MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

Political Discourse, the Media and Campaign Communications:

A grounded theory analysis of how the 2011 General Election was manifested in
unsigned editorials in *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post*

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Abstract

Traditionally, the Canadian political environment has been predicated on a left-right ideological split, with the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) on the left and iterations of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) on the right (Cochrane, 2010). However, this changed after the 2011 General Election when the NDP won enough seats in Parliament (102, an increase of 65 seats from the last election) to form the Official Opposition. The LPC lost a drastic number of seats, from 77 seats to 34 seats (-43), reducing them to third party status in the House of Commons for the first time in history.

This paper explores how this phenomenon was manifested in the media by analyzing unsigned editorials in two national English language Canadian newspapers, *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post,* from April 20, 2011 to May 2, 2011. This time period was chosen to reflect the period between expressed public support for the NDP rose above support for the LPC and the end of the campaign on election day. To analyze this phenomenon, this paper uses grounded theory as the methodological framework.

Grounded theory is a qualitative and explorative form of research that differs from other forms of qualitative research because the data collection phase and analysis phases of the project are conducted concurrently (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Banks, et al., 2000; Schreiber, 2001; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Gibbs, 2007; Charmaz, 2000). This approach provides a flexible framework to explore new phenomena, free of preconceived ideas about findings (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). A series of coding phases - open coding, axial coding, notional coding - are used to identify patterns within the textual data and the observed patterns are used to form theories to explain the phenomenon.

The analysis in this paper suggests that prior to the General Election outcome, the NDP emerged as a serious political contender to the CPC. This theory emerges from two patterns observed in the data centred around political discourse and campaign communications. The first observed pattern is how the editorials described each party's leader using a narrative of leadership and capability. The CPC and NDP leaders, whose parties gained the most in the General Election, were described under the narrative of leadership and reflected this narrative in their campaign communications. The second observed pattern was the way certain issues were highlighted in the editorials as salient election issues. These issues - Quebec, healthcare, and the economy - were more closely related to the campaign communications from the NDP and the CPC than they were to the LPC.

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Introduction

Canada's political environment has been predicated on a left-right ideological split, with the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) on the left and iterations of the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) on the right (Cochrane, 2010). After the most recent General Election an increased number of votes for the New Democratic Party (NDP) enabled this party to form the Official Opposition in the House of Commons, an historical first. Prior to the outcome of this election, the spotlight of the mainstream media reflected the traditional ideological split between the CPC and the LPC (Cochrane, 2010). The performance of the NDP in the 2011 General Election upset the traditional dichotomy between the LPC and the CPC and challenged the position of the LPC in the Canadian political environment.

Given the role of the media as a source for information and opinions and politicians and political issues (Le, 2010; Lippman, 1925), this paper is interested in how the media reflected the rise of the NDP during the 2011 General Election campaign. The role of the media is especially critical during a General Election campaign because the media shapes the environment within which citizens make their political choices (Lippmann, 1925; Trimble & Sampert, 2004; Fletcher & Everett, 1991).

One of the roles the media plays is providing a shared language for the general public and politicians to discuss public affairs (Leonard, 1986). A common language benefits the electorate, politicians and the press by providing a "seemingly natural way of making sense of political life" (Leonard, 1995:4; McCombs & Shaw,

1972). A common language allows everyone to discuss the same issues using the same language.

The news media is expected to do more than just highlight a topic or report the facts (Le, 2010). The role of the news is also to provide a public space to discuss ideas and evaluate political issues (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004; De Vreese, 2004; Nimmo & Combs, 1992). Leonard notes the benefits of having an organized space for civic discussion within a democratic society as legitimating the importance of multiple points of view in public debate and establishes the press as a legitimate source to manage differing perspectives (Leonard, 1995). Editorials, in particular, are seen to reflect the general public debate by representing a sort of microcosm of broader public discourse (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004).

Given the recent change in the Canadian political landscape after the 2011 General Election the focus of this paper is to better understand how the election was written about in editorials. This paper explores the 2011 General Election campaign as manifested in editorials from two national Canadian newspapers, *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* from April 20, 2011 to May 2, 2011.

Newspapers remain important media sources, even in light of newer communication technologies including blogs, micro-blogs and social media (Print Measurement Bureau, 2011). *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* were selected to form the corpus for this research given their position within the Canadian media environment, their national scope and their positions within the Canadian political spectrum.

Researchers have approached the connection between media, politics and the general population using different methodologies, including content analysis and agenda setting theory. Although these communications methodologies inform the analysis conducted in this project, this paper uses grounded theory as its research framework. These communication methodologies inform the analysis of this project but this paper uses grounded theory as a research framework. Grounded theory provides a flexible research framework to study a phenomenon for which there is little existing research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Banks, et al., 2000), as is the case in this context.

Grounded theory was chosen as the most appropriate research methodology because, as noted by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), it is commonly used by researchers to fill gaps in existing research knowledge and to pursue information in new areas of research. Grounded theory is a qualitative, explorative form of research (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). It differs from other forms of qualitative research primarily because data collection and analysis occur at the same time (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Banks, et al., 2000; Schreiber, 2001; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Gibbs, 2007; Charmaz, 2000).

Analyses that apply the grounded theory method identify an area of interest and allow for the theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:12). Within this process there are three stages of research: open coding, axial coding and notional coding (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Banks, et al., 2000; Schreiber, 2001; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Gibbs, 2007). The smallest unit of analysis within the research cor-

pus are "tokens" - bracketed units of text (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).   Breaking down the text into tokens allows the researcher to identify patterns in text and develop a broader theory.

Using grounded theory, this paper explores how editorials in *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* covered the 2011 General Election campaign.   The following questions were used to guide data collection during the open coding phase: *Which tokens describe the election campaign? Does this token refer directly to the campaign? Who/what issue is represented in this token?*   The initial round of coding generated 24 categories and 137 coded tokens. In the first wave of axial coding, open-coding categories were collapsed down to six more inclusive categories. The Notional coding process yielded four broad categories: Leadership, Dominant issues, Peripheral issues, and Governance.

By approaching the findings without preconceptions about what to expect from the data, the analysis conducted for this paper identifies the following key findings: the word leadership was an important part of the editorials' vernacular related to the 2011 General Election, and, the issues that editorials focussed on -- Quebec, healthcare, and the economy -- were closely related to the campaign platform issues of the NDP and the CPC.   The overarching theory proposed by this paper to explain how the 2011 General Election campaign manifested in editorials from two leading Canadian newspapers is that the importance of leadership and the salient election issues positioned the leader of the NDP as the serious political contender to the CPC, even prior to the 2011 General Election outcome.

This paper explains these findings and the research process. It begins by exploring the political tradition in Canada and the relationship between the news media industry and citizenry to provide the context of the 2011 General Election. Then, it identifies the research approach and research protocol before describing the results from the grounded theory analysis.

Political Context of Canadian Politics

Entering into the 2011 General Election, there were four main federal political parties with representation in the House of Commons. Listed in order based on the number of seats held, they were: the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC), the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC), the Bloc Quebecois (BQ), and the New Democratic Party (NDP) (elections.ca, 2011). After the 2011 General Election, the status of most of these parties was significantly altered. This section summarizes the main federal political parties and outlines some of the important events in the current federal political climate. The following section focusses on trends in public opinion during the 2011 General Election campaign.

Canadian Political Context

It is important to concentrate on political parties within the context of General Elections because of the central role that parties occupy in the political process which becomes more important during election campaigns (Cross, 2009). The centrality of political parties in the political process becomes even more important during election campaigns. In federal elections, citizens vote for a candidate in their riding

to represent them in the House of Commons, and the party that wins a majority of the seats forms the government.   In situations where no party's seat totals constitute a majority, typically the party with the most seats forms the government.

Although voters vote for a local candidate, typically this choice is based on the federal political party that their candidate represents.   Political theorist William Cross (2009) underscores the importance of political parties on Member of Parliament (MP) selection:

> Election campaigns are contests fought among political parties. Most voters decide which party they wish to govern and cast a ballot for the local candidate endorsed by their party. Media coverage of election campaigns is dominated by the parties... Candidates representing political parties received more than 99 per cent of the votes cast in the 2008 election.

(Cross, 2009: 243)

Thus, political parties, not individuals, are the central players in election campaigns.

Typically two parties have represented the discernible lines of ideological divisions that dominated Canada's federal political landscape: the Conservatives and the Liberals (Cochrane, 2010; Carty, 1992). Both of these political parties have long roots in Canada, stemming back to the pre-Confederation British tradition of the "Whigs" and "Tories" (Fierbleck, 2006). "Tory" was a term used to denote those Canadians who supported the British monarchy but more recently has come to be associated with Conservative parties (Fierbleck, 2006); "Whig" stems from the British term for political ideologies related to social liberalism and constitutionalism and has come to be associated with the Liberal Party (Fierbleck, 2006).

The NDP represents a third political tradition. This party comes from a third and more recent political tradition, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) (Carty, 1992). This party represented the socialist tradition in the form of a "protest party" (Carty, 1992:573). The BQ is the nationalist party for Quebec and only runs candidates in that province. The BQ tends to foster a leftist-ideology (Lucardie, 2007). Entering the 2011 election, the Canadian political landscape followed this tradition quite well.
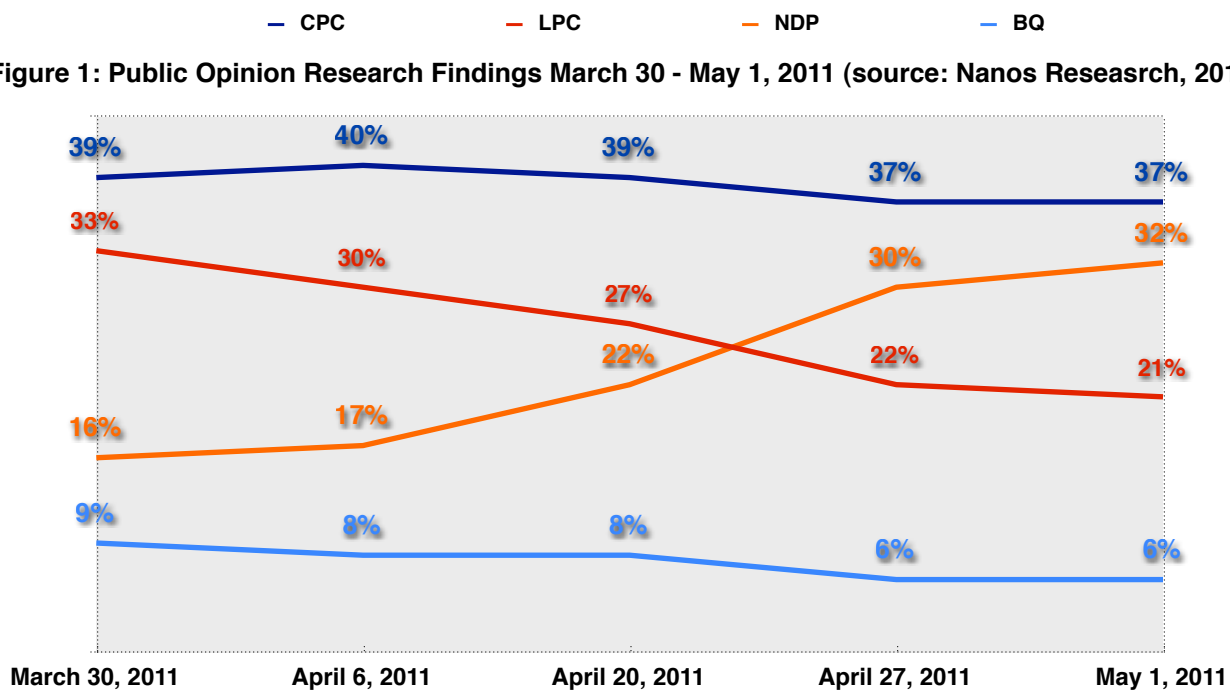
The variety of political parties demonstrated by these four parties is an important part of the democratic process in Canada (Cross, 2009). Canada's main political parties are meant to represent the electorate's different political ideologies ranging from the CPC on the right, the NDP on the left and the LPC at the left-of-centre (Cochrane, 2010). The breadth of political ideologies represented by the party system is symbolically and substantively important (Leonard, 1995; Cross, 2009). Cross (2009) notes that having multiple political parties who cover different points of view fosters a stronger connection between citizens and the democratic process: "the [political] parties take on the task of connecting citizens in their far-flung communities with political power exercised in Ottawa" (Cross, 2009:250). Citizens expect that political parties should be inclusive and representative of the many different components of Canadian society.

Changing Public Opinion

Although the NDP won a significant number of seats in the 2011 General Election, they started the campaign well behind the LPC in public opinion polls

(nanosresearch.com, 2011).   Figure 1 represents these findings using research from public opinion research conducted by Nanos Research during the 2011 General Election campaign. The numbers reflected in Figure 1 identify a significant shift in public opinion, with the largest increase in support for the NDP occurring between the survey conducted on April 20 and April 27.

— CPC   — LPC   — NDP   — BQ

Figure 1: Public Opinion Research Findings March 30 - May 1, 2011 (source: Nanos Reseasrch, 2011)

| March 30, 2011 | April 6, 2011 | April 20, 2011 | April 27, 2011 | May 1, 2011 |

Findings released on March 30, 2011 suggest that just one in eight Canadians expressed support for the NDP (16%), compared to one third who expressed support for the LPC (33%) (nanosresearch.com, 2011). On May 1, 2011, the day before the General Election, this figure had flipped -- one in five Canadians expressed support for the LPC (21%) and one third expressed support for the NDP (32%) (nanosresearch.com, 2011). During the election campaign, public opinion research findings suggest that support for the CPC remained stable with levels of expressed support remaining at about two in five Canadians (37% to 40%).

Public opinion research findings suggest that a change took place during the 2011 in the levels of support for the main federal political parties.   However, at this point, there is little academic research that explores the change within the context of the 2011 General Election campaign.

Changing Voting Patterns

Results from the last four General Elections (2004 to 2011) indicate a gradual shift in Canada's political landscape. Coincidentally, this time period also represents the beginning of the contemporary CPC and the period when Stephen Harper became leader of the CPC, in 2004, and Jack Layton became leader of the NDP, in 2003. Figure 2 represents the number of seats won by each party after each General Election from 2004 to 2011.

— CPC	— LPC	— NDP	— BQ

Figure 2: Number of seats won by Canadian federal political parties (2004-2011) (source: electionscanada.ca, 2011)
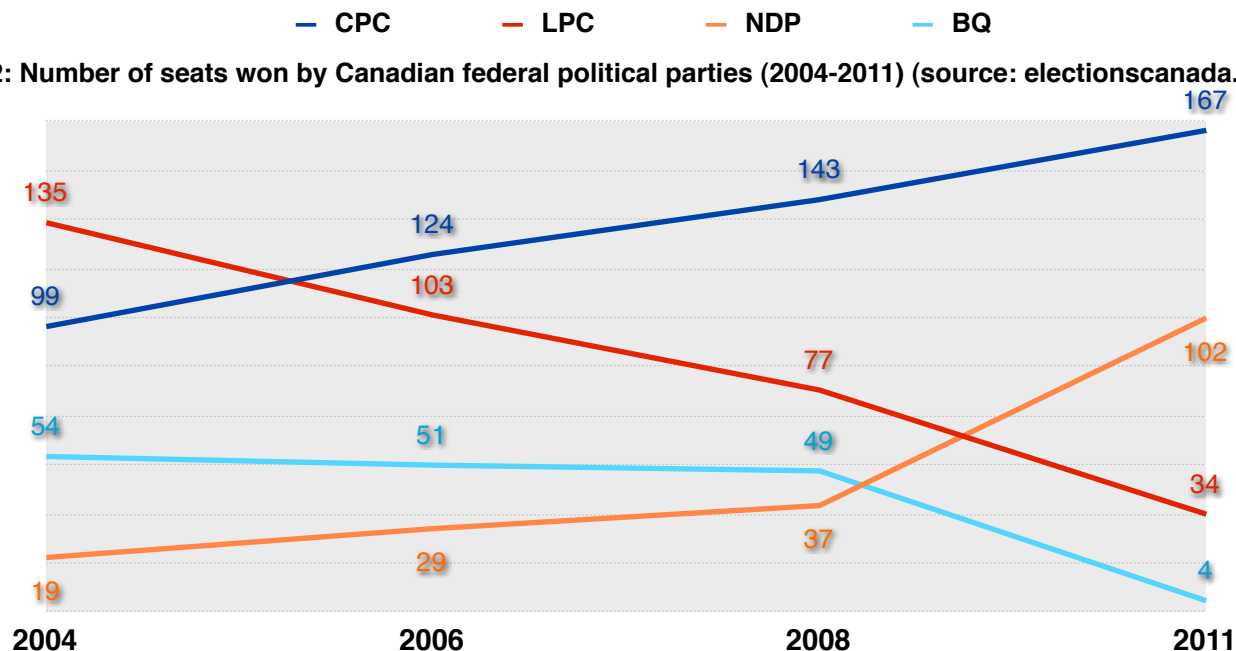
Since 2004, the CPC has steadily increased the numbers of seats it holds in the House of Commons from 99 seats in 2004, 124 in 2006, 143 in 2008 and 167 in

2011 (electionscanada.ca, 2011). However the party that made the most gains during this time period is the NDP, growing from 19 seats in 2004 to 109 in 2011 (electionscanada.ca, 2011). During the timeframe the LPC lost a significant number of seats, averaging a decrease of 30 seats after each election - from 135 in 2004 to 103 in 2006, 77 in 2008 and 34 in 2011 (electionscanada.ca, 2011). Between 2004 to 2008 the BQ had continuously won about 50 seats, until the last election when they dropped down to just four (electionscanada.ca, 2011).

The NDP gained the largest number of seats in the 2011 General Election, increasing the number of seats it holds in Parliament from 37 to 102 (+65) (electionscanada.ca, 2011). The CPC also made a significant gain, from 143 to 167 (+24) which gave the party enough seats to form a majority government for the first time since it became a party in 2003 (electionscanada.ca, 2011). The LPC and BQ lost a significant number of seats: from 77 seats to 34 seats for the LPC (-43) and from 47 seats to four seats for the BQ (-45) (electionscanada.ca, 2011).

Figure 3 represents the change in seats held by the four parties after the 2008 General Election and the 2011 General Election. The loss in support for the LPC is particularly striking because the LPC has never held such a small number of seats or such a low level of expressed support (Jeffrey, 2009; elections.ca, 2011; nanosresearch.com, 2011).

Figure 3: Number of Seats held by Canadian federal political parties (2008-2011) (source: electionscanada.ca, 2011)

| CPC | LPC | NDP | BQ |

2008 legend values: 49, 37, 77, 143

2011 legend values: 4, 102, 34, 167
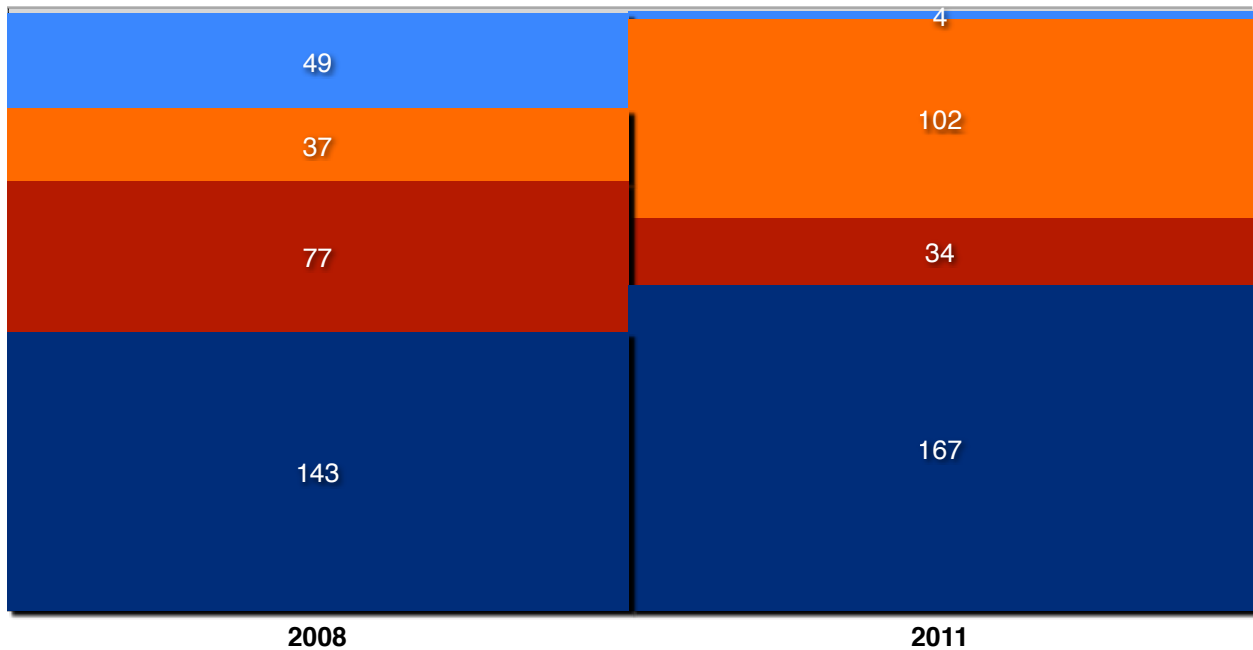
These polling and election results depict a story of change. The change in trends in public opinion and electoral results represent a gradual move away from the LPC towards the CPC and the NDP. Although the public's sentiments were already changing, the 2011 General Election caused significant and historical disruptions in Canada's federal political environment.

Politics and the Press

While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what causes public opinion to shift, there is a strong and well-researched connection identifying the role of the media in shaping the environment in which citizens form political opinions (Lippmann, 1925; Trimble & Sampert, 2004; Fletcher & Everett, 1991; Le, 2010; Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Leonard, 1995). This is largely due to the fact that citizens do not gen-

eral interact with the political world directly - it is mediated to them through the media (Lippmann, 1925; Trimble & Sampert, 2004). Thus, a large role the media plays is to provide a key channel of communication between politicians and citizens (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007). Within this channel the media performs two functions simultaneously: reflects and influences the social and political environment (Le, 2010).

In its reflective role, the plays the role of capturing the views of society. One such function is by capturing and formalizing the way people talk about political issues. This particular type of language is referred to as vernacular (Leonard, 1995). Vernacular denotes a common language using words and pictures to share and express one's political interests (Leonard, 1986). Developing a common vernacular serves the public, politicians and the press (Leonard, 1995; McCombs & Shaw, 1972) because it provides a "seemingly natural way of making sense of political life" (Leonard, 1995:4). In this role, the media reflects the language used to describe a particular political issue by providing the formalizing the language related to it.

If the media serves to influence society, one way it may do so is through agenda setting. When the mass media place emphasis on a topic, by discussing it , even if the coverage is negative, the audience receiving the message will place greater importance on this topic (Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, when the media highlights an issue its audience will place a greater on this issue. As Bernard Cohen (1963) stated: "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its

readers what to think about" (13). Thus the media has the potential to influence the political environment by spotlighting some events, issues, people, and perspectives while downplaying others (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006; Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Lippman, 1925).

Newspapers

Canadians have access to a variety of media channels for information about politics (Wadell, 2009). Recently, attention has focused on the prominence of newer communication technologies, including blogs, micro-blogs and social media (Wadell, 2009). While newer communication technologies are gaining in popularity, these forms of communication only reach a small proportion of the population, especially when compared to traditional media such as television news and newspapers (Waddell, 2009).

Newspapers in particular continue to reach a large audience of Canadians. Every week three-quarters (77%) of Canadian adults read a daily newspaper either in print or online and there are roughly the same number of newspapers today, 100 dailies and more than 1,100 community newspaper, as there were 10 years ago (National Audience Databank, 2008). Table 1 represents the circulation numbers for the most circulated Canadian daily newspapers in 2010 (Canadian Media Director's Council, 2010:36).

The findings in Table 1 identify the *Toronto Star* (390,163) as the most circulated daily newspaper in Canada, followed by the national edition of *The Globe and Mail* (304,967) and *Le Journal de Montréal* (266,160) (Canadian Media Directors'

Council, 2010). The other nationally scoped Canadian daily newspaper, *The National Post (*177,989), is ninth on this list (Canadian Media Directors' Council, 2010).

Table 1: Circulation numbers for top ten Canadian daily newspaper (2010) (source: Canadian Media Directors' Council, 2010)	
Daily newspaper	**Total circulation (Monday to Friday)**
Toronto Star	390,163
The Globe and Mail (National)	304,967
Le Journal de Montréal	266,160
Metro Toronto	258,858
24 Hours Toronto	247,236
La Presse (Montréal)	206,921
Vancouver Sun	182,823
Toronto Sun	178,461
National Post	177,989
Montreal Gazette	173,757
TOTAL:	**2,387,335**

In addition to total circulation numbers, newspapers remain a popular source for information about political events such as General Elections. This is likely because they are seen to provide in-depth coverage of events and opinions (Wadell, 2009). Following the 2008 General Election, EKOS Research Associates conducted a survey of Canadians to find out their media during election campaigns for political news (as cited in Waddell, 2009). Their findings revealed that a strong majority of Canadians relied somewhat or extensively on traditional news media including television (84%), newspapers (74%) and online media sources (52%) as their main

source of election campaign information (as cited in Waddell, 2009). Therefore, newspapers remain an important gauge of information that the public receives about the parties and issues (Print Measurement Bureau, 2011; Wadell, 2009).

Editorials

Newspaper editorials reflect the opinions in society and the broader public discourse surrounding public affairs (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004). In a reflective role, newspapers provide a public forum for discussions about ideas and the space for professionals to evaluate political issues (De Vreese, 2004; Nimmo & Combs, 1992). In an influential role, unsigned editorials represent the "official expressions of a media's position on an issue" (Le, 2010:3) and provide an opportunity for the newspaper to officially express its opinion. Some consider editorials as forming a microcosm of society. in part because of the special position they occupy in the newsroom of providing a somewhat balanced forum for discourse while allowing the newspaper to express their opinions (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004). Therefore, newspaper editorials are a revealing source for data collection because of its distinctive role surrounding public discourse and debate on political issues (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004).

In addition to providing a public space to discuss public affairs, the editorial page also serves as a space where the newspaper can take a stand on issues, as well as its own identity. The editorial page is described as revealing the "inner character and philosophy" of each newspaper (Clarke & Evans, 1983:73). Editorials serve as a way for newspapers to associate themselves politically. The position edi-

torials occupy within the media system provides an opportunity to send signals about alignments the newspaper wishes to encourage or interests it seeks to block (Clarke & Evans, 1983:119). Newspapers can structure their editorials to select, present and comment on news for the public to influence public opinion, reinforce their identity or support their allies (Le, 2010; Kahn & Kenny, 2002). Within the context of an election campaign, Le notes that "editorials behave like any other politician but with specific advantages" (Le, 2010:173). In this role, the newspaper goes beyond its role of reflecting society and takes on its other role of influencing society.

National Canadian Newspapers

Canada's media system is dominated by a small number of multimedia conglomerates who own the two national newspapers and the main private television broadcasters. *The Globe and Mail* is owned by David Thomson, Canada's "wealthiest man" (Brent, 2010). The acquisition of *The Globe and Mail* by Thomson's private investment company was part of a larger $3-billion acquisition whereby Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE) took over *The Globe and Mail's* parent company CTVglobemedia (Brent, 2010). *The National Post* is currently owned by the Postmedia Network, "the largest publisher by circulation of paid English-language daily newspapers in Canada" (Postmedia.com/company, 2011). *The National Post* was bought by the Postmedia Network as part of larger deal when its parent company, CanWest Global, went bankrupt (Brent, 2010).

The Globe and Mail has been referred to as "Canada's newspaper of record" (Gidengil, 2008:59) and has typically been at the centre of the federal political spec-

trum (Dornan & Pyman, 2002). On average, *The Globe* reaches 2.4 million print and online customers on a weekly basis and enjoys a "large and highly loyal readership" (Print Measurement Bureau, 2011). *The National Post* reaches a weekly readership of 1.8 million print and online customers (Print Measurement Bureau, 2011). The National Post holds stronger ties to right-wing, conservative politics (Dornan & Pyman, 2002). However, it should be noted that newspaper readership is not limited to one publication.

Readership of *The Globe and Mail*'s consists of "Canada's most influential and affluent citizens" (www.globelink.ca, 2010). The newspaper positions itself as "an essential read for Canadians who want to know about the issues, facts and opinions that affect our domestic landscape and the world at large. In print for 165 years, The Globe and Mail has consistently delivered Canada's best and deepest coverage of national, international and business news" (www.globelink.ca, 2010). *The National Post* describes itself as featuring "coverage from across the country and around the world, delivered with a distinctly Canadian voice. But it's more than just news: it's an eclectic package that combines award-winning reporting with hard-hitting analysis to take you deep inside the stories that count" (mediakit.nationalpost.com, 2010). The corpus for this research paper is composed of editorials from these two national newspapers in order to capture the broader range of opinions and the differing audiences they appeal to.

Research Approach

Research corpus

The Globe and Mail and *The National Post* were selected to form the corpus for this project because they are both nationally scoped newspapers, they each publish six times a week (Monday to Saturday), and they occupy distinct positions within Canada's media environment (Dornan & Pyman, 2002). There is also overlap between readership of *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post:* sixty-six per cent (66%) of *The National Post* readers also read *The Globe and Mail* (NADbank, 2010).

Research indicates that the historical political leanings of *The Globe* and *The National Post* has influenced how each newspaper covers elections (Trimble & Sampert, 2004; Dornan & Pyman, 2002).   Following the 2000 General Election, Trimble and Sampert (2004) analyzed how *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* reported on that election by examining each newspaper's use of news story headlines related to the election. Their findings suggest that each newspaper's headlines reflected the newspaper's political values. For example, *The Globe and Mail* appears supportive of the Liberal Party members and policies, where as *The National Post* "...used its editorials to portray the Liberal platform as a series of big-spending policies and vacuous campaign promises" (Trimble & Sampert, 2004: 65).   In their analysis of newspaper headlines, Trimble and Sampert (2004) identified that political leanings of *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* within the Canadian media system.

Research for this paper draws on editorials from *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* to gain a broader sample of the news environment. To use only one of these two newspapers for analysis would lead to an unrepresentative sample of the media's role in the political landscape during the 2011 General Election campaign. Using two national newspapers offers a more comprehensive view of this landscape.

Approaches for studying media

Analyzing how the 2011 General Election campaign period manifested in newspapers can be approached using a number of methodologies. For example, researchers have explored the connections between media and politics using a variety of different approaches including content analysis, agenda setting theory and media priming (Le, 2010).

Content analysis has long been applied as a quantitative approach to analyze newspapers (Krippendorf, 2004). The first quantitative newspaper analysis was published in 1893 and applied content analysis as a longitudinal study of *The New York Times* between 1881 to 1893 (Krippendorf, 2004). Using this approach provided researchers with a quantifiable method to analyze "the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes" (Krippendorf, 2004:xvii). Quantitative analysis of newspaper content provides a needed scientific ground for arguments about journalism.

Agenda setting describes the influence of the mass media on politics (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This theory is based on the idea that the mass media

can render a topic important in the mind of the public by emphasizing that particular topic (Cohen, 1963; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Previous studies have identified a strong connection between the issues the media highlights and public priorities (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Ghanem, 1996; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; Weaver, Graber, McCombs, & Eyal, 1981).

Priming and Framing are two more approaches that media researchers have used to analyze editorials (Le, 2010). Priming "occurs when news content suggests to news audience that they ought to use specific issues to make political evaluations" (Scheufelde & Tewksbury, 2007:11). Framing assumes that the characterization in "news reports can have an influence on how it is understood by audiences" (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007:11). Both of these theories are predicated on a revised positivist framework (Le, 2010).

These approaches are all valid methodologies to analyze how the 2011 General Election was manifested in editorials. However, this paper required a different type of methodology because it did not set out to prove a pre-existing ideology. Given the recentness and unfamiliarity presented in this situation, analyzing the phenomenon in this paper required a different research approach -- grounded theory.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative, explorative form of research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It differs from other forms of qualitative research because the data collection phase and the analysis phases of the project take place simultaneously

(Charmaz, 2000; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Banks, et al., 2000; Schreiber, 2001; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Gibbs, 2007). Theory is "derived from data... systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:12). Researchers using grounded theory understand the importance of grounding theory in real world data and experiences and "realize that these become the foundations for making comparisons and discovering properties and dimensions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:4-5). Grounded theory is the most appropriate research approach to analyze how the 2011 General Election was manifested in editorials because it provides a flexible framework to un-cover findings.

The analytical process of grounded theory centers on "the interplay between researcher and data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:13). Researchers using grounded theory begin analyzing their data before they have finalized data collection, develop-ing a tight relationship between the data collection, analytical ideas and theorizing (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, Banks, et al., 2000, Gibbs, 2007). Grounded theory is generally considered to be more of an approach than a method, setting it apart from other forms of research methods (Gibbs, 2007).

One of the primary benefits of grounded theory, as a research approach, is that the analytic process prompts the discovery and development of theory, rather than the other way around (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, Gibbs, 2007). In analysis using the grounded theory approach the "researcher does not begin a project with a precon-ceived theory in mind... [he or she] begins with an area of study and allows the the-

ory to emerge from the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:12). To properly conduct grounded theory, it is important to maintain a flexible and open mind to theorize new theories from the data (Gibbs, 2007).

Grounded theory is useful for researchers who are flexible, prefer to work with data rather than abstract theoretical ideas, and who are willing to draw from their personal experiences in their research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, Banks, et al., 2000, Gibbs, 2007). Discovering theory that is developed from data ensures the theory is directly connected to the phenomena it studies (Banks, et al., 2000). The process and techniques of grounded theory ensure the researcher keeps theory within the boundaries of what can be proved using their particular evidence (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, Banks, et al., 2000, Gibbs, 2007).

Theory refers to denoting "a set of well developed categories (e.g. themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework" to explain a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:22). The process of developing a theory is referred to as "theorizing" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:21). Theorizing is based on "conceiving or intuiting ideas (concepts) but also formulating them into a logical, systematic, and explanatory scheme" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:21). This process can be complex and lengthy, therefore Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify two operations which are essential for grounded theory development: asking questions and making comparisons (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The process of asking questions and making comparisons is contained and managed through the use of theoretical sampling (Banks, et al., 2000). Theoretical

sampling is a way to manage data collection, within the framework of the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Using a theoretical sampling approach allows the researcher to begin developing theories and explanations, while performing data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process also helps in identifying additional cases for sampling by refining, elaborating, and exhausting conceptual categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Gibbs, 2007). By observing a particular situation within a sample the researcher refines important variables and factors (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Gibbs, 2007).

Data collection within the grounded theory approach involves two key concepts: coding and flexibility. Coding is crucial to the process because, "Theory is grounded in the relationships between data and the categories into which they are coded" (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002: 218). The researcher must remain flexible throughout the coding process due to the fact that, "Codes and categories are mutable until late in the project, because the researcher is still in the field and data from new experiences continue to alter the scope and terms of his or her analytic framework" (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002: 218). This approach provides the researcher with a flexible framework to analyze and code their data.

Coding is the backbone of the grounded theory approach. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the "analytic procedure through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:3). The purpose of coding is to: "Build, rather than test theory; provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of raw data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:13). It also pushes

the researcher to "consider alternative meanings of phenomena; be systematic and creative simultaneously; and, identify, develop, and relate the concepts that are building blocks of theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:13). The coding process is integral because it helps the researcher identify units of meaning and inform the development of theory.

Given the interplay between data collection and theorizing, grounded theory is an appropriate approach to study the phenomena of the 2011 General Election campaign period. I will describe how I used grounded theory to provide a flexible framework through which I analyzed and theorized how the 2011 General Election campaign was manifested in editorials in Canadian English newspapers, using the protocol suggest by Strauss and Corbin (1998)

Research Plan (Applying Grounded Theory)

Research problems for qualitative research can originate from a number of sources (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The source of inspiration for this research topic came from a real world event, the change in political environment during the 2011 election campaign period. In order to frame the research problem, I drew from a variety of sources for context, which Strauss and Corbin suggest - reviewing existing literature, conducting research based on personal observation and research from prior grounded theory analyses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The research question for this project began quite broad: How do newspapers reflect campaign communications in their election coverage? Answering this question would require studying every newspaper in every country on any election. By

providing a tighter framework for this research project, the research scope provided the flexibility and freedom to explore this phenomenon, without forcing me to consider an "entire universe of possibilities" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:41). Thus, the research question guiding this paper is: How did the editorial coverage of the 2011 General Election campaign, in two of Canada's national English language newspapers, shape the political and social environment surrounding the 2011 General Election?

However, research using grounded theory cannot attempt to prove precise relationships amongst variables or test pre-existing hypotheses (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A research question in a grounded theory project is more akin to a guiding statement that identifies the phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In framing the data collection, the texts I analyzed were editorials from *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post* from April 20 to May 2, 2011, excluding editorials prior to April 20, 2011. Documents were collected during this time to reflect the period during the campaign which exhibited a crucial shift in public opinion. Document collection was conducted by accessing editorial texts archived on Pro-Quest.

Coding

To analyze documents, I began by examining editorials from each newspaper with content related to the 2011 General Election campaign period to identify tokens, or units of meaning related to the research statement. Tokens are "clauses, sentences or larger expressive units" (Banks, et.al, 2000:303). This step in coding is

called open-coding - coding units of meaning into conceptual categories based on an intuitive bracketing of discourse data by grouping the categories into similar categories and labeling categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Banks, et al., 2000; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

In open coding, it is important to be "free to consider the meanings of words, phrases, [and] sentences...on an equal basis" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:219). In the open-coding stage, coding remains "unrestricted" to ensure the range and definition of categories is not pre-decided (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:219).   This process focusses on generating units to be codified through a   process yielding preliminary topic categories.

Considering the central phenomenon in this project, some of the categories that I anticipated creating included: how frequently each political party is mentioned, party leader characterizations, descriptions of political parties, attacks, historical precedents, historical trends, analyses of communication practices, use of similes and metaphors, and statistics and quantifiable data. However, I remained open to whatever categories were generated by the data.

The next stage of coding is called axial coding. Axial coding is the process of refining and integrating categories (Banks, et al., 2009). Axial coding, also known as the constant comparison method, involves making connections between categories, potentially creating new categories or identifying themes that span many categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In this stage, links are made between categories by drawing connections between categories and their subcategories (Strauss & Corbin,

1998:123). This process reshapes categories and produces deeper meanings by working back and forth between the established categories and the raw data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Prior to conducting the research for this project, I suspected that some of the categories that might result from the axial coding process could include categorizing all examples of metaphors used to describe political parties into a category called "party metaphors" and "leader metaphors."

Along with establishing new categories, axial coding internally validates the integration of categories by linking them conceptually and ensuring that the categories reflect the true nature of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Stauss & Corbin, 1998; Banks, et al. 2000; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In doing so, "Each category's core properties are clarified by going back through the data many times" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:219). Glaser and Strauss (1967) note that constant comparison forces the researcher to start "thinking in terms of the full range or types or continua of the category, its dimensions, the conditions under which it is pronounced or minimized, its major consequences, its relations to other categories, and its other properties" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:107). The goal at this stage is to develop new, more inclusive semantic categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Throughout the process of axial coding, the number of new categories levels out as incidents fit into the existing categories (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:219). As the category set becomes "theoretically saturated," new incidents add little value to the

existing concepts (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002:222). Any modifications which are made are done so to clarify logic, remove non-relevant properties, or integrate details into the broader outline of the interrelated categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Once categories become saturated it is important to begin determining a narrative structure based on the categories or theorizing.

The next step is called selective coding or notional coding. This stage identifies a few core categories and helps identify a central a narrative to describe the phenomena. Core categories are rooted in an established connection that exists between core categories and notional categories (Banks, et al., 2009).

To illustrate this stage, I will continue to draw from the example using similes and metaphor. In an article published in the Globe and Mail on April 25, 2011, titled *The Liberal big tent, the NDP off-centre*, there are many instances of descriptions drawing on metaphors referring to action and movement, concerning the NDP. For example, the article describes the party as "a New Democratic Party that is apparently <u>growing</u> in strength," "The remarkable <u>rise</u> of the NDP" "that would be a welcome <u>jolt</u> to the party system there" (Globe and Mail, Editorial, 2011). From these examples one could theorize that the use of language reflected the increasing popularity of the NDP.

Throughout the coding stages in this research, extensive research notes, referred to as memos, were kept and diagrams were used to uncover potential relationships, as set out by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Banks, et. al. (2000). Memos are written records of analysis and serve as directions for the analyst (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). While these can take many different forms, they are typi-

cally analytical and conceptual rather than descriptive. Diagrams are visual devices that the analyst uses to help depict the relationship amongst concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These tools were instrumental in identifying relationships between categories, themes and building interpretation. Figures 1, 2 and 3 (located below in the results section) represent the diagrams used to manage data collection and analysis in this research project.

Results

Given that data collection and theorizing occur simultaneously in grounded theory, the findings listed below are coupled with a fairly detailed explanation of how they emerged from the data.

Open Coding

The analysis for this project yielded preliminary topic categories that were based on patterns found in the data in the open coding process. Strauss and Corbin (1990) note that in the open coding phase, categories "have to be analytically developed by the researcher" (67). After reading all of the editorials twice, I began bracketing tokens that conceptualized how the 2011 General Election was manifested in the editorials. This meant excluding some content from editorials during the election campaign period because they did not relate to the 2011 General Election campaign period.

I developed my own set of questions to ascertain which tokens should be coded and how. These included questions such as: Which tokens describe the election campaign? Does this token refer directly to the campaign? Who/what issue is represented in this token? In addition to my own questions, I drew from questions developed by Banks, et. al. (2000). These questions included: "What appears to be the meaningfully cohesive topic unit? What does this unit of discourse describe or what is the subject described as doing? What is the underlying principle of this expression?" (Banks, et. al., 2000:304). The categories developed through the open coding process and their frequency of occurrence are displayed in Table 2, including an example for each category to illustrate it.

	TABLE 2: OPEN CODING RESULTS	
Category	Example	# of tokens
1. leadership	"We were not presented with an opportunity to vote for something bigger and bolder" (G&M, 28APR)	8
2. economy	"The Prime Minister and the Conservative Party have demonstrated principled judgment on the economic file." (G&M, 28APR)	7
3. health care	"Health care is suffering from chronic spending disease." (G&M, 28APR)	9
4. economics + health care	"their perfectly proper concerns with their health and their savings." (G&M, 20APR)	4
5. Conservative platform (generally)	"In their platform, the Conservatives sensibly enough, but uninspiringly, emphasize an infrastructure theme." (G&M, 20APR)	2
6. Afghanistan	"While Canada's combat mission in Kandahar is almost over, 950 soldiers and support staff have been committed to a three-year training mission. Canada has also spent $127-million to support the rule of law in Afghanistan, and another $5.5-million to train correctional officers." (G&M, 26(a)APR)	3
7. Leader comparisons	"Michael Ignatieff would lose to Mr. Layton in the folksiness sweepstakes." (G&M, 25APR)	7

	TABLE 2: OPEN CODING RESULTS	
Category	**Example**	**# of tokens**
8. Party comparisons	"Whether that merits support for the Liberals over the Conservatives is a very different question" (G&M, 25APR)	**7**
9. Parliament	"If the result is a confident new Parliament, it could help propel Canada into a fresh period of innovation, government reform and global ambition." (G&M, 28APR)	**2**
10. Democracy	"So far this year, more than 2,000 people have died in Arab countries in the fight for democracy." (NP, 2MAY)	**2**
11. Fed-Prov	"It needs to reform its troubled equalization program without straining national unity." (G&M, 28APR)	**2**
12. CAN-US	"Relations with the U.S. are at a critical juncture. Any thickening of the border threatens to punish all Canadians, while negotiations over perimeter security have implications for national sovereignty and economic security." (G&M, 28APR)	**1**
13. Michel Ignatieff	"While Canadians still need to learn more about Mr. Ignatieff, he is a passionate advocate of equality of opportunity, and for protecting Canada's democracy." (G&M, 25APR)	**12**
14. Jack Layton	"Jack Layton has energized the New Democrats and the electorate" (G&M, 28APR)	**10**
15. Stephen Harper	"Only Mr. Harper and the Conservative Party have shown the leadership, the bullheadedness (let's call it what it is) and the discipline this country needs." (G&M, 28APR)	**10**
16. Environment issues	"Fewer election issues illustrate the divide between political rhetoric and political challenge more than climate change." (G&M, 21APR)	**15**
17. Research + Development	"To get there, it will take a renewed investment in research, a national vision that includes other levels of government, and more astute politics."	**1**
18. civic engagement	"We in the West do not reflect often enough on how powerful an act it is simply to be able to place an "x" next to the name of the person we wish to represent us in our national parliament, provincial legislature or local council." (NP, 2MAY)	**7**
19. LPC	"The Liberal Party remains broadly centrist." (G&M, 25APR)	**1**
20. Religion and politics	"so as advance polls opened yesterday, voters likely mixed with Good Friday pilgrims, each going about their business, citizens to their civic duties, religious folk to their worship." (NP, 23APR)	**2**
21. comparison to the US	"Yet a comparison of our election campaign to events south of the border shows how relatively moderate and civilized things are in this country." (NP, 29APR)	**3**

	TABLE 2: OPEN CODING RESULTS	
Category	**Example**	**# of tokens**
22. negative	"We'll admit that the current federal campaign often has failed to inspire." (NP, 2MAY)	9
23. NDP	"It wants to set an arbitrary limit on credit card interest rates, without considering how quickly card companies will stop issuing them to people with low credit ratings, i.e. the same people the NDP purports to help." (NP, 28APR)	2
24. Quebec	"Quebecers don't like being promised powers and privileges that ultimately aren't delivered." (NP,28APR)	11
	Total # of tokens:	137

Through the open coding process, 24 categories and 137 tokens were identified. While most tokens of text were comparatively easy to bracket, categorize and label at this stage, some units of text were more challenging because they could have fit into more then one category. In some cases tokens that referred to an issue also referred to a political platform as well. Examples of issues that were difficult to separate include Quebec, the economy and health care. For example, *"Layton's NDP would stand in the way of few if any demands. Once Quebec had all the powers Mr. Layton is willing to hand over, there would be little practical reason for remaining within Canada, other than the annual equalization cheque"* (NP, 28APR). This token could have fit within the category *Quebec* or the category *Jack Layton*. I chose to include this token in the category called *Quebec* because I felt it was more important to capture the way the issue was framed rather than how it related to the narrative surrounding the leader.

Some of the categories that resulted from the open-coding process include:

13. Michel Ignatieff (eg. *"But his campaign failed to show how the Conservative government has failed, and why he and the Liberals are a preferred alternative."* (G&M, 28APR)

14. Jack Layton (eg. *"He has impressed many with his stamina, his sincerity, poise and ease on the stump, and his clear fondness for people and the art of politics, a quality needed in an era of increasing political cynicism."* (G&M, 25APR)

15. Stephen Harper (eg. *"Stephen Harper and the Conservatives are best positioned to guide Canada there."* (G&M, 28APR)

4. economics + health care (eg. *"nor has there been an honest recognition of the most critical issues that lie ahead: a volatile economy, ballooning public debts and the unwieldy future of our health-care system."* (G&M, 28APR)

24. Quebec (eg. *"The Post's front-page Wednesday story on the degree to which the NDP has sold its soul to Quebec nationalists should be read by anyone thinking of voting for the New Democrats on Monday."* (NP, 28APR)

18. civic engagement (eg. *"Whether you vote based on where one of the national parties stand on an issue you care deeply about, or you vote for the candidate in your riding who inspires you most, just vote."* (NP, 2MAY)

Axial Coding

The second stage, axial coding, collapses the fragmented tokens into more comprehensive categories. Categories developed through axial coding reconstruct open coded categories into broader categories by "relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their proportions and dimensions. It looks at how categories crosscut and link" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:124). The initial round of coding generated 24 categories and 137 coded tokens. In the first wave of axial coding, these

categories were collapsed down to six categories that are more inclusive. By pro-posing relationships among categories I was able to construct a logical association between them.

Strauss and Corbin note that "although the text provides clues about how categories relate, the actual linking takes place at a conceptual level" (1990:125). Throughout this process, the axial coded categories emerge through a process of constant comparison between the data and the new categories. The new categories resulting from axial coding and the open coding categories can be found in Table 2.

Throughout the process of axial coding, I focused on collapsing categories by determining how these categories "vary dimensionally" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:143), how categories are connected and how they differ. To re-evaluate cate-gories, some of the questions I referred to include: What is the core connection be-tween these tokens? Is there a broader category that connects these tokens? What makes them similar and what makes them different? How will the meaning of the broad category change if I include this token?

	TABLE 3: AXIAL CODING	
Category	**Example**	**# of tokens**
1. Leadership		**40**
1. leadership	"In each instance, domestic politics trumped real opportunities for Canadian leadership - so that our domestic policies and stance have helped to marginalize Canada on the world stage." (G&M, 21APR)	8
13. Michel Ignatieff	"While Canadians still need to learn more about Mr. Ignatieff, he is a passionate advocate of equality of opportunity, and for protecting Canada's democracy." (G&M, 25APR)	12

TABLE 3: AXIAL CODING		
Category	**Example**	**# of tokens**
14. Jack Layton	"The remarkable rise of the NDP is thanks primarily to Jack Layton, coming into his own in his fourth campaign." (G&M, 25APR)	10
15. Stephen Harper	"He has built the Conservatives into arguably the only truly national party" (G&M, 28APR)	10
2. Parties		**5**
5. Conservative platform (generally)	"In their platform, the Conservatives sensibly enough, but uninspiringly, emphasize an infrastructure theme." (G&M, 20APR)	2
19. LPC	"The Liberal Party remains broadly centrist." (G&M, 25APR)	1
23. NDP	"It wants to set an arbitrary limit on credit card interest rates, without considering how quickly card companies will stop issuing them to people with low credit ratings, i.e. the same people the NDP purports to help." (NP, 28APR)	2
3. Issues		**53**
2. economy	"Canadians take Mr. Harper's successful stewardship of the economy for granted, which is high praise." (G&M, 28APR)	7
3. health care	"Health care is suffering from chronic spending disease." (G&M, 28APR)	9
4. economics + health care	"nor has there been an honest recognition of the most critical issues that lie ahead: a volatile economy, ballooning public debts and the unwieldy future of our health-care system." (G&M, 28APR)	4
6. Afghanistan	"This "great escape" shows that, despite the vast expenditure, enormous human sacrifice and assistance of NATO troops, the government and its institutions remain weak, especially in southern Afghanistan, where authorities are unable to carry out their most basic responsibilities." (G&M, 26(a)APR)	3
16. Environment issues	"We have had a piecemeal approach, with laudable federal support for some efforts (such as the Lower Churchill Falls development), but not for others." (G&M, 21APR)	15
17. Research + Development	"To get there, it will take a renewed investment in research, a national vision that includes other levels of government, and more astute politics."	1
11. Fed-Prov	"It needs to reform its troubled equalization program without straining national unity." (G&M, 28APR)	2

	TABLE 3: AXIAL CODING	
Category	**Example**	**# of tokens**
12. CAN-US	"Relations with the U.S. are at a critical juncture. Any thickening of the border threatens to punish all Canadians, while negotiations over perimeter security have implications for national sovereignty and economic security." (G&M, 28APR)	1
24. Quebec	"NDP plans, particularly in Quebec, are ill-considered and dangerous, and anyone supporting them is backing a serious gamble with the health and unity of the country." (NP, 28APR)	11
4. Governance		**11**
9. Parliament	"The challenges facing our next federal government do not end there, of course." (G&M, 28APR)	2
10. Democracy	"The next House of Commons must find new ways to protect Parliament, the heart of our democracy." (G&M, 28APR)	2
18. civic engagement	"Whether you vote based on where one of the national parties stand on an issue you care deeply about, or you vote for the candidate in your riding who inspires you most, just vote." (NP, 2MAY)	7
5. Comparisons		**17**
7. Leader comparisons	"Michael Ignatieff would lose to Mr. Layton in the folksiness sweepstakes." (G&M, 25APR)	7
8. Party comparisons	"Michael Ignatieff has promised to continue it, pretty much forever. The Tories have also endorsed the 6-per-cent figure. The NDP? Don't even ask." (G&M, 26APR)	7
21. comparison to the US	1."Yet a comparison of our election campaign to events south of the border shows how relatively moderate and civilized things are in this country." (NP, 29APR)	3
6. Non-election		**2**
20. Religion and politics	"so as advance polls opened yesterday, voters likely mixed with Good Friday pilgrims, each going about their business, citizens to their civic duties, religious folk to their worship." (NP, 23APR)	2
7. 2011 General Election		**9**
22. negative	"We'll admit that the current federal campaign often has failed to inspire." (NP, 2MAY)	9

One example of a category that emerged in the axial coding stage is Leader-ship. This category was comprised of the open coding categories "leader compari-sons" and "party comparisons" because they could have fit into the categories "Leadership" or "Comparison." However, I wanted the focus for the "Leadership" category to remain on the leaders, and keep a comparison category separate. Other categories that resulted from the axial coding process include: Parties - 5. Conservative platform (generally); Issues - 2. economy , 3. health care, 4. health care and the economics, 16. Environment issues; Governance - 9. Parliament, 10. Democracy, 18. civic engagement; Comparisons - 7. Leader comparisons, 8. Party comparisons; Non-election - 20. Religion and politics.

Notional Coding

The next step is determining how categories are "systematically developed and linked with subcategories" (1998:143). This process is referred to as selective cod-ing or notional coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:143). Notional coding identifies the core categories that describe the phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It does so through a process of "integrating and refining the theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:143). It is not until this process that the major categories are integrated that the larger theoretical scheme begins to emerge into a theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The selective categories resulting from the selective coding process can be found in Table 3.

TABLE 4: NOTIONAL CODING RESULTS			
Notional Categories	**Description**	**Example + [Axial Category]**	**Tokens**
Leadership	Includes tokens that refer to issues directly connected to leadership, the parties and comparisons	"We'll also concede that most of the parties have done a mediocre job of articulating a positive vision of what Canada would be like if Canadians voted for them." (NP, 2MAY)	63
2. Dominant issues	Includes tokens related to the issues raised during the 2011 General Election	"Tax policies and health care are important - but so are Canada's commercial and investment relations with the world, especially with the rising region of East Asia." (G&M, 20APR)	31
3. Peripheral Issues	Includes topics that are indirectly related to the 2011 General Election	"In many places across the land, Canadians make their way to church in order to vote." (NP, 23APR)	24
4. Governance	Includes tokens that refer to issues related to governance, democracy and civic engagement	"The challenges facing our next federal government do not end there, of course." (G&M, 28APR)	20

The Notional coding process yielded four categories: *Leadership, Dominant Issues, Peripheral Issues,* and *Governance.*

Leadership refers to those tokens that directly discuss leadership during the 2011 General Election. The *Leadership* category has 63 tokens These categories include tokens of text that refer to the party leaders themselves, comparisons made between the party leaders, comments made about the leaders, or the parties. For example:

> *"Those who disdain the Harper approach should consider his overall record, which is good." (G&M, 28APR)*

> *"The remarkable rise of the NDP is thanks primarily to Jack Layton, coming into his own in his fourth campaign." (G&M, 25APR)*

"While Canadians still need to learn more about Mr. Ignatieff, he is a passionate advocate of equality of opportunity, and for protecting Canada's democracy." (G&M, 25APR).

Dominant Issues refers to tokens related to the most frequently and widely discussed issues during the General Election campaign. There are 31 tokens in this category. These issues are: the economy, health care, economy and health care together, and Quebec. For example:

"as a new economic frontier, to Canada's west, as a land of promise for which they should ready themselves." (G&M, 20APR)

"There is no spending priority of government that is more critical than this," Mr. Harper said yesterday. "This is an unshakable commitment. . . to keep that health-care system strong." (G&M, 26APR)

"nor has there been an honest recognition of the most critical issues that lie ahead: a volatile economy, ballooning public debts and the unwieldy future of our health-care system." (G&M, 28APR),

"Their promise to extend provincial language laws to federal institutions, and a vague commitment to reopen the Constitution, may win votes in Quebec - and that would be a welcome jolt to the party system there - but it is risky." (G&M, 25APR)

Peripheral Issues refers to tokens of issues discussed in the editorials, but are not directly related to the election campaign. This category has 24 tokens.

Governance Issues is a category that describes text related to governing, democracy or civic engagement. In this category, 20 tokens were identified. This category could have been blended with issues, however discussions surrounding democracy and civic engagement received a lot of attention therefore I felt that it should stand alone as a category. Some examples of Governance tokens include:

"If you are tempted today to skip a trip to the polls, think of the Libyans and Syrians who would put their life on the line -and are doing so, in fact, even as you read these words -for the right to do what too many Canadians won't do today." (NP, 2MAY)

"The next House of Commons must find new ways to protect Parliament, the heart of our democracy." (G&M, 28APR)

From the open coding process 24 categories emerged with 137 tokens. Through the axial coding process, these initial 24 categories were re-analyzed and collapsed into seven broader categories. The third step in the grounded theory analysis yielded four notional categories. Based on the patterns discovered during the open coding process, the axial coding process, and the notional coding process, the categories that emerged help in to identify theories to explain the phenomenon: how the 2011 General Election was manifested in the editorials of *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post*. Having identified these categories, I will now turn the focus to the potential theories that emerged.

Theorizing

The overarching theory from this analysis suggests that the NDP emerged as a serious political contender, replacing the LPC as the CPC's main opposition, even before the 2011 General Election. This theory emerges from two patterns observed in the data. The first observed pattern is how the editorials described each party's leader using a narrative of leadership and capability. The CPC and NDP leaders, whose parties gained the most in the General Election, were described favourably under the narrative of leadership, while the LPC leader was not. The second ob-

served pattern is how editorials framed certain issues as important election issues. These issues - Quebec, healthcare, and the economy - were more closely related to the campaign platforms of the NDP and the CPC relative to the LPC. The first theory that I will discuss is the narrative surrounding leadership*.*

Leadership

Leadership was identified as a category in the open coding stage of analysis and remained a category throughout the refining process.   The frequency of the word leadership -- mentioned 24 times, 17 times in *The Globe and Mail* and seven times in *The National Post* -- positions it as an important part of the vernacular of this election campaign.   Generally, narratives of leadership should be part of the vernacular for this election campaign and leadership is generally an important component of Canadian election campaigns (LeDuc, 2009; Fox, 2001; Paré, et. al, 2008). Discovering Leadership to be part of the election campaign is not surprising. However, the finding I do want to elaborate is the way two leaders were depicted under a similar narrative while the third leader was depicted differently.

The narrative describing the leadership capabilities of the CPC leader and the NDP leader depict them favourably, though in contrasting ways. On the one hand, CPC leader Stephen Harper is depicted as a strong, disciplined leader.   He has "shown the leadership, the bullheadedness (let's call it what it is) and the discipline this country needs" (G&M, 28APR). On the other hand, Jack Layton is described as a popular leader, a hard working and energetic leader and a fighter. He has "come into his own" (G&M, 25APR) and "energized the New Democrats and the electorate"

(G&M, 28APR). The strength of Stephen Harper's leadership style stand in contrast to the lively nature of Jack Layton's leadership. Although they stand in contrast, the narrative under which both leaders are described is within a common political discourse that represented strong leadership capabilities and each leader's ability to lead.

The other leader in this campaign, LPC leader Michael Ignatieff, is not described under the same narrative of leadership as the CPC and NDP leaders. While these leaders are described as possessing an individual leadership style, either strong or popular, the LPC leader is characterized less definitively. He is depicted under the narrative of a democratic, "honourable opposition leader" (G&M, 28APR), "a passionate advocate of equality of opportunity" and a protector of Canadian democracy (G&M, 25APR). While these qualities -- honourable, democratic, and protective -- are generally considered to be positive capabilities for a leader to possess, they do not construct a particularly strong leadership identity. This can be attributed as a communication challenge which the LPC was unable to meet. The narrative under which the leadership capabilities of Michael Ignatieff are described do not ascribe a defined leadership style to him, even though he is described as possessing leadership qualities.

The following theory is posited to explain how the NDP was successful at replacing the LPC as the stronger political contender to the CPC in this election campaign, under the narrative of leadership. Simply put, the NDP was more successful than the LPC at defining their leader as a contrast to the CPC's leadership style.

This theory is influenced by the Lees-Marshment framework. The Lees-Marshment framework compares political parties to contemporary producers of goods and services and postulates that:

> ...modern political parties in liberal democracies need to alter the ways in which they deliver their product offerings (e.g., party platforms, party and leader image) to their consumers (i.e., voters) to effectively connect with the electorate... political marketing is, fundamentally, about organizational behaviour and the design of political products. The "products" are seen to be comprised, foremost, of intangibles such as how a political party performs in terms of its leadership...

(Paré & Berger, 2008:)

This framework is mentioned to demonstrate the importance of political party leadership and candidate's ability to engage with their electorate. It is used to demonstrate the desire of politicians to be described under a narrative that resonates with their electorate.

The analysis in this paper suggests that the NDP leader and the CPC leader were described under a narrative of contrasting leadership styles. Incidentally the CPC and the NDP parties both explicitly incorporated the "leader" and "leadership" narrative into their campaign communications. The word leadership appears in the opening statement to the CPC and the NDP campaign platforms and to define each party's leader.

The CPC use the word leader(ship) to frame their campaign platform: "In this election, Canadians will choose between principled leadership and opportunism" (conservative.ca, 2011), to position their leader as the most capable amongst the lead-

ers in this election. In addition to using the word in their campaign, the word also appears in the masthead of their website. The NDP use the word leadership in the title of their campaign platform. It reads "My commitment to you / Leadership you can trust to give your family a break" (ndp.ca, 2011). In this case, the NDP is using the word leadership to position their leader as the best choice in this campaign. They go further and title two chapters in their platform "Leadership in Canada" and "Leadership on the world stage" (ndp.ca, 2011) to reinforce the point.

The LPC leader is not defined using the same common political discourse as the NDP and the CPC leaders. The LPC does not use the word leadership to introduce its campaign platform. The "leadership" narrative only appears on the second page of the platform. Instead of focussing on leadership in his introduction letter to the platform, Michael Ignatieff highlights the issues that the LPC will focus on during the election campaign: equal opportunity (liberal.ca, 2011).

Within the context of framing their leader, the NDP used a common political discourse which created a distinction between their leadership style compared to the CPC. The folksy and popular narrative under which the NDP leadership was defined stands in contrast to the disciplined, strong narrative under which the CPC leadership was defined.

The overarching theory proposed in this paper is that leadership was integral to the political discourse in the 2011 election campaign and was used as part of the vernacular in editorials in *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post*. While the CPC and the NDP were successful at defining their party leaders within a similar

narrative framework, the LPC did not define their leader within the same framework. This theory is conjectured for the following two reasons: first, the narrative which the LPC was depicted was separate from the rhetorical framework under which the leaders of the CPC and the NDP were depicted. Second, the LPC did not frame itself using the same vernacular as the CPC and the NDP.

The second part to this theory suggests that the CPC and the NDP were positioned within a similar leadership framework and used a similar political discourse in their campaign communications. The CPC and the NDP adopted the word leadership directly into their parties' vernacular and this word was used to describe them in a positive way.

Overall, the issue of leadership focused on those parties who identified themselves according to the traits of leadership, while the party that did not lost attention. One communications consideration that can be drawn from this theory is the consequence of operating outside of the established narrative and political discourse during an election campaign. The CPC and the NDP leaders were both described under a narrative of leadership and both parties incorporated this narrative directly into their vernacular. By not operating explicitly within the same communications scenario makes it difficult to contrast the LPC leader with the other leaders.

Policy Issues

The second observed pattern from the data was the way editorials identified and framed salient election issues. Many issues were covered in the editorials during the 2011 General Election campaign, however only a few became salient elec-

tion issues.   This is typical of most election campaigns which gravitate towards a small set of defining issues (Holler & Skott, 2004; Soroka, 2002).

The breadth of issues covered during this campaign ranged from abstract topics such as civic engagement and the role of the monarchy in contemporary Canada to pragmatic issues such as employment rates and health care policy. Identifying the prominent issues during this campaign is relevant because of the way election issues can influence "voting behaviour and electoral outcomes" (Holler & Skott, 2004:216).   During the coding stages the issues that were identified as the salient election issues during this election campaign are: Quebec, the economy and healthcare.   The first issue that I will discuss is the way Quebec was framed within the context of an election issue.

During this campaign, Quebec was the often cited as an election issue. Generally local and regional politics, in particular Quebec, are issues during federal election campaigns (Cutler, 2002).   In a country with many regional differences, federal politicians make concerted efforts to appeal voters at the local level (Cutler, 2002).

The Quebec issue was framed within the context of the NDP, with an emphasis on the way Jack Layton reached out and connected with Quebec voters. In fact, the the importance of the Quebec issue was framed primarily in relation to either the NDP or Jack Layton. The following tokens serve as examples of the impact of the NDP on this issue:

8. "[Layton] has shown that a federalist party can make serious inroads in Quebec, but it has come at the cost of an unwelcome promise to impose provisions of Quebec's language law in federal workplaces." (G&M, 28APR)

9. "Their promise to extend provincial language laws to federal institutions, and a vague commitment to reopen the Constitution, may win votes in Quebec - and that would be a welcome jolt to the party system there - but it is risky." (G&M, 25APR)

These examples identify some skepticism towards the ability of the NDP as policy-makers on this issue. However, the performance of the NDP on this issue is not the important point. The significance of this issue is the way the NDP leader was depicted as connecting with a large block of voters. The emphasis on this singular issue makes it interesting because it is an issue that became connected to the NDP campaign during this election period. While it is difficult to determine whether the media was reflecting society or influencing society on this issue, the NDP won a significant number of seats in Quebec.

Healthcare is another issue that emerged within the Dominant Issues category. The patterns that were identified is the way the media continued to focus on this issue and reflected it as popular issue with the electorate. Although none of the parties were directly connected to it, healthcare was prominently featured in the NDP's campaign communications.

Although the NDP does not feature explicitly in the discussion surrounding healthcare, this is an issue that they were successful at defining as their own. What stands out about this issue during this election campaign is the way the framed this issue as an NDP issue. Healthcare was prominently featured in the NDP's cam-

paign communications and a focus of their election campaigning. Drawing on Priming theory, which explains the ability of the media to draw attention to certain political issues at the expense of others, it becomes an importance election issue. Whether the media was reflecting social opinions or influencing them, the emphasis on healthcare positioned it as a salient election issue.

The economy, as framed in editorials, was observed as a salient election issue. Similar to the way healthcare manifested as a salient issue, the economy was depicted a popular issue for the electorate. Traditionally the economy will be an election campaign issue in Canada.

What stands out about the way the economy was manifested as a salient issue in editorials is the way it was framed as an issue requiring strong, determined leadership. The language surrounding this issue, was similar to the language used by the CPC to describe their leader. Using a similar political discourse of leadership, Stephen Harper was depicted as the most capable leader to manage this issue. This issue was also integral to the CPC's election campaign communication.

Interestingly, the economy was integrated into the CPC's campaign communications and has been identified as a salient election issue in the party's campaign platform. Whether the media was reflecting the public interest in this issue, or giving it attention to frame it as a salient election issue, the CPC integrated it into their campaign communications and made significant gains during the 2011 General Election.

A general observation about the set of salient issues that were observed during this campaign period is that these issues -- Quebec, the health care and the economy -- are the same issues that are closely related to the way the CPC and the NDP framed their campaign communications and platforms. Both parties used a similar political discourse and both parties made significant gains in the 2011 General Election.

Leadership featured prominently as an issue discussed in editorials during the 2011 General Election campaign. While the vernacular used to describe the leadership of CPC leader Stephen Harper and NDP leader Jack Layton depicted each one as possessing strong leadership qualities, albeit contrasted leadership qualities.

In addition to leadership qualities, three policy issues received attention in the editorials: Quebec, health care, and the economy. Two of these issues were connected to the NDP campaign platform, Quebec and health care, while the economy policy issue was an integral part of the way the CPC communicated their party's campaign platform.

From these analyses, one overarching story line emerges to explain how the 2011 General Election was manifested in editorials. By observing the common political discourse shared by the NDP and the CPC, and the way this was reflected in both parties' campaign communications, the NDP emerged as the primary oppositional political opponent to the CPC.

This theory is derived from two patterns observed in the data. First is the pattern describing how the party leaders were depicted in the editorials. The CPC and

the NDP were both described under a similar narrative of leadership and had each communicated about their leader in a similar way. The second pattern observed is how a small set of salient election issues -- Quebec, healthcare and the economy -- was framed in editorials as the relevant election issues. The CPC and the NDP were connected to these issues and had integrated these themes into their campaign communication. These two parties gained the most in the 2011 General Election.

Conclusion

Using grounded theory, this paper explored how the 2011 General Election campaign was manifested in the editorials in Canada's two national newspapers - *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post.* The paper reviewed Canada's political tradition, explored how this tradition was challenged during and after the most recent federal election and reviewed the results from the grounded theory analysis.

Prior to the 2011 General Election, Canada's mainstream media spotlight focused on the LPC and different iterations of the Conservative party as the main federal political parties (Cochrane, 2010). After the most recent election, an increased number of votes for the NDP enabled the party to form the Official Opposition in the House of Commons, challenging the historical positions of the LPC and the CPC (electioncanada.ca, 2011; Cochrane, 2010).

Analyzing the results from the 2011 General Election and reviewing findings from public opinion research polls conducted during the General Election campaign

identified the shift away from the Canadian political tradition even before the General Election took place.

Mainstream media was identified as a main communication channel between political process and the general public as well as a source of interpretation of the process (Lippmann, 1925). This is largely due to the fact that most Canadians do not directly interact with politicians or the political process (Lippmann, 1925). By establishing a common vernacular (Leonard, 1986) and setting the agenda (Le, 2010) the media serves to reflect and/or influence the social and political environment within which Canadians make their political choices (Lippman, 1925; Cohen, 1963; Leonard, 1986; Le, 2010).

The research corpus for this paper was editorials from Canada's two most circulated national newspapers *The Globe and Mail* and *The National Post.* These newspapers were chosen because they are national in scope, follow a similar distribution cycle and appeal to a similar, but slightly distinctive audience. Including two newspaper was also important in order to capture a broader sampling of editorials.

Grounded theory was Given that grounded theory is a qualitative, explorative form of research, it was the most appropriate research to analyze the manifestation of the 2011 General Election while it was still a relatively new phenomena (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Banks, et al., 2000; Schreiber, 2001; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; Gibbs, 2007). Analyses that use the grounded theory method begin by identifying an area of interest, rather than with a preconceived theory in order for the theory to emerge from

the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:12). This approach provided a flexible framework to analyze and code data. The guiding research statement for this paper explored how the shift in public opinion towards the federal political parties during the 2011 Canadian federal election was manifested in editorials in two of Canada's national English language newspapers.

By asking the following questions: *Which tokens describe the election campaign? Does this token refer directly to the campaign? Who/what issue is represented in this token?* I identified codable units of meaning that formed the basis of my analysis. The initial round of coding generated 24 categories and 137 coded tokens; in axial coding the categories that were identified in the open-coding process were collapsed down to six more inclusive categories. These categories were further collapsed to form four categories in the notional coding process. These categories are: Leadership, Dominant issues, Peripheral issues, and Governance. From these four categories, a thematic storyline began to emerge.

From the coding process one overarching theory emerged, supported by two observed patterns within the data. This paper proposed the following overarching theory to explain how the 2011 General Election campaign was manifested in editorials. The importance of leadership and the salient election issues positioned the NDP as the serious political contender to the CPC, even prior to the 2011 General Election outcome. This theory stems from the findings that the leadership was an important part of the editorials' vernacular related to the 2011 General Election, and, this word was an integral part of two of the parties' campaign communications.

Secondly, the salient issues that editorials focussed on -- Quebec, healthcare, and

the economy -- were closely related to the campaign platform issues of the NDP and

the CPC. Both of these parties made significant gains in the 2011 General Election.

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