Government in Québec

Tone of Broken Pledges
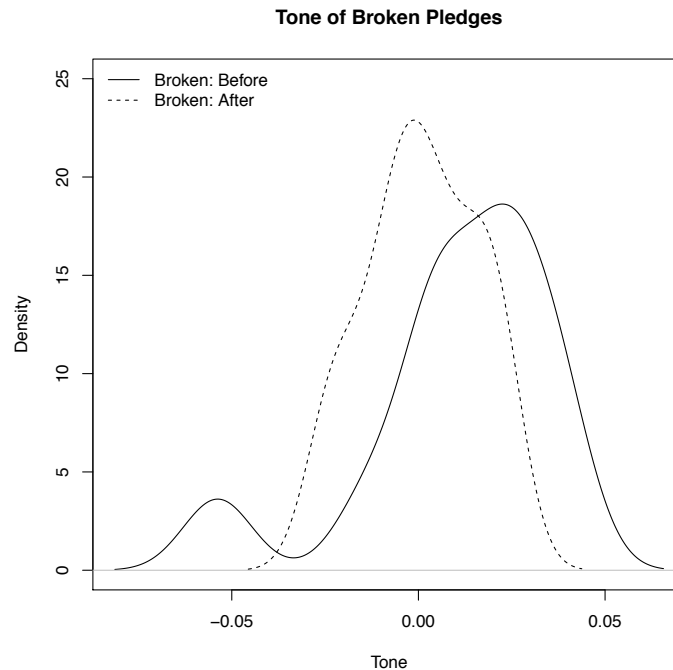
What we found in Quebec is in line with our results presented in this paper. However, since it covers an ongoing government and relies on an overall small number of newspapers articles we should not press those results too hard. See Duval (*Forthcoming*) for more details.

While this replication is encouraging, it tells us little about its generalizability to other contexts. The research design we employed should fare pretty well regardless of the context. Whether journalists attribute blame to a government party, its leader, a coalition, the opposition, a divided government, mavericks, the administration, etc. does not really matter since we only gauge the tone of the coverage and not the so much its particularities or who is targeted. One potential constraint for future research is that the dictionary we primarily used, the *Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary* is currently only available in English and French. However, this might prove a minor concern since there has been some success using translated text in the context of a comparative text analysis (Lucas et al. 2015).

Overall, the answer to the question, "do the media alert citizens when a pledge is broken?" appears to be positive. Theoretically, the Burglar Alarm Model proposed by Zaller (2003) seems to describes fairly well what's going on with the coverage of electoral pledges. Journalists output an alert signal when a pledge is broken but are otherwise pretty even in their coverage of pledges, by which we mean that they do not react positively to pledges being fulfilled.

Conclusion

L'objectif des trois articles contenus dans cette thèse était d'approfondir les connaissances entourant les promesses électorales. De prime abord, l'étude des promesses électorales semble avoir reçu passablement d'attention scientifique, mais lorsque l'on examine de plus près les recherches existantes, nous constatons que la majorité de ces études se ressemblent et que leur apport se limite souvent à l'ajout d'un cas. Afin de conclure cette thèse, la présente section effectuera un survol des lacunes toujours présentes dans l'étude de la représentation promissoire. Nous situerons les trois articles dans cet éventail critique et proposerons des pistes de recherche futures qui nous semblent nécessaires afin de combler certains des manques soulevés.

La mise en œuvre des promesses électorales au T_2 de la représentation promissoire constitue notre premier axe de recherche. Tel que souligné dans l'introduction, cet axe demeure l'aspect le plus étudié des promesses électorales. Depuis les premières études dans les années 1980, on peut dénombrer plus d'une trentaine d'articles, de thèses, de livres ou de chapitres sur le sujet. Étendre l'étude d'un phénomène, dans ce cas-ci la tenue des promesses électorales, à de nouveaux contextes est un exercice louable et nécessaire, si nous cherchons à généraliser des résultats, mais cet exercice n'approfondit que rarement notre compréhension d'un phénomène. Nous savons que la majorité des promesses électorales sont tenues dans les 17 pays étudiés. Ceci étant dit, notre compréhension de la représentation promissoire au T_2 se limite pratiquement à ce constat. Les mécanismes sous-jacents, les dynamiques et les rôles des acteurs impliqués sont encore plutôt méconnus. Cette observation semble particulièrement frappante lorsque l'on compare le champ d'études de la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales à celui de l'étude de la mise en œuvre des agendas. Ce dernier champ, aussi appelé « étude du comportement législatif », se compose de recherches qui vont au-delà des simples constats de fin de mandat et se concentre

sérieusement sur les dynamiques du déroulement de ces mêmes mandats. À ce titre on peut mentionner les récentes études de Bevan et Greene (2016), de Bevan et al., (2011) et de Jennings et al. (2011a; 2011b).

Ce commentaire ne se veut cependant pas trop critique à l'égard des études s'inscrivant au T_2 de la représentation promissoire, et ce pour deux raisons. La première est d'ordre méthodologique : les études sur le comportement législatif disposent de beaucoup plus de données sur de plus longues périodes que les études portant sur la tenue des promesses. Cela rend possible l'utilisation de méthodes passablement plus sophistiquées, ce qui permet d'examiner les aspects dynamiques de cet objet d'étude. Cet avantage, au niveau de la modélisation, s'explique essentiellement par le fait que, contrairement à l'étude de la tenue des promesses électorales, les études du comportement législatif n'emploient pas de codage manuel. Il ne s'agit cependant pas entièrement d'un désavantage puisque le codage manuel de la tenue des promesses amène une précision dont les études de la mise en œuvre des agendas ne peuvent se revendiquer. La deuxième différence est d'ordre épistémologique. En effet, l'identification d'un phénomène ou d'une règle générale empirique se doit de précéder son explication. En ce sens, il serait raisonnable de concevoir que l'étude de la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales va éventuellement atteindre un certain seuil empirique au-delà duquel les dynamiques sous-jacentes au T_2 deviendront le centre de l'attention.

Ceci étant dit, dans le premier article de cette thèse, *Time and the Fulfillment of Election Pledges*, les promesses sont modélisées de façon dynamique. Pour ce faire nous avons adopté une approche longitudinale dans laquelle notre variable d'intérêt n'est plus la tenue ou non tenue d'une promesse en fin de mandat (transversale), mais plutôt mais plutôt le moment au cours du mandat où chaque promesse est déclarée tenue (BTSCS). Ce changement requiert l'ajout d'une date correspondant à la tenue de chaque promesse, mais permet en retour l'étude de certaines dynamiques sous-jacentes à la tenue des promesses. En ce sens, nous espérons que cette étude pavera le chemin et inspirera les autres chercheurs à s'intéresser à ce type de modélisation. Notre article discute principalement du rôle

du temps et des interactions entre le temps et la performance économique, mais fort est à parier que de nombreux facteurs, présents ou absents des études existantes, évoluent aussi à travers la durée d'un mandat. La littérature sur le comportement législatif suggère plusieurs pistes à ce sujet, la plus intéressante semble porter sur les dynamiques partisanes au sein des gouvernements de coalition.

Le second axe de recherche regroupe les recherches sur les perceptions qu'ont les citoyens de la tenue des promesses électorales. Cet axe de recherche contient fort probablement la plus grande lacune de la représentation promissoire. Les quelques études existantes, y compris le second article présenté dans le cadre de cette thèse, *Citizen's evaluations of campaign pledge fulfillment in Canada*, se concentrent sur l'aptitude des citoyens à distinguer les promesses tenues des promesses rompues. Ces articles se situent dans un débat plus large qui oppose les théories du choix rationnel aux théories des choix « identitaires ». D'un côté les théories du choix rationnel proposent que les évaluations des électeurs se basent sur les faits (voir par exemple Downs, 1957 ; Key, 1966 ; Page et Shapiro, 1992). De l'autre, les approches liées aux identités sociales proposent que les électeurs se basent plutôt sur leur identité et la proximité des élus à cette celle-ci afin d'émettre leurs jugements (voir par exemple Achen et Bartels, 2016 ou Feldman et Conover, 1983).

Les résultats de notre étude, mais aussi ceux des quatre autres articles sur les perceptions des promesses électorales publiés à ce jour, semblent corroborer l'approche mitoyenne de Brady et Sniderman qui veut que les citoyens tentent d'équilibrer deux « désirs cognitifs » (*psychological objectives*), soit le désir d'être précis et factuel et le désir de « cohérence » entre leurs perceptions et leurs valeurs (1985, 1068). Les études existantes et le deuxième chapitre de cette thèse suggèrent la présence simultanée de ces deux aspects cognitifs. D'une part, toutes ces recherches établissent que les niveaux de tenues réelles (les *faits*) des promesses affectent les évaluations des citoyens et donc que ceux-ci sont généralement factuels dans leurs évaluations. Et d'autre part, ces études

démontrent aussi que les citoyens établissent leurs verdicts sur la base de facteurs subjectifs relevant de leur identité de groupe, tel leur identification partisane, qui n'ont rien à voir avec la tenue des promesses électorales. Nous devons cependant souligner que bien que les deux éléments de l'approche de Brady et Sniderman soient présents, le poids des facteurs subjectifs semble plus grand que celui des faits.

Cependant, la théorie de la représentation promissoire, des approches rationnelles et des approches identitaires stipulent toutes que ces raisonnements font partie du choix de vote des électeurs. Dans le cas de la représentation promissoire, il est proposé que les électeurs sanctionnent ou récompensent le gouvernement sortant sur la base de la tenue des leurs promesses électorales lors du vote. Cette démonstration n'a pas encore été effectuée. La capacité de distinguer les promesses tenues des promesses rompues est une condition nécessaire à ce calcul lors du vote, mais pas une condition suffisante. Ainsi, nous savons que les citoyens sont, en général, plutôt aptes à bien reconnaître le niveau de tenue des promesses, mais nous ne savons aucunement s'il s'agit d'un facteur qui influence leur vote.

Établir s'il existe un lien entre les évaluations des citoyens et leur vote représente possiblement le plus grand test que la représentation promissoire se doit de réussir. S'il advenait que ce lien existe bel et bien, la représentation promissoire acquerrait une maturité théorique certaine. À l'inverse, si la démonstration est faite que les choix de vote des citoyens ne sont pas affectés par la tenue des promesses, l'étude des promesses électorales perdrait son assise et le cadre théorique de la représentation promissoire se devrait d'être remis en question.

Le troisième axe de recherche regroupe essentiellement deux études observant la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales au T_1. Cet axe de recherche est très peu développé et, dans une certaine mesure, soulève davantage de questions qu'il n'y répond. Il serait important de dépasser le simple constat que certaines promesses reçoivent davantage de couverture médiatique que d'autres et de s'interroger sur les causes et conséquences de ce constat. Les médias ne sont

pas simplement une courroie de transmission entre les partis, leurs plateformes et les citoyens. Une sélection s'effectue (certaines promesses sont écartées alors que d'autres sont mises en première page) et il importe d'étudier ce phénomène. À ce titre, nous ne savons d'ailleurs pas dans quelle direction la causalité de cette sélection se doit d'être étudiée. Les promesses mises de l'avant dans l'espace médiatique sont-elles sélectionnées, car elles sont plus importantes aux yeux des citoyens? Ou deviennent-elles plus importantes dû à leur médiatisation? Ou peut-être s'agit-il des deux mécanismes?

Ce manque de connaissances entourant la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales lors des élections n'est qu'un seul des problèmes auquel devront s'attarder les chercheurs s'intéressant à ce sujet. Une autre lacune dans la littérature est qu'il n'existe aucune étude qui se penche sur la couverture des promesses électorales lors du mandat, c'est-à-dire au T_2 de la représentation promissoire. Tel que mentionné, il est important d'étudier la couverture médiatique des promesses électorales non seulement lors de l'élection (au T_1), mais aussi lors du mandat (au T_2), car les citoyens y puiseront leur information au T_3. Il s'agissait de l'objectif du troisième article de cette thèse, intitulé *Ringing the Alarm : The Media Coverage of the Fulfillment of Electoral Pledges*. Cette recherche est plutôt encourageante en ce qui concerne la représentation promissoire. En effet, on y constate que les médias alertent les citoyens lorsqu'une promesse est rompue. Plus précisément les médias mettent à la disposition des citoyens les ressources d'information dont ils ont besoin afin de décider s'ils veulent sanctionner ou non le gouvernement sortant au T_3. L'accès -ou tout au moins la possibilité d'avoir accès- à de l'information de qualité sur la non-tenue des promesses représente une condition nécessaire de la représentation promissoire et notre étude démontre que cette condition était présente dans le contexte canadien lors des deux derniers mandats du gouvernement Harper. La généralisabilité de ces résultats est cependant incertaine. Les résultats ont été répliqués avec succès dans le contexte québécois pour la durée du gouvernement Couillard (Duval, à paraître), mais cela ne nous donne que très peu d'indications sur la portée de ces résultats à l'international.

Une lacune qui nous apparaît flagrante ne s'inscrit dans aucun des axes de recherche identifiés étant donné qu'aucune étude n'existe à son sujet. Malgré la multitude d'études portant sur les promesses électorales, aucune ne semble s'interroger sur la provenance des promesses qui se retrouvent dans les plateformes électorales au T_1.

En effet, l'alignement entre les préférences des partis et celles des citoyens est une condition démocratique souvent discutée en science politique. À titre d'exemple, V.O. Key Jr. affirmait que les partis se devaient d'inclure les citoyens dans l'élaboration des politiques publiques (1961). De son côté, Dahl écrivait qu'un gouvernement raisonnable allait mettre en œuvre les politiques désirés par la majorité (1989). Il nous semble donc particulièrement important, afin de pouvoir entamer une discussion à caractère plus normative sur le rôle démocratique des promesses électorales, de s'interroger sur la congruence entre les promesses électorales des partis et les politiques désirées par le public. Dit autrement, l'offre politique des promesses électorales que font les partis correspond-elle aux demandes des citoyens? Cette recherche est particulièrement nécessaire parce qu'à ce stade, nous ne savons toujours pas réellement si les promesses électorales s'inscrivent dans une approche théorique découlant de « l'idéal populiste » (*populist ideal*) ou dans une approche s'inspirant des théories des « dirigeants » (*leadership theories*). Les travaux de Dahl mentionnés ci-haut s'inscrivent dans la première approche. En somme, cette perspective met l'emphase sur le rôle des citoyens dans la détermination des politiques. L'approche des dirigeants propose quant à elle que le rôle des citoyens se limite à choisir les dirigeants et que ceux-ci choisissent les politiques (voir par exemple Schumpeter, 1942 et Achen et Bartels, 2016 : 3-20). S'il n'y a pas de correspondance entre la demande des citoyens et l'offre de politique retrouvée dans les plateformes, il faudrait conclure que les promesses électorales s'inscrivent dans l'approche des dirigeants. Au contraire, s'il y a concordance entre l'opinion publique et les promesses électorales, ces résultats favoriseraient l'explication théorique de l'idéal populiste.

Il s'agit de la prochaine recherche portant sur les promesses électorales que nous entendons effectuer. L'objectif est d'établir s'il existe un lien entre la demande populaire et les promesses qui se retrouvent dans les plateformes électorales lors de plusieurs élections successives. Plus précisément, cette recherche mesurera la connexion entre les préférences agrégées des citoyens par domaine de politique et la quantité de promesses que les partis émettent dans ces mêmes domaines. En plus de permettre de discuter de la dimension normative des promesses électorales, cette recherche rapprochera la littérature sur les promesses électorales de celle sur la compétition électorale. Présentement les études sur les promesses électorales se contentent de citer les théories du mandat sans aborder les dynamiques électorales qui en découlent.

Plus qu'une simple idée de recherche, nous avons déjà effectué un prétest avec les données canadiennes. Nous avons comparé les quantités de promesses électorales par domaines lors de sept campagnes électorales canadiennes (1993-2011) avec l'importance que les citoyens accordent à ces mêmes domaines telle que mesurée à l'aide de la série chronologique "*Support for Spending*" des sondages du *Canadian Public Opinion Archive* (CORA). Les résultats sont très prometteurs et démontrent une forte relation entre la demande du public et la quantité de promesses qui se retrouvent dans les plateformes lors de l'élection subséquente, et ce dans les neuf domaines de politiques où la comparaison était possible. Ce projet de recherche nous a valu du financement du CRSH pour effectuer un post-doctorat à *University of California : Davis* sous la supervision de James Adams pour la période 2018-2020.

Un autre bémol général qui se doit d'être émis à l'égard des recherches sur les promesses électorales est, qu'au final, celles-ci ne représentent qu'une petite partie de l'action gouvernementale. Ce constat est bien illustré dans l'étude de Jacob et al. (2018, à paraître) dans laquelle les auteurs ont mesuré la proportion de l'activité gouvernementale qui était allouée aux promesses électorales lors du gouvernement du Couillard. Leurs résultats indiquent que la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales représente environ 25% de l'activité gouvernementale

totale. Ce chiffre peut sembler bas de prime abord, mais cela s'explique, au moins en partie, par le fait que l'ensemble des études sur la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales ne mesure que les promesses électorales contenues dans les plateformes électorales. Il s'agit d'un choix méthodologique problématique étant donné qu'il est tout à fait concevable que les politiciens, qu'ils soient chefs de parti ou candidats locaux, émettent des promesses qui ne se retrouvent pas dans la plateforme électorale lors de leurs activités de campagne. Qui plus est, lors du mandat, les élus prennent aussi de nouvelles positions et émettent de nouveaux engagements. Cependant, force est de constater que les études existantes ne se préoccupent pas des promesses qui ne se retrouvent pas dans les plateformes électorales.

À ce titre, certains parallèles intéressants peuvent être dressés avec l'étude des agendas de politiques publiques. Dans un premier temps, l'étude des politiques publiques a été marquée vers la fin des années 1970 par la création du *Manifesto Research Group* (MRG). Les données résultant du codage des plateformes électorales effectué dans le cadre de se projet ont servis à de nombreuses études liant l'orientation des plateformes aux politiques publiques (voir par exemple Budge and Hofferbert, 1990 ou Klingemann et al., 1994). Par la suite, dans les années 1990, un autre projet d'envergure a vu le jour, le *Policy Agenda Project*. Pour reprendre les dires de John dans son article *The Policy Agendas Project: A Review* (2006) ce projet titanesque visait à combler les lacunes de l'approche par les plateformes du MRG qui ne fournissait que peu d'information sur l'agenda des politiques publiques (2006 : 976). Il serait possible de concevoir que l'étude de la mise en œuvre des promesses électorales pourrait être sur une trajectoire similaire à celle de l'étude des agendas des politiques publiques et que l'attention exclusive portée aux plateformes électorales ne saura pas durer. Le développement des méthodes d'analyse de contenu automatisées laisse aussi présager que des changements dans le *modus operandi* des études sur les promesses électorales seront inévitables. Si on reprend l'étude des agendas de politiques publiques à titre d'exemple, on observe que des méthodes automatisées ont été développées pour faciliter le processus de codage du *Comparative Agendas Project* (voir Albaugh et

al., 2014). Malgré le fait que le codage de la tenue des promesses électorales spécifiques représente une tâche passablement plus difficile que le codage des politiques publiques dans les catégories générales du Comparative Agenda Project, il ne serait pas surprenant de voir des méthodes similaires faire leur apparition prochainement. Sans exagérer la portée de ces méthodes, la conception d'un outil permettant l'identification automatique des promesses semble tout à fait réaliste et faciliterait grandement l'élargissement de l'étude des promesses électorales au-delà des plateformes électorales. Plus concrètement, Eichorst et Lin (à paraître) ont récemment développé un dictionnaire permettant de distinguer les passages précis (*concrete*) des passages plus vagues (*vague*) des plateformes électorales. Une fois leur étude et dictionnaire publiés, il faudra tester si celui-ci pourrait être adapté à l'identification des promesses.

En conclusion, l'objectif de cette thèse était d'approfondir les connaissances scientifiques entourant la théorie de la représentation promissoire. Ainsi, le premier article raffine l'analyse de la tenue des promesses électorales au T_2, le second article étend les connaissances entourant les évaluations des citoyens au T_3 et le troisième évalue la couverture médiatique des promesses effectuée au T_2, mais dont les citoyens ont besoin au T_3 afin de faire leur choix lors des élections. Toutefois, tel qu'illustré dans cette section, la représentation promissoire est encore une théorie qui n'a pas fait toutes ses preuves et un bon nombre d'études sont encore nécessaires pour en tester la validité. De plus, avec la publication récente d'un article dans le *American Journal of Political Science* et d'un livre à paraître sous peu chez *Michigan University Press*, l'étude des promesses électorales s'est mérité une certaine visibilité. Ce champ d'études représente, à notre sens, un terreau fertile pour de nombreuses recherches à venir.

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