DEMOCRACY FOR SALE: 
THE MARKETIZATION OF CANADIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND ITS 
IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

by

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Abstract

An increasingly popular subject of focus within political science literature is the marketization of political discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Prince 2001; Simpson & Cheney, 2007). This article complements this body of literature by analysing how market-based discourse reinforces a passive frame of citizenship within Canadian politics. Market discourse utilizes concepts, values, and vocabularies commonly found in the marketplace – the language of branding, consumer satisfaction, efficiency and productivity – and applies it to the political realm. This paper argues that the marketization of political discourse frames politics as an area of social life predominantly concerned with the maximization of individual self-interest. In order to support this examination, political discourse analysis is combined with framing theory to analyse taxation discourse in party platforms from the 2011 Canadian federal election. Applying the frames to the party platforms reveals how market-based discourse reinforces a passive frame of citizens as self-interested, financially-motivated, and antisocial individuals. Marketization represents a worrisome trend in Canadian politics as it threatens to hollow out the public sphere by developing a consumption-oriented, self-interested civic culture.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, James Proctor.
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For Mom, who fed my curiosity
Introduction

I was describing that thing of a mixed neighborhood of shared misery and shared joy. We were citizens... And now we are only taxpayers…. A citizen has some connection to his neighborhood, or his state or his country. The taxpayer doesn't.

- Toni Morrison

The language we use in democratic societies matters. Political discourse is a fundamental component in democratic institutions as deliberation, discussion and decision-making all operate on a communicative basis. Language provides the foundation for our very core understandings: it underpins how individuals think, interpret, conceptualize and understand the world. Perhaps then it may not come as a surprise that interest in political discourse is both wide-spread and long-established. Interest in political discourse extends over a diverse group of historical and contemporary thinkers, from political theorists to cognitive scientists, critical linguists to political psychologists, legal scholars to public relations practitioners. One particularly useful concept to social scientists is the notion of emphasis framing. Emphasis framing refers to how the words, images and phrases speakers use to relay information impact how citizens think of, understand and interpret political phenomenon. In this paper, I analyse the contemporary frames found in Canadian political discourse. More specifically, I argue that the use of market-based discourse in Canadian politics has long-term democratic implications as it frames citizenship in passive, rather than active, sense.

A quick scan of recent electoral campaigns conducted by the three major Canadian political parties reveals the growing influence of market-based discourse. Within the political science discipline, research has also recently focused on the increasing use of marketization discourse within Canada. Politicians and pundits often stress the particular branding of political parties, the consumer impact of particular policies, and use market-based jargon to when discussing political affairs. The growing

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1 While an exhaustive list of figures is likely impossible to provide, this list of political theorists extends all the way from Aristotle (1992) to Gramsci (1971) and Connelly (2008); outside of political science, cognitive scientists such as George Lakoff (1996, 2004), political psychologists like Drew Westen (2007), and legal scholars like Ronald Dworkin (1996) may also be included. For a summary of these thinkers, see: Saurette, P., & Gordon, K., 2013. “Arguing Abortion: The New Anti-Abortion Discourse in Canada.” Canadian Journal of Political Science, 46 (01), pg. 157.
ubiquity of market techniques and language may be supported by the notion that they work; that market-based discourse resonates with voters and translates into electoral success for parties. While identifying when the widespread adoption of market discourse by political parties occurred remains a task fraught with difficulty, an analysis of recent Canadian politics – specifically in the area of taxation policy – highlights its visibility. Although marketization can be witnessed in contemporary political discourse, the democratic implications of this phenomenon are unclear. If such terminology does impact a citizen’s participation in politics, then it prudent to understand how the effects actually work. I argue that marketization hollows out the public sphere by reinforcing an individualistic, self-interested and disconnected vision of citizenship.

This paper is divided into four broad sections. The first section provides a literature overview of previous work in the realm of political discourse analysis and emphasis framing. It draws upon experimental research to demonstrate how framing and political discourse impacts both citizens’ policy preferences and conceptualizations of citizenship. The second section introduces my notion of passive and active citizenship frames. I focus on these frames as they offer competing visions of citizenship: the passive frame envisions the citizenry as largely individualistic and self-interested while the active frame necessitates a politically engaged and civically-oriented citizenry. The third section applies these frames to the contemporary Canadian political sphere in order to illustrate how the marketization of discourse reinforces a passive frame of citizenship. To support this, I employ an interpretive analysis of party platforms from 2011 federal Canadian election. My focus within this analysis is largely on taxation discourse as it lends itself useful for comparing the passive and active frames. The final section outlines how the marketization of discourse has problematic implications for contemporary democracies. I argue that the danger of market-based discourse is that it may lead individuals to reconceptualize citizenship by propagating an individualistic and consumption-oriented civic culture – a move that undermines the type of engaged political participation and deliberation needed to sustain a vibrant democracy. This
section also addresses potential counter-arguments that claim the rise of market-based discourse provides increased government accountability, transparency and responsiveness.
Literature Overview – Political Discourse Analysis and Emphasis Framing

In order to examine the discourse used within Canadian politics, a political discourse analysis (PDA) framework is needed to highlight the various ways in which language is used to influence sociopolitical power relations. This section outlines how insights from PDA can be combined with framing theory to provide a deeper analytical understanding of political discourse.

Language in politics has always been a topic of concern. Some of the earliest works in the Western philosophical canon examine the relation between politics and language. In a well-known extract from *Politics*, Aristotle writes:

Man is a political animal in a sense in which a bee is not… Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech. Speech is something different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and used by them to express pain of pleasure… Speech, on the other hand, serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust.⁶

Even within the early formations of democracy, Aristotle is aware of the pivotal role speech plays in collective decision-making. The capacity for speech makes humans political because it allows individuals to come to a conclusion on what constitutes the common good. Hannah Arendt also notes the role of deliberation in Greek society, arguing that that being political, “to live in the polis, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence.”⁷

Deliberation is used in the polis to collectively address problems that affect citizens and commit to some form of action. Long after the demise of the Athenian polis, language still remains the basis upon which political processes operate. As such, a critical examination of discourse is required.

A critical approach to discourse analysis contains several key components: an interest in naturally occurring language; a focus on units larger than isolated sentences (such as speeches or platforms); and the incorporation of non-verbal communicative actions.⁸ This approach focuses on how the real-world use of language has implications that extend beyond the literal meaning of the words taken at face-value. T.A. van Dijk, one of the earliest contributors to PDA, defines it as a critical
analysis which examines the “reproduction of political power… through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance.” While van Dijk’s definition provides a strong foundation for PDA, this paper also incorporates the Faircloughs’ view of political discourse as inherently action-oriented and deliberative. Political discourse is characterized by the ability to take action (by influencing changes and making decisions) in situations where alternative choices may be made; situations in which no alternatives are available means that political agency does not exist. Since politics assumes a capacity for agency, analysing political discourse requires understanding how discourse contributes to action – examining whether discursive arguments either support or oppose a particular ways of acting.

Political discourse is inherently deliberative precisely because politics is concerned with collective decision-making. The process of arriving at a political decision is deliberative as it is requires the weighing of options either in favour of or against a particular course of action. This is not to say that deliberation will necessarily be democratic, inclusive and egalitarian; in fact, in many situations deliberation is undertaken by exclusive and authoritarian and groups who pay no regard to democratic principles. Nevertheless, since politics is premised on the ability to make decisions within a context of disagreement, determining the best course of action necessitates some form of discussion and debate. Recognising the deliberative nature of politics helps PDA practitioners understand how discourse is used to either support or oppose different responses to political problems. Applying this understanding to the Canadian context reveals how discourse used by political actors is designed to support a particular course of action.

The Faircloughs’ also connect political discourse with frames and framing. Frames are used in political discourse to direct the argument towards certain conclusions which serve the arguer’s interests. These frames act as unconscious cognitive structures that influence how individuals see the world, social policies and political institutions. Framing is used to influence and define the context
surrounding arguments in such a way that leads individuals towards particular conclusions. PDA and framing are interrelated as framing influences the situational context surrounding discourse which, in turn, affects peoples’ actions. Recognising this begins to illustrate how framing steers arguments towards particular courses of action.

The two central aspects of framing involve selection and salience. Framing selectively chooses certain language or words and makes them more salient in a communicating text in order to promote particular conclusions. If framing is successful, it alters the way individuals perceive reality without distorting actual facts. Put in other words, framing changes how individuals make sense of reality. Frames are often understood in two ways: frames in thought, which consist of mental representations of reality; and frames in communication, which develop when speakers relay information to others. Of course, frames in communication often shape frames in thought; a process typically called a framing effect. Researchers often further divide framing effects into ‘emphasis’ and ‘equivalency’ effects. Emphasis framing highlights how constantly stressing potentially relevant criteria leads individuals to focus on these criteria when constructing political opinions. For example, a politician who builds her campaign on rhetoric of ‘saving families money,’ may lead voters to focus on this consideration at the poll. In comparison, equivalency framing examines how the use of different, but logically equivalent, words or phrases may lead individuals to alter their preferences. One example of this may be the use of emotive or value-laden terms (i.e. using ‘freedom-fighter’ in place of ‘terrorist’) as a means of persuasion. Depending on whether we hear the word ‘freedom-fighter’ or ‘terrorist,’ a different frame is activated in our mind and we are pre-emptively steered toward a different conclusion.

Within politics, there are neither neutral concepts nor neutral language: every concept and word has specific social connotations and denotations, each with distinct political valences which contribute to different constructions of the political. The language we use to discuss issues comes with cognitive baggage which affects how we think about these issues. Framing transforms the context of meaning
surrounding an issue which, in turn, changes how we view that issue. It is these frames that influence how we think, understand and make sense of political events, policies and speeches. Ultimately, the most successful frames lead us to arrive at certain conclusions which shape the way we act. As this paper examines the role of marketization discourse between political actors, my analysis will focus primarily on framing effects, both in the emphasis and equivalency form.

Experimental research demonstrates that framing impacts how citizens both perceive and respond to particular public policies. McBeth, Lybecker and Garner find differences in the forms and rate of public participation when recycling efforts are frame through either a ‘duty-based’ or ‘engaged’ view of citizenship.\(^{23}\) They maintain that the engaged recycling frame is more likely to be supported by individuals with an engaged view of citizenship, but that respondents with a duty-based view of citizenship were less likely to support the engaged recycling frames.\(^ {24}\) The notion of ‘engaged’ vs ‘duty-based’ frames connects with experiments that examine the ‘self-interest’ and ‘collective good’ framing of public policy. Carolyn Funk outlines that when collective good framing resonates successfully with individuals, it has consequences for policy preferences that are independent of self-interest.\(^ {25}\) This corresponds with research that finds the framing of political messages that address collective losses generate more favorable policy attitudes when compared with self-interest framing.\(^ {26}\) Previous research on self-interest and collective good framing informs my work as I designed my ‘active’ citizenship frame with language that evokes notions of the common good, collective benefits and societal well-being; while the ‘passive’ frame utilizes language that focuses on self-interest and maximizing individual utility.

Finally, the emerging field of citizenship studies also shapes my own research. In a summary of the field, Jones and Gaventa argue that most contemporary writing on citizenship is underpinned by “the assertion that the way in which people understand themselves as citizens is likely to have a significant impact on their perception of their rights and obligations and on whether they participate, in what form
Experimental research supports the notion that the framing of citizenship impacts both individual self-understandings of citizenship and political participation. Of particular interest is Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, who demonstrates that individuals’ self-conceptualizations of citizenship affect not only their participatory behaviour in politics but overall understanding of politics. Her work is interesting because it is one of the few empirical studies analyzing the connection between normative ideals of citizenship and political participation. She states that the “comprehension of citizens’ conceptualizations of the political system and their role within that system facilitates [their] understanding of how they interact with political leaders and institutions, and therefore, in part, how the system itself works.” Her work highlights that people participate politics in ways that are consistent with their understanding of citizenship.

Within Canadian politics, similar work has been conducted by Andre Blais and Christopher Achen. By comparing panel data from the United States and Canada, the authors find that a sense of civic duty functions as a powerful predictor of voter turnout. What is similar between these empirical studies is the finding that individuals who place a greater emphasis on civic duty in their conceptualization of citizenship are more likely to vote than individuals who do not take civic duty seriously. This research helps highlight the influence that political discourse has on citizenship insofar as the changes in the way citizenship is discussed also impact what it means to be a citizen. Invoking different frames of citizenship impacts how citizens understand citizenship and may ultimately affect their political participation. As Kjerstin Thorson summarises, “the way… people make sense of citizenship matters because what individuals imagine for and expect of their own civic agency influences civic and political behavior.” In this sense, individuals who understand citizenship in a passive sense (an understanding that demands little civic participation), are less likely to be politically engaged; while individuals who understand citizenship in an active sense may be more likely to engage.
As both the active and passive frames imply different conceptualizations of citizenship, evoking either frame impacts whether citizenship is perceived in an active or passive sense.

In summary, PDA conceptualizes political discourse as action-oriented and inherently deliberative: it is a form of practical argumentation that seeks to persuade or dissuade people for or against a particular course of action. Within this, framing and frames have a vast influence on how political discourse is interpreted, as they subconsciously influence how individuals see, interpret and understand everyday life. The deliberative nature of political discourse means that successful frames steer individuals towards a particular course of action which serves the arguer’s rhetorical interests. The next section builds upon these concepts in order to introduce two frames which affect how individuals understand and interpret political discourse within the realm of contemporary Canadian politics.
‘Active’ vs. ‘Passive’ Frames of Citizenship

As both the ‘active’ and ‘passive’ frames of citizenship refer to theoretically abstract concepts, it is prudent to outline a working definition of both concepts for this paper. Once these two frames have been established, they will be used in Section 3 to outline how the marketization discourse in contemporary Canadian politics reinforces a passive conception of citizenship. While the politicians, pundits, political advisors and media advisors may not necessarily evoke either frame consciously, utilizing a critical frame perspective illustrates how their language alters the contextual understanding of any given political issue.

**The ‘Passive Frame’**

An exploration of passive citizenship reveals that its roots likely trace back to the earliest incarnations of the liberal tradition in political thought; however, a sufficient examining of the history of passive citizenship would stretch outside the aims of the paper. As such, this subsection outlines the core concepts in passive citizenship: limited political participation, self-interest (especially in fiscal matters), and the use of language couched in economic rationalism.

Prior to analytically unpacking each of the concepts, it is useful to provide a definition of democracy that aligns with the passive frame. Joseph Schumpeter’s oft-cited minimalist definition works well: “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.” This is an extremely telling definition. He presents an elite-oriented model where the responsibility of the common citizen is not actively participating and deliberating in political processes but simply choosing an elite minority of representatives with whom the power is vested to make political decisions. In Schumpeter’s definition, the citizenry is reduced to a largely passive role were their primary form of political participation is voting every couple of years. This definition discounts the

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II For a fuller account of liberal citizenship, see John Rawls’ *Political Liberalism* and Michael Sandel’s *Democracy’s Discontent.*
other ways citizens actively participate in politics (for example, grass root forms of community-building, civic engagement in local, political protests, etc.) From this perspective, citizens are akin to consumers in the marketplace who passively ‘buy’ into a political party. As Schumpeter explains:

Party and machine politicians are simply the response to the fact that the electoral mass is incapable of action other than a stampede, and they constitute an attempt to regulate political competition exactly similar to the corresponding practices of a trade association. The psychotechnics of party management and party advertising, slogans and marching tunes, are not accessories. They are of the essence of politics. So is the political boss.\textsuperscript{36}

Schumpeter’s definition posits the citizenry as a passive group who, either due to ignorance or disinterest, do not have the capacity to make informed contributions to the political sphere. Instead, elites engage in a competitive struggle against each other in order win support of electorate. Immediately, the use of market metaphors is apparent as the politicians compete for the support of voters. He presents a market-like approach to accountability as voters who do not support a politician’s particular policies will simply not support the candidate during the next election (rather than portray their dissent through more active forms). In a sense, Schumpeter’s aggregative vision of democracy stresses consumer satisfaction over civic engagement: the role of the electorate is merely relegated to either rewarding or punishing politicians during elections.

Schumpeter’s definition detaches moral questions on the nature of the common good from politics. He rejects that a common good exists which all citizens can agree upon, and instead maintains the primary responsibility of the electorate is electing and evicting a government.\textsuperscript{37} If individuals do have different conceptions of the common good, then they can promote their particular conception either in isolation or in aggregation with other citizens.\textsuperscript{38} The Schumpeterian vision of public interest is, in this regard, market-driven as it assumes that the common good simply reflects the aggregation of individual self-interests. This ideal of the liberal self – as an individual unencumbered by outside ends and
attachments – has been criticised as an ‘atomistic’ view of humankind which ignores how societal and communal context affect individual beliefs.iii

Examining the New Public Management (NPM) reforms that occurred in many western industrialized nations also helps clarify what the passive frame of citizenship entails. These reforms are interesting due to the rhetoric of economic rationalism that was used to justify them. At its core, NPM sought to replace traditional and hierarchical bureaucratic processes with market and competition-driven tactics.39 Janet and Robert Denhardt provide a list of key tenets of NPM, four of which are particularly relevant for this analysis: an emphasis on competitive service delivery in order to create greater efficiency, enhanced responsiveness and accountability; a results-based and entrepreneurial-oriented public service environment; a customer-driven approach concerned with meeting the needs of the consumer first; and a market-oriented government aimed at structuring environments so that the market can operate most effectively.40 They also argue that the prevailing model of human behaviour associated with NPM is economic rationality, where individuals act in their own self-interest in order to maximize their own ‘utility.’41

The passive frame of citizenship is similar to NPM as both utilize language that is couched in economic rationalism. Passive citizenship assumes that citizens are primarily interested in their own personal matters and seek to maximize their own ends. Market discourse connects with the passive frame become it tends to focus on economic self-interest. For example, repeated emphasis on ‘taxpayers’ makes individuals consider their own interests: how much tax they pay, what they are getting out of it and at what cost. Rather than stressing proper procedure, due-process and citizen empowerment, market discourses stresses the virtues of efficiency, productivity and customer satisfaction. By focusing on self-interest, passive citizenship hinders the type of public engagement and collective interest needed to sustain a properly functioning democracy. Instead, of framing citizenship as a form of membership in a

iii For a fuller account, see Charles Taylor’s essay “Atomism” in his work Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2.
community (such as active citizenship), passive citizenship focuses on the individual solely as an individual.

This provides a rough sketch of what the passive frame of citizenship looks like when evoked in political discourse. By stressing self-interest, limited political participation and economic rationalism, the passive frame of citizenship almost re-conceptualizes the relationship between citizens and the government as akin to a business transaction, where tax-paying citizens expect a personal return on their investment. In this sense, passive framing reinforces an individualistic and fiscal-oriented view of citizenship that ignores or discounts public interest, civic engagement and collective participation for the betterment of society. Applying this frame to real-world political examples illustrates how certain forms of political discourse lead to a self-interested, individualistic and rights-oriented vision of democracy.

**The ‘Active Frame’**

In comparison to passive framing, active citizenship stresses the importance of political engagement, civic duty, political participation and a shared sense of belonging. Rather than focusing on individual self-interest, active citizenship posits that interest in collective public affairs is integral in democratic life. This subsection outlines how active citizenship asserts the virtues of participatory and deliberative behaviour in democratic politics.

Within the last twenty years, several political theorists have presented normative arguments urging for a more active definition of citizenship in order to rejuvenate civic life in western democracies. Theorists such as Michael Sandel and Benjamin Barber argue that a renewed sense of engagement is crucial to help mitigate declining rates of political participation in industrialized nations. For these theorists, politics is not an external phenomenon that citizens engage in occasionally; rather, it is an integral part of individuals’ lives as the political rights and freedoms they enjoy are underpinned by their political duties and responsibilities. By emphasizing the collectivist dynamic of democratic politics, the active frame of citizens is able to address some the limitations inherent in passive citizenship. As Sandel
argues, the passive understanding of citizenship (or in his words, liberal understanding) lacks the civic resources required to sustain self-government. This is because it cannot “secure the liberty it promises, [as] it cannot inspire the sense of community and civic engagement that liberty requires.” By positing citizens solely as self-interested individuals and the common good as an aggregation of these interests, the passive frame is not able to develop a collective sense of belonging among a citizenry. Community, whether it is ascriptive or voluntary, is a fundamental part of liberty as individuals achieve political freedom through cooperative participation with other individuals. Citizenship, by its very nature, requires individuals to be part of a larger, collective whole. At times, belonging requires certain civic obligations and duties; however, ignoring the obligations that stem from citizenship undermines citizenship itself. The development of collective belonging allows citizens to focus on communal needs rather than individual desires.

Critics may be wary of this collective sense of belonging due to the darker undertones sometimes associated with the homogeneity of communities. History provides numerous examples where yearning for communal identity has led to prejudiced, exclusionary, and violent anti-democratic societies. Benjamin Barber helps highlight why people are right to be wary of community in all its forms, writing that the ideal democratic civil society requires:

Citizens who are neither mere consumer of government services and rights-bearers against government intrusion… nor mere voters and passive watchdogs… Rather, its democratic citizens are active, responsible, engaged members of groups and communities that, while having different values and conflicting interests, are devoted to arbitrating those differences by exploring common ground, doing public work and pursuing common relations. Social relations in strong democratic civil society are thicker and more rewarding than those afforded by markets or by the economic interactions of production and consumption, yet they are less solidaristic and inhibiting than those of blood communities.

Here Barber outlines a vision of a democratic community that provides a form of collectivism while still accommodating the pluralism found in most contemporary societies. This provides a citizenry with some form of a shared connection with each other, while simultaneously acknowledging that differences that exists amongst citizens. Of course, these differences may extend to the degree that different
individuals feel that are included in political processes; but, by providing room for deliberation amongst all citizens, this vision of democratic governance creates the space to deliberate and (hopefully) overcome barriers to inclusion.

The focus on shared participation in decision-making processes is something passive citizenship is unable to provide. In passive citizenship, individuals are free to pursue their own ends through a number of means, of which voting or political engagement is only one form. The active frame of citizenship is different as it stresses collective deliberation over the common good and the fate of that political community. Deliberation involves more than advocating one’s own ends and respecting others’ ends - it requires the sense of belonging and a concern for the community whose fate is at stake. This vision of self-government, as Sandel writes, demands that “citizens possess, or come to acquire, certain qualities of character, or civic virtues.” This ideal of civic virtue means that the governments cannot aspire for moral neutrality as democratic governance necessitates a “formative politics, a politics that cultivates in the citizens the qualities of character self-government requires.” A government that seeks to cultivate civic virtue cannot be neutral as it must instil the qualities needed to sustain self-government. Sandel labels this form of democracy civic republicanism, but what is important to stress is its participatory and deliberative nature. This definition of democracy is much more encompassing than the minimalist one as it provides equal opportunities for citizens to become involved in agenda-setting, deliberation and decision-making. Contrary to Schumpeter’s definition, the citizenry is not synonymous with the electorate. Republicanism offers a compelling vision of citizenship because it recognises that true self-determination requires active political participation from the citizenry.

Several core concepts come into focus when active citizenship. The active frame emphasizes an individual’s sense of belonging to a political community; the civic obligations which arise from that community; the importance of civic virtue; and the necessity of widespread, active political participation from the citizenry. Like the classic liberal definition of citizenship, active citizenship values individual
rights but it also stresses communal obligations and civic duties. Applying the active frame to contemporary politics may illustrate how some forms of political discourse promote widespread political participation, civic duty, and engaged deliberation as fundamental democratic components.

In summary, this section outlines the main concepts in the active and passive frames of citizenship. Since both frames imply different conceptualizations of citizenship, evoking either frame may impact a citizen’s participatory behaviour in politics. Whereas the passive citizenship aligns with the liberal conception of rights-oriented citizenship; active citizenship presents a participatory account that aligns in part with civic republicanism. The active conception of citizenship is compelling as it cultivates the civic culture needed to sustain a healthy and vibrant democracy. A full exploration into the democratic implications of passive citizenship is provided in Section 4. The next section applies these frames to contemporary Canadian politics to illustrate how marketization reinforces passive citizenship.
The Marketization of Discourse within Canadian Politics

The marketization of Canadian political discourse remains, like in most advanced industrialized societies, difficult to trace. Nevertheless, an analysis of recent Canadian politics – specifically in the area of taxation policy – highlights its visibility. Simpson and Cheny summarize marketization as:

A framework of market-oriented principles, values, practices, and vocabularies; as a process of penetration of essentially market-type relationships into arenas not previously deemed part of the market; or as a universal discourse that permeates everyday discourse but goes largely unquestioned.\(^{51}\)

At its core, marketization seeks to extend market-based principles, beliefs and models to other areas of life. This section examines how the marketization of political discourse frames Canadian politics in which reinforces a passive conception of citizenship. I examine Canadian political discourse on taxation from party platforms during the 2011 general federal election. Discourse on taxation is chosen in particular because elucidates clear differences between the passive and active citizenship frames. Anti-tax discourse lends itself to a passive frame as it focuses on the savings it presents to individuals and implies a form of limited government; in comparison, the active frame positions tax payments as a collective duty and communal obligation required to support public goods.

**Applying the Frames: Canadian Party Platforms and Political Discourse on Taxation**

“You know, there’s two schools of thought in economics. One is that there are some good taxes and the other is that no taxes are good taxes. I’m in the latter category. I don’t believe that any taxes are good taxes.”\(^{52}\)

- Stephen Harper

The current discourse on taxation within Canada seems to have an anti-tax ideological bias. This anti-tax rhetoric has turned into policy through the Conservative government’s implementation of corporate tax-cuts, ‘boutique’ tax-cuts and GST reductions.\(^{53}\) Even cases where the Conservative government had to increase spending, such as Canada’s Economic Action Plan, have not been immune from anti-tax framing. Kristin Kozolanka argues that the deliberate use of the term ‘action plan’ over ‘stimulus plan’ minimizes the perception of spending public money, an act that may of alienated core
supporters. The anti-tax ideology is by no means limited to the Conservative Party. Across party lines, the message has been consistent at the federal level has been that taxes need to be reduced. This message is particularly evident in the party platforms released during the 2011 federal election.

The very first sentence of the Conservative platform frames the election by stating that Canadians have a choice between the Conservative a low-tax plan for jobs and growth and the opposing “high-tax agenda that will stall our recovery, kill jobs, and set you and your family back.” This is interesting for several reasons. First off, as the first sentence in the platform, it sets the tone for the discourse which follows. This framing prioritizes the fiscal dimension of citizenship by maintaining that low-taxes are of primary importance to Canadians. Moreover, the statement does not conceptualize high-taxes in such a way which illustrates the adverse effects they may have on Canadian society at large, but rather the adverse effects they pose for an individual and his or her family. By promoting individualism and fiscal self-interest, these statements help invoke a passive frame of citizenship.

Numerous other statements in the platform also reinforce a passive frame. Under the subheading entitled ‘Our Plan,’ the Conservative Party states that they “will not raise taxes on Canadian consumers and families, and we will not raise the tax rate on the businesses that create jobs for Canadians.” It goes on to state that the party is committed to hardworking Canadian families by not raising the tax burden and “putting money back in the pockets of taxpayers.” Used in this context, the repeated use of the word ‘taxpayer’ is particularly revealing. During the NPM reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, when the culture of the public service was transformed to focus on performance over process, citizens were increasingly referred to as clients or customers. The use of customer or client over citizen likens the citizen-government relationship to a bus reduced primarily to a business transaction, wherein tax-paying citizens expect a personal return on their investment. This same logic applies to ‘taxpayer’ terminology. While it is true that citizens do pay taxes, this is only one dimension of citizenship. Citizens are not only taxpayers but voters, rights-holders and participants in the public governance. Referring to Canadians as
taxpayers promotes a uni-dimensional view of citizenship that solely stresses the tax-paying, fiscal dimensions. The Conservative Party’s use of ‘taxpayer’ terminology in the platform is not an isolated occurrence either: in 2007, the Conservative government implemented a ‘Taxpayer’s Bill of Rights’ designed to improve the professionalism in government service delivery. Ultimately, ‘taxpayer’ terminology reinforces passive framing as it focuses on the fiscal dimension of citizenship (specific the services being directly delivered to the individual) rather than conceptualizing taxation as necessary communal obligation, which collectively benefits society.

The repeated use of the concept of ‘family’ in the platform is also telling. The Conservative Party states that it has implemented the lowest federal tax burden in 50 years, an act which has saved Canadian families more than $3000 yearly. In total, the platform mentions ‘family’ or ‘families’ sixty-three times throughout the document. Lakoff argues that ‘family’ is a powerful metaphor within political discourse because that is how the nation is commonly conceptualized, with the government acting as the parent in this relationship. In one sense, this may encourage an active frame as it makes us think of other citizens as members of our national family. However, the way it is framed within the platform does not lead people to think about the collective obligations citizenship requires (for example, taxation). The platform ignores the potential positive aspects of taxes, primarily how taxes contribute towards public goods which may be beneficial for communities, and instead stresses that familial well-being and financial security are responsibilities best left to the individual families.

The Conservative platform also highlights how the concept of economic freedom can be framed in a way which justifies lower taxes. The platform outlines that “Stephen Harper’s Government believes in increasing the freedom of Canadians to spend their own money on their own priorities.” Framing tax reductions in terms of economic freedom portrays taxation as antithetical to individual liberty. The anti-tax discourse reinforces the passive frame as maintains that the increased economic freedom of Canadians can only be achieved less government intervention in an individual’s life. This coincides with
Saurette and Gunster’s findings that the use of economic freedom rhetoric within the Canadian conservative movement almost always implies a notion of limited government.\textsuperscript{64} What this discourse pre-emptively disallows are not only discussions on the potential benefits of publicly subsidized welfare and marginal efficiency costs, but also questions on who should receive these benefits and who should pay the marginal efficiency costs.\textsuperscript{65} The potential contestability of the economic freedom rhetoric remains hidden due to its initial framing, which presents itself to the average educated audience member being reasonable, measured, and empirically grounded.\textsuperscript{66} In this sense, economic freedom rhetoric reinforces the passive frame as it limits questions on the merits of a limited government and individual freedom.

Several instances of support for social assistance programs can be witnessed in the Conservative platform: it states that they will not cut transfer payments to education, pensions or the universal public health care system.\textsuperscript{67} But even when discussing government-funded social programs, the language is predominantly market-based. For example, rather than outlining barriers to healthcare access, the platform states that renewing the Healthcare Accord requires an emphasis on greater accountability, improved results, and better reporting measurements.\textsuperscript{68} By utilizing this language, the platform applies market-based values and vocabularies to the public provision of public services, an area not often deemed as part of the market. The marketization of public service processes can be seen in several other instances within the platform. Under the section tilted ‘Open Government Initiative,’ the Conservatives claim that they plan on increasing government accountability and openness through ‘Open Dialogue,’ ‘Open Information,’ and ‘Open Data.’\textsuperscript{69} The specifics of what these entails, however, are unclear. When coupled with statements in the platform regarding the ‘Red Tape Reduction Commission,’ which is a joint team made up of entrepreneurs and Members of Parliament who reduce bureaucratic obstacles to job creation, the ‘Open Government Initiative’ reveals it may undermine bureaucratic processes designed to ensure fairness and neutrality in government services in the name of efficiency and
Further incorporating these market-like reforms into the public service entrenches marketization and competition-driven tactics into government provision of public goods. This supports the passive framing of citizens as individuals who, rather than thinking of themselves as directly involved in government processes, come to understand themselves primarily as passive recipients of government services.

Marketization can also be witnessed in the Conservative platform’s discussion of Aboriginal issues. Under a sub-section entitled ‘First Nations Financial Transparency,’ the platform states that Stephen Harper’s government will strengthen the relationship between Canadians and Aboriginal peoples by requiring the publication of salaries and expenses for First Nations chiefs and councilors. The Conservatives argue that this new law, which increases transparency and accountability in public funds provided to First Nations, also creates openness and trust not only amongst band councils and members, but amongst all Canadians. However, since the First Nations Financial Transparency Act has come into effect, it has received harsh criticism from Indigenous peoples. Ghislain Picard, who at the time was the interim Nation Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, argued that the law’s reporting requirements call for the disclosure of information beyond that required from other governments. Framing the law as necessary for financial transparency and accountability makes First Nations accountable to the federal government rather than First Nation members, thus undermining Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty.

The self-interested nature of market-based discourse also hinders the openness and trust the platform purports to offer. Hayden King, the director for the Centre of Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University, argues that the First Nations Financial Transparency Act will likely lead to increased media scrutiny of a handful of chief and councils with unjustifiably high salaries: a form of superficial reporting that supports popular ‘corrupt chief’ narratives prevalent in the Canadian public. King argues that this narrative may lead Canadians to feel absolved of any responsibility to First
Nations, as they perceive the challenges Indigenous people face as a result of self-inflicted suffering.\textsuperscript{75} Rather than promoting openness and trust amongst Aboriginal peoples and Canadians, the First Nations Financial Transparency Act may effectively solidify apathy and disengagement with Indigenous perspectives.\textsuperscript{76} In short, the marketization of Indigenous issues undermines opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and understanding by promoting a self-interested civic culture that only serves to further polarize relations between Canadians and Aboriginal peoples.

A final area examined within the 2011 Conservative platform is the section on the elimination of the per-vote subsidy. The platform frames the elimination of the subsidy primarily as a matter of fiscal responsibility, as the government has “a duty to use Canadians’ tax dollars with great care, and only in the public interest when families are struggling to make ends meet.”\textsuperscript{77} Once again, this framing preemptively omits questions on the deeper democratic value of the per-vote subsidy. It leads to debates over the economic function of per-vote subsidy rather than its democratic function, and inhibits discussions on subsidy’s role in ensuring a fair electoral playing field for all political parties. The framing assumes that individuals are, first and foremost, concerned about their own pocketbook and that the government should not interfere in the financial affairs of the citizenry. It is telling that the public interest in the platform is assumed to be the reasonable spending of tax income. Of course, it is important that the government is responsible with the public’s money. But this is not their only duty: it is also in the public’s interest to ensure that properly functioning democratic mechanisms and procedures are in place; mechanisms and procedures which ensure the political opinions of the whole public are represented. The platform’s account of the public interest contrasts with deliberative notions where citizens debate, discuss and deliberative on the public interest in order to deliver the most benefits to all members of a given political community.
Table 1: Anti-Tax Discourse within Party Platforms\(^\text{IV}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>‘Tax cut’</th>
<th>‘Low-tax’/‘Low tax’/‘Taxes low’</th>
<th>‘Will not raise taxes’ (or similar wording)</th>
<th>‘Taxpayer’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Party of Canada</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Party of Canada</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Democratic Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned earlier, this anti-tax discourse is not necessarily limited to the Conservative Party, though it seems to be most prevalent among them. To illustrate this, I conducted a rudimentary content comparison of the Conservative Party’s, the Liberal Party’s and NDP’s 2011 platforms. Key words and phrases associated with the anti-tax or low-tax ideology were selected and then searched for in each party platform. Overall, the most Conservative Party maintained the most mentions of these key words (with 25 mentions) and the Liberal Party maintained a distant second (with 7 mentions). For a full explanation of the results see Table 1. Of course, this analysis is limited as the mere mention of certain phrases is not enough to assume the party’s anti-tax stance. The fact that I only examine the 2011 election is limiting as well. In fact, it would be extremely beneficial if future projects cross-compare election platforms over time to illustrate the historical evolution of these terms. Nevertheless, these results are still beneficial as the prevalence of each term hints at its importance in the party platform. Interestingly, none of the parties explicitly state any plans to increase taxes. The closest mention of this is in the Liberal platform where they outline their plan to cancel the Conservative government’s corporate income tax cuts.\(^7\)\(^8\) Indeed, the absence of pro-tax discourse may be an act of framing itself as opposition parties may find that emphasizing the benefits gained from public goods resonates stronger with voters than outlining the costs associated with those public goods.

The introduction of the Liberal platform boldly claims that they will “reduce the Conservative deficit responsibly, without raising your taxes, by making better choices.”\textsuperscript{79} The platform highlights that the primary distinction between the Liberal and the Conservative party is not their views on taxation (as they both state they will not raise taxes) but that the Liberals make wiser investment choices with public money. Once again, this frames the conversation in such a way that pre-emptively disallows discussions on the potential positives of taxation and instead assumes tax cuts are needed, but that the debate is really over how much or where taxes should be cut. The section on a proposed oil spill contingency plan reveals the further marketization of discourse as it promises that the Liberal government plans to implement “new liability limits to ensure taxpayers are not left to pay for the clean-up of a major spill.”\textsuperscript{80} Even here, the oil spill contingency plan is justified as a means to protect taxpayers’ money rather than as an environmental protection plan which safeguards the Canadian ecological system. This provides a prime example where an active frame may have been used. Instead of outlining the financial cost to citizens, the active frame may focus on the communal environmental cost of such a catastrophe as well as the collective duty Canadians have to protect against such a scenario. However, the Liberal Party chooses to frame the discourse in a way which does not appeal to Canadians’ collective concerns about their shared environment, but to their individual concerns about their own wallets.

In comparison, the introduction to the 2011 NDP platform provides an example of what the active framing of citizenship potentially looks like in practice. The first section of the platform, entitled “Practical First Steps to give your Family a Break,” provides an overview of the social assistance programs the NDP seeks to improve. This includes strengthening pensions; increasing access to child-care and post-secondary programs; improving family and maternity leave benefits; re-instating a federal minimum wage; and extending Employment Insurance stimulus measures.\textsuperscript{81} Immediately, the use of the ‘family’ metaphor by the NDP highlights how common this analogy is in political discourse. But more importantly, this section of the platform illustrates a potential example of active citizenship framing:
unlike the Conservative platform, which provides benefits to Canadians largely through individual tax
cuts and credits, the NDP platform presents benefits to all Canadians through universal social welfare
and public assistance programs. Rather than appealing to individual self-interest, the NDP platform
emphasizes universal social assistance programs that lead citizens to think collectively about issues that
are of communal concern.

The active framing of citizenship is by no means limited to parties on the left of the political
spectrum. The 1980 Progressive Conservative (PC) electoral platform, developed during Joe Clark’s
leadership bid, presents a compelling example of how parties who identify ideologically as center-right
can invoke the active frame of citizenship. The central proposal in the platform is making mortgage
interest payments a deductible expense from taxable income. At first glance, offering a tax-break on
mortgage payments may seem to support passive citizenship by playing to individualistic financial
interest. But the following section, appropriately titled ‘The Social Benefits of Home Ownership,’ states
that people “own homes feel a greater stake in the community and country they live in.” The use of the
term ‘community’ is extremely telling as it attempts to appeal to the collectivist political sentiments.
The platform goes on to claim that the increasing home ownership in Canada would create a “more
stabled, settled and productive society.” Moreover, under a section entitled ‘But isn’t home ownership
a rich man’s game?’ the PCs argue while the tax break benefits all Canadians, it presents the optimal
savings for low-to-middle income earners because of the policy’s built-in ceilings. The PC platform is
unique as it offers a universal tax-break for families, but frames it in such a way that highlights how it
collectively benefits all of Canadian society. This example helps illustrates how the active framing of
citizenship can and has been invoked by parties from ends of the political spectrum.

In summary, analysing the party platforms from the 2011 general election reveals numerous
where political discourse reinforces a passive frame. As Dobbin aptly states, the debate on tax cuts in
Canada is essentially “about how much and when, not whether to cut taxes.” The anti-tax rhetoric
evident in the platforms backs the notion that citizens are individuals who are primarily concerned with their own savings. Meanwhile, the economic freedom rhetoric maintains that taxes are a negative interference to individual liberty. The values common to the active frame – such as the necessity of communal civic obligations, deliberation on the common good and the importance of active political participation – rarely arise in the platforms. In fact, the discourse is framed in such a way that when questions over the common good do arise (e.g. the per-vote subsidy example in the Conservative platform or the oil spill contingency plan in the Liberal platform), the public interest is already assumed to be the financial well-being of individual families. This discourse supports the passive conception of citizens as individualistic, self-interested (especially in fiscal matters) and rights-oriented.

Going over party platforms reveals how certain forms of market-based discourse support passive framing. What this does not illustrate, however, is whether the marketization of political discourse is a trend that is increasing or decreasing. Several interesting theories have been proposed to explain the rise of marketization discourse in Canada. Some scholars see market-based discourse as a continuation of the brokerage politics model that has long dominated Canadian political science. Others link the rise of the market-based political discourse with the neoliberal ideological swing that occurred during the governments of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Within Canada, neoliberalism reverberated with the Mulroney and Chrétien governments’ focus on major spending cutbacks, the dismantlement of certain social programs, and civil service reforms. Differing slightly from both these approaches are those who argue marketization in Canadian politics was impeded deeper democratic questions. Susan Delacourt argues that the election of René Lévesque insulated Canada from the growing influence of American political marketing as the collective Canadian political consciousness was focused on existential democratic questions regarding national unity, the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Empirically testing these theories on the rise of marketization extends beyond the aims of this paper; however, recognizing that the marketization of political discourse is occurring, as evidenced
by the party platform analysis, is an important first step in this process. This paper recommends conducting future research to empirically examine how the rise of marketization has occurred in Canadian politics.
The Democratic Implications of Marketization

For many people, the meaning of citizenship is a topic left largely unreflected upon in day-to-day life. However, as mentioned earlier, research demonstrates that an individual’s understanding of citizenship has significant impacts on his or her political participation. The language we use to talk about citizenship matters because it informs our civic self-understandings. The notion of ‘citizenship vocabularies’ helps unpack the central role that political discourse has on self-conceptualizations of citizenship. These vocabularies, whether invoked unconsciously or consciously, play a central role in both constraining and enabling emerging patterns of political participation. Understanding the influence of citizenship vocabularies provides researchers with a set of concepts to analyze how people make sense of what it means to be part of public life. To put crudely paraphrase Wittgenstein: just as “the limits of my language are the limits of my world;” the limits of our citizenship vocabularies are also the limits of our civic imaginings. If citizens live in a world where they are constantly inundated with political discourse about that is largely self-interested and individualistic, they may began to think of politics in the same way. Recognizing these tendencies allows us to begin to illustrate why the marketization of discourse is problematic for democratic politics.

At the individual level, the marketization of political discourse reinforces a market ideology that is essentially antisocial and based on self-interest rather than public good. Marketization frames politics as another sphere of life where an individual’s central focus is on maximizing his or her own utility. The concepts of ‘efficiency,’ ‘cost-effectiveness’ and ‘client-satisfaction’ reconceptualize the government to citizen relationship as a corporation to shareholder relationship, wherein taxpayers expect personal returns for their contribution. Marketization leads citizens to focus on the benefits they personally can derive from politics, while negating or ignoring the strong collectivist dimension that connects a citizenry. The active account of citizenship, with its strong republican undercurrent, implicitly assumes that individuals can and will put aside their own particular interests to pursue some
form of common good. This depends not only on the ability of citizens to come together and deliberate on political issues, but that citizens feel a sense of mutual responsibility and understand (at least to some degree) one another. Benjamin Barber, in his book on participatory democracy *A Place for Us*, succinctly sums up the antisocial aspects that make marketization problematic for democratic discourse:

Markets are simply not designed to do the things democratic polities or free civil societies do. Markets give us *private, not public, modes of discourse*… [and they] advance individualistic, not social, goals and they encourage us to speak the language of “I want,” not the language of “we need.” Markets preclude “we” thinking and “we” action of any kind at all, trusting in the power of aggregated individual choices (the “invisible hand”) somehow to secure the common good. In the name of diversity and private choice, markets foster a kind of consumer totalism, turning multidimensional citizens into one dimension, solitary shoppers. Consumers speak the divisive rhetoric of “me.” Citizens invent the common language of “we.”

Here Barber puts into plain language how marketization inherently hinders collectivism by leading citizens to focus on the ‘I’ (that is, their individual wants, desires and rights) while ignoring the ‘we’ (communal needs, obligations and duties). At the individual level, the marketization of political discourse is worrisome as it creates a retreat inwards, where individuals focus on private matters rather than issues that are of public and communal concern.

The discursive retreat from issues of public concern is especially poignant in Canada given the strong collectivism historically present in Canadian political culture. The predominance of collectivist values in Canadian political culture has been noted by several authors. Perhaps the most famous of these is S.M Lipset’s thesis that the influence of counter-revolutionary Toryism in Canada underpins the country’s collectivist tradition. Despite the datedness of Lipset’s comparative analysis of Canadian and American values, his thesis has maintained strong theoretical significance with both its share of detractors and supporters. Lipset himself amended his conclusions, but maintained his central core arguments well into the 1990s. Marketization, with its anti-social, individualistic and self-interested characteristics, threatens the Canadian social assistance system that was, in part, a result of collectivist traditions. This results not only in the foreclosing of certain politics spaces, but it also alters understandings of what social policy is and what the purpose of the welfare state should be. Michael J.
Prince argues that marketization has led to a new conception of the welfare state were greater value is placed on competiveness and productivity. He points to the death of Canada’s two universal income programmes in the 1990s – Old Age Security and Family Allowances – as a symbol of the decline in collectivist principles and the subordination of welfare values to market norms. If this trend continues, it could result in the dismantlement of certain programs, policies and institutions that are considered core to the Canadian social welfare model – an act that may serve to radically alter Canadian political culture.

Of course, scholars are right to emphasize the potential benefits of market-based discourse. Treating the citizen as a consumer is useful as it may allow politicians to listen to voters more effectively through precise targeting; it may renew focus on service delivery; and it could generate greater political responsiveness and accountability. The NPM reforms, which furthered marketization in the public service, sought to replace traditional and hierarchical bureaucratic processes with market and competition-driven tactics. These reforms were often justified by the argument that introducing market-like conditions would provide greater transparency, accountability and service in public institutions. They were, in part, a response to the traditionally rule-based, hierarchical, top-down and authority-driven procedures of old public administration. These reforms can be seen as a reaction to the (whether perceived or real) bureaucratic inefficiency, bloat, lack of transparency, and the unresponsiveness of ‘big’ governments. By introducing market-like mechanisms in the political process, marketization ostensibly offers increased efficiency, productivity, and responsiveness – in effect, delivering greater client-satisfaction. From this perspective, the marketization of discourse provides citizens with the ability to hold politicians to account on government responsiveness and efficiency.

Although marketization in Canadian politics appears to provide greater citizen empowerment, a nuanced examination begins to reveal the problematic implications it poses for democratic politics. The argument presented in this paper should not be taken to endorse a return to old public administration,
where byzantine bureaucratic procedures leave citizens feeling that the government is unresponsive and impenetrable. A critique of marketization is not a defense of outdated and hierarchical forms of governance. Instead, a plethora of alternative approaches to democratic governance exist that treat citizens neither as unengaged constituents (as in old modes of public administration) nor passive customers (as in market-based models). Archon Fung uses the term ‘empowered participation’ to refer to this third path of reform, which rather than looking to the market, takes it inspiration from traditions of civic engagement, participatory democracy, and deliberation. Fung’s model of citizenship (one rooted in what he calls accountable autonomy) overcomes the antisocial aspects inherent in marketization by asking citizens to consider stepping away from purely private pursuits to participate in public problem-solving around issues of common concern; while at the same time, respecting the constraints and realities that prohibit people from engaging in all the contemporary public problems that merit attention. Fung’s model helps illustrate participatory-based alternative approaches that reform unresponsive public institutions without resorting to market-based mechanisms.

While market-based reforms and discourse may offer greater accountability and responsiveness in some sectors of life, they cannot account for the complexities that make up contemporary democratic governance. Marketization is worrisome as it promotes consumer identities over citizen identities. In doing so, it confuses the types of freedoms and protections consumers have with the freedoms, protections and obligations that citizens require. The freedom to buy a new car or piece of clothing is fundamentally different than the freedom to determine how to live and under what kind of regime. Markets may be beneficial in the regulation of private goods, but public goods (such as citizen empowerment, social assistance, or environmental sustainability) can only be fully developed and utilized through collective action and decision-making. In this sense, customer satisfaction is not the same as citizen empowerment: whereas customer satisfaction relies solely upon individual fulfillment; citizen empowerment requires collective action. Here it is difficult not to comment on how similar this
description is to the Arendtian notion of empowerment, which maintains that ‘power’ is impossible to hold individually, as power only develops when a multitude of individuals come together for a common cause.\footnote{113}

Ultimately, marketization presents a worrisome trend in Canadian politics as governments are fundamentally different than corporations. One of the primary responsibilities for a corporation is delivering a profit to its shareholders.\footnote{114} A government does not operate on the same for-profit basis and is instead tasked with addressing the common good – how citizens can best live and have meaningful control over their own lives. This difference means that in a corporation, virtues like efficiency and productivity are emphasized, while in democratic governance virtues like justice and due-process may be considered essential. Most importantly, democracy (at least in theory) necessitates that individual citizens have an equal opportunity to influence political decisions. Within the marketplace, the voices of customers are not considered equal as money increases influence. Underlying market-based discourse and the passive frame of citizenship is an aggregative vision of democracy that assumes public interest is simply the accumulation of individuals’ self-interests. Just like in the marketplace, aggregative democracy seeks to address the individual demands of customers, but it does not provide the space needed for a shared deliberation on public goods. Conversations on what the public interest actually constitutes require engaged and active participation from all citizens. It is only through shared dialogue that citizens from diverse life-worlds can begin to understand (though arguably, never fully comprehend) the difference perspectives, understandings and lived experiences of their fellow citizens.

The marketization of discourse, due to its inherently anti-social characteristics, impedes understandings of others as it cannot provide for such a robust shared dialogue. Further entrenching market-based discourse into Canadian politics is antithetical to participatory aims because it only serves to reinforce a passive understanding of citizenship. Marketization implies that citizens to believe they are passive recipients of government services rather than active participants in public processes.\footnote{115} By
assuming that all relationships the can be reduced to mere market exchanges, the notion of citizenship is gutted and fundamentally altered. Marketization reinforces a passive frame of citizenship where citizens see themselves removed from political processes; a belief that has detrimental effects on political participation and deliberation.
Conclusion:

This paper examined how the marketization of Canadian political discourse reinforces a passive conceptualization of citizenship. In order to support this, I combined political discourse analysis with framing theory to illustrate how frames influence both political discourse and political outcomes. Simply put, framing recognizes that there are neither neutral concepts nor neutral language within politics: every word contributes to different constructions of the political. Framing, if successful, not only shapes the context surrounding discourse but also affects how individuals interpret, understand and make sense of the political conservation at hand. Building upon these insights, I introduced my conceptions of passive and active frames. Both frames lead to differing understandings of what citizenship actually entails. The passive frame stresses a rights-oriented account of citizenship, self-interested individualism and limited political participation (as the citizenry is responsible for electing politicians rather than actively participating in politics). In comparison, the active frame stresses the necessity of active political participation; the civic obligations and duties that connect a citizen to a larger political community; and the need for shared deliberation on what constitutes the public interest. The different conceptualization of citizenship in the active and passive frames means that evoking either frame impacts how individuals understand citizenship. Once the frames were developed, they were applied to the Canadian political sphere. I employed an interpretive approach to outline how marketization is evident in Canadian political discourse. This analysis primarily focused on party platforms from the 2011 general federal election. Applying the frames to the illustrated how the anti-tax rhetoric common in party platforms reinforces a passive frame of citizens as self-interested individuals primarily concerned with their own economic freedom and financial well-being. Concerns regarding civic obligations, collective deliberation on the common good and the importance of active political participation rarely arose in the party platforms.
In summary, it is important to identify the democratic implications that the marketization of politics presents. Ultimately, the marketization of discourse – with its self-interested, passive and uni-dimensional framing – threatens political participation and cross-cutting opportunities for deliberation on what constitutes the public interest. The active conception of citizenship is much more compelling as it cultivates the shared sense of civic commonality needed to sustain a healthy and vibrant democracy. Marketization legitimises the credibility of market narratives that promote the direct opposite of this: an individualistic, antisocial and consumption-oriented civic culture which pays no heed to civic-mindedness. While passive citizenship empowers private individuals, it does not provide the collective-orientation needed to empower a citizenry. The marketization of politics hollows out the public sphere by reinforcing a frame that presents individuals are largely passive, disinterested and unconnected with one another. A new discourse with a focus on empowered participation, collective deliberation and shared belonging is needed to renew public life in contemporary democracies.
Notes


4 Ibid.


14 Lakoff, G. (2004). Don’t think of an elephant!: Know your values and frame the debate. p. XV.

15 Ibid. p. 52.

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30 Ibid. p. 371.


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41 Ibid. p. 28.


Ibid.


ibid. pp. 5-6.

ibid. p. 6.


ibid. p. 115.


ibid. p. 25.

ibid. p. 25.


ibid. p. 25.


ibid. p. 256.

ibid. p. 257.


ibid. p. 30.

ibid. p. 64


ibid. pp. 63-64.

ibid. pp. 63-64.

ibid. pp. 63-64.


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93 Ibid. p. 70.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
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