

Is it Really You in Elected Politics? How Political Authenticity is Challenged by the Communications Imperative in the Era of the Permanent Campaign

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The meaning of authenticity:

Something that is real or true (Kearney, 1995)

Historical authenticity:

Babe Ruth's baseball bat



***Categorical* authenticity:**
“Is this *real* Italian food?”

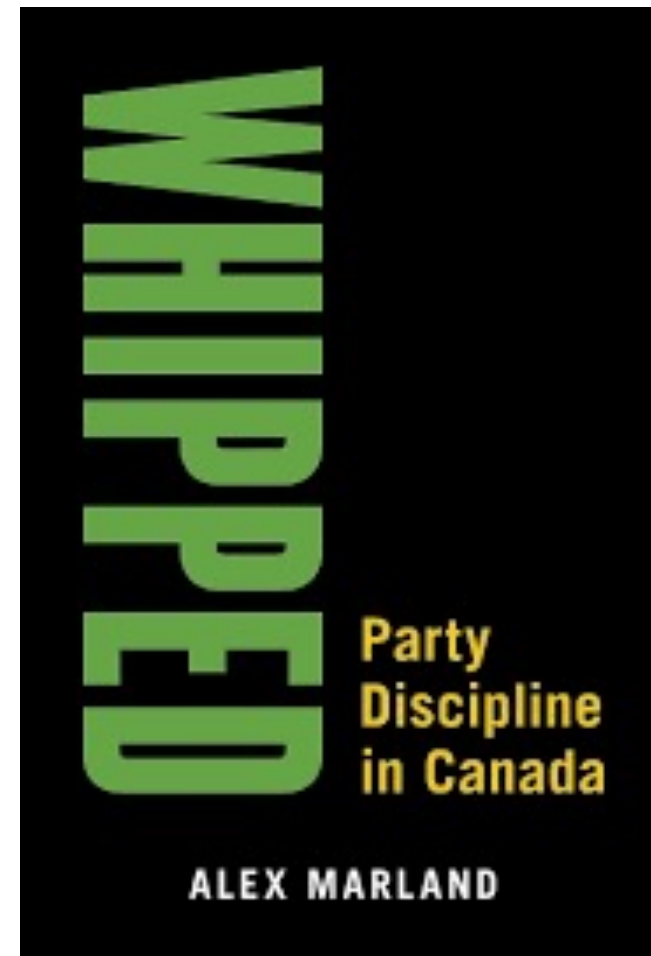
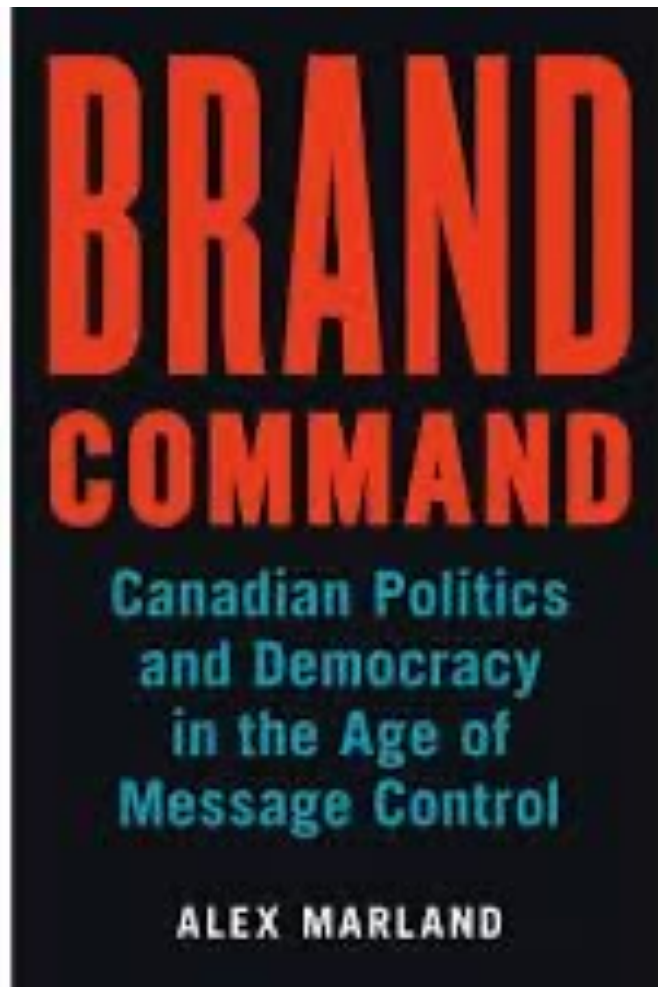


Values authenticity:

“Are they saying what they truly mean?”

“Are they actually who they seem to be?”





1. CPC 2021 Post-election Report:

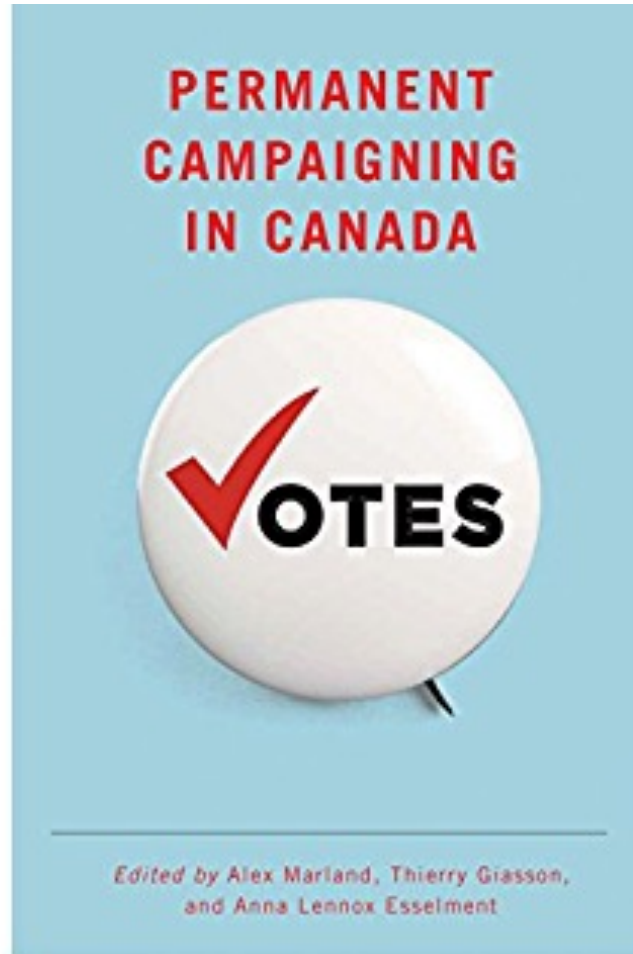


“over-managed”

“over-coached”



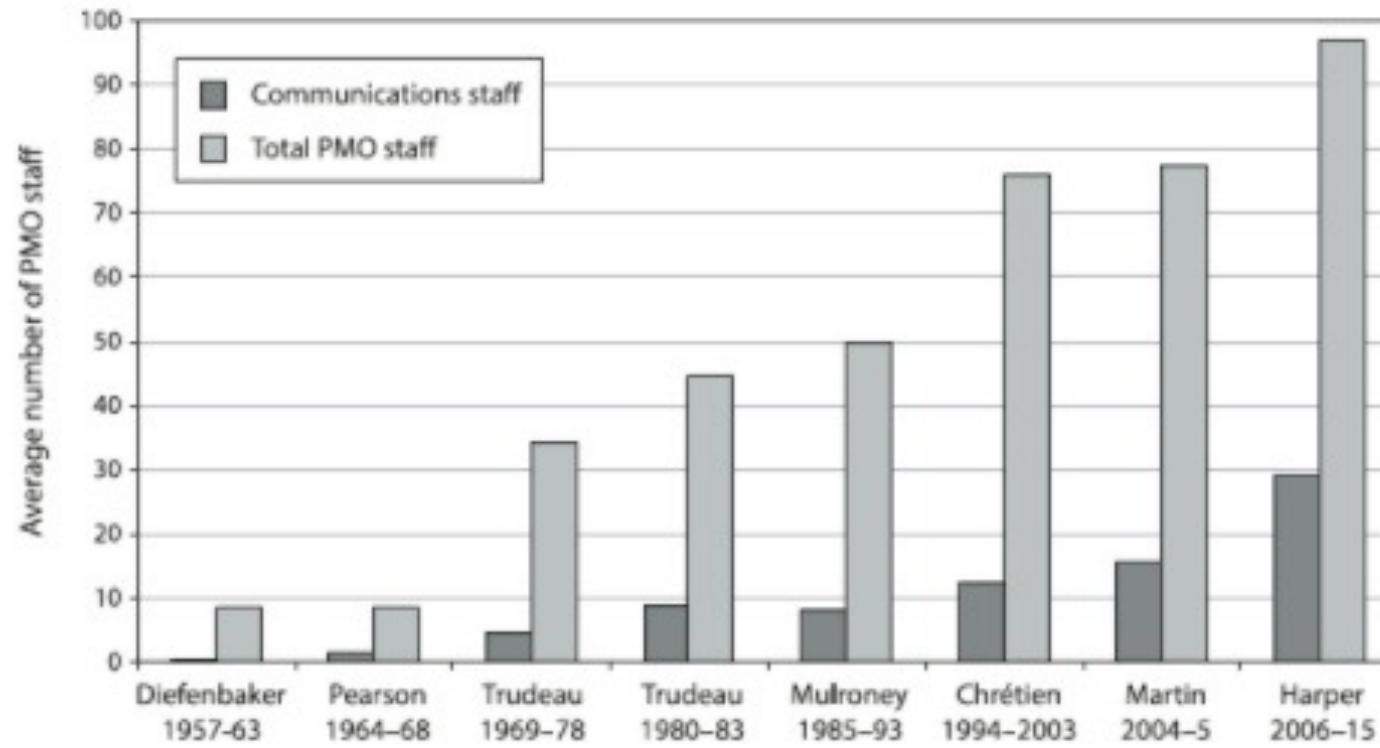
2. A shift in PMO Communications Staff:

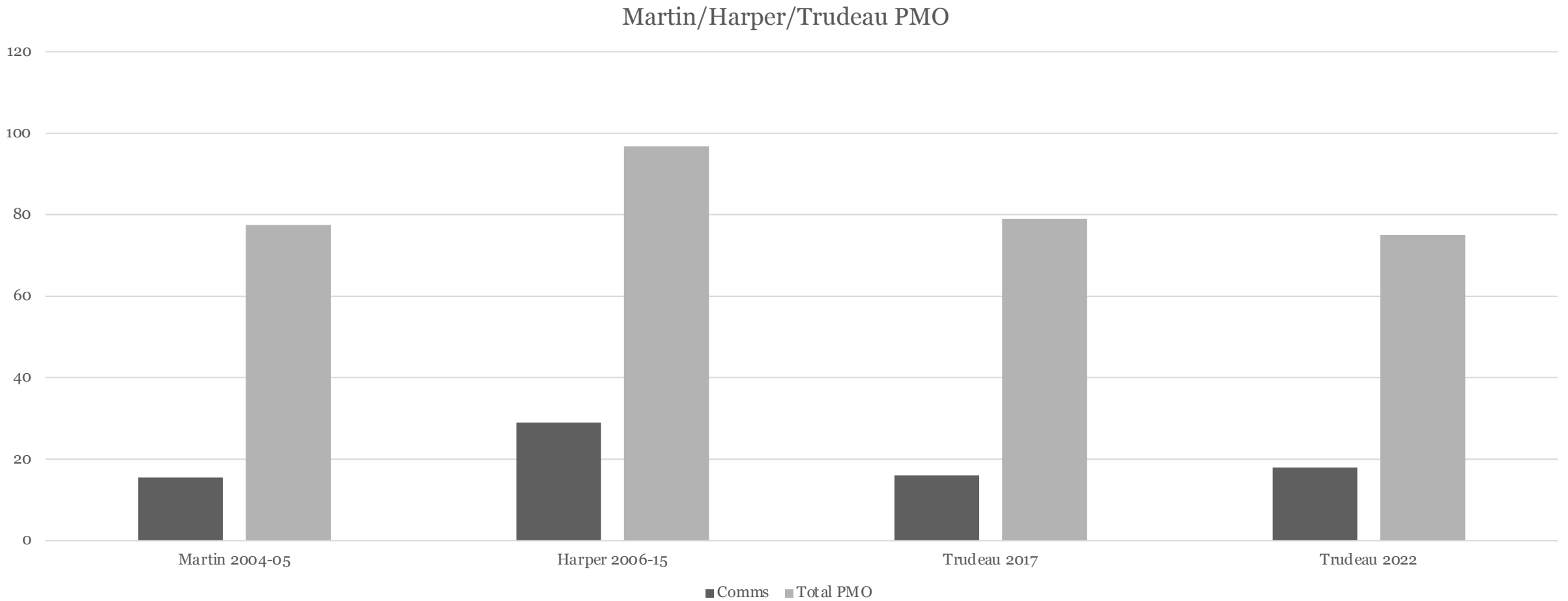


PMO Communications Staff, 1957-2015

FIGURE 12.1

Average number of PMO communications staff and total PMO staff, by prime minister





Organizations

-  [Canada](#)
-  [Prime Minister's Office](#)
-  [Communications](#)

Communications

People

1. [Ahmad, Cameron](#); 613-992-4211; Director of Communications;
2. [Grover, Akshay](#); 613-992-4211; Videographer;
3. [Kanter, Emily](#); 613-992-4211; Communications Planner; ←
4. [Roy, Cecely](#); 613-992-4211; Speechwriter;
5. [Salembier, Florent](#); 613-992-4211; Writer;
6. [Sewani, Shehzad](#); 613-992-4211; Executive Assistant - Communications;
7. [Hage-Moussa, Vanessa](#); 613-992-4211; Deputy Director, Communications;
8. [Vaillancourt, Ann-Clara](#); 613-992-4211; Press Secretary;
9. [Wellstead, Alex](#); 613-992-4211; Press Secretary;
10. [Hughes, Vincent](#); 613-992-4211; Communications Planner; ←
11. [Trogen, Emily](#); 613-992-4211; Communications Planner; ←
12. [Krizus, Astrid](#); 613-992-4211; Lead Speechwriter;
13. [Gravel, Alexandre](#); 613-992-4211; Speechwriter;
14. [Lund, Parker](#); 613-992-4211; Lead Writer;
15. [Robinson, Johanna](#); 613-992-4211; Senior Manager, Digital and Creative Communications;
16. [Lange, Riley](#); 613-992-4211; Lead Coordinator, Digital & Creative Content;
17. [Tetreault, Alex](#); 613-992-4211; Special Assistant;
18. [Scotti, Adam](#); 613-992-4211; Photographer;



3. Rise of populist politicians



The Permanent Campaign

Political consultant Patrick Caddell noted in a memo to President-elect Jimmy Carter that “governing with public approval requires a continuing political campaign” (Blumenthal 1980, 39).



- **The permanent campaign**: Electioneering throughout governance, which often involves leveraging public resources. This is more prevalent with fixed-date election legislation because all political parties maintain a state of election readiness that builds as the election approaches. Non-stop campaigning is most pronounced in the final year of a four-year cycle, during by-elections, and during the uncertainty of minority government when the possibility of a sudden election campaign is ever-present.

(Marland, Esselment, and Giasson 2017)

Strategic Objectives of the Permanent Campaign

TABLE 1.1

Strategic objectives of permanent campaigning in Canada

Component	Description	Examples of inter-election activities
1 Communication control	Communication practices that at one time were confined to the official campaign period but are now routinely practised in the inter-election period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate screening and training • Direct marketing with supporters • Fewer opportunities for going off script • Information constraints • Political advertising • Tighter media protocols • Unforgiving message discipline
2 Resource exploitation	State resources are leveraged for campaigning purposes between elections, in particular to support new approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government advertising and polling • More communications personnel • Partisan mailings through MPs' offices • Politicization of public administration • Satellite offices • Touring and pseudo-events
3 Redefinition of norms	Attempts are made by political elites to circumvent or change rules and norms to accommodate the practice of permanent campaigning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altered conventions or legislation • Fusion of party and government messaging and visuals • Ignoring normal processes • Discrediting critics, libel suits • PMO digital media production
4 Database management	Fundraising and data mining are key roles for the extra-parliamentary party operations as a means to drive agendas throughout the parliamentary mandate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email fundraising • Information collection about electors • Political marketing research, segmentation, and microtargeting
5 Coalition building	Governing party's willingness to engage with or court particular stakeholders, groups, or constituents – while ostracizing opponents – is increasingly tied to its larger electoral goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals to select subsegments of the electorate while ignoring others • Mobilization of supporters • Monitoring of protests

Marland, Giasson, and Esselment
2017, 17



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Performed authenticity?

“To be authentic, politicians who are told to be on-brand need to be involved in message development and have the freedom to sound human” (Marland, 2020, 147).

“Authenticity just means faking it well” (Edelman, 2019).

- Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, has been called an authentic politician.

This might be one reason why.

Proposed IDG Project:

- **Objective 1** - Using a media scan and a short survey, generate a bank of terms that are associated with the word authenticity in the Canadian political context to understand what Canadians think about when asked about authenticity in politics.
- **Objective 2** - Analyze these terms in focus groups to determine what they mean to Canadians, how they fit with the values authenticity lens, and how closely the Canadian case aligns with existing literature.
- **Objective 3** - Develop the insights derived from O1 and O2 into specific questions that can later be used for a large-n survey of both Canadian voters and elected officials to probe their perceptions of political authenticity and how an authenticity “trait” could affect voter choices during elections.

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