Before starting to expand on the theoretical, methodological, and analytical work of this project, I would first like to briefly contextualize the election. The 2015 Canadian federal election is an important moment in Canadian history, the results of this decision impact many on a global and national scale. Relative to the rest of the world's political processes the Canadian election might seem a little subdued, and to some it might seem that this was an important election strictly because in the next year there is set to be another fairly important moment in history in the United States. Although some issues before the Canadian elections are often coloured with prospect of what the relationship of the potential Canadian government will be with the potential American government, the Americans are not the only reason why this election is an important moment.

Incumbents in this election, Stephen Harper and the Progressive Conservative party, have been in office for a decade preceding the election. Due to the Conservative's apparent successes, they were followed by a significant portion of the Canadian populous for that decade (Parliment of Canada, 2015). An entirely undesirable government does not pass through votes of non-confidence and reach a majority government as the Harper Conservatives did in 2011. Such successes include the *relatively weak* effects of the 2008 financial crisis, although many argue this was unrelated to the Harper Conservative's policies. As Canadians watched the rest of the world struggle through economic turmoil and uncertainty, their own lives seemed easier. Many Canadians gave credit for that ease to the Conservatives, although some Canadians do not give this same praise. While the incumbents typically do well in elections, many Canadians leading up the election regarded their vote as 'ABC', or 'Anything But Conservative'[[1]](#footnote-2).

Parties

There are four major national parties typically considered as those with a shot at winning the election or receiving major media coverage. One of which is the Progressive Conservative Party, led by Stephen Harper. As noted previously, the PC's are the incumbents to the election after a decade of office. Ideologically, they are slightly right of center, being more conservative with social and economic policy than most of the other parties. Their campaign platform in this election played off their political experience and reputation for responsible economic policy (Conservative Platform, 2015). Some party campaign ambitions were tax reductions, balancing the federal budget, job growth, and reduction of drug-related crime. Most of their platform was centred around the economic stability of Canada that they could provide and the other parties could not, even notable was one of the party's slogans “Protect our Economy”.

As a member of the 'ABC' parties, the Liberal Party of Canada is often seen as the traditional opposition party when there is a Conservative government. Most Federal governments in Canada swing between the Liberals and the Conservatives with few exceptions. This was not the case in the 2015 election however, the NDP was the opposition leading up to this election. Ideologically the Liberal Party is a little left of centre in Canadian politics (Liberal Party, 2015). For many Canadian's the Liberals represented a change from the Conservative party, but in the form of change they were familiar with due to their long history in Canada. This familiarity with the Liberals in part comes from their many federal governments, but may also be because the leader of the party is the son of one of Canada's most well known prime ministers, Pierre Trudeau. Justin Trudeau is also the youngest candidate in the election, and many of the Liberal Party's more progressive policies which reflect an appeal to a younger demographic may well have come from their young leader. The party slogan 'Real Change' can be seen as a reflection of this attitude in the Liberal Party.

While the Liberals may traditionally be the opposition party in Canada, in this election they were not they only party with potential to win. Another ABC party, the NDP led by Thomas Mulcair, was thought to have strong candidacy. Part of the reason for this perception was Mr. Mulcair's strong presence in the House of Commons (Global News, 2015 & Canada.ca, 2014 & Ottawa Citizen, 2014 & CBC, 2014). As leader of the NDP, from 2011 up to the election, Mr. Mulcair was the leader of the official opposition in the house of commons, and by no means could it be said that he quietly held that position. Mulcair was frequently seen in headlines, depicted as a strong voice opposing the policies and plans of Prime Minister Harper, leading a lot of voters to see him and the NDP as very strong possible candidates for the 'anything but conservative' vote. Ideologically the NDP is left of centre, quite a distance away from the Conservatives on a number of key issues (NDP, 2015). This distance from the Conservatives was reinforced with the recent win of Albertan provincial election for the NDP. Being one of the more conservative leaning provinces in Canada, the win in Alberta was thought by some to confirm the NDP's apitude for replacing the Conservatives federally (Global News, 2015 & Toronto Sun, 2015 & Ipsos, 2015 & Winnepeg Free Press, 2015).

The Green party, led by Elizabeth May, has traditionally gotten very low percentage of votes in Canada (Wikipedia, 2015). This party's main focus is traditonally acting as an advocate for environmental issues, raising such problems before the house so as to give them a proper hearing in government as a response to the lack in the top parties (Green Party, 2015). Never holding a federal government, and never being in the official opposition, meant that the Green party had a strong reputation for being a 'wasted vote'. Although this reputation carried some doubts leading into the 2015 election, climate change and the global impact that some of Canada's industries has on the environment became an issue more present on voter's minds. Concerns about climate change, along with May's repeated assertions that they are not a single issue party, citing Canada's problems of inequality, student debt, sustainability, meant that it is not unreasonable that the Green party's policies might not be very far out of line from what many voters would like to see in government.

Issues

There were a host of issues and political talking points that each of the parties had a stance on. While it may be unnecessary to discuss how each party felt about every issue, it is very important to discuss what kinds of things Canada was dealing with leading up to the election. One talking point of the federal election that almost always comes up is the national economy. There were some major issues, one of which was the coming recession which Canada was expects to endure (CBC, 2015 & Time, 2015 & Macleans, 2015). A low dollar meant rising cost of imports, a problem leading to Canadian's expecting to see their their day to day living getting harder.

A major economic talking point for the election was the national budget, and each party felt that they had to define their position on this problem. Liberal's felt that a balanced budget was not that important, stating they would run a deficit for years after the election (Liberal Party Platform, 2015). The Conservatives and the NDP felt that the budget was important enough to voters that they explicitly stated would try to balance it during their time in office (Conservative Party Platform, 2015 & NDP Party Platform, 2015). Growth was expected to slow, and each party more or less towed the ideological line of their parties in order to achieve said growth. A related issue to this was proposed pipelines, exporting oil from Canada to the United States and another across Canada (Global News, 2015 & The Globe and Mail, 2015 & Financial Post, 2015). This was an issue of economy vs. the environment, and while it represented some subtle distinctions between the three major parties, it effectively positioned the Greens against the rest. Also of note, nearing the end of the campaign the Trans-Pacific-Partnership agreement was approaching its conclusion. While this was not a major issue in the news cycles, it was an important issue which did divide the parties to some degree.

Healthcare is another theme for the election, often being a source of major division between the parties. One issue was euthanasia or assisted suicide. This is a topic that has been relatively well developed in other countries and on a provincial level, but this was one of the first elections in which the issue became something that some parties felt they needed to include in their platforms (Conservative Party Platform, 2015 & Liberal Party Platform, 2015 & NDP Party Platform, 2015). There was also the issue of pharmacare, an alleged hole in the Canadian national healthcare plan (The College of Family Physicans In Canada, 2015). This was framed by each party differently, some focusing on the economic impact of such a policy and others as a health and fundamental rights issue. Another issue that bleeds the lines between main themes is marijuana legalization, which also represented a very strong division between the parties. Conservatives framed this issue as one of public safety and crime (Conservative Party Platform, 2015), while as Liberals tended to argue that this could not only be an health issue but one of economics as well (Liberal Party Platform, 2015).

There was also the theme of climate and the environment. This issue is not strictly Canadian, much of the policy that results of these discussions will have a global impact. In the months following the election, the world is set to meet to at COP21, a global conference on climate change[[2]](#footnote-3). The government elected in this campaign would need to go to represent Canada in these conferences, a nation which has a global reputation for being one of the worst emitters (E.D.G.A.R Joint Research Center, 2015). Part of this comes from our strong economic dependence on oil and agricultural industries, an issue which divides the parties sharply. Again, one party may feel that the oil dependence is a strictly economic issues and ignore the climate consequences, while another party may feel just the opposite.

~~Another main theme for this election is foreign policy. The decisions made in this area have global impacts, and each party made it clear where their intention on this problem lay. It was in these intentions that many of the parties differ. An especially important issue surrounding foreign policy was the global threat of terrorism represented by ISIS. While no party takes this issue lightly, their responses to this issue vary greatly and because this issue is so emotionally charged it represented a major voting factor for Canadians. Some felt that the response was a military invasion to isolate the problem to the affected areas, and others felt that a more hands off approach was best for Canada, sometimes citing the problems that the American's felt during their involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.~~

~~This problem leads into two domestic problems as-well, which also were approached differently by the parties. First was the issue of the Bill C-51, which many believed to be an infringment on Canadian's privacy while others believed to be a nessecary course of action to protect Canadian's security. The policies presented by this bill were fairly broadly scoped and so its impacts were aswell, but one of the most concerning of issues surrounding this bill was the implications that it had for digital communications. In the wake of the Snowden reveliations about the NSA and the patriot act, Canada was argued to be getting its own version of digital spying. Another domestic issue that greatly imapcted the election was the global refugee crisis, a direct consequence of the Syrian civil war. Few of the issues of the election were as divisive or as emotionally charged as the refugee crisis, probably because it engaged with such vigor so many issues - economics, humantarianism, foreign policy were all shades of this discussion.~~

~~Distinctly Canadian were the First Nations issues, some of which were brought to the Canadian awareness after the 'Idle No More' protests which occured years prior to the election. Despite a number of urgent issues, for a long time they were unfortunately disregarded by politicians. They include the missing and murdered aboriginal women, who greatly outnumber any other demographic in Canada, and yet there has been little investigation to the cause of this difference. Another issue is the failing reserve system, where many live without safe drinking water or stable housing. The prevelance of drug and alcohol abuse in this community is thought to be a direct consequence of the Canadian tendency to ignore these problem of integration of the communities. The Truth and Reconciliation commision had its hearings in years prior, and was set to release its final report in the months after the election. Many first nation peoples found this report important as whoever gets elected will have to deal with the Comission and it's report and likely act on those findings. This report could represent a significant change moving forward in how Canada works towards resolving these issues, and also represents an issue which is highly divisive and important to the election.~~

1. <http://www.anyonebutharper.ca/>, <http://www.votetogether.ca/>, <http://anythingbutconservative.ca/>, <http://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/angry-veterans-launch-anything-but-conservative-campaign-1.2522054>, http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/canadian-politics/veterans-group-starts-anyone-but-conservative-campaign-plans-to-picket-pro-harper-events-in-uniform [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. http://www.cop21paris.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)