R. Johnston, A. Blais, H. Brody, and J. Crete, *Letting the People Decide* (MQUP, 1992), Ch 2, 6, 8

**Epilogue**

* Place significant emphasis on the idea of *issue priming*
  + Two theoretical explanations can be found for robust priming effects
    - First – comes from social choice theory and suggests that politicians will sometimes emphasize a particular issue to gain strategic advantage over their opponents
    - Second – comes from combining recent work on decision-making and choice with the older Columbia University research on campaign effects. Emphasis here on accessibility, priming, and selective attention
* Authors suspect that partisans are especially vulnerable to priming – with rhetoric playing a role in directing voters toward a specific agenda and considerations surrounding that agenda

Four Alternative Explanations:

* From spatial theory: (1) In spatial models with plurality voting, three mobile alternatives, and one issue, “at least one party will be outside or on the boundary of the interquartile range of the electorate’s distribution of ideal points” – this does not fit 1988
  + (2) Catering to party activists leads to differences among parties – the more a party converges on the median, the fewer reasons it gives its workers and financial angels, who are typically far away from the median, for helping it.
  + (3) To the extent that an event such as a debate is about leadership, it may yield gains to a party independently of policy distances. In this case, failure to select a median policy no longer unduly risks defeat in the case of very large number of voters, since a candidate may win anyway if he or she is fortunate enough to win the debate
* From directional theory: (4) the spatial model is flawed at its very foundation – people do not support the party closest to them, rather they support the party that is on the same side of the status quo as they are
* Johnston et al believe that these theories fall short. What needs to be added to spatial models is a force that drives parties away from the centre – and that force is priming. Parties prime because they must provide voters with reasons for voting for them – but not just any reasons will do. They must be reasons with enough force that they will cause people to vote for the party – reasons connected to the mainsprings, to the basic cleavages, of the political system are excellent candidates. The best reasons are ones that resonate with the pre-existing partisan ties of the electorate – Free Trade passed this test, Meech Lake did not.