

The influence of electoral endorsements on vote choice in Canadian elections

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Legend

BQ – Bloc Québécois

CES – Canadian Election Study

CPC – Conservative Party of Canada

LPC – Liberal Party of Canada

MEDW – Making Electoral Democracy Work (project)

NDP – New Democratic Party

Abstract

In the final days leading up to elections, many major newspapers in Canada and around the world depart from the principle of media neutrality and openly support a particular political party. Do these overt attempts at persuasion by trusted institutions actually affect the vote choice of their readership, and are these effects felt evenly across the population? In this thesis, I examine the 2011 and 2015 Canadian federal elections using data from the 2011 Canadian Election Study and the 2015 Making Electoral Democracy Work project. I find voters to be significantly influenced by their newspaper's endorsement in the 2015 sample, and find that this influence primarily influences those who identify with no party. Although the influence is modest in size, with the geographic concentration of newspaper readership it is potentially large enough to influence outcomes in individual ridings. Combined with my finding that newspaper endorsements are far from evenly distributed across parties, this has troubling implications for Canadian democracy.

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1. Introduction

In the final weeks of the 2015 Canadian general election, the editorial boards of many newspapers across the country undertook their traditional task of endorsing candidates for office. Despite the seemingly routine nature of endorsements, they garnered an unprecedented amount of media attention due to Postmedia's decision to impose an endorsement of the Conservative party upon their many newspapers. The public discussion around Postmedia's actions took many forms, prompting many debates surrounding the relationship between a newspaper and its owners, and the media's role in federal elections. For many, the unanswered question left in the wake of this discussion was simple; do newspaper endorsements actually matter? That is to say, do newspaper endorsements influence the outcome of elections? This is the question I will be answering in this thesis.

Several studies in The United States and United Kingdom have found that newspaper endorsements are capable of influencing the vote choice of their readers. While the priming and agenda-setting effects of Canadian media have been examined by political scientists, the blatant attempts at persuasion that are newspaper endorsements have thus far gone unexamined. Using data from the 2011 Canadian Election Study and 2015 Making Electoral Democracy Work project, combined with self-collected data on newspaper endorsements in the 2011 and 2015 elections, I find that reading an endorsing newspaper does raise one's chance of voting for the endorsed party when compared to those respondents who were exposed to no endorsement at all.

These findings have some troubling implications for the health of Canadian democracy. If newspaper endorsements can indeed influence Canadians' political perceptions, then are small groups of newspaper editors and publishers able to influence how people vote? If so, is this

influence substantial enough to influence the outcomes of Canadian elections? Given that the media is the primary forum through which democracy can be conducted in a modern mass society, the ability for media moguls to influence election outcomes by dictating endorsements is a troubling possibility, especially given the precedent of Postmedia's 2015 decision to impose a chain-wide endorsement.

The structure of the thesis proceeds as follows: First, I review the existing literature on newspaper endorsements, and outline my theory and hypotheses. Second, I present the newspaper endorsements of the 2011 and 2015 elections and discuss their distribution. Next, I explain my methodology and discuss my data sources and their limitations. Finally, I present the results of the two regression models, evaluate my hypothesis based upon them, and discuss the overall effect of endorsements on elections in Canada.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definitions of newspaper endorsements

At its core, a newspaper endorsement is simply an editorial, traditionally without a byline and attributed to the entire editorial board, that announces the party or candidate(s) that a newspaper wishes to see win in a given election. In his capacity as editor-in-chief of *La Presse*, André Pratte argued that endorsements are but a natural extension of a newspaper's role; seeing as a newspaper's editorial board frequently expresses its opinion on all matter of issues, it is their duty to take a stance on 'the most important issue in democracy'.¹

Generally, a newspaper's endorsement, like other unattributed editorials, is a recommendation for the newspaper's readership that is intended to represent the consensus view of the editorial board as a whole.² The Winnipeg Free Press goes as far to append a message to this effect at the end of their endorsements. However, this is not universally the case; it is generally acknowledged that setting an editorial endorsement is traditionally the prerogative of its publisher. While this is rarely done in the modern age, Postmedia did exercise this right in 2015 to force a chain-wide

¹ André Pratte, 'Pourquoi La Presse prend-elle position?', *La Presse*, 9 October 2008, sec. Éditoriaux, <http://www.lapresse.ca/debats/editoriaux/andre-pratte/200810/09/01-27865-elections-pourquoi-la-presse-prend-elle-position.php>.

² See, for example: Kimberly Meltzer, 'Newspaper Editorial Boards and the Practice of Endorsing Candidates for Political Office in the United States', *Journalism* 8, no. 1 (1 February 2007): 85.

endorsement of the Conservative party, prompting much criticism and even the resignation of Andrew Coyne as the *National Post*'s opinion editor.³

Moreover, a newspaper's endorsement of a political party or candidate, according to Maxwell McCombs, is "a direct, overt [attempt] at influencing the behaviour of the audience"⁴. For McCombs and other researchers, a newspaper's goal in writing an endorsement is clearly to convince their readership to support a political party or candidate. In response to the negative impressions associated with a newspaper telling its readership how to act, *La Presse* decided to release its 2015 endorsement eleven days before Election Day, to allow for a greater public debate.⁵

For newspapers themselves, however, the goal behind an endorsement is sometimes less clear. In justifying its then-new policy of not endorsing candidates, the Winnipeg Free Press declared endorsements to be 'unfair', and further declared them pointless as they "do nothing anyways"⁶. Within its 2015 endorsement, *La Presse* was very clear that it did not intend to impose a point of view but rather they intended to "mettre de l'avant, sans prétention aucune, une façon de voir les

³ Peter Edwards, 'Andrew Coyne Leaves Editor Role over National Post's Election Endorsement', The Toronto Star, 19 October 2015, <http://www.thestar.com/news/federal-election/2015/10/19/national-post-comment-editor-resigns-over-election-endorsement.html>.

⁴ Maxwell McCombs, 'Editorial Endorsements: A Study of Influence', *Journalism Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Fall 1967): 545.

⁵ Guy Crevier, 'Pour un gouvernement Trudeau', *La Presse*, 7 October 2015, sec. Débats, <http://www.lapresse.ca/debats/editoriaux/201510/06/01-4907240-pour-un-gouvernement-trudeau.php>.

⁶ Winnipeg Free Press Editorial Board, 'Democracy Depends on Voters', 16 October 2015, <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/editorials/We-endorse-voting-and-political-participation-but-not-any-candidates-333277521.html>.

choses.”⁷ While newspapers may prefer to use softer language to describe endorsements than do researchers, both groups agree on the core principal that an endorsement is an argument laid out to demonstrate why a particular candidate or party is the best choice for voters in a given election.

In a seemingly universal manner, editorial board members firmly deny that endorsements have any influence on the actual news coverage presented by the publication during an election, and firmly assert that their support of a party is strictly limited to the editorial section. In interviewing members of the editorial boards of several American newspapers regarding their endorsement practices, Meltzer found that none among them claimed to have any difficulty keeping editorial opinion and news coverage separate.⁸

In sum, a newspaper endorsement is at its core an announcement of the newspaper’s preferred candidate(s) or party to win office or government, with the intention of informing or influencing their audience. Generally, the endorsement is intended to represent the consensus view of the editorial board, and is intended to be kept separate from the actual news coverage of the election in question.

2.2. Effects of newspaper endorsements on election outcomes

To date, published studies of the influence of electoral endorsements have been confined to the United States and United Kingdom. Despite the existence of numerous studies on the role that the

⁷ Crevier, ‘Pour un gouvernement Trudeau’.

⁸ Meltzer, ‘Newspaper Editorial Boards and the Practice of Endorsing Candidates for Political Office in the United States’, 95.

media play in Canadian elections, the influence of newspaper endorsements on voter behaviour has not yet been the subject of academic study. While UK studies have mostly concentrated on national parliamentary elections, US studies have varied greatly between various federal, state, and local elections. While these studies are united in finding that some form of ‘endorsement effect’ does exist, they differ significantly in the causal mechanisms that they use to explain the effect, as well the size of effect they find.

2.2.1. Models of endorsement influence

In a very broad and general sense, the mechanisms through which a newspaper’s endorsement of a political party or candidate could sway an elector’s vote are conceived through a form of bounded rationality. Most authors start from the assumption that voters select a candidate or party by evaluating them on various criteria such as policy positions, trustworthiness, and the personal competence of candidates and leaders. The ability of electors to evaluate such matters is naturally limited by the information at their disposal, and, as the average modern voter can be assumed to have little (if any) direct contact with candidates, the information at their disposal can be assumed to be largely determined by the mass media they consume.

The existing research falls into two general camps when discussing the way in which readers of newspapers are persuaded by electoral endorsements. The first postulates that readers are

persuaded by the endorsement itself,⁹ and the second that the endorsement is in fact but one of substantial number of articles, published over an extended period, which taken all together manage to nudge the paper's readership in a particular direction.¹⁰ These seemingly conflicting interpretations can simultaneously exist if the first is confined to low-information elections and the second used for larger-scale ones, although the first model is at times incorrectly used to explain large elections¹¹.

2.2.1.1. Endorsements as a source of influence

Many studies of endorsement effects in the United States have focused on low-level elections which garner relatively little publicity, often for seats on municipal governments and school boards, or even for elected bureaucratic positions such as County Clerk or District Attorney. These elections are more often non-partisan in nature, and the average voter will often have very little

⁹ For example: James E. Gregg, 'Newspaper Editorial Endorsements and California Elections, 1948–62', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (1 December 1965): 532–38, doi:10.1177/107769906504200402; McCombs, 'Editorial Endorsements'; Timothy B. Krebs, 'The Determinants of Candidates' Vote Share and the Advantages of Incumbency in City Council Elections', *American Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 3 (July 1998): 921–35, doi:10.2307/2991735.

¹⁰ For example: Howard A. Scarrow and Steve Borman, 'The Effects of Newspaper Endorsements on Election Outcomes: A Case Study', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (1979): 388–393; Kim Fridkin Kahn and Patrick J. Kenney, 'The Slant of the News: How Editorial Endorsements Influence Campaign Coverage and Citizens' Views of Candidates', *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 2 (2002): 381–394; Jonathan McDonald Ladd and Gabriel S. Lenz, 'Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media', *American Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 2 (1 April 2009): 394–410, doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00377.x.

¹¹ For example, Chun-Fang Chiang and Brian Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence: Evidence from Newspaper Endorsements', *The Review of Economic Studies* 78, no. 3 (1 July 2011): 795–820, doi:10.1093/restud/rdq037.

information upon which to base their vote. Under these circumstances many authors theorise that the endorsement article itself has a persuasive power over the paper's readership, as readers will have often received very little other information to guide their choice.¹²

In his study of Californian elections, Gregg follows this logic in concluding "that newspaper endorsements have less influence when voters have other sources of information by which to reach decisions."¹³ Gregg's thinking has been backed up by many studies, which have found endorsements to be influential in small elections with little coverage, elections with very large numbers of candidates, and non-partisan elections. In his study of Chicago city council elections, Krebs theorised that voters turn to endorsements as a signal of "candidates' credibility and legitimacy" in the absence of other information.¹⁴

While Gregg's exact formulation posits that endorsements are most useful in the absence of other information, others have used similar logic to argue that endorsements can be useful in situations with a complete overload of information. Mueller found such an effect in a 1969 election in which 133 candidates vied for places on a Junior College Board of Trustees – as the board was newly

¹² Gregg, 'Newspaper Editorial Endorsements and California Elections, 1948–62'; McCombs, 'Editorial Endorsements'; John E. Mueller, 'Choosing Among 133 Candidates', *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1970): 395–402.

¹³ Gregg, 'Newspaper Editorial Endorsements and California Elections, 1948–62', 537.

¹⁴ Krebs, 'The Determinants of Candidates' Vote Share and the Advantages of Incumbency in City Council Elections', 924.

created and non-partisan, voters were unable to rely on incumbency or party affiliation to guide their vote, and were not reasonably able to personally evaluate each of the candidates due to their vast numbers.¹⁵ Given their inability to evaluate all candidates individually, voters presumably would outsource this task to their newspaper. Similarly, the 1964 Illinois at-large legislative election saw voters casting a total of 177 votes, with neither party running a full slate of candidates. In his aggregate-level study, Michael Hooper found that while party affiliation was the primary determining factor of vote shares, newspaper endorsements explained the majority of the remaining variation, particularly in those areas that had the highest newspaper circulation.¹⁶ Once again, in a situation where an average individual could not reasonably be expected to take the time to evaluate all of their possible choices carefully, newspaper endorsements provide a convenient source of information for those still wishing to cast a (somewhat) informed ballot.

Low-information models of influence also are commonly used in municipal elections, where media coverage is generally less plentiful and endorsements make up a greater percentage of overall press coverage. In Cincinnati municipal elections in the 1960s and 1970s, Lieske found that endorsements, both those of newspapers and those of civil society groups, were important determinants of vote share, but less important than the resources available to and the followership

¹⁵ Mueller, 'Choosing Among 133 Candidates'.

¹⁶ Michael Hooper, 'Party and Newspaper Endorsement as Predictors of Voter Choice', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (1 June 1969): 302–5, doi:10.1177/107769906904600211.

of the candidate.¹⁷ In studying Chicago city council elections between 1979-1995, Krebs found similar results, finding endorsements to be an important determinant of vote-share, particularly for non-incumbent candidates.¹⁸

Kenneth Rystrom's study of Californian endorsements found similar effects for primary elections and ballot initiatives (referenda). Primary elections saw higher endorsement effects than did general elections, due to the lower media attention and voters' inability to rely on partisan affiliation. Endorsements for ballot initiatives similarly had a greater impact on the least controversial issues, due to the lower media attention these uncontroversial proposals would generate. Overall, Rystrom found endorsements to have quite modest effects, increasing overall vote share by 0.7 percentage points in general elections, compared to 1.8 in primaries and 1.2 on propositions.¹⁹

Occasionally, the editorial endorsement itself is conceived of the source of influence in elections with few candidates, high importance, and extensive news coverage. Chiang and Knight, for example, apply this model to the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections in the United States, finding an overall increase in vote share of 5% among newspaper readers, and 4% in the population as a whole.²⁰ While their data do allow them to show party support rising around the point of an endorsement publication, they do not control for non-endorsement editorials and can not show that

¹⁷ Joel Lieske, 'The Political Dynamics of Urban Voting Behavior', *American Journal of Political Science* 33, no. 1 (1989): 150-74, doi:10.2307/2111257.

¹⁸ Krebs, 'The Determinants of Candidates' Vote Share and the Advantages of Incumbency in City Council Elections'.

¹⁹ Kenneth Rystrom, 'The Impact of Newspaper Endorsements.', *Newspaper Research Journal* 7, no. 2 (1986).

²⁰ Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence'.

the endorsement alone is responsible for the increase. In any case, the findings of Chiang and Knight may indicate that endorsements on their own can exert a persuasive influence in all elections, but this does not negate the finding of others that endorsement effects can be aided by accompanying editorial and news slant.

In summation, newspaper endorsements are often conceived of as being influential in-and-of themselves in a situation in which a voter is unlikely to take the time to evaluate all of their options individually. In cases where the time needed to evaluate every option is too great to spare (or the election too unimportant to justify the time), electors may turn intentionally to their newspaper, in hope that this trusted institution will have done the necessary analysis to inform their opinion. In cases where little coverage of an election is available, readers may still intentionally turn their newspaper for guidance. Alternatively, the endorsement may prove influential because it is (one of) the only piece(s) of information available to the voter, and thus gains an enormous influence on their decision. In all of these cases, the election contested would tend to be smaller and more local in scale (except in the case of at-large districts) and the influence of the endorsement would be independent of any slant in the newspaper's editorial or news coverage.

2.2.1.2. Endorsements as an indication of slant

While many studies of endorsement effects have focused on low-information elections, endorsements are also routinely published by newspapers for elections in which are far larger in scale, such as US presidential and senatorial elections, as well as UK parliamentary elections. The numerous studies that have found significant endorsement effects in these situations directly contradict Gregg's oft-repeated assertion that newspaper endorsements only prove effective in cases of low information; these elections are the subject of massive, almost omnipresent news

coverage, and yet endorsements are still found to be influential. The reason for this contradiction appears not to be that Gregg and his contemporaries were entirely wrong in their conclusions, but rather that they were examining a different influence mechanism than were those who study larger elections. In these elections that receive substantial amounts of press coverage there is evidence to indicate that the influence of a newspaper's endorsement may come in an at least partly indirect fashion. Indeed, the endorsement may only serve as a barometer of a newspaper's overall editorial slant. Several American studies instead take up this causal mechanism, particularly those dealing with larger scale elections and published more recently.²¹

Studies of electoral endorsements in the United Kingdom seem to universally fall into this second causal mechanism, believing that overall editorial slant is the source of any endorsement persuasion.²² It is worth noting here that newspapers in the United Kingdom differ somewhat from their American and Canadian counterparts. Unlike most North American newspapers, they are not geographically isolated to a single city or region, but rather distributed across the country. Furthermore, British newspapers are often very overtly partisan in comparison to those in the US

²¹ See, for example: Scarrow and Borman, 'The Effects of Newspaper Endorsements on Election Outcomes'; Robert S. Erikson, 'The Influence of Newspaper Endorsements in Presidential Elections: The Case of 1964', *American Journal of Political Science* 20, no. 2 (May 1976): 207, doi:10.2307/2110642; Robert E. Hurd and Michael W. Singletary, 'Newspaper Endorsement Influence on the 1980 Presidential Election Vote', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1 June 1984): 332–38, doi:10.1177/107769908406100213.

²² See, for example: Kenneth Newton and Malcolm Brynne, 'The National Press and Party Voting in the UK', *Political Studies* 49, no. 2 (1 June 2001): 265–85, doi:10.1111/1467-9248.00313; McDonald Ladd and Lenz, 'Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media'.

and Canada, and make no attempts to hide their affiliations. Furthermore, British radio and television are forbidden to present biased coverage, giving the press a near-monopoly on editorial bias. While this does not mean that the workings of UK newspaper endorsements are necessarily different from those in the United States, it does explain why UK researchers would be more likely to assume this causal model, as the prevalence of editorial slant is harder to ignore. For example, in studying the 1987 general election, Miller found the tabloid press to be somewhat more effective at persuading their readers than ‘high-brow’ newspapers (due to the latter’s more partisan readership) and further found television to have far less persuasive power than the press.²³ In studying the 1997 election, McDonald Ladd and Lenz found that newspapers that switched their endorsement to Labour were able to convince between 10 and 25% of their readers to follow suit, depending upon the statistical model they applied.²⁴

However, the influence may not be limited only to the opinion pages of a publication. In studying the coverage of US senatorial elections in the 1990s, Kahn and Kenny found a statistically significant relationship between the slant of a paper’s news coverage and the candidates it endorsed; that is to say, they found that papers tend to write about the candidates that they endorse

²³ William L. Miller, *Media and Voters - The Audience, Content, and Influence of Press and Television at the 1987 General Election* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 198.

²⁴ McDonald Ladd and Lenz, ‘Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media’.

with a more positive tone and more frequently.²⁵ In cases where their findings hold true – cases where an endorsement is accompanied a long history of slanted news coverage – the endorsement itself need not actually hold a huge amount of persuasive power for an ‘endorsement effect’ to be observable. Rather, the endorsement itself may serve only as an indicator of the newspaper’s editorial slant or bias, and the actual influence may stem almost entirely from the news pages of the paper. While UK studies of endorsement effects do not mention news slant specifically, there is nonetheless evidence that a similar endorsement-directed slant enters into UK papers,²⁶ and thus it is quite conceivable that the same mechanism may be present.

While many do support (either explicitly or implicitly) that newspaper endorsements are generally representative off the overall slant of a newspapers editorials and opinion-pieces,²⁷ Kahn and Kenny’s finding of a link to a slant in news coverage is rather surprising, as it runs contrary to journalistic principle, which dictates that news coverage and editorial opinion should be entirely divorced from one another. Furthermore, some other studies contradict Kahn and Kenny’s findings in this regard; in their study of the 1992 US Presidential election, Dalton et al. find that newspapers were not more likely to favour the agenda of their endorsed candidate in terms of their news

²⁵ Kahn and Kenney, ‘The Slant of the News’.

²⁶ D. Butler and D. Stokes, ‘Political Change in Britain: Forces Shaping Electoral Choice’, *Comparative Political Studies* 14, no. 1 (1981): 81.

²⁷ For example: McDonald Ladd and Lenz, ‘Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media’; Scarrow and Borman, ‘The Effects of Newspaper Endorsements on Election Outcomes’; Newton and Brynin, ‘The National Press and Party Voting in the UK’.

coverage.²⁸ However, in support of Kahn and Kenny's findings, and following the same methodology, Druckman and Parkin also find a link between news slant and editorial endorsement in the 2000 Minnesota Senatorial race.²⁹

Kahn and Kenny are also entirely contrary to Gregg in finding that endorsements are actually *more* influential in elections that receive more press coverage.³⁰ Though these two assertions may appear to be at odds, they are both reasonable if confined to the appropriate cases. In cases where an endorsement is not accompanied by a great number of editorials or slanted news pieces, it is only logical that the endorsement effect will be greatest when voters have no other information upon which to base their decision. Conversely, when repeated editorials and slanted news are mobilised alongside the endorsement, an increased volume of coverage provides increased chances to sway the reader

Some studies ignore endorsements entirely and operationalise news slant as their independent variable. Following the methodology of Kahn and Kenny, Druckman and Parkin find that readership of a newspaper with coverage slanted in favour of a candidate in the 2000 Minnesota

²⁸ Russell J. Dalton et al., 'A Test of Media-Centered Agenda Setting: Newspaper Content and Public Interests in a Presidential Election', *Political Communication* 15, no. 4 (September 1998): 463–81, doi:10.1080/105846098198849.

²⁹ James N. Druckman, 'The Impact of Media Bias: How Editorial Slant Affects Voters', *Journal of Politics* 67, no. 4 (1 November 2005): 1030–49, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00349.x.

³⁰ Kahn and Kenney, 'The Slant of the News', 389–90.

Senatorial election significantly increases voters' evaluations of said candidate.³¹ Robinson found that survey respondents who believed the media they consumed to be biased towards a particular candidate were more likely to ultimately vote for that candidate, increasing the endorsed candidate's vote-share by six percentage points. Furthermore, Robinson found that the effect for newspapers was stronger than for television or radio.³²

While endorsements as an indication of slant are more often applied to large-scale and high information elections, this is not universally the case. Scarrow and Borman³³ apply this model to the 1977 election for District Attorney in Suffolk County, New York. Taking advantage of the natural experiment created by a free newspaper distributed to only half the county, they found that the endorsement had a positive effect on vote choice beyond what could be explained by partisan identity. While the endorsement for District Attorney was accompanied by several weeks of strong editorials in the same direction, Scarrow and Borman found that in the subsequent 1978 election for County Clerk, which was not a subject of other editorial, had a much smaller impact.

Particularly in cases where voters can reasonably be expected to have the information and time needed to evaluate all major candidates in an election, the influence of newspaper endorsements

³¹ Druckman, 'The Impact of Media Bias'.

³² John P. Robinson, 'Perceived Media Bias and the 1968 Vote: Can the Media Affect Behavior After All?', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1 June 1972): 239–46, doi:10.1177/107769907204900203.

³³ Scarrow and Borman, 'The Effects of Newspaper Endorsements on Election Outcomes'.

is often conceived of as working in an indirect fashion. While the endorsement itself may also sway voters, it is assumed to be accompanied by several weeks, months, or even years of editorials and possibly even news coverage slanted in favour of the endorsed party or candidate.

2.2.2. Differentiating factors – who is affected?

Some studies have commented on the difference in persuasiveness between right- and left-leaning endorsements, and in persuadability between more right- and left-leaning individuals.³⁴ Studies both in the US and the UK that analyse these differences find that right-leaning endorsements (i.e. those for the Republican or the Conservative party) are more persuasive than left-leaning one, and that more left-leaning individuals are easier to persuade than those more to the right. Newton and Brynin, for example, found in the United Kingdom that voters who identified as being Labour supporters were more likely than Conservatives to vote in line with their paper's editorial slant, even when that slant is contrary to their own identity.³⁵ Within this context, some studies have also analysed the impacts of multiple newspaper readership, both at the individual and district level. In this context as well, more right-leaning endorsements are found to be more persuasive, and the

³⁴ Erikson, 'The Influence of Newspaper Endorsements in Presidential Elections'; Newton and Brynin, 'The National Press and Party Voting in the UK'; Hurd and Singletary, 'Newspaper Endorsement Influence on the 1980 Presidential Election Vote'; Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence'.

³⁵ Newton and Brynin, 'The National Press and Party Voting in the UK'.

more right-leaning endorsement is the one that produces the apparent influence. For example, Erikson's study of the 1964 US presidential election, which used polling-station level data, found that when a county was exposed to two competing newspaper endorsements the noticeable effect was from the Republican endorsement.³⁶

While Chiang and Knight also found Republican endorsements to be more persuasive than those of Democratic candidates their explanation of this finding differs from that of other authors. Chiang and Knight's study focused on the credibility of endorsements, working from the assumption that readers will be more likely to be swayed by an endorsement that they perceive as being more credible.³⁷

A further finding within the field of partisan affiliations is that 'independents' or those who identify with no party are more likely to be persuaded by an endorsement than those who do, and that individuals with weak party identifications are easier to persuade than strong partisans. Chiang and Knight found that moderate voters – be they moderate democrats or moderate Republicans – were more likely to be swayed than were those with more extreme or deeply-held views.³⁸ Rather than focus on independents or moderates specifically, some studies have separated voters based upon how late into a campaign they made their voting decision. Here again, those with less strong

³⁶ Erikson, 'The Influence of Newspaper Endorsements in Presidential Elections'.

³⁷ Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence'.

³⁸ Ibid.

political views (i.e. those who took longer to decide) are found to be more likely to be influenced. In McCombs's small-scale follow-up to Gregg's study of Californian elections, he found that those who made their voting decision quite close to Election Day were more likely to be swayed than those who made their decision early on.³⁹ Robinson likewise found those who remained undecided later into the campaign to be more likely to vote in line with the perceived bias of their newspaper.⁴⁰

Several sources also find a difference in the size of the endorsement effect between those who read newspapers habitually and more occasional readers, with more frequent readers being more likely to be swayed. Chiang and Knight, for example, found low frequency (defined as fewer than seven days per week) readers were less likely to be affected by an endorsement, and that the only statistically significant endorsement effect was on high-frequency readers.⁴¹ Kahn and Kenny likewise found that the only significant endorsement effect was for everyday readers.⁴² MacDonald Ladd and Lenz differentiated only between all newspaper readers and 'habitual readers', which they defined as those who "read one of the switching papers in every wave in which they were interviewed".⁴³ They find that habitual readers are far more influenced by endorsement switches,

³⁹ McCombs, 'Editorial Endorsements'.

⁴⁰ Robinson, 'Perceived Media Bias and the 1968 Vote'.

⁴¹ Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence', 18.

⁴² Kahn and Kenney, 'The Slant of the News', 389.

⁴³ MacDonald Ladd and Lenz, 'Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media', 398.

experiencing a maximum effect of 23.4%, compared to 14.0% among all readers. In the case of the 1964 Illinois at-large election Hooper found that the observed endorsement effect was stronger in those areas with higher newspaper circulation.⁴⁴ Many authors attribute this difference simply to exposure. As endorsements are generally run only once in a newspaper, those who read less frequently or don't read the entire paper may simply miss the endorsement article and thus not be swayed by it.⁴⁵ Equally, this difference in relation to editorial slant, as less frequent readers would be exposed to fewer editorials and/or less news slant, and therefore be less likely to be swayed.⁴⁶

In summary, the persuasiveness of newspaper endorsements can be differentiated based upon the ideological positioning of the endorsement, the political affiliation of the reader, and the frequency with which the reader reads the newspaper in question. In both the US and UK, studies have found more right-leaning endorsements to be more persuasive, and more left-leaning individuals easier to persuade. Moreover, those with weaker or no party affiliation are found to be more likely to be swayed than those who identify more strongly. Finally, endorsement effects are found primarily among those who read newspapers on a daily or near-daily basis.

2.2.1. Use of natural experiments

An evident concern in attempting to determine newspapers' influence is ensuring that the link between the newspaper(s) one reads and their vote is more than mere coincidence. Conservatives

⁴⁴ Hooper, 'Party and Newspaper Endorsement as Predictors of Voter Choice'.

⁴⁵ See, for example: Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence', 18.

⁴⁶ See, for example: Kahn and Kenney, 'The Slant of the News', 389.

may simply opt to read more right-leaning papers and be entirely uninfluenced by their paper's endorsement. Many studies have assuaged this fear by controlling for alternative determinants of vote choice, and for a voter's pre-existing party identification. Numerous studies have found that endorsements are a significant predictor of vote choice, even after controlling for one's political beliefs.⁴⁷ A few studies, however, have capitalised upon unusual situations to create 'natural experiments' to address causality more directly.

Erikson's study of the 1964 US presidential election measured vote shifts since 1960 on a county-level in conjunction with shifts in county newspaper endorsements from 1960. By comparing in this manner between these two presidential elections Erikson attempted able to illustrate how an endorsement impacts changes in voting behaviour, showing for example that counties where the newspaper(s) switched their endorsement from Republican to Democrat saw an increase in the Democratic vote 5.5 percentage points greater than counties that saw Republican endorsements in both elections.⁴⁸

In their study of the 1977 election for the District Attorney of Suffolk County, New York, Scarrow and Borman exploited the fact that only a single paper published an endorsement, and that this

⁴⁷ See, for example: Hurd and Singletary, 'Newspaper Endorsement Influence on the 1980 Presidential Election Vote'; David Butler and Donald E. Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 2nd college ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976); Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence'.

⁴⁸ Erikson, 'The Influence of Newspaper Endorsements in Presidential Elections', 215.

paper was only distributed to half of the county, for free on a twice-weekly basis. Their analysis found that even after controlling for differences in party affiliation (as the election was partisan) the endorsed candidate received a vote share approximately twenty percentage points greater in the newspaper's circulation area, although vote shares for the similar unendorsed position of county clerk were essentially identical in both halves of the county.⁴⁹

Between the 1993 and 1997 UK general elections, several major newspapers switched their editorial stance to favour the Labour Party, a rare occurrence in the highly partisan British press. Being the notoriously partisan organisations that they are, newspapers in the UK typically firmly support a single party and hold this stance over numerous electoral cycles.⁵⁰ McDonald Ladd and Lenz combined this event with data from the British Election Panel Study, which had 211 respondents who had read a tone-switching paper and 1,382 who read a constant paper or did not read a paper. Although the two groups were similar in most demographic matters such as race and education, the tone-switching group were noticeably more likely to switch their vote to Labour, which the authors hold to be proof of a direct link between vote choice and newspaper readership.⁵¹

Taken in conjunction with the other studies that have found a link between endorsements and voting behaviour, these 'natural experiments' provide a fairly strong indication that at least some voters are in fact swayed by a newspaper's endorsement. While some people undoubtedly simply

⁴⁹ Scarrow and Borman, 'The Effects of Newspaper Endorsements on Election Outcomes'.

⁵⁰ Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 1976, 81.

⁵¹ McDonald Ladd and Lenz, 'Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media'.

opt to read newspapers that align with their own views, these natural experiments show that at least some people seemingly will change their vote based upon an endorsement.

2.2.2. Methods of measurement

Many earlier American studies measured newspaper endorsement effects indirectly, using geographic location to infer newspaper readership. Such tools are obviously only suitable in cases where newspapers, or at least those that publish endorsements, present little to no geographic overlap in their readership, and readership levels are comparable across regions. Despite the limitations, in some cases such methods can prove to be surprisingly viable. For example, Scarrow and Borman's⁵² study exploited a natural experiment created by the fact that the only relevant endorsement was published by a single newspaper which was freely distributed to almost every home in a region. While other studies worked with less ideal conditions, attempts to mitigate the difficulties of aggregate data were made by focusing on single-endorsement and high circulation areas.⁵³

Virtually all of the more recent studies, and several older ones as well, resolve the shortcomings of the indirect methods by using data from panel surveys, such as the UK and US National Election

⁵² Scarrow and Borman, 'The Effects of Newspaper Endorsements on Election Outcomes'.

⁵³ For example: Gregg, 'Newspaper Editorial Endorsements and California Elections, 1948–62'; Hooper, 'Party and Newspaper Endorsement as Predictors of Voter Choice'.

Studies. As they allow researchers to match a specific voter's vote choice with their newspaper reading habits, they for allow accurate measurement of smaller endorsement effects and more complicated elections, and the introduction of control variables in the absence of a natural experiment. Furthermore, in the UK the extensive overlap of multiple competing national newspapers with widely varying editorial stances⁵⁴ leave panel studies as seemingly the only viable measurement method.

In the Canadian context, indirect measurement is not an empirically sound approach. *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* are both distributed widely across the country, as are many regional papers such as *La Presse* throughout Québec. The existence of these overlapping newspaper distribution areas, in addition to the presence of multiple local newspapers, makes it difficult to determine the endorsement to which newspaper readers in a given area were exposed. This issue, combined with declining readership and the increased possibly of following newspapers from other regions via the internet, make aggregate-level data non-viable for the modern and Canadian context.

⁵⁴ Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 1976, 82.

2.3. The Canadian Context

The role of newspapers has been largely absent from the Canadian literature on the media's role in elections. For example, in "Letting the People Decide", the authors break the role of the media during a campaign into four categories: television news, opinion polls, advertising, and leader's debates.⁵⁵ This focus, prioritising nightly TV news over newspapers, is fairly typical of scholarship on Canadian elections. Moreover, where newspapers are mentioned, they are largely analysed in a similar fashion to television, focusing on print media as a source of news stories and information. In these cases, the persuasion from the media would come somewhat indirectly, through mechanisms such as priming and framing, and stem from which news stories the media chose to run and how they are presented. The rather blatant and direct persuasion that is attempted in newspaper endorsements and editorials has been largely left out of Canadian research.

Studies of the role of the media in Canadian elections have often been qualitative and content-focused, analysing how the media portray certain issues or candidates.⁵⁶ There exists however some doubt as to the staying power of media effects; while some studies do find a significant link

⁵⁵ Richard Johnston et al., *Letting the People Decide: Dynamics of a Canadian Election* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), <http://journals.cambridge.org/production/action/cjoGetFulltext?fulltextid=6238808>.

⁵⁶ See, for example: Joanna M. Everitt and Michael Camp, 'Changing the Game Changes the Frame: The Media's Use of Lesbian Stereotypes in Leadership versus Election Campaigns', *Canadian Political Science Review* 3, no. 3 (1 October 2009): 24–39; Linda Trimble and Shannon Sampert, 'Who's in the Game? The Framing of the Canadian Election 2000 by the Globe and Mail and the National Post', *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 37, no. 1 (2004): 51–71.

between vote choice and media exposure,⁵⁷ Dobrzynska, Blais and Nadeau found that while media effect can explain shifts in vote intention over the course of the campaign, there was no significant difference between the actual vote choices of those who consumed much or little news.⁵⁸

Studies of media impact in Canada are also often done in a manner that presents media exposure as a monolith, rather than distinguishing between particular media sources that voters may be exposed to. Mendelsohn and Nadeau, for example, find that Catholics who have been more exposed to television news display a less noticeable cleavage in voting patterns (in comparison to non-Catholics) than do those who consume little news.⁵⁹

In Canadian study of newspapers in particular, much of the focus has been the rise of – and possible problems resultant from – chain-ownership and consolidation of newspapers. The rise of conglomerates such as Conrad Black’s (now defunct) Hollinger International prompted widespread concern about the possible loss of diversity of editorial opinion, and loss of diversity in news coverage.⁶⁰ Concern about these effects was sufficient to prompt the creation of a royal commission, which was highly critical of the degree of ownership concentration and recommended divestment along with strict regulation of future acquisitions.⁶¹ While editorial endorsements are

⁵⁷ André Blais and M. Martin Boyer, ‘Assessing the Impact of Televised Debates: The Case of the 1988 Canadian Election’, *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 2 (April 1996): 143–164, doi:10.1017/S0007123400000405.

⁵⁸ Agnieszka Dobrzynska, André Blais, and Richard Nadeau, ‘Do the Media Have a Direct Impact on the Vote? The Case of the 1997 Canadian Election’, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 15, no. 1 (2003): 27–43.

⁵⁹ Matthew Mendelsohn and Richard Nadeau, ‘The Religious Cleavage and the Media in Canada’, *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 30, no. 1 (March 1997): 129–46, doi:10.1017/S0008423900014967.

⁶⁰ See, for example: Kai Hildebrandt and W. C. Soderlund, eds., *Canadian Newspaper Ownership in the Era of Convergence: Rediscovering Social Responsibility* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005).

⁶¹ Tom Kent, *Report of the Royal Commission on Newspapers* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1981).

clearly a political aspect of newspapers that could be influenced by consolidation (as evidenced by Postmedia's actions in the 2015 election), to date they have not been given explicit consideration.

This represents a significant gap in the literature on media influences on Canadian elections, as well as the specific literature dealing with newspaper endorsements. Apart from the literature on the influence of leaders' debates and political advertisements on the Canadian electorate, the literature on media effects on vote choice has been focused on indirect and even inadvertent fashions that the media could influence their readership, such as priming, framing, and agenda-setting. Given that these effects are established in the Canadian context, overlooking the "overt [attempt] at influencing the behaviour of the audience"⁶² that is a newspaper endorsement could be omitting a very important source of media influence. If indeed Canadian voters are susceptible to inadvertent influence from the media's framing of events, it seems improbable to suggest that they are somehow immune to deliberate attempts to sway their votes. Furthermore, as deliberate attempts to influence voters by political parties (in the form of advertising) have garnered significant attention,

Overlooking direct attempts at persuasion also omits what is potentially the most troubling source of media influence from a democratic perspective. While other media effects may reflect journalists' unconscious bias seeping into their coverage, endorsements are a deliberate mechanism of influence with the goal of influencing their readership. With Canada's newspapers being consolidated into fewer and fewer chains, this tool to influence the Canadian voting public

⁶² McCombs, 'Editorial Endorsements', 545.

is being controlled by an increasingly small group. Understanding this source of media influence is therefore important for a fuller understanding of the health of Canada's democracy, and well as for informing the continuing discussion surrounding the trend of consolidation.

Moreover, the existing literature on newspaper endorsements is limited to the cases of the United States and United Kingdom. The addition of the Canadian case helps to provide external validity, evaluating if newspaper endorsements are influential outside of the British and American contexts. Canada's electoral context is vastly different from that of the United States, having a multi-party and parliamentary system, and only voting for a single representative at each election (rather than simultaneously electing a President, Representative, and also voting on ballot initiatives). Additionally, the media landscape in Canada is different, particularly from that of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom has several major newspapers which are distributed on a national basis, often having evident partisan affiliations.⁶³ Canada's newspapers by contrast are generally less wide-reaching, having their distribution limited to a single city or region. The addition of the Canadian case will strengthen the literature on newspaper endorsements' influence on election outcomes by providing a different political and media context.

⁶³ Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 1976.

2.4. Theory and hypothesis

I will be approaching my research question from a rational choice perspective, more specifically from a perspective of bounded rationality. Bounded rationality takes the assumption that actors strive to make rational choices, but are limited in their ability to do so by personal factors such as their own cognitive ability to make a decision and the time available to them in which to do so, and by external factors such as the available information upon which an actor can make their decision.⁶⁴ Therefore, within the context of an election, we can expect that the decisions of these quasi-rational actors will differ based upon their personal characteristics such as their age, gender, region of residence, and political ideology (which help to determine what their interests are), as well as the amount and source of information they have available to them about the election (which will help them determine how to vote in order to best maximise their own interests).

In a modern Canadian federal election, the media consumed by a voter will be the primary determinant of the information available to them. In the large federal electoral districts of the present day, the average voter will have had little to no direct interaction with the candidates who are vying to become their Member of Parliament, let alone with the party leaders who hope to become Prime Minister. For the average Canadian elector, the information available to evaluate the policies of a party, as well as the personal competence of its leader and candidates, will principally come from the news media.

⁶⁴ See, for example: Bryan D. Jones, 'Bounded Rationality', *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1999): 297–321, doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.297.

Within the broader category of news media, newspapers, be they consumed through traditional physical means or via the internet, will play a particularly important role. While other news sources, in particular television news, may play a role in determining an elector's vote choice, their impact will be different and less than that of newspapers. While television stations may frame issues slightly differently from one another and emphasise different aspects of the campaign, newspapers stand alone in present naked attempts at persuasion through their editorial pages. The editorial endorsement, typical the product of a consensus amongst the editors of a newspaper, represents the overall direction of the slant of the editorials and columns presented in the newspaper on the subject of the campaign. A regular reader of the newspaper, who relies on the publication for information upon which to form their decision in an election, can therefore be expected to be presented with a series of arguments aimed at pushing them to vote a particular way, and in some cases may even be presented with a slant in the actual news coverage pointing them in this same direction.

In sum, electors can be assumed to be (quasi-) rational actors, but their rationality is limited both by their own biases and abilities, as well as by the information they have available to inform their decision. In a modern federal election campaign, this information will come to the voter almost entirely through the filter of the news media they consume. While all forms of media may play a role in informing the vote choice of electors, newspapers play a special role due to their overtly partisan editorial pages, which attempt to push the reader to vote in a particular fashion. While the reader will still make an independent voting decision based upon the information available to them, the slant of these editorials will inform the manner in which they interpret this information, and thus influence their ultimate vote choice.

Based upon this framework and the extensive literature on the subject, I expect that endorsements will have a demonstrable effect on Canadians' voting behaviour, with endorsements of the any political increasing the odds of readers voting for them and decreasing the odds of voting for all other parties. Furthermore, I expect that the strength of this endorsement effect will be strongest for those who do not identify with any party, as they are likely more open to persuasion and less decided in their vote choice. Finally, based upon research that has found endorsements of both the US Republicans and UK Conservatives to be more effective, I postulate that this is an inherent property of more right-wing parties, and that a similar effect will be found for Canada's Conservative party. In the case of mixed endorsements, I expect the two endorsements to essentially negate each other, leaving either no net effect, or a reduced effect in favour of the more right-wing party. More explicitly, this understanding of endorsements combined with the existing literature on the subject leads me to make four hypothesises:

H₁: Reading a newspaper that endorses a political party will increase a voter's probability of voting for said party.

Those who regularly read a newspaper for their political news will likely be relying upon the publication, in part or in whole, to inform their vote choice. The endorsing paper will likely be presenting a large number of editorial, and possibly even news coverage, slanted in favour of the endorsed party, as the endorsement typically represents the consensus view of the newspaper's

editorial team. Therefore, I expect to find that newspaper endorsements increase the reader's odds of supporting the endorsed party, as has been found in the United States and United Kingdom.⁶⁵

H₂: The effect of an endorsement on a reader's probability to vote for an endorsed party will be greatest among those no party affiliation

While the information available to a voter plays a large role in determining their voter choice, this information will need to be interpreted in light of their pre-existing biases and opinions. If a voter already feels close to a particular party they will likely be far more decided in their vote choice, and will be much more resistant to messaging encouraging them to vote differently. Will voters who identify with no party at all are certainly not blank slates, their refusal to identify with a singly party indicates a greater degree of openness to voting for different parties, and a greater wiliness to consider other options. As such, I expect to confirm the finding of previous studies⁶⁶ that the politically unaffiliated are most likely to be influenced by an endorsement.

H₃: Endorsements of more right-wing parties will be more influential than those of more left-wing parties

Studies in both the United States and United Kingdom have found that endorsements of more right-leaning parties are more persuasive, and that more left-leaning individuals are more likely to be persuaded by an endorsement.⁶⁷ Given that this trend has appeared in both of the countries where

⁶⁵ For example: McDonald Ladd and Lenz, 'Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media'; Kahn and Kenney, 'The Slant of the News'; Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence'.

⁶⁶ Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence'; Robinson, 'Perceived Media Bias and the 1968 Vote'; McCombs, 'Editorial Endorsements'.

⁶⁷ For example: Newton and Brynin, 'The National Press and Party Voting in the UK'; Erikson, 'The Influence of Newspaper Endorsements in Presidential Elections'.

newspaper endorsements have thus far been studied, I hypothesise that this to some extent an inherent property of newspaper endorsements, and that newspapers may more easily convince their readership to support more conservative parties. As such I expect to see endorsements of the Conservative Party of Canada prove more influential than other endorsements, as was the case for the US Republicans and the British Conservatives.

H₄: Readers of two conflicting endorsements will display no net influence from the endorsements, or a reduced effect in favour of the more right-wing party

Explained in a spatial metaphor, readers of conflicting endorsements will be being pushed in one direction by the first newspaper, and in an opposite direction by the second. Presuming both newspapers push with approximately the same strength (i.e. that they are equally persuasive), the effects will negate each other resulting in no net-movement. If one pushes more strongly, the reader will be moved towards the endorsed party of the more persuasive newspaper, but the effect of the other newspaper pushing in an opposite direction will cause the net effect to be less than that of those who were exposed to only one endorsement.

3. Newspaper endorsements in the general elections of 2011 and 2015

As I could find no comprehensive study of the orientation of newspaper endorsements in Canadian federal elections, I collected the data myself by examining the editorial pages of daily newspapers in the period leading up to the 2011 and 2015 elections. First, I compiled a list of all those newspapers listed by respondents to the 2011 Canadian Election Study as well as those newspapers ranked as being in the top 50 daily newspapers by circulation by Newspapers Canada⁶⁸ (now known as News Media Canada). Using the databases Canadian Newsstand and Factiva, I next examined all articles appearing in the opinion or editorial sections of the newspapers during the last two weeks leading up to the election, to determine if an endorsement had been published. To ensure accuracy, I also consulted an existing (though incomplete) list of 2015 endorsements⁶⁹ compiled by Dwayne Winseck, to ensure that no endorsing newspapers had been missed.

While the tables presented in this section do provide the endorsements of all those in the sample, it is not necessarily an exhaustive list of all endorsements published in the 2011 and 2015 elections. I limited my research to those newspapers that were listed by at least one respondent to the 2011 CES, as well as all those publications with circulation over 15,00 daily readers (representing the

⁶⁸ Kelly Levson, '2011 Daily Newspaper Circulation Report' (Newspapers Canada, 2012), <http://www.newspaperscanada.ca/sites/default/files/2011%20Daily%20Newspapers%20Circulation%20Report%20FINAL.xlsx>.

⁶⁹ Dwayne Winseck, 'Canadian Newspaper Election Endorsements: Elite and out of Sync', Policy Options, 3 November 2015, <http://policyoptions.irpp.org/2015/11/03/canadian-newspaper-editorial-endorsements-in-the-2015-federal-election-elite-and-out-of-sync/>.

top 50 daily newspapers by circulation). It is therefore possible that the endorsements of smaller newspapers and community newspapers (non-daily newspapers) were excluded from the below lists, if indeed any such endorsements exist. While all major endorsements are included in the following tables, and certainly all endorsements pertinent to the samples used in this thesis, it is possible that some minor newspapers' endorsements may have been missed.

3.1. Endorsements in the 2011 election

Table 1: Daily newspapers endorsing the Conservative Party in 2011

Newspaper	Owner ⁷⁰	Avg. Daily Circulation ⁷¹	Readers in Sample
The Globe and Mail	CTVGlobemedia Inc.	323,230	59 (19.4%)
The Toronto Sun	Quebecor/Sun Media	174,482	9 (3.0%)
Vancouver Sun	Postmedia Network Inc.	169,269	27 (8.9%)
National Post	Postmedia Network Inc.	155,162	12 (3.9%)
The Province (Vancouver)	Postmedia Network Inc.	153,503	6 (2.0%)
The Gazette (Montréal)*	Postmedia Network Inc.	134,354	8 (2.6%)
Calgary Herald	Postmedia Network Inc.	131,508	15 (4.9%)
Ottawa Citizen†	Postmedia Network Inc.	118,227	17 (5.6%)
Winnipeg Free Press	F.P. Canadian Newspapers LP	117,913	26 (8.6%)
The Spectator (Hamilton)	Torstar	103,894	4 (1.3%)
Edmonton Journal	Postmedia Network Inc.	103,416	4 (1.3%)
Waterloo Region Record	Torstar	63,321	5 (1.6%)
Winnipeg Sun	Quebecor/Sun Media	56,515	2 (0.7%)
The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)	Postmedia Network Inc.	53,160	9 (3.0%)
The Calgary Sun	Quebecor/Sun Media	50,124	0 (0%)
Edmonton Sun	Quebecor/Sun Media	46,535	1 (0.3%)
The Leader-Post (Regina)	Postmedia Network Inc.	44,665	6 (2.0%)
The Ottawa Sun	Quebecor/Sun Media	43,138	1 (0.3%)
The Sudbury Star	Quebecor/Sun Media	15,016	1 (0.3%)
The Brockville Recorder and Times	Quebecor/Sun Media	9,615	1 (0.3%)
Total:		2,016,920	213 (70.1%)

†Endorsed a Conservative government in addition to various local candidates

*Paper not present in regression model due to exclusion of Québec

⁷⁰ Levson, '2011 Daily Newspaper Circulation Report'.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Table 2: Daily newspapers publishing non-conservative endorsements in 2011

Newspaper	Owner⁷²	Avg. Daily Circulation⁷³	Readers in Sample	Party Endorsed
Toronto Star	Torstar	374,678	45 (14.8%)	NDP
La Presse*	Power Corp. of Canada	218,257	29 (9.5%)	Local endorsements
Le Soleil*	Power Corp. of Canada	81,730	5 (1.6%)	None (explicit)
Le Devoir*	Independent	33,488	12 (3.9%)	Bloc Québécois
Total:		708,152	91 (29.9%)	

*Paper not present in regression model due to exclusion of Québec

Three of the above endorsements stand out as being rather atypical in nature. The Ottawa Citizen's editorial board published an endorsement calling for a Conservative majority government, but also published separate endorsements for fifteen Ottawa-area ridings. Several of these local endorsements were, in fact, for Liberal and New Democratic candidates, and not the conservatives who *The Citizen* wished to see form government. This left some readers with a very uncertain message from their newspaper; for those who lived in ridings where Liberal and New Democrat candidates were endorsed, their newspaper was telling them to do two very contradictory things, making it impossible for them to vote fully in-line with their newspaper's endorsement. As Canadian voters cast only a single vote in general elections, that for the single Member of Parliament representing their riding, action on both the *Citizen's* recommendation to elect the local NDP candidate, and to their hope to install a Conservative majority government, would not be simultaneously possible.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

The two Power Corporation of Canada papers which published endorsements also printed somewhat abnormal endorsements. *La Presse* also endorsed individual candidates, selecting specific local candidates in nine Québec ridings, endorsing three candidates from each of the three major national parties, but none from the Bloc Québécois. Rather than endorsing a party to form government, as the *Citizen* did, *La Presse* published mostly a very neutral endorsement, hoping to “mieux faire entendre la voix du Québec moderne au Parlement”⁷⁴. *Le Soleil* published a particularly unusual endorsement that explicitly supported no particular candidate, and instead prompted voters to pick the best local candidate.⁷⁵ Unlike *La Presse*, *Le Soleil* provided their readers with no guidance as to which candidates those were.

The Postmedia Network had a very uniform tone, coming out strongly in favour of the Conservative party. Unlike other chains, which saw some variation either due to conflicting endorsements between papers, or some papers opting not to endorse, every single Postmedia daily

⁷⁴ André Pratte, ‘Pour un Québec fort à Ottawa’, *La Presse*, 29 April 2011, <http://www.lapresse.ca/debats/editoriaux/andre-pratte/201104/28/01-4394343-pour-un-quebec-fort-a-ottawa.php>.

⁷⁵ Pierre-Paul Noreau, ‘Voter local’, *Le Soleil*, 29 April 2011, sec. Éditoriaux, http://www.lapresse.ca/le-soleil/opinions/editoriaux/201104/28/01-4394395-voter-local.php?utm_categorieinterne=traficdrivers&utm_contenuinterne=cyberpresse_B22_editorialistes_255150_section_POS1.

published an independent endorsement of the Conservative party. Moreover, each of the endorsements were specific in calling for a majority government.⁷⁶

The Quebecor chain had some particularly interesting variation. The chain's major Québec-based newspapers, *Le Journal de Montréal* and *Le Journal de Québec*, did not publish any endorsements. Two of the papers acquired by Quebecor's subsidiary *Sun* chain (which is now owned by Postmedia), *The Brockville Recorder and Times* and *The Sudbury Star*, published very similar, yet distinct, endorsements. While both papers urged their readers to vote for the same party, *The Sudbury Star* published a very lukewarm endorsement of the Conservative party that called the leadership a "bombastic, self-aggrandizing bunch"⁷⁷, whereas *The Brockville Recorder* published a much stronger endorsement of local Conservative candidate Gord Brown, calling him "the solid

⁷⁶ 'Conservative Majority Needed to See Us through Turbulent Times', *The Vancouver Sun*, 30 April 2011, sec. Editorial; 'Editorial Board Endorsement: Conservatives a Clear Choice in Uncertain Times', *National Post*, accessed 25 September 2016, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/editorial-board-election-endorsement-conservatives-a-clear-choice-in-uncertain-times>; 'A Tory Majority Would Be Best for Canada', *The Province*, 29 April 2011, sec. Editorial; 'Canada Needs the Stability of a Majority Government', *The Gazette*, 30 April 2011, sec. Editorial; 'Tories Deserve a Majority', *Calgary Herald*, 30 April 2011, sec. The Editorial Page; 'Time to Consider a Tory Majority', *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, 2 May 2011, sec. Forum; 'Politics and Pragmatism', *Leader Post*, 2 May 2011, sec. Viewpoints; 'The Case for a Tory Majority', *Ottawa Citizen*, 30 April 2011, sec. Editorial; 'A Winning Formula for Alberta Voters', *Edmonton Journal*, 30 April 2011, sec. Opinion.

⁷⁷ 'Conservatives Haven't Earned a Majority', *The Sudbury Star*, 30 April 2011, sec. Editorial, <http://www.thesudburystar.com/2011/04/30/conservatives-havent-earned-a-majority-editorial>.

choice”⁷⁸. Those Sun Media papers that carried the *Sun* name, the *Toronto*⁷⁹, *Edmonton*⁸⁰, *Winnipeg*⁸¹, and *Ottawa Sun*⁸², all published an identical endorsement of Stephen Harper and the conservatives. The endorsement speaks of Sun Media’s support rather than that of the individual papers, and is very insistent that this support is contingent upon Harper fulfilling his promises.

Torstar stands alone in having endorsements of different parties within the chain. The chain’s flagship *Toronto Star* took the unusual position of endorsing the New Democratic Party,⁸³ which was at the time the third party in Parliament. Two of the chain’s smaller Southern-Ontario papers, *The Waterloo Region Record*⁸⁴ and *The Spectator*⁸⁵ (Hamilton), took an entirely contrary position and endorsed the incumbent Conservatives, both mentioning that the NDP were promising but not yet ready to govern.

⁷⁸ ‘Gord Brown Remains the Best Choice’, *The Brockville Recorder*, 30 April 2011, sec. Editorial, <http://www.recorder.ca/2011/04/30/editorial-gord-brown-remains-the-best-choice>.

⁷⁹ ‘Sun Backs Stephen Harper*’, *Toronto Sun*, 1 May 2011, sec. Opinion, <http://www.torontosun.com/2011/04/30/sun-backs-stephen-harper>.

⁸⁰ ‘Sun Backs Stephen Harper*’, *Edmonton Sun*, 1 May 2011, sec. Opinion, <http://www.edmontonsun.com/2011/04/30/sun-backs-stephen-harper>.

⁸¹ ‘Sun Backs Stephen Harper*’, *Winnipeg Sun*, 1 May 2011, sec. Opinion, <http://www.winnipegson.com/2011/04/30/sun-backs-stephen-harper>.

⁸² Noreau, ‘Voter local’.

⁸³ ‘Toronto Star Endorses the NDP’, *Toronto Star*, 30 April 2011, sec. Opinion, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2011/04/30/toronto_star_endorses_the_ndp.html.

⁸⁴ ‘Record’s View: Tough Choice Facing Canadians in Election’, *Waterloo Region Record*, 29 April 2011, sec. Editorial, <http://www.therecord.com/opinion-story/2578646-record-s-view-tough-choice-facing-canadians-in-election/>.

⁸⁵ ‘A Decision by Default’, *The Hamilton Spectator*, 30 April 2011, <http://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/2088978-a-decision-by-default/>.

A noticeable contrast between the anglophone and francophone dailies appears in terms of the attribution of their endorsements. In all of Canada's Anglophone daily newspapers that published endorsements, the article announcing the endorsement was presented as an unsigned editorial attributed to the editorial board of the newspaper as a whole. The three francophone dailies to publish endorsements, namely *La Presse*, *Le Soleil* and *Le Devoir*, all went against this trend and published their endorsements under the by-line of their editor-in-chief. Despite this difference, the two Power Corporation newspapers endorsements are nonetheless written from the collective 'nous' perspective (with nous seemingly referring to the editorial board), whereas the independently owned *Le Devoir's* endorsement⁸⁶ is written with a more passive voice without personal pronouns.

⁸⁶ Bernard Descôteaux, 'Élections Fédérales - D'abord Le Bloc', *Le Devoir*, 25 September 2016, <http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/canada/322281/elections-federales-d-abord-le-bloc>.

3.2. Endorsements in the 2015 election

Table 3: Daily newspapers endorsing the Conservative Party in 2015

Newspaper	Owner ⁸⁷	Avg. Daily Circulation ⁸⁸	Readers in Sample
The Globe and Mail	The Woodbridge Co.	336,487	442 (24.7%)
National Post	Postmedia Network Inc.	186,108	254 (14.2%)
Vancouver Sun	Postmedia Network Inc.	136,787	175 (9.8%)
The Toronto Sun	Postmedia/Sun Media	121,304	102 (5.7%)
The Province (Vancouver)	Postmedia Network Inc.	114,467	124 (6.9%)
Calgary Herald	Postmedia Network Inc.	106,916	—
Edmonton Journal	Postmedia Network Inc.	92,542	—
Ottawa Citizen	Postmedia Network Inc.	91,796	—*
The Gazette (Montréal)	Postmedia Network Inc.	80,895	60 † (3.4%)
London Free Press	Postmedia Network Inc.	60,426	—*
Windsor Star	Postmedia Network Inc.	49,613	—*
Winnipeg Sun	Postmedia/Sun Media	46,900	—
Calgary Sun	Postmedia/Sun Media	43,277	—
The StarPhoenix (Saskatoon)	Postmedia Network Inc.	39,008	—
Edmonton Sun	Postmedia/Sun Media	37,649	—
The Leader-Post (Regina)	Postmedia Network Inc.	34,136	—
The Ottawa Sun	Postmedia/Sun Media	34,083	—*
Total:		1,612,393	1,157 (64.7%)

— : Missing from sample with no readers present

—*:Present in sample, but readers could not be identified (see Limitations of the data)

† Paper not present in regression model due to exclusion of Québec

⁸⁷ Kelly Levson, '2015 Daily Newspaper Circulation Report' (Newspapers Canada, 2016), https://nmc-mic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2015-Daily-Newspaper-Circulation-Report-by-Title-SPREADSHEET_FINAL.xlsx.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Table 4: Daily newspapers publishing non-conservative endorsements in 2015

Newspaper	Owner⁸⁹	Avg. Daily Circulation⁹⁰	Readers in Sample	Party Endorsed
Toronto Star	Torstar	318,763	326 (18.2%)	Liberal
La Presse	Power Corp. of Canada	289,933	240 [†] (13.4%)	Liberal
The Spectator (Hamilton)	Torstar	113,575	—*	Liberal
Winnipeg Free Press	F.P. Canadian Newspapers LP	106,473	—	None (explicit)
Le Soleil	Groupe Capitales Médias	78,455	— [†]	None (explicit)
Waterloo Region Record	Torstar	53,283	—	Liberal
Le Devoir	Independent	43,358	65 [†] (3.6%)	Bloc Québécois
The Guardian (Charlottetown)	TC Media	14,377	—	Liberal
The Sudbury Star	Postmedia/Sun Media	8,537	—*	Mixed NDP/Liberal
Total:		1,026,754	631 (35.3%)	

— : Missing from sample with no readers present

—*:Present in sample, but readers could not be identified (see Limitations of the data)

[†] Paper not present in regression model due to exclusion of Québec

As in 2011, the Postmedia chain, now bigger following the purchase of Quebecor's *Sun* chain, made up the bulk of the conservative endorsements. The flagship *National Post*, published an endorsement that acknowledged the government's shortcomings, but nevertheless hoped for a

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

renewed Conservative majority.⁹¹ Their endorsement was echoed by the *Vancouver Sun*,⁹² *Province*,⁹³ *Calgary Herald*,⁹⁴ *Edmonton Journal*,⁹⁵ *Ottawa Citizen*,⁹⁶ *Gazette*,⁹⁷ *London Free Press*,⁹⁸ *Windsor Star*,⁹⁹ *StarPhoenix*,¹⁰⁰ and *Leader-Post*,¹⁰¹ all of which published separate and unique endorsements of the Tories attributed to their own editorial boards. Following their

⁹¹ ‘National Post View: Our Choice for Government’, National Post, 17 October 2015, sec. Comment, <http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/national-post-view-our-choice-for-government>.

⁹² ‘Editorial: Conservatives Best Choice to Manage the Economy’, Vancouver Sun, 16 October 2015, sec. Opinion, http://www.vancouversun.com/opinion/editorials/editorial+conservatives+best+choice+manage+economy/11441448/story.html?__lsa=eb9a-89f5.

⁹³ ‘Editorial: Conservative Leader Stephen Harper Is Still the Best Choice to Lead Canada’, The Province, 15 October 2015, <http://theprovince.com/opinion/editorial-conservative-leader-stephen-harper-is-still-the-best-choice-to-lead-canada>.

⁹⁴ ‘Editorial: Let’s Keep Harper’s Steady Hand on the Helm’, Calgary Herald, 17 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://calgaryherald.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-lets-keep-harpers-steady-hand-on-the-helm>.

⁹⁵ ‘The Choice, Still, Is Harper’, Edmonton Journal, 16 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://edmontonjournal.com/opinion/editorials/1016-oped-editorial>.

⁹⁶ ‘Editorial: The Case for Returning the Conservatives to Power’, Ottawa Citizen, 16 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/columnists/editorial-the-case-for-returning-the-conservatives-to-power>.

⁹⁷ ‘Editorial: Conservatives Are the Most Prudent Choice’, Montreal Gazette, 17 October 2015, <http://montrealgazette.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-conservatives-are-the-most-prudent-choice>.

⁹⁸ ‘It’s about Economy, Not about Change’, The London Free Press, 15 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://www.lfpress.com/2015/10/15/its-about-economy-not-about-change>.

⁹⁹ ‘Star’s View: Conservatives Deserve Re-Election’, Windsor Star, 16 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://windsorstar.com/opinion/editorials/stars-view-conservatives-deserve-re-election>.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Editorial: Harper, Tories Best Choice’, Saskatoon StarPhoenix, 16 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://thestarphoenix.com/news/national/editorial-harper-tories-best-choice>.

¹⁰¹ ‘Editorial: Conservatives Best Choice for Sask’, Regina Leader-Post, 17 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/editorial-conservatives-best-choice-for-sask>.

example from 2011, the *Toronto Sun*¹⁰², *Winnipeg Sun*¹⁰³, *Calgary Sun*,¹⁰⁴ *Edmonton Sun*¹⁰⁵, and *Ottawa Sun*¹⁰⁶ all published an identical endorsement of the Conservative party, attributed to the Postmedia Network.

Despite the controversy surrounding Postmedia imposing a Conservative endorsement upon its publications, the endorsement was not published in all Postmedia properties. While all of its major dailies endorsed the Conservatives, several papers printed no endorsement at all, and *The Sudbury Star* stood alone in publishing a contrary endorsement. The paper has an unusual position in the Postmedia chain, being one of the papers acquired in the purchase of Sun Media from Quebecor, but not being a *Sun*-branded newspaper. The endorsement published by the *Star* was mostly a local one, encouraging voters to support the Liberal candidate in Sudbury and the NDP in the Nickel-Belt riding, and expressing hope for a Liberal minority government.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Postmedia Network, 'Harper Clear Choice on the Economy', *Toronto Sun*, 9 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/10/09/harper-clear-choice-on-the-economy>.

¹⁰³ Postmedia Network, 'Harper Clear Choice on the Economy', *Winnipeg Sun*, 9 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://www.winnipegsun.com/2015/10/09/harper-clear-choice-on-the-economy>.

¹⁰⁴ Postmedia Network, 'Harper Clear Choice on the Economy', *Calgary Sun*, 9 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://www.calgarysun.com/2015/10/09/harper-clear-choice-on-the-economy>.

¹⁰⁵ Postmedia Network, 'Harper Clear Choice on the Economy', *Edmonton Sun*, 9 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://www.edmontonsun.com/2015/10/09/harper-clear-choice-on-the-economy>.

¹⁰⁶ Postmedia Network, 'Harper Clear Choice on the Economy', *Ottawa Sun*, 9 October 2015, sec. Opinion, www.ottawasun.com/2011/04/30/sun-backs-stephen-harper.

¹⁰⁷ Don MacDonald, 'Sudbury PoV: Minority, Lefebvre, Gravelle Best', *Sudbury Star*, 17 October 2017, <http://www.thesudburystar.com/2015/10/17/sudbury-pov-minority-lefebvre-gravelle-best-for-city>.

Unlike in the 2011 election, the papers of the Torstar chain arrived at a uniform conclusion for their endorsements. While the flagship *Toronto Star* abandoned its previous NDP endorsement to support Justin Trudeau,¹⁰⁸ its regional affiliates *The Spectator* and the *Waterloo Region Record* departed from their previous Conservative endorsements to also back the Liberal Party^{109,110}. While the Torstar chain papers did all endorse the same party like Postmedia, Torstar insists these decisions were entirely independent, as they were highly critical of Postmedia's decision to impose endorsements.¹¹¹ Torstar were joined in endorsing the Liberals by *La Presse*¹¹², who had only backed individual candidates in 2011, and by Charlottetown's *The Guardian*¹¹³, which had never before in its history endorsed a political party¹¹⁴.

¹⁰⁸ 'Toronto Star Endorses Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau for Prime Minister', *Toronto Star*, 9 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2015/10/09/for-justin-trudeau-and-the-liberal-party-editorial.html>.

¹⁰⁹ 'The Record's View: In This Election, Canada Needs a Vote for Change', *Waterloo Region Record*, 17 October 2015, sec. News, <http://www.therecord.com/news-story/5965009-the-record-s-view-in-this-election-canada-needs-a-vote-for-change/>.

¹¹⁰ 'The Spectator's View: Time for a Change in How Canada Is Governed', *The Hamilton Spectator*, 15 October 2015, <http://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/5960056-the-spectator-s-view-time-for-a-change-in-how-canada-is-governed/>.

¹¹¹ John Honderich, 'Postmedia Let down Readers by Dictating Election Endorsements: Honderich', *The Toronto Star*, 9 November 2015, <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/commentary/2015/11/09/postmedia-let-down-readers-by-dictating-election-endorsements-honderich.html>.

¹¹² Crevier, 'Pour un gouvernement Trudeau'.

¹¹³ 'Our Best Hope for a New Direction', *The Guardian*, 16 October 2015, sec. Opinion, <http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/opinion/editorials/2015/10/16/our-best-hope-for-a-new-direction-4311738.html>.

¹¹⁴ 'The Guardian to Endorse Political Party, Leader in Editorial', *The Guardian*, 25 September 2016, <http://www.theguardian.pe.ca/News/Election-2015/2015-10-15/article-4310236/The-Guardian-to-endorse-political-party%2C-leader-in-editorial/1>.

As it had in 2011, *Le Soleil* explicitly opted not to endorse any candidate, instead encouraging voters to ‘vote according to their convictions’¹¹⁵. *Le Soleil* was joined in their rejection of editorial tradition by the *Winnipeg Free Press*, who had previously backed the conservatives. The *Free Press* editorial team instead encouraged voters to make their own decision, calling the bias created by an endorsement ‘unfair’ and further stating that endorsements “do nothing anyways”.¹¹⁶ Finally, *Le Devoir* kept with their previous record by endorsing the Bloc Québécois, citing the need to represent Québec’s interests and to keep the seemingly-inevitable Liberal government from being a majority.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Gilles Carignan, ‘La parole est à vous’, *Le Soleil*, 17 October 2015, sec. Opinions, <http://www.lapresse.ca/le-soleil/opinions/editoriaux/201510/16/01-4910902-la-parole-est-a-vous.php>.

¹¹⁶ Winnipeg Free Press Editorial Board, ‘Democracy Depends on Voters’.

¹¹⁷ Bernard Descôteaux, ‘Prenons garde!’, *Le Devoir*, 17 October 2015, sec. Politique, <http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/canada/452828/elections-du-19-octobre-2015-prenons-garde>.

3.3. Distribution of endorsements

The distribution of newspaper endorsements, while not a central focus of this thesis, are interesting enough to warrant discussion. In both the 2011 and 2015 elections, the most striking trend is the overwhelming favouritism towards the Conservative Party. In 2011, only two newspapers could be found that endorsed other parties, compared to nineteen that endorsed the Conservatives. In 2015 the spread was somewhat more balanced, with six newspapers backing other parties compared to seventeen supporting the Conservatives. In terms of daily circulation, Conservative papers in 2011 had 2,016,920 readers compared to 408,166 for other parties, and in 2015 the figure was 1,612,393 to 833,289. Thus, in the incredibly lopsided election of 2011 Conservative endorsements were reaching almost five times as many Canadians as were those of any other party, and even in the more balanced 2015 the ratio was still almost twice as many.

Moreover, the support of non-Conservative parties is also far from evenly spread. The NDP, despite having been the Official Opposition following the 2011 election, received only a single party endorsement over the two elections covered in my data collection. The Bloc Québécois similarly only received two endorsements, both being from the very small but influential independent newspaper *Le Devoir*. While the Liberals and Conservatives are clearly the two preferred parties of the majority of Canadians, the fact that the New Democrats have received only a single endorsement in these two elections reflects that the opinions of editorial boards are at least to some extent out of line with those of the general public. Furthermore, the preference for the Conservatives over the Liberals, and for the Liberals over the New Democrats, indicates that the opinions expressed in endorsements are generally slanted to the right of the political spectrum.

Considering my finding that endorsements are capable of influencing vote choice, this lopsided distribution is somewhat troubling. Evidently, this lopsidedness is not always sufficient to change election results – the Conservatives getting the backing of *The Globe and Mail* and the Postmedia chain in 2015 did not prevent the Liberals from winning a large majority of seats. But as a point of principle, the disconnect between editorial and public opinion is somewhat troubling. Taking into account the precedent of Postmedia setting a Conservative endorsement for all of its massive chain, this lopsidedness becomes even more troubling. While readers of Conservative endorsements in 2015 outnumbered those of all other parties almost two-to-one in 2015, the decision to make those Conservative endorsements fell to only two groups; *The Globe and Mail*, and Postmedia.

4. Methodology

4.1. Data

The data for this study were obtained through two different surveys; the 2011 Canadian Election Study¹¹⁸ and the 2015 Making Electoral Democracy Work Project¹¹⁹. The Canadian Election Study is a survey of Canadians conducted for every federal election since 1965. Despite the survey's long history, only the 2011 data could be used as no other year repeated the necessary question on newspaper readership. Making Electoral Democracy Work surveyed voters in various western countries regarding the voting behaviour in elections between 2010 and 2015, including the 2015 Canadian federal election. Unlike the Canadian Election Study which surveyed residents of all provinces (but not those of the territories), Making Electoral Democracy Work's survey was limited to British Columbia, Ontario and Québec.

Due to Québec's different party system, with the prominent nationalist party the Bloc Québécois, Quebecers have a different set of options to consider in making their vote choice, and the media discussion around elections focuses on four parties instead of three. For this reason, I decided to exclude Québec respondents from both regression models.

The main independent variable of interest, the newspaper endorsement to which the respondent was exposed, was gathered indirectly using questions in the two surveys regarding newspaper

¹¹⁸ Patrick Fournier et al., 'The 2011 Canadian Election Study', Dataset, (2011).

¹¹⁹ André Blais et al., 'Making Electoral Democracy Work', Dataset, (2015), <http://electoraldemocracy.com/voter-behaviour>.

readership. I compared the titles respondents reported reading with the list of endorsements in Section 3 and coded the respondents' endorsement exposure into one of five categories: respondents who reported reading no newspaper, or who reported reading one or more newspapers that did not publish an endorsement, were coded as having been exposed to no endorsement (1). Those who only reported reading one newspaper, or who reported reading a newspaper with an endorsement and one or more without an endorsement, or those who reported reading multiple newspapers which all endorsed the same party, were coded as having been exposed to a Conservative, Liberal or NDP endorsement (2,3,4). Respondents who reported reading two or more newspapers which published conflicting endorsements were recorded as being exposed to a 'mixed endorsement' (5).

Endorsement	2011 Sample	2015 Sample
None	582 (74.0%)	1720 (77.3%)
LPC	-	145 (6.5%)
CPC	162 (20.6%)	219 (9.8%)
NDP	42 (5.3%)	-
Mixed	-*	140 (6.3%)
Total:	786 (100%)	2224 (100%)

Table 5: Distribution of variable Endorsement Exposure

While mixed endorsements were included in the 2015 analysis, as the incredibly low number in the 2011 sample (n=13) made it impossible for Stata to perform the regression, respondents exposed to a mixed endorsement were excluded from the 2011 sample. It is also worth noting that the newspaper readership questions were slightly different between the two surveys. Canadian Election Study respondents were asked to list newspapers they read regularly for news, and were provided spaces to enter the titles of up to three publications. The Making Electoral Democracy Work survey, however, asked "What was (were) your primary source(s) of information about the

election?”. Respondents could choose from a closed list of major newspapers, television stations and internet publications, however with no means to rank them in order of importance (See section 9.1).

In addition to the above-mentioned independent variable of interest, seven control variables are included in the model. Gender, measured as a male/female binary variable, is included as one’s gender has a substantial impact on their life experiences and may impact their openness to some endorsement messages. Moreover, women are less likely to support the Conservative Party as they are less likely to hold right-wing values and beliefs.¹²⁰

Age, measured in years, is included for similar reasons, as those in different age brackets have differing material interests based upon being in different stages of their lives – elderly people have a greater stake in issues surrounding pensions and healthcare, whereas the young will have a greater interest in post-secondary education and youth unemployment. Furthermore, being born in different eras changes the life experiences and overall political attitudes, which will inform their political decision making. Moreover, older voters have a general tendency to hold more conservative attitudes, particularly after age 50.¹²¹

A categorical region variable is also included to account for the variations in political culture and media landscape in different provinces included in the sample. The 2011 model includes a four-

¹²⁰ See, for example: Elisabeth Gidengil et al., ‘Explaining The Gender Gap in Support for the New Right The Case of Canada’, *Comparative Political Studies* 38, no. 10 (1 December 2005): 1171–95, doi:10.1177/0010414005279320.

¹²¹ See, for example: K. R. Truett, ‘Age Differences in Conservatism’, *Personality and Individual Differences* 14, no. 3 (1 March 1993): 405–11, doi:10.1016/0191-8869(93)90309-Q.

category region variable that divides respondents between the West, Ontario, Québec, and the Atlantic, whereas the 2015 data only included three provinces (British Columbia, Ontario and Québec) uses a binary variable as Québec was excluded. Those living in different regions of the country will have different material interests due to their different economic and historical realities. Different regions of the country also have varying cultures and political histories, which will affect both respondents' vote choice and the reception of endorsement messages.

Furthermore, a dummy variable for immigrant status is included, as those born outside of Canada will have had significantly different life experiences and been raised in a different political culture, thus changing the manner in which they evaluate their voting options. Immigrants will also have somewhat differing interests from native-born Canadians, likely being far more interested in certain issues, such as family-reunification. This difference in voting behaviour is well-established in the literature, and those born outside of Canada have a greater tendency to support the Liberal Party.¹²²

Religion is also included in the model, as one's religious background plays an important role in determining their personal values, which will in turn influence how they evaluate political

¹²² See, for example: André Blais, 'Accounting for the Electoral Success of the Liberal Party in Canada Presidential Address to the Canadian Political Science Association London, Ontario June 3, 2005', *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue Canadienne de Science Politique* 38, no. 4 (December 2005): 821–840, doi:10.1017/S0008423905050304.

candidate. The precise variable I included is a dummy variable for Catholics, justified on the basis that Catholics are also well known to have a tendency to support the Liberal Party.¹²³ Despite being well-documented, the Liberal-Catholic relationship is poorly understood in its functioning, but is the principal religious cleavage in Canadian electoral politics.¹²⁴

Finally, an ordinal measure of education is included as a higher level of education is generally known to be related to more left-leaning views, and has shown some relation to increased NDP support.¹²⁵ Additionally, more educated people could quite conceivably respond differently to endorsements, being potentially more difficult to sway. Conveniently, the two different datasets used the same eleven-point scale from ‘No schooling’ to ‘Professional degree or doctorate’ to measure education.

4.1.1. Treatment of unusual endorsements

While the majority of newspaper endorsements were easy to categorize based upon the party endorsed, a few endorsements included in the sample were somewhat less clear in their tone, and required more careful consideration. Readers of the *Ottawa Citizen* who lived in a riding where the local endorsement was for a non-Conservative candidate (e.g. residents of Hull-Aylmer, where NDP candidate Nycole Turmel was endorsed) were excluded from the analysis. As these readers were exposed to two conflicting recommendations from the same editorial board it is difficult to

¹²³ See, for example: Laura B. Stephenson, ‘The Catholic-Liberal Connection: A Test of Strength’, in *Voting Behaviour in Canada*, ed. Cameron D. Anderson and Laura B. Stephenson (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 86–106.

¹²⁴ Blais, ‘Accounting for the Electoral Success of the Liberal Party in Canada Presidential Address to the Canadian Political Science Association London, Ontario June 3, 2005’.

¹²⁵ See, for example: Shaun Bowler and David J. Lanoue, ‘Strategic and Protest Voting for Third Parties: The Case of the Canadian NDP’, *The Western Political Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1992): 485–99, doi:10.2307/448722.

determine which of these, if either would be dominant, and as such it is impossible to accurately code their endorsement exposure.

While *The Globe and Mail's* 2015 endorsement of the Conservatives but not of Stephen Harper was certainly odd, and may have sent a mixed message to readers, the respondents who read the *Globe* were coded as being exposed to a Conservative endorsement. While the endorsement did read as a bit half-hearted, many of the endorsements called specifically for minority governments, or came with numerous caveats. While it is possible that this is indicative of *The Globe and Mail* having less Conservative slant than the average conservative-endorsing paper, a full content analysis of their campaign coverage is outside the scope of my thesis, and inferring so much from a single article would be imprudent.

In summary, I made all efforts to categorise unusual endorsements in the most appropriate fashion possible. Endorsements of specific candidates were treated the same as endorsements of parties; in cases where a paper endorsed candidates of a party other than the one they endorsed (*Ottawa Citizen*), those readers living in the affected ridings were excluded. Additionally, I coded weak and strong endorsements identically, as doing otherwise would be inferring too much from the endorsement article.

4.1.2. Limitations of the data

Both datasets used in my analysis, the 2011 Canadian Election Study and the 2015 Making Electoral Democracy Work project were selected upon the basis of necessity, as were the cases of the 2011 and 2015 elections. Many other datasets are available which collect data on whether or not respondents read newspapers, but no other datasets could be found which collected both the

respondent's vote choice and the title(s) of the newspaper(s) they read. While these data are by no means unworkable, they have several shortcomings that ought to be considered when interpreting results.

The 2011 and 2015 elections both make for less-than-ideal cases due to the spread of newspaper endorsements. Both elections see one major party going unendorsed by any newspaper, with the Liberals receiving no endorsements in 2011 and the NDP being ignored by all major papers in 2015. While *La Presse* did endorse some individual Liberal candidates in 2011, no readers in the sample lived in the ridings of those candidates. The *Ottawa Citizen* likewise endorsed some Liberal candidates, but respondents exposed to this endorsement were excluded due to the paper endorsing the Conservative Party overall. While the spread of endorsements in 2015 was not quite as one-sided as in 2011, the year still makes for a less-than-ideal case. Endorsements in the election were still far from evenly spread, with Conservative endorsements accounting for over 70% of the circulation in endorsement-publishing newspapers, and no newspapers endorsing the New Democratic Party.¹²⁸ This makes comparisons between endorsements of different parties difficult, as Liberal and NDP endorsements have never appeared in the same year.

Rather than allowing respondents to write-in the names of publications that they read, Making Electoral Democracy Work provided a closed-ended question with a limited range of only major daily newspapers to choose from. Additionally, Making Electoral Democracy Work only surveyed residents of Québec, Ontario, and British Columbia, meaning that many endorsements published

¹²⁸ Winseck, 'Canadian Newspaper Election Endorsements'.

by regional papers in other parts of the country are not included. This is further compounded by the fact that only the *Toronto Star* endorsed the New Democrats in 2011, and only five newspapers endorsed the Liberal Party in 2015. Of the five endorsing the Liberals, only the *Toronto Star* and *La Presse* were listed as options on the Making Electoral Democracy survey, and I excluded *La Presse*'s readers from the 2015 model due to Québec's different party system. The end result then is that all respondents in the final sample who read a Liberal-endorsing newspaper were readers of the *Toronto Star*. This creates the unfortunate possibility that the observed effects of Liberal-leaning endorsements have more to do with the particularities of one specific newspaper than they do with Liberal endorsements in general.

Moreover, the circumstances surrounding the conservative endorsements also makes 2015 an unusual situation. As mentioned above, the Postmedia chain dictated that its papers would endorse the Conservative party, rather than allowing the individual papers' editorial boards to set their own endorsements. *The Globe and Mail*'s endorsement was also rather unusual and tepid, expressing support for the governing Conservative Party, but not for incumbent Prime Minister Stephen Harper.¹²⁹ Such an unusual endorsement does not give readers very clear direction from their newspaper, as it is not possible to simultaneously vote for a Conservative candidate and against the party's leader. Given that most conceptualisations of the causal mechanisms behind endorsement influence postulate that the influence stems from both the endorsement itself and the

¹²⁹ 'The Tories Deserve Another Mandate – Stephen Harper Doesn't - The Globe and Mail', 16 October 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/the-tories-deserve-another-mandate-stephen-harper-doesnt/article26842506/>.

overall slant of the publication's editorials and news coverage, this possible disconnect between the newspaper's endorsement and the actual opinions of editorial boards is potentially problematic.

The 2011 sample is further afflicted with a low sample size. While the Canadian Election study itself had over 2500 respondents, only a small subset completed the Web-Based Survey which asked respondents the titles of newspapers they read, and of them only 490 supplied the name of at least one newspaper they regularly read. After excluding respondents exposed to mixed endorsements those who had provided an ambiguous newspaper name (e.g. *Mail*), the final sample then includes only 204 respondents who were in fact exposed to an endorsement. As these responses break down further based on the type of endorsement exposed to (see [Table 5](#)) the sample size of the study is quite low, particularly for NDP endorsements.

The 2015 data addresses these shortcomings with a far greater sample size, having just under 3000 valid responses, 631 of whom were exposed to an endorsement. While the Making Electoral Democracy Work data is far more robust in terms of sample size, it does not have the breadth of the Canadian Election Study. Respondents were only selected from Canada's three most populous provinces: Ontario, Québec and British Columbia. The exclusion of other provinces leaves out a great many endorsing newspapers, such as the *Calgary Herald* and *Winnipeg Free Press*, and also makes it more difficult to generalise results to the country as a whole. Furthermore, unlike the Canadian Election Study which allowed respondents to write in the name of any newspaper, the Making Electoral Democracy Work survey only allowed respondents to select from a limited range of publications, with no option to specify the name of a publication not included on the list. While this made the data analysis far less laborious, as only national newspapers and those of the province's largest city (Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver) were included many large and

endorsement-publishing newspapers were excluded, including the *Ottawa Citizen* and Hamilton's *The Spectator*.

Finally, differences between Making Electoral Democracy Work and the Canadian Election Study create additional difficulty in comparing between years. While the CES asked respondents about the newspapers they read regularly for news, MEDW specifically asked respondents about the news sources they used to inform their vote choice (see section [9.1](#)). While these two questions are obviously quite similar in their overall tone, they are not entirely identical and may obtain slightly varying responses. For example, a hypothetical respondent who reads the *Toronto Sun* specifically for its coverage of local Toronto politics may list it as a newspaper read regularly for news when responding to the CES, but not list it in response to the MEDW question as they did not use it for information on the 2015 federal campaign. Indeed, the MEDW survey wording may obtain somewhat more pertinent results, as it corresponds more directly to my theory than does that of the CES.

While the 2011 and 2015 elections are not ideal cases, and the Canadian Election Study and Making Electoral Democracy Work project provide somewhat flawed data sets, they still provide a workable means of examining the effects of endorsements on Canadian federal elections. While conclusions can still be made about the effects of endorsements in general on election campaigns, caution will need to be taken when interpreting any differences between Conservative, Liberal, and NDP endorsements, or when generalising results to the country at-large.

4.2. Model

My hypotheses will be tested using two different multinomial logistic models, one for the 2011 dataset and a second for the 2015 dataset. Two separate models are preferable over a single pooled model due to the differences between the two datasets. While the two surveys asked relatively similar questions, the 2015 MEDW project covers a more limited geographic range and collected data on fewer newspapers than did the CES, and also received far more respondents (see [4.1.2 Limitations of the data](#) for more detail on the difference in the two datasets) . Additionally, the 2011 endorsements were divided between the Conservatives, Bloc Québécois and NDP, whereas the 2015 election saw several endorsements of the Liberal party but none of the NDP. Given the differences in data source, along with the differences in the independent variable caused by the different electoral contexts, two separate regression models are preferable.

I chose to use a multinomial logistic regression model as the dependent variable, the respondent's vote choice, is a nominal variable with the possible choices of Liberal Party, Conservative Party, New Democratic Party, Bloc Québécois, and other (non-voters were excluded from the sample).

5. Results

5.1. 2011 Model

The results of the 2011 data are generally inconclusive. Owing possibly to the rather low sample sizes in the endorsement groups, none of the endorsement variables returned significant results. Although not significant, the NDP endorsement variable does have the expected sign, implying an increase in probability of an NDP vote choice. Despite indicating a (non-significant) decrease in the probability of voting NDP as expected, the CPC endorsement variable curiously indicates a increase in the probability of voting Liberal, although this again does not meet conventional levels of statistical significance. Overall, the results of the 2011 model are fairly inconclusive, and far from robust. As none of the variables of interest meet any conventional level of statistical significance, no conclusions relative to my hypotheses can be drawn from the 2011 data.

Table 6: Multinomial Logistic Regression of Vote Choice in the 2011 Federal Election

	<i>LPC</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Other</i>
<i>CPC Endorsement</i>	.324(.319)	-.213(.310)	-.007(4.73)
<i>NDP Endorsement</i>	.890(.649)	.546(.662)	-.418(1.19)
<i>LPC Party ID</i>	2.35(.314) ***	1.11(.315) ***	.290(.499)
<i>CPC Party ID</i>	-2.96(.435) ***	-2.60(.315) ***	-3.28(.641) ***
<i>NDP Party ID</i>	1.78(.833) **	3.88(.741) ***	1.74(.910) *
<i>Catholic</i>	.323(.296)	-.224(.273)	1.74(.762) **
<i>Non-Immigrant</i>	-.313(.338)	-.053(.326)	.624(.593)
<i>Age</i>	.005(.009)	.001(.008)	-.010(.013)
<i>Female</i>	-.071(.064)	-.084(.061)	-.041(.097)
<i>Education</i>	.106(.064) *	.046(.060)	.120(.101)
<i>Ontario</i>	.656(.308) **	-.082(.279)	-.139(.427)
<i>Atlantic</i>	1.10(.391) ***	.121(.356)	-.536(.633)
<i>Constant</i>	-2.02(.935) **	-.046(.859)	-3.32(1.53) **

N= 786,McFadden Pseudo R²=0.350, * p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

5.2. 2015 Model

The 2015 model gives far more significant and interpretable results than did the 2011 model, particularly as they relate to mixed endorsements. The significant and positive coefficient for mixed endorsements with the LPC indicates that when exposed to both a CPC and LPC endorsement, the net effect on the reader is still in favour of a Liberal vote. Liberal endorsements likewise show an increased probability of a Liberal vote, as well as a reduced probability of an NDP vote. Conservative endorsements showed some limited significance, as in 2011, but this time in the expected direction, showing a reduced probability of a NDP vote choice.

Table 7: Multinomial logistic regression of vote choice for the 2015 federal election

	<i>LPC</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Other</i>
<i>CPC Endorsement</i>	-.303(.215)	-.755(.364)**	-.560(.939)
<i>LPC Endorsement</i>	1.12(.318)***	-.730(.266)***	.662(.558)
<i>Mixed Endorsement</i>	.804(.318)**	.459(.371)	.282(.598)
<i>LPC Party ID</i>	3.25(.392)***	1.42(.433)***	.756(.599)
<i>CPC Party ID</i>	-3.01(.225)***	-3.12(.287)***	-3.34(.518)***
<i>NDP Party ID</i>	2.67(.727)***	4.52(.718)***	1.06(1.06)
<i>Catholic</i>	.0335(.183)	-.0669(.205)	.184(.289)
<i>Immigrant</i>	.105(.166)	-.309(.193)	.0390(.205)
<i>Age</i>	-.0222(.00436)***	-.0243(.00475)***	-.0384(.00674)***
<i>Female</i>	.0278(.132)	.185(.144)	.0324(.205)
<i>Education</i>	.0628(.0383)	-.0684(.0415)*	-.0755(.0598)
<i>British Columbia</i>	.175(.143)	.627(.156)***	.885(.226)***
<i>Constant</i>	.945(.406)**	1.50(.438)***	1.05(.614)*

N= 2224, Pseudo R²=0.252, * p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

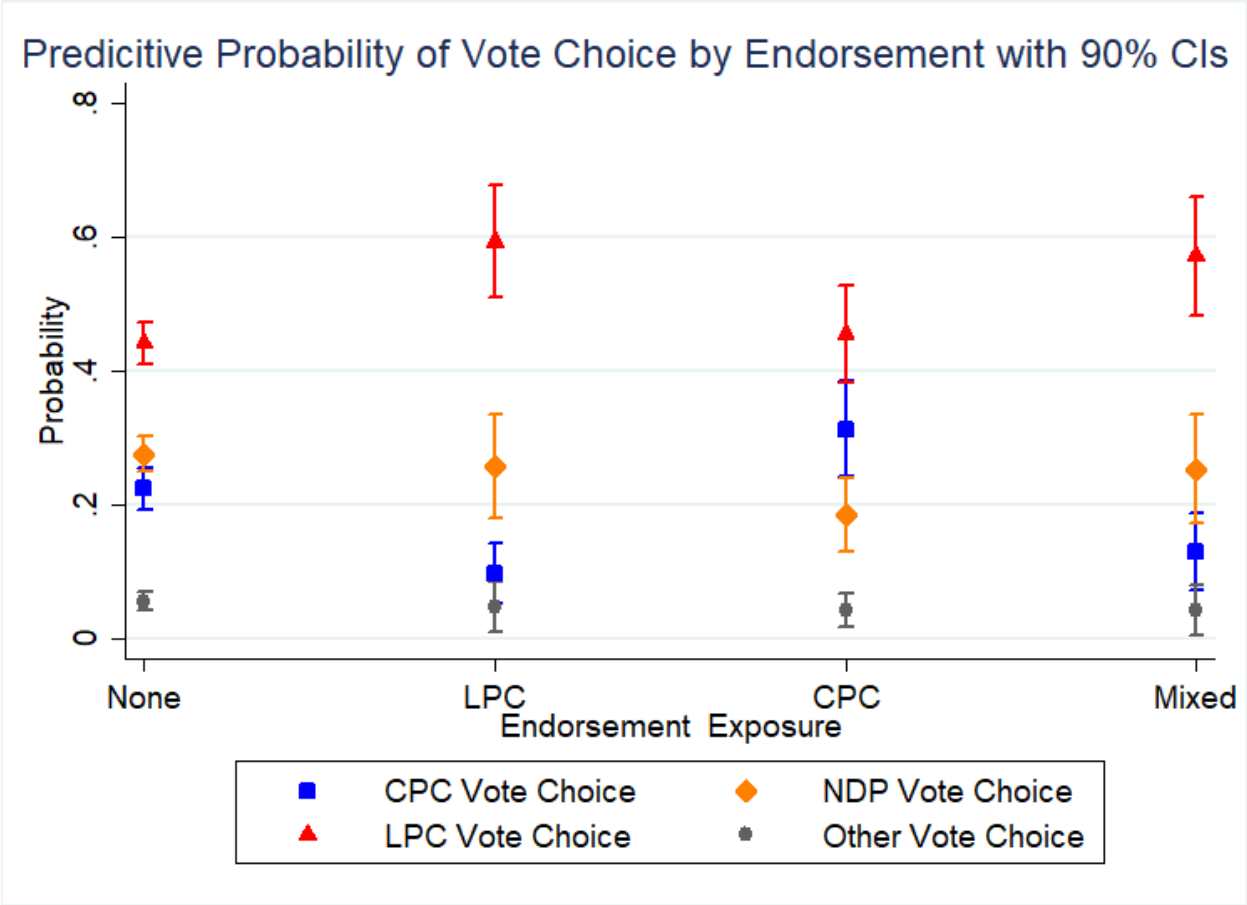


Figure 1: Predictive marginal effects at means of Endorsement Exposure

Liberal endorsements do appear to have a substantive effect on voting behaviour. Comparing the predicted values for those exposed to no endorsement (in the leftmost column) to those exposed to an LPC, CPC or mixed endorsement, [Figure 1](#) shows in several cases that those exposed to endorsements have increased likelihoods of voting for the endorsed party, and decreased probabilities of supporting others. Holding all other variables at their means, a voter exposed to no endorsement has a probability of 44.1% of voting for the LPC, with exposure to a Liberal endorsement this rises to 59.3%, a difference which is significant at the 95% confidence level. In a similar fashion, whereas a reader exposed to no endorsement has a 22.5% chance of supporting the Conservative Party, reading a Liberal-endorsing newspaper causes this probability to fall to

9.9%, a difference which is also significant at the 95% confidence level. Interestingly, Mixed endorsements appear to have an almost identical effect to Liberal endorsements. Compared to no endorsement, the odds of a Liberal and a Conservative vote choice increase and decrease, respectively, although the decrease in probability of voting Conservative is only significant at a 90% confidence level. Liberal and mixed endorsements are also alike in their apparent lack of effect on NDP voting; readers of Liberal-endorsing newspapers have a 25.9% probability of voting for the New Democrats compared to 25.4% for those exposed to a mixed endorsement, neither of which is significantly different from the no-endorsement probability of 27.7%.

Conservative endorsements appear to have a much more moderate effect on voting behaviour. While readers of Conservative-endorsing newspapers do appear to be more likely to vote accordingly, having a probability of 31.4% compared to the no-endorsement level of 24.5%, this difference falls short of significance even at the 90% confidence level. The probability of a Liberal vote choice seems to be likewise unaffected, actually rising slightly to 45.6% from 44.1%, a difference that is also insignificant. A significant effect can, however, be found for the probability of NDP vote choice, which drops to 18.6% from a no-endorsement level of 27.7%, which is significant at the 90% confidence level.

5.2.1. Endorsement effects and party identification

Several previous studies of the role of newspaper endorsements in determining vote choice have found party identification to be a key mitigating factor in determining the strength of the endorsement effect. Many previous studies¹³⁰ have found that only those with weak or no party identification are effected by newspaper endorsements.

An obvious risk in analysing the link between vote choice and newspaper readership is the possibility of a reversed causality; it may be that voters read a certain newspaper *because of* their support for a political party, rather than support a party due to their newspaper. While the possibility of this link still exists, the tendency of Canadian newspapers to change endorsements makes this somewhat less likely than it is in other jurisdictions. While no comprehensive data on the history of newspaper endorsements in Canada exists, *La Presse*¹³¹ and *The Globe and Mail*¹³² have both published histories of their own endorsements, that reveal a tendency to switch between the Liberal and Conservative parties. Within the sample of 2011 and 2015 endorsements used in this thesis, there are also several examples of newspapers switching their endorsements between elections, either going between endorsing a party and endorsing none, or between endorsing two different parties. In addition, many markets in Canada only have a single newspaper, or multiple newspapers of the same leaning, making it impossible for many Canadians to select a newspaper

¹³⁰ Kahn and Kenney, 'The Slant of the News'; Chiang and Knight, 'Media Bias and Influence'.

¹³¹ Pratte, 'Pourquoi La Presse prend-elle position?'

¹³² 'Federal Election: Globe Editorial Endorsements from 1984 to Now', *The Globe and Mail*, 16 October 2015, sec. Politics, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/federal-election-globe-editorial-endorsements-from-1984-to-now/article26827000/>.

that aligns with their views. While some newspapers in Canada nevertheless do have fairly consistent partisan leanings, the possibility of voters choosing to read newspapers that re-enforce their partisan leanings is less in Canada than in other areas, such as the UK.

As can be seen in [Table 8](#), the distribution of newspaper readership by party identification in the 2015 sample is not entirely random. Compared to the expected frequencies, notably more individuals with a Liberal party identification reported reading the Toronto Star, as with Conservatives and Conservative-endorsing newspapers. The chi-square statistic confirms that the relationship between party identification newspaper readership is significant at the 99% level of confidence, however the Cramér’s V of .0946 suggests that the effect between these two variables is small in size. Indeed, there are still many respondents who reported reading newspapers that conflict with their views, and slightly more Liberals reported reading a CPC-endorsing newspaper than would be expected.

Table 8: Party identification by endorsement exposure

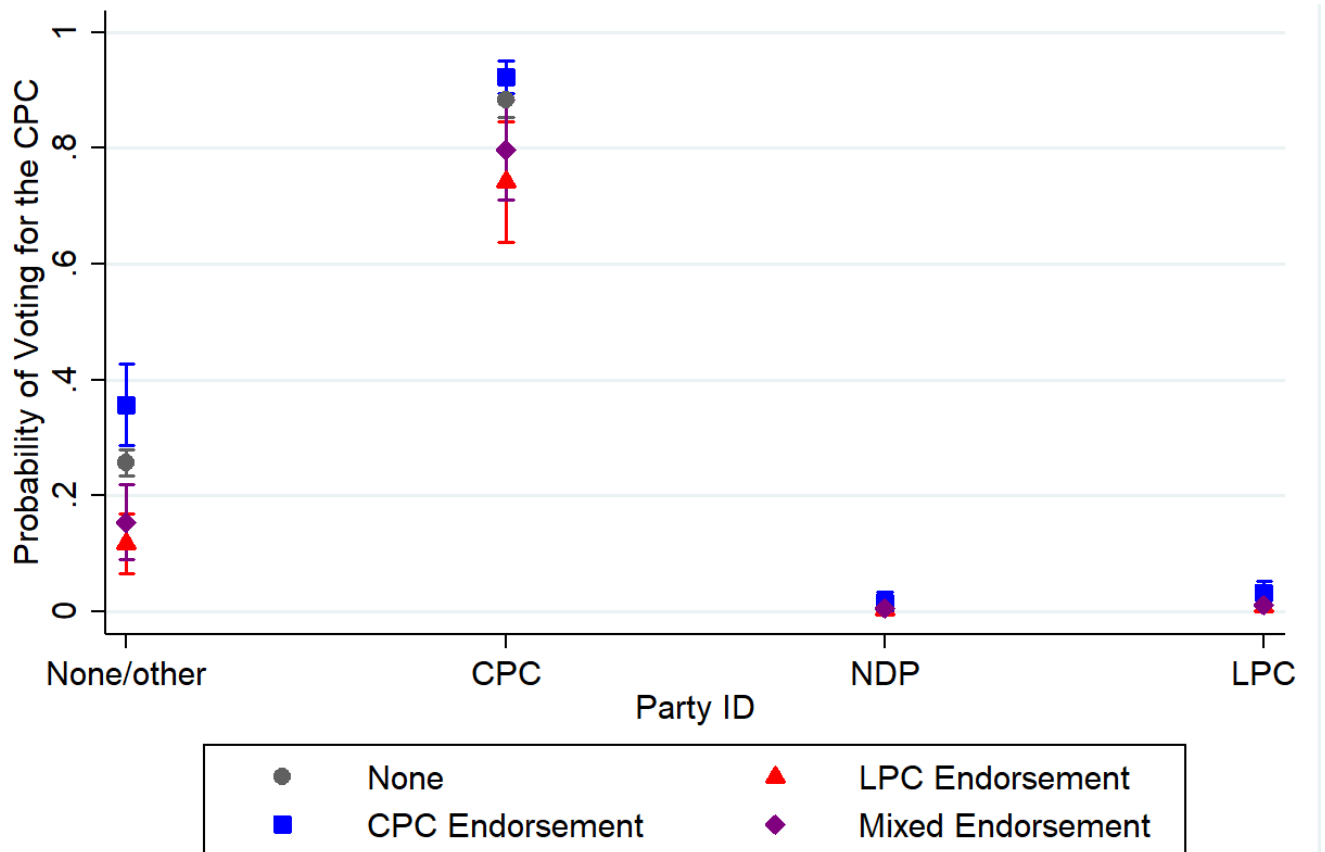
	No/Other Party ID	CPC Party ID	NDP Party ID	LPC Party ID	Total
No Endorsement	1049 (1010.0)	279 (279.2)	177 (176.3)	215 (254.4)	1720
LPC Endorsement	75 (85.1)	15 (23.5)	18 (14.9)	37 (21.5)	145
CPC Endorsement	121 (128.6)	46 (35.5)	19 (22.5)	33 (32.4)	219
Mixed Endorsement	61 (82.2)	21 (22.7)	14 (14.4)	44 (20.7)	140
Total:	1306	361	228	329	2224

Frequencies in 2015 sample (*expected frequencies in parentheses*), $\chi^2=59.73$, Cramér’s V=.0946

As actual party membership rates in Canada are quite low, respondents were instead asked if they “usually think of [themselves] as being close to any particular federal political party”, and were asked to specify what party, if applicable. For ease of interpretation, the 46 respondents who identified with non-official parties were grouped in with those who had no party identification. As

is typical of Canadian electors, party identification was rather weak amongst the sample, with the majority of respondents reporting no party affiliation whatsoever.

Figure 2: Probability at means of voting for the CPC by Party ID with 90% CIs



As can be seen in [Figure 2](#), those who identify with no party or have a non-major party identification experience the largest endorsement-related differences in their probability of voting for the Conservative Party. Whereas those who were exposed to no endorsement have a 25.7% probability of supporting the CPC, this drops to 11.8% with a Liberal endorsement (a difference significant at the 99% confidence level) and rises to 35.6% with a Conservative endorsement (significant at the 90% confidence level). Endorsements also showed some significant effects within CPC-identified respondents, with the probability of voting Conservative diminishing to

74.1% from the no-endorsement level of 88.3%, a difference significant at the 90% confidence level. While the probability of voting Conservative for CPC partisans does rise to 92.3 with a CPC endorsement, this is not a significant difference from no endorsement. Endorsements do not appear to have any effect on the probability of a Conservative vote for New Democratic and Liberal partisans, however, their no-endorsement probabilities being 0.8% and 0.5% respectively, with no statistically significant variations associated with endorsements. Those exposed to mixed endorsements appear to have been influenced in a very similar fashion to those exposed only to a Liberal endorsement. For those with no or a minor-party partisan identification, the probability of voting Conservative dropped to 15.4% from 25.7%, a difference significant at the 90% confidence level, similar to the effect observed for liberal endorsements. The probability of a conservative vote similarly fell from 88.3% to 77.9%, but unlike with the Liberal endorsement this difference was not statistically significant.

As can be seen in [Figure 3](#), the predictive marginal effects of endorsement exposure on Liberal vote choice largely mirror the results for the probability of a Conservative vote. Once again, endorsement effects were largest for those voters who did not identify with an official party. Amongst this group, a Liberal endorsement raises the probability of a Liberal vote to 54.1% from the no-endorsement level of 38.6%, a difference significant at the 95% level of confidence. A mixed endorsement similarly is associated with a probability of 51.9%, however this difference is significant only at the 90% confidence level. For Conservative partisans as well, exposure to a Liberal endorsement is associated with an increase in probability of a Liberal vote from the no-endorsement level of 6.5% to 16.8%, a difference significant at the 90% level of confidence. Respondents exposed to Conservative endorsements and those exposed to none were not different

in their probability to vote Liberal in any category, and both Liberal and mixed endorsements were not different from none for either Liberal- or NDP-identified voters.

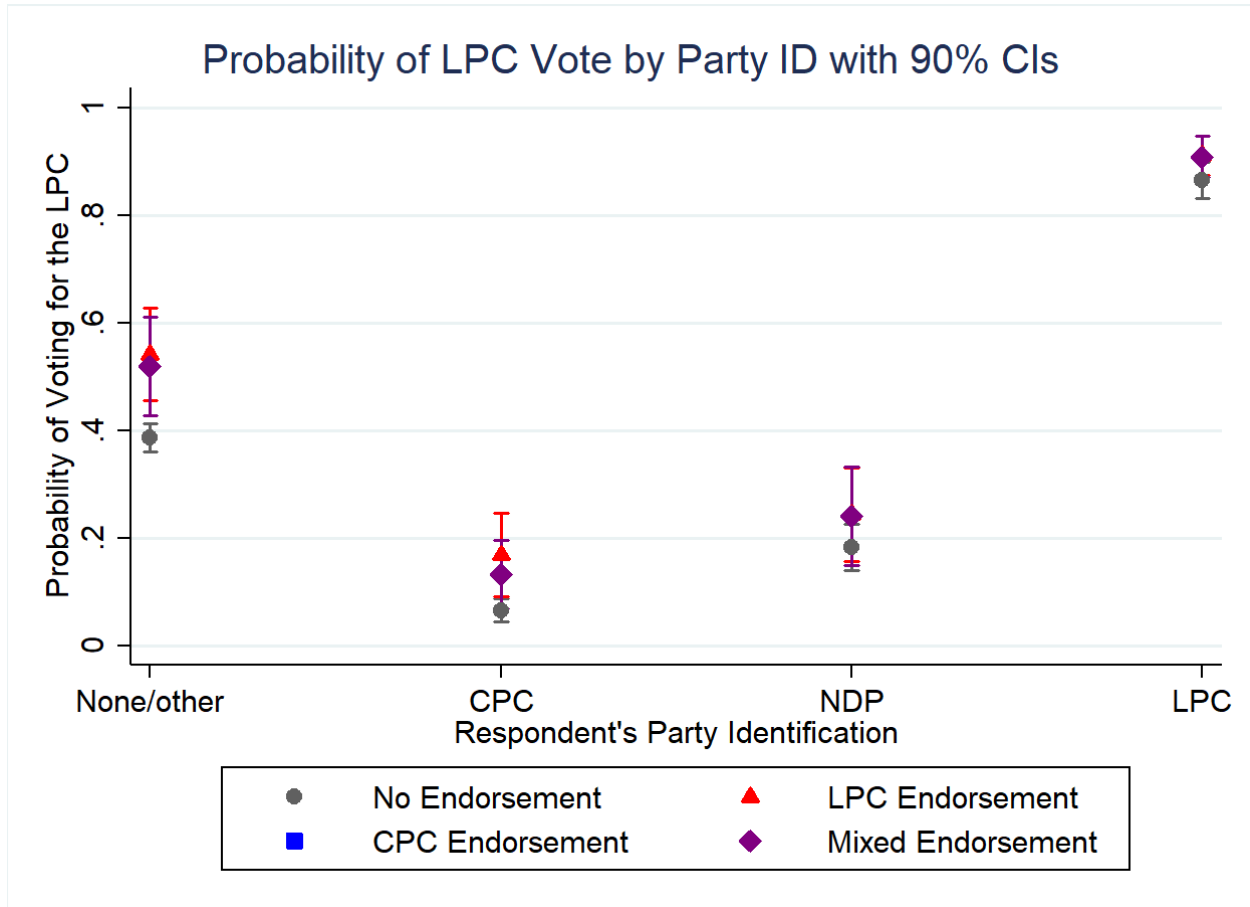


Figure 3: Probability of LPC vote by party ID (CPC endorsement removed for ease of interpretation)

In summation, when controlling for party identification the strongest endorsement effects are seen in those respondents who do not identify with a major party. Among Liberal and New Democrat partisans, those exposed to no endorsement show no significantly different probability of voting for either the CPC or LPC than do those who were readers of endorsing newspapers. While Conservative-identified voters did see endorsement-related changes in their probability to vote for

both the CPC and LPC, these changes were smaller in their magnitude and significant at lower levels of confidence. While these results do show the largest effects are felt amongst the unaffiliated, as I had expected (see Theory and hypothesis), the greater variation among CPC-affiliated voters than among other partisans was not something I had anticipated. Given the decline in Conservative vote-share in 2015, it is possible that more Conservatives were open to the idea of voting for another party, and thus were more susceptible to endorsement influence.

6. Discussion

6.1. 2011 and 2015 results

There is relatively little that may definitively be said of the results from the 2011 model. Overall, none of the endorsement-related variables attained significance even at a 90% level of confidence, owing quite likely to the unfortunately low sample size. From such a low sample size, no compelling argument can be made to confirm or disprove my hypotheses, and no strong conclusions can be responsibly drawn.

The 2015 models, on the other hand, confirm my hypothesis that reading a newspaper which endorses a political party increases one's odds of voting for that party. The results of the regression model indicate that endorsements are a significant indicator of one's vote choice. Furthermore, the predictive marginal effects indicate that those exposed to Liberal endorsements do have significantly greater odds of voting Liberal than those exposed to none.

The comparison of Liberal and Conservative endorsements showed results entirely contrary to the expectations laid out in the hypothesis. Whereas previous studies have found conservative endorsements to be more persuasive those of more left-leaning candidates,¹³³ the results of the 2015 model show the exact opposite. Moreover, both in terms of probability of voting for the Conservatives (see [Figure 2](#)) and for the Liberals (see [Figure 3](#)), those who held a partisan

¹³³ See, for example: Erikson, 'The Influence of Newspaper Endorsements in Presidential Elections'; Newton and Brynin, 'The National Press and Party Voting in the UK'.

identification with the Conservative Party were still to some degree susceptible to being persuaded by an endorsement, whereas those who identified with the Liberal Party displayed no significant difference between being exposed to an endorsement and to no endorsement. Finally, Conservative endorsements only were associated with significantly different vote-choice probabilities for those without a major-party identification supporting the Conservative Party, in contrast to Liberal endorsements which produced significant results also for Conservative partisans and effected the odds of both a Liberal and a Conservative vote choice. In the aggregate, a Liberal endorsement appears to have a greater ability to sway a reader's vote choice than does a Conservative one, in contrast to results reported elsewhere and disproving my initial hypothesis.

The results relating to mixed endorsements in the 2015 model are particularly interesting. While my hypothesis predicted that mixed endorsements would have either no or a moderate-conservative effect, the results nonetheless show that the overall effect of mixed endorsements is in favour of the Liberal Party. Even when limiting the analysis to those respondents who held certain party identifications mixed endorsements displayed largely the same results as those exposed only to Liberal endorsements, although with generally somewhat smaller effects and lower levels of statistical significance. These results are to some extent contrary to the expectations laid out in my hypothesis, as it was anticipated that mixed endorsements would have identical effects to no endorsement at all. The underlying logic of the hypothesis is nevertheless supported to some degree; mixed endorsements were expected to deliver no statistically significant difference from no endorsements because the contradicting influences of the Liberal and Conservative endorsements were expected to essentially negate each other, leaving with a net-effect of near zero. This is, however, predicated on the implicit assumption that Liberal and Conservative endorsements would be of (relatively) equal persuasiveness; in fact, the marginal effect of a Liberal

endorsement on Liberal vote choice is over one-and-a-half times that of a Conservative endorsement on Conservative vote choice. With this taken into consideration, mixed endorsements are still somewhat conforming to the logic set out in the hypothesis, as the weaker Conservative endorsement does appear to have some degree of a moderating effect on the Liberal endorsement, causing the effect of a mixed endorsement, causing the persuasive effect of the mixed endorsement to be less than that of a Liberal endorsement alone.

A great amount of healthy skepticism should, however, be used in drawing conclusions relating to the different effect of Liberal and Conservative endorsements. Despite the fact that five newspapers endorsed Justin Trudeau's Liberal party in the 2015 election (see [Table 4](#)), due to Charlottetown's *The Guardian* being outside of the three provinces surveyed, *La Presse* readers being excluded along with the province of Québec, and the *Spectator*, *Waterloo Region Record*, and *Sudbury Star* not being listed as options, all those in the final sample exposed to Liberal endorsements were readers of the *Toronto Star*. Similarly, all those coded as having been exposed to a mixed endorsement were readers of the *Star* and at least one Conservative-endorsing newspaper (most often the *Toronto Sun*, *Globe and Mail*, and *National Post*).

This problematic sample greatly reduces the validity of any generalisations made about the comparative strengths of Liberal and Conservative endorsements. While endorsements of the Liberal Party do appear in the above-discussed results to have a greater persuasive effect than their Conservative counterparts, one could equally conclude that the *Toronto Star* has a greater influence over its readership than does the average Conservative-endorsing newspaper. While these results are interesting and suggestive of Liberal endorsements being more influential in the

2015 election, it simply is not possible to reject the alternative hypothesis that the difference is in fact a product of the *Toronto Star* specifically.

Beyond the limitations of the dataset, the context of the election should also be considered when comparing the effects of Liberal and Conservative endorsements. The Liberals won an enormous victory under their new leader, Justin Trudeau, taking 184 of the House of Commons' 338 seats, compared to the 34 of 308 they had won in the previous election. Incumbent Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative party had by contrast been in government for close to a decade, and were encountering the scandals and controversies that are typical of such a long tenure. Given the size of this victory, it is quite possible that the Liberal platform was simply easier for a newspaper to sell to people. Rather than being a product of the *Star* or its endorsement, or an inherent property of more left-leaning parties in Canada, the vision and image presented by the Trudeau Liberals may simply have been more capable of bringing in new supporters. There does exist some evidence to support this in the data; when comparing the probabilities of voting Conservative and of voting Liberal (see [Figure 2](#) and [Figure 3](#), respectively) it appears that the Liberals were far better at attracting supporters of other parties than were the Conservatives. For partisans of both the NDP and Liberals, the probability of a Conservative vote choice hovers near zero, and shows no difference at all based upon endorsement exposure. For a Liberal vote, however, both NDP and CPC supporters have substantial probabilities of voting for the LPC (as high as 20% for NDP-identified respondents) and further show some (non-significant) variation based upon endorsement exposure. Given the Liberals' greater ability to sell themselves to those who identified with other parties, the explanation for the difference in strength between Liberal and Conservative endorsements may simply be that the *Toronto Star* simply had an easier task to accomplish than did *The Globe and Mail* and Postmedia.

6.2. Ultimate effects on election results

The previous section establishes that newspaper endorsements do indeed have an influence on voters and that these effects vary based on the party endorsed and the party identification. While this does answer the research question set out in the beginning of this thesis, it is nonetheless somewhat lacking in context. The question still left unanswered is to what extent this influence is *consequential* for Canadian politics – that is to say, are newspaper endorsements ever likely to have a noticeable or substantive impact on Canadian elections? In this section I will attempt to better contextualise the results by analysing the potential of newspaper endorsements to impact the outcome of the 2015 federal election, using the results of the restricted model.

As can be seen in [Figure 1](#), reading a newspaper that published an endorsement of the Liberal Party, or at least reading the *Toronto Star*, causes one's probability of voting Liberal to rise to 59.3% from 44.1% when holding all control variables at their means – an increase of 15.2 percentage points. To put it in other terms, in the general population it can be expected that 44.1% of voters will support the Liberal Party when exposed to no endorsement, and that 59.3% will when exposed to the *Toronto Star* and its endorsement. Based upon this statistic, if it were the case that all electors were readers of newspapers the effect of newspaper endorsements on election outcomes would be enormous; a fifteen percentage-point swing in vote-share for a political party would be sufficient to change the outcome of most federal elections.

In reality, however, the impact of newspaper endorsements is greatly reduced due to the relatively low rates of newspaper readership. Even Canada's largest newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, reached only a circulation of 336,487 in the average 2015, compared to Canada's total of

25,939,742 electors¹³⁴. Within the 2015 sample, 76.5% of respondents were exposed to no endorsement, either from not reading a newspaper, or reading one with no endorsement. Based upon these readership levels, even if all endorsements were at the levels of persuasiveness of the *Toronto Star*'s endorsement of the Liberal Party, only 3.57% of the voting public could be expected to be persuaded into switching their vote based upon an endorsement. While at national level this degree of vote swing could have a notable (though likely not government-changing) effect on election outcomes, the vast majority of (Conservative) endorsements had an observed effect of a 6.9 percentage point increase, which was not statistically significantly significant. In reality, then, even the modest increase of 3.57 percentage points is far above the influence that endorsements actually had in the 2015 election.

While endorsements are likely of little consequence at the national level, this is not necessarily the case at the local level. While *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* address themselves to a pan-Canadian audience, and the internet age has made it possible to read virtually any newspaper from any location, the vast majority of papers market themselves to a particular geographic location, and have a rather geographically concentrated readership. In this context, then, it is conceivable that a newspaper with a high enough readership and persuasive enough endorsement could have a

¹³⁴ Elections Canada, 'Forty-Second General Election - Official Voting Results', n.d., <http://www.elections.ca/res/rep/off/ovr2015app/41/table1E.html>.

note-worthy effect on the results in local ridings. Even without concentrating their readership, in some particularly close constituencies a swing of only a few percentage points could easily change the outcome of the election.

The *Toronto Star*, with its readership concentrated in the Greater Toronto Area, would potentially have such an effect. Being the largest newspaper in Canada by total weekly circulation¹³⁵, the *Star* has a massive audience concentrated in a region that voted overwhelming Liberal in the 2015 election. While calculating the impact of the endorsement is not possible due to not knowing the precise number of readers who live in each Toronto-area riding, nor how many among them are voters, it is quite possible that the *Star*'s endorsement had a sufficient impact to alter election results in some Toronto ridings.

¹³⁵ Levson, '2015 Daily Newspaper Circulation Report'.

7. Conclusion

While the 2011 data failed to provide any significant and robust results, the results of the 2015 analysis do support my core hypothesis; electoral endorsements of a political party published in Canadian daily newspapers do influence their readers to vote for that party. Furthermore, my second hypothesis is also confirmed, as only those who identified with no political party displayed a statically significantly greater probability of supporting the party endorsed by their newspaper, when compared to those respondents who were exposed to no endorsement.

Neither H_3 nor H_4 can be confirmed based upon my analysis. In fact, Liberal endorsements displayed greater persuasive power than did those of the Conservative party, entirely contrary to my expectations and what has been observed in other countries. Rather than the effects of the two endorsements negating each-other, those exposed to a mixed endorsement saw a rise in the probability of voting Liberal similar to those exposed only to a Liberal endorsement. While the effect of mixed endorsements appeared to be less than that of Liberal endorsements, the difference was not statistically significant. However, the small number of Liberal endorsements means that these findings should be treated with extreme caution, as they represent particularities of the *Toronto Star*, or of the context of the 2015 election, rather than inherent properties of Liberal or Conservative endorsements.

In light of the continuing trends of media consolidation, and the incredibly uneven fashion in which newspaper endorsements are distributed between parties, these findings should be cause for some concern. Newspapers in Canada are continuing to be concentrated into larger chains, and Postmedia has set a precedent for dictating chain-wide endorsements. While the degree of influence these endorsements have is unlikely to influence a sufficient number of voters to

influence electoral outcomes on the national scale, widely-read local papers could potentially have an outcome-changing impact on individual ridings, particularly in constituencies that are already close. These findings imply then that very small groups of people – newspaper editors and publishers – may be having a substantial impact on Canadian elections.

The implications of these findings for the overall quality of Canadian democracy are thus less than stellar. In an idealised democracy, all citizens would have the ability to participate equally, and issues would be decided through open debate among equals. My findings in this thesis however imply that this is not fully the case, and that by controlling the slant of their sources of information, newspaper editors and owners can significantly impact the voting habits of their readers. Moreover, this influence is not being applied in an even fashion – my analysis of endorsements in 2011 and 2015 reveal that the overwhelming majority of endorsements are directed towards the Conservatives, and that only one over two elections favoured the New Democrats. While their influence over Canadian elections is likely far too little to impact overall outcomes, small groups of newspaper editors and publishers are having disproportionate impacts on federal elections through their control of newspapers' editorial slants.

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9. Appendix

9.1. Question Wording

Variable	Data Source	Question wording
Vote Choice	2011 CES	Which party did you vote for?
	2015 MEDW	Which party's candidate did you vote for?
Endorsement	2011 CES	And please type in the name(s) of any newspapers that you read regularly for news:
	2015 MEDW	What was (were) your primary source(s) of information about the campaign?*
Catholic	2011 CES	Please tell me, what is your religion, if you have one?
	2015 MEDW	What is your religion, if you have one?
Party ID	2011 CES	In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Bloc Québécois, Green Party, or none of these?
	2015 MEDW	Do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular FEDERAL political party? (If yes) Which party do you feel closest to?
Education	2011 CES	What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
	2015 MEDW	What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Immigrant	2011 CES	In what country were you born?
	2015 MEDW	Were you born in Canada

***Respondents could choose any number of responses from the following closed list of sources:**

<u>Ontario Respondents</u>	<u>BC Respondents</u>
Global (on television or online)	
CityTV (on television or online)	
CTV (on television or online)	
CBC (on television or online)	
<i>Toronto Star (in print or online)</i>	<i>Vancouver Province (in print or online)</i>
<i>Toronto Sun (in print or online)</i>	<i>Vancouver Sun (in print or online)</i>
<i>Globe and Mail (in print or online)</i>	
<i>National Post (in print or online)</i>	
Huffington Post (online)	
Buzzfeed (online)	
Your local paper (in print or online)	
Your local commuter paper	
Other non-English language news source (any format)	
Other English language news source (any format)	

9.2. Variable Coding

Variable	Data Source	Coding
Vote Choice	2011 CES	0 - Other 1 - Liberal 2 - Conservatives 3 - NDP 4 - Bloc
	2015 MEDW	1 - CPC 2 - NDP 3 - LPC 88 - Other
Endorsement	2011 CES	0 - None 2 - Conservative 3 - NDP 4 - Bloc Québécois
	2015 MEDW	0 - None 1 - LPC 2 - CPC 3 - Mixed
Region	2011 CES	1 - West 2 - Ontario 3 - Québec

		4 - Atlantic
	2015 MEDW	35 - Ontario 59 - British Columbia
Party ID	2011 CES	0 - None/other 1 - CPC 2 - NDP 3 - LPC 4 - BQ
	2015 MEDW	0 - None/other 1 - CPC 2 - NDP 3 - LPC
Religion	2011 CES	0 - Not Catholic
	2015 MEDW	1 - Catholic
Education	2011 CES	1 - no schooling
	2015 MEDW	2 - some elementary school 3 - completed elementary school 4 - some secondary/high school 5 - completed secondary/high school 6 - some technical, community college, CEGEP, College Classique

		<p>7 - completed technical, community college, CEGEP, College Classique</p> <p>8 - some university</p> <p>9 - bachelor's degree</p> <p>10 - master's degree</p> <p>11 – professional degree or doctorate</p>
Age	2011 CES	Continuous
	2015 MEDW	
Gender	2011 CES	<p>0 - Male</p> <p>1 - Female</p>
	2015 MEDW	<p>1 - Male</p> <p>2 - Female</p>
Immigrant	2011 CES	<p>0 - Born outside of Canada</p> <p>1 - Born in Canada</p>
	2015 MEDW	<p>0 - Born in Canada</p> <p>1 - Born Elsewhere</p>