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ARTICLE



Legislative Experiences, Ideology, and Socio-Demographic Background: The “Orange Wave” New Democratic Party Members of Parliament

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ABSTRACT

The “Orange Wave” in the 2011 federal election produced the largest and most diverse federal NDP caucus in Canadian history. This article uses interviews with members of this caucus to study their legislative experiences. It finds that a shared commitment to creating social democratic change generated an overarching similarity in the experiences of these MPs across sociodemographic groups. NDP MPs that were young, visible minorities, and from Quebec were not found to have significantly different legislative experiences when compared to the NDP MPs not from those groups. Female NDP MPs did report different legislative experiences compared to male NDP MPs, but these differences were limited and more present among younger female NDP MPs. The conclusion argues that ideology shapes legislative experiences, interviewing method affects the results of legislative experiences studies, the intersectionality of MPs’ identities could be important, and gathering large cross-party interview samples of Canadian MPs is a challenge.

KEYWORDS

New Democratic Party of Canada; Canadian House of Commons; gender; visible minorities; Quebec

On the night of the 2011 federal election, the Canadian political landscape suddenly shifted as an “Orange Wave” swept over much of the country. The NDP won 103 seats, including 59 in Quebec (up from the one seat that the party had won in that province in the previous election). The federal NDP caucus that resulted from the Orange Wave represented two exciting research opportunities.

First, there was no academic literature specifically devoted to the activity of the NDP MPs in the House of Commons and Canadian literature on “legislative experiences” of MPs had focused on parliamentarians from other parties. “Legislative experiences” refers to legislators’ subjective evaluations of the political issues they face, their careers, and their role in the political system. Second, the NDP caucus that came out of the Orange Wave was the most diverse in the history of the House of Commons (up to that point in its history¹) in terms of the relatively large proportions of women, youth, visible minorities, and Quebec MPs (Lewis 2006; Black and Hicks 2006; O’Neill and Thomas 2016).

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Both international and Canadian literature on legislators from diverse backgrounds finds that they have quite different legislative experiences from their colleagues who are not members of their group. They are more likely to highlight the discrimination they face during their careers and emphasize political issues that relate directly to their socio-demographic group. With the NDP caucus that emerged from the Orange Wave, it would be possible to have relatively robust sample sizes of Canadian MPs from traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic groups and possible to control for ideology because there would be a large samples of these types of MPs taken from the same party.

To examine the legislative experiences of the NDP caucus after the Orange Wave, this article uses an approach to interviewing legislators that employs generic open-ended questions to avoid priming the respondents in any particular way and open coding to allow conclusions to emerge organically from the interview data. Using this Glaserian method, we find that ideology is the key to understanding the legislative experiences of NDP caucus after the Orange Wave. The commonality creating the core variable within these NDP MPs' legislative experiences is their strong ideological commitment to create social democratic change within Canadian society. When responses of NDP MPs are broken down by sociodemographic group, ideology remains the overriding factor that defines their legislative experiences. As such, our findings run somewhat contrary to established literature alluded to above: NDP MPs from traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic groups were generally not more likely to highlight the discrimination that they face during their careers and emphasize political issues that related directly to their sociodemographic group.

The new NDP MPs from Quebec did not appear to bring about a discernable shift in the ideology and functioning of the federal NDP caucus. Contradicting assumptions with respect to the nationalism of province's political class, Quebec NDP MPs were found to have quite similar legislative experiences compared to non-Quebec MPs. Compared to their colleagues from outside Quebec, these new MPs had similar self-assessments of their personal ideology and similar views on the role that MPs play in the legislative process. They also rarely mentioned experiences directly related to the French language or the status of the Québécois nation in Canada. We found that visible minority NDP MPs and young NDP MPs were only somewhat more likely to mention experiences of discrimination and issues specific to their sociodemographic group. One possible exception was female NDP MPs. Compared to male NDP MPs, female NDP MPs were more likely to mention legislative experiences and issues specific to their sociodemographic group without prompting. But, such differences were not overwhelming and much more present within the experiences of young female NDP MPs compared to older female NDP MPs.

Literature Review

Perhaps due to their small size, there are no studies that specifically examine the activity of federal NDP caucuses in the House of Commons. One has to go back the Walter Young's research (1969, 218–253) to find an analysis of the activity of the NDP's predecessor, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), within the House of Commons based on interviews with CCF MPs and archival records from the CCF caucus.

His impressionistic analysis does foreground ideology as he states that CCF MPs were diligent in the Parliamentary work because they were “motivated by their belief in the righteousness of their cause and their recognition that their mistakes would be multiplied one-hundredfold by an opposition that eagerly awaited socialist faux pas” (219). Later research on the federal NDP (Morton 1986; Whitehorn 1992; Sayers 1999) does note the party’s doctrinaire approach to its ideology and its strong commitment to ensuring that its positions on political issues did not stray from its social democratic roots. However, these analyses are based on party platforms and the activities of NDP activists at conventions as opposed to the activity of NDP MPs within the House of Commons.

While the activity of Canadian MPs has been studied in many different ways, we will concentrate on the limited literature that exists on the subjective evaluations of the legislative experiences of Canadian MPs. The Canadian legislative experiences literature tends to rely on in-depth interviews with MPs using a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Kornberg (1967) surveyed Canadian MPs in the twenty-fifth parliament (1962–1963) and Docherty (1997) administered an extensive survey to Canadian MPs following the 1988 and 1993 federal elections. Both books examine the differences in career paths among MPs and the way that they perceived their representational role in Canadian politics. For instance, following the work of Pitkan (1967) and Eulau and Wahlke (1978), Docherty examines how MPs see themselves as being a “trustee” who follows their own personal judgment/values, a “delegate” that seeks to represent the majority view of voters in their constituency, or a “politico” that shifts back forth between the two types of representative styles and also seeks to take into account the position of their party and their leader. He finds that, while Reform MPs and to a lesser extent Liberal MPs saw themselves as representatives of the majority view of their constituents, NDP MPs are more likely to see their task as following the position of their party and leader (Docherty 1997, 146–147). More recently, Loat and MacMillan (2014) performed eighty exit interviews with former MPs for their recent book *Tragedy in the Commons* and found these former parliamentarians were very displeased with the excessive party discipline and the minimal power accorded to individual MPs in the Canadian House of Commons. A follow-up article using the same dataset points to the strain that being an MP puts on family life (Farney, Koop, and Loat 2013). Royce Koop’s research uses in-depth interviews with Canadian MPs, but it focuses more on the way in which MPs interact with their constituents and party activists in their local ridings as opposed to their experiences in the House of Commons (for example, see Koop 2014).

While this Canadian literature on MPs’ legislative experiences is informative, the NDP’s caucus is not singled out for specific analysis because of the low number of NDP MPs in the House of Commons during the time periods being analyzed. Indeed, NDP MPs made up a very low proportion of the sample size for these surveys. Further, the conclusions of these studies generally do not emphasize the ideology or party affiliation of MPs as an important factor in explaining their legislative experiences.

When we explore the literature on legislative experiences of members of traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic groups, we can see that these experiences have been studied in the United States, Europe, and Australia. These studies have confirmed that female legislators are much more likely to see themselves as representatives of women and feel obliged to raise women’s issues (Thompson 1980; Dodson and Carroll

1991; Whip 1991; Reingold 1992, 2000; Thomas 1994; Barrett 1995; Gertzog 1995; Carroll 2001; Sineau 2001; Childs 2004). Research on African American legislators has confirmed that they are more likely to focus on issues pertaining to their sociodemographic group like the redistribution of wealth, feel that their actions are very closely scrutinized by the media, report high levels of discrimination, and perceive resistance from the bureaucracy (Nelson 1991; Swain 1993; Button and Hedge 1996; Hedge, Button, and Spear 1996).

Some of this type of work has been replicated in Canada. Kornberg's survey of Canadian MPs found that Quebec MPs were frustrated because they felt that they were routinely denied career advancement due to their linguistic background but were still expected to adopt positions that were at odds with their Francophone constituents' desires in the name of party unity (1967, 142–145). Docherty's survey of MPs found female MPs were more likely to be involved in policy development work on women's issues and less likely to see exclusion from cabinet as "career failure" (196–197, 231–232). Looking at surveys of female MPs after the 1993 election who were visible minorities or came from Southern European backgrounds, Black (2000) argues that they were aware of the discrimination that their sociodemographic group faces in politics and tried to compensate by having very high levels of educational and occupational success prior to seeking office. Tremblay (2003) found that the extent to which female legislators in Canada and Australia felt that they have a responsibility to represent women depended upon their party's ideology and whether they were elected in a single member electoral division.

Overall, it is evident that both international and Canadian literature on the legislative experiences of traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic groups has formed a consensus that these legislators have quite different experiences from their colleagues who are not members of those groups. In particular, legislators from traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic groups are more likely to highlight the discrimination that they face during their careers and bring up issues that relate directly to their sociodemographic group.

However, this literature on the legislative experiences of members of traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic group has certain weaknesses. First, all of this research uses interviews with legislators administered prior to 2000. It is possible that changing societal norms regarding women, visible minorities, or young people has altered the legislative experiences of legislators for these groups. Second, legislative experiences literature has strongly focused on women and African Americans. The legislative experiences of young legislators and visible minority legislators other than African Americans have only rarely been studied. Third, this literature has usually dealt with only one sociodemographic group at a time (e.g., female to male legislators or white legislators to African American legislators). There have been few attempts to simultaneously compare the legislature experiences of several sociodemographic groups to each other—e.g., comparing visible minority legislators to women legislators. With the exception of Black (2000), intersectionality has not been considered. Intersectionality refers to how identities related to race, class, gender, age, ability, and sexual orientation can overlap with each other to create discrimination and oppression of certain groups and individuals (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013). For instance, it is difficult to find research on the legislative experiences of young female legislators or visible minority

female legislators. Finally, the vast majority of these studies disclose to their interview subjects that the purpose of the research is to examine the experiences of their particular sociodemographic group and asked direct questions about discrimination or how the legislator attempts to represent the concerns of their sociodemographic group. It is possible that using this approach primes the interview subject to focus on the different experiences they have had and downplay experiences that were more universal.

Data and Method

The size and diversity of the federal NDP caucus following the Orange Wave provided an opportunity to correct these gaps in the literature on the experiences of legislators from traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic backgrounds and expand research on the activities of NDP MPs in the House of Commons. At the time of the interviews from March 2014 to December 2014, the NDP's caucus had shrunk from the 103 MPs that it elected due to defections and retirements. When the interviews were being conducted, the 96-person NDP caucus consisted of 56 percent Quebec MPs, 36 percent female MPs, 15 percent visible minority MPs, and 22 percent MPs under 35 years old. The two indigenous NDP MPs are included in the visible minority category. The data for this article were gathered through recorded interviews with 58 NDP MPs, representing a 60 percent of the NDP caucus. MPs were guaranteed that their identities would be kept anonymous and the interviews were transcribed in the language in which they were conducted (either English or French depending on the preference of the MP). The similarity of the demographic make-up of the interview sample and the demographic composition of the actual caucus meant that no weighting was necessary.² It important to note that all of MPs from Quebec surveyed were elected in 2011 as part of the Orange Wave and while almost all of the MPs surveyed from outside of Quebec had been first elected prior to the 2011 election.

Based on the established literature, we expected that NDP MPs from diverse backgrounds would foreground issues that affected their sociodemographic group and illustrate awareness of the discrimination that they have faced during their political careers. However, beside this impression, we had few other expectations concerning the legislative experience of NDP MPs because the subject had been so understudied. As such, we decided to follow a Glaserian grounded theory (sometimes also called classic grounded theory). The fundamental tenant of the Glaserian method, which has its roots in the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), is that the researcher should start their collection and analysis of interview data with few preconceived theories, preferring to generate conclusions from the data alone. In an explanation of grounded theory by Glaser later in his career, he noted "hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research" (2004, 11). The Glaserian method actually begins prior to the interview process. Generic as opposed to specific questions are preferred. When conducting interviews, Glaser advocates that researcher "listens to participants venting issues" and refrains from adding their own commentary (11).

Following the Glaserian method, we created a structured questionnaire consisting of eight open-ended questions about the NDP MPs' legislative experiences. All of the eight

questions were read out to each MP in exactly the same manner and the researchers administering the questionnaire did not add any of their own commentary or ask any follow up questions. The researcher simply read the question and recorded the response on an audio recorder.

The authors made a conscious decision not to inform the MPs that their responses were going to be used in a study that examines the legislative experiences of traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic groups. Rather, the study was vaguely described as analyzing the NDP's activity in the House of Commons. The questions on legislative experiences were embedded in a larger questionnaire containing sections on a variety of topics ranging from the MP's views on specific issues, methods of communication with voters, and relations with stakeholder groups. The MPs were also made aware that all of their caucus colleagues were being asked to participate in this research project as opposed to informing them that the researchers were focusing only on female MPs, visible minority MPs, Quebec MPs, or young MPs. The eight open-ended questions about legislative experiences were phrased in generic manner so as to not channel the MPs' responses in any particular direction. Thus, for example, instead of asking the female MPs if they had ever experienced sexism, female MPs were asked more broadly about what challenges they had faced during their career as a MP.

The methodological reason for all of these decisions is that we did not want to prime the MPs from these traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic groups in any manner. We felt that introducing the study to MPs as research regarding the sexism experienced by female MPs or the discrimination faced by visible minority MPs could bias their responses. Instead, we wanted to understand the extent to which MPs from these underrepresented sociodemographic groups spontaneously identify sexism and discrimination in their legislative experience without prompting. Our efforts to not lead the MPs are consistent with the Glaserian principles of allowing the interview subjects to "vent" and not forcing the researcher's preconceived notions on participants during the interview process.

The transcripts of the interviews were coded using N-vivo 10. First, the text of the interviews was coded according to the attributes of the participants (Saldana 2009, 55–58). It was decided that we were interested in four separate attributes of the MPs—if they were young (defined as 35 years old and under),³ female, self-identified as a visible minority, and if they represented an electoral district in Quebec. Second, we did a round of open coding. Instead of starting with a pre-determined list of codes to be forced upon the data, open coding is a line-by-line reading of the interview transcripts to generate a list of themes and observations suggested by the participants themselves. There is no limit to the number of themes that may emerge, and this process allows the researcher to identify the reoccurring patterns in the data without reference to any preconceived ideas or theoretical notions. The end product of the open coding process is a set of codes that gives an accurate picture of the overall story being told by the dataset (Saldana 2009, 81–85). In the best-case scenario, a "core variable" can then be identified within this set of codes that is central to the conceptual framework emerging from the data. The core variable "reoccurs frequently in the data and comes to be seen as a stable pattern that is more and more related to other variables" (Glaser 2004, 14).

Our open coding generated approximately 300 codes and slightly over 2,200 instances of those codes occurring in the entire interview sample. Each instance of

a code being applied came from when the MP brought up a topic themselves, without prompting from the interviewer. These codes were aggregated into tables (see Appendix) to discover the patterns that had emerged from the open-coding process. The tables illustrate the percentage of MPs in the interview sample whose answers contained any length of text that was coded under a certain category. It is important to realize that, for the purposes of our study, it did not matter if the MP talked about the subject embodied in the code for one sentence or two paragraphs. What mattered was that the MP mentioned the topic, even if the topic was mentioned in passing.

When reading the tables in the Appendix, it important to focus on two elements. First, the reader should note that responses are ranked so that the most popular responses are at the top of the tables. Second, we are interested in differences in the legislative experiences of MPs from the four sociodemographic groups mentioned above. As such, we performed chi-squared tests to ascertain if there were statistically significant differences in the responses of male versus female MPs, young versus old MPs, visible minority versus non-visible minority MPs, and Quebec MPs versus MPs from the Rest of Canada (ROC). The extent to which there is a statistically significant difference between the percentage of one group of NDP MPs mentioning a topic compared to the percentage of another group of NDP MPs mentioning that topic, is indicated through the use of asterisks.

For instance, in Table 1, 53 percent of young NDP MPs mentioned “realizing my values” as a reason for entering politics compared to 28 percent of NDP MPs over the age of 35. The three asterisks attached to this finding illustrate that the difference of between the responses of young and old NDP MPs on this question is statistically significant at $p \leq .01$. On the other hand, 24 percent of male NDP MPs mentioned “realizing my values” as a reason for entering politics compared to 32 percent of NDP female MPs. There are no asterisks attached to this finding indicating that the difference in the percentages of male NDP MPs versus female NDP MPs on this question was not statistically significant.

To examine the intersectionality of age and gender, the text below does provide some additional analysis on young female NDP MPs versus older female NDP MPs and young female NDP MPs versus young male NDP MPs that is not found in the Appendix. It is important to note that this analysis does come from a rather small subsample taken out of the entire 58 MP sample. There were ten female NDP MPs under 35, ten female NDP MPs over 35, and six male NDP MPs under 35 in this subsample. The sample sizes for other intersections of identity, like visible minority women, were deemed too small for reliable analysis.

The Core Variable: engendering Social Democratic Change

Through examining the most frequent responses of NDP MPs to the eight open-ended questions that are contained in the tables in our Appendix, the core variable of “engendering social democratic change” emerges. The specification of this core variable should be understood in the light of the ideology and history of the NDP. A sizeable literature on the CCF–NDP’s ideology is available (See Zakuta 1964; Young 1969; Whitehorn 1992; Carroll and Ratner 2005). While it is difficult to summarize all of the nuances of the federal NDP’s ideology in the space provided, a recent analysis by

McGrane (2017) identifies four enduring elements. First, full employment is to be achieved through direct subsidies to the private sector and government spending on public goods such as infrastructure, hospitals, and schools. Second, greater economic equality is stimulated by the large-scale expansion of the welfare state that is funded by increasing taxes on corporations and high-income earners. Third, public ownership is an important mechanism to provide essential services for citizens (e.g., rail service or postal service) at affordable rates. Fourth, environmental protection must be given equal priority alongside economic growth and improvements should be made to Canada's liberal rights regime to reduce discrimination faced by women and minority groups. Upon examining federal NDP platforms from 2004 to 2015, McGrane further concludes that there was an ideological moderation that played down some aspects of the party's more ambitious left-wing policies on trade, labor, and the environment. But, overall, these platforms were consistent with the four enduring elements of the federal NDP's ideology that he identified.

For New Democrats, this vision of a social democratic Canada, consisting of these four elements, is constantly held up as being in opposition to the policies followed by Conservative and Liberal federal governments. As longtime NDP MP Stanley Knowles quipped, "the Conservatives and Liberals are alike as two peas in a pod" (1961, 97). Compared to the NDP, neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals possess as fundamental critique of the deep social and economic inequalities that exist in Canada (Campbell and Christian 1996). Indeed, a central component of the NDP's ideology has always been that it would enact much wider ranging political reforms than previous Liberal and Conservative governments in terms of expansion of the welfare state, public ownership, minority rights, and pacifism (Laycock 2014).

It is the realization of this vision of a social democratic Canada that colors the MPs' responses to all of the questions that we asked. Their pursuit of Canada that resembles these four elements of social democratic ideology, described above, shapes their experiences as MPs. They are seeking social democratic change and they often frame this social democratic change as moving away from the policies followed by Conservative and Liberal governments of the past—policies that they described to the authors as being destructive to Canada's social fabric and Canada's future.

However, the NDP has never formed government at the federal level in Canada to enact the profound political change that it seeks, and, at the time of these interviews, the party was facing what the MPs considered to be a particularly right-wing Conservative government. In this sense, it is understandable that the desire to see unrealized social democratic change binds NDP MPs together and creates a significant level of similarity and unity among the legislative experiences of NDP MPs regardless of their sociodemographic background. As we will see in the rest of the article, social democratic ideology and the commitment to creating social democratic change influences all aspects of the NDP MPs' legislative experiences as opposed to selected aspects. No matter which aspect of their legislative experience they are discussing, the NDP MPs refer to the need for profound social democratic change in Canada that moves the country in a different direction compared to the one taken by the Liberal and Conservative governments of the past. As such, this desire for social democratic change is identified as the core variable that emerges from our study. It is the theme that reoccurs most frequently within the interview data across all sociodemographic groups

of NDP MPs and it is central to elaborating the conceptual framework that grows out of our analysis.

Motivation, Success, and Views on Representation

The first part of the NDP MPs' legislative experience that we examined relates to their motivation. To tap into these feelings, the MPs were asked to think back to why they became a MP in the first place: "Why did you decide to seek office?" (These data are found in Table 1 of the Appendix). It is apparent that the overarching commonality of NDP MPs when it comes to their motivation for entering politics was ideological. It was their desire to change the federal government and shift toward a more social democratic country after years of rule by the Liberals and Conservatives. Indeed, the most popular reasons that NDP MPs entered politics were to make generic social change, alter policy on a specific issue, realize their personal values, see Jack Layton (the late NDP leader) as Prime Minister, and displace political rivals from the Conservative and Liberal parties.

Overall, in Table 1, there were only three specific variations closely related to socio-demographic background that were statistically significant. First, 21 percent of female MPs (4 out of 19) cited increasing women's representation in politics as a motivation for seeking office with no prompting. The young female NDP MPs in the sample drove this finding with three out of the four female MPs who cited increasing women's representation being 35 or under. One young female MP reported that she entered politics "to make sure that young women take up space and have a voice and that the institution is changed to reflect the fact that young women are people who are able to have decisional power which I don't think is quite yet the case." In contrast to the female NDP MPs who foregrounded women's representation in politics, no Quebec MPs mentioned defending the French language or defending the interests of the Québécois nation as a reason for entering politics.

Another striking finding was that 70 percent of visible minority MPs cited being asked to run as a reason to seek office compared to only 20 percent of non-visible minority MPs. It is likely that this finding is a direct result of an NDP policy that does not allow a nomination for a federal riding to go forward unless there is at least one candidate who is female, young, or a visible minority. Young MPs were more likely than older MPs to report the reason that they sought office being simply that no one else wanted to do it. This finding may reflect that some of these young NDP MPs were sought to run in unwinnable ridings, especially in Quebec, where the NDP made its historic breakthrough in 2011.

The ideological goal of seeking social democratic change emerges once again as the core variable when we asked MPs how they define success: "What are the most important things that you want to accomplish as a MP? What have been some your successes as a MP?" This data is found in Table 2 of the Appendix. Overall, NDP MPs define success as representing Canadians by achieving change on their behalf. They want to represent constituents within their federal riding who come to their offices for help, fellow citizens of their region, and the "Canadian people" as a whole. It is the feeling of Orange Wave NDP MPs that the best way to represent Canadians is to influence the actions of the current government in ways that improve their lives

and eventually form an NDP government that would give them a voice, restore their faith in democracy, and turn back the policies of the Harper Conservative government.

For instance, one MP confided that they define success as “simply renewing a number of peoples’ faith in their elected leadership, that in and of itself would be a huge thing.” Interestingly, NDP MPs appear to define success as bringing about changes in Canadian society as opposed to excelling at their parliamentary tasks (private member bills, committee work, and critic responsibilities) or their work for the party (getting the NDP’s message heard and being re-elected).

However, NDP MPs rarely referred directly to issues of race, age, language, or gender when defining success in Table 2. Only 2 of the 20 female NDP MPs (both of whom were 35 or under) in the sample included advancing women’s issues in their definition of success. Similarly, only 2 out of 16 young NDP MPs specifically mentioned representing and inspiring young people as a component of their definition of success. Only 1 out of 10 visible minority NDP MPs mentioned increasing the representation of visible minorities in the House of Commons and improving immigration policy as measures of their success. Improving the lives of Indigenous Canadians was actually mentioned as a goal for an equal proportion of visible minority and non-visible minority MPs. Finally, only 1 out of 32 Quebec MPs in the sample included promoting the French language in their definition of success.

Table 3 explores the views on NDP MPs on representation by asking “When deciding how to vote on bill, what is the most important factor in your decision?” We can see that, regardless of sociodemographic group, it is the ideology of the party and the personal ideology of the NDP MP that is of utmost importance when deciding how to vote on a bill.

The overwhelmingly popular response in Table 3 was that MPs followed what could be referred to as the “party line”—i.e., the common position of the party on the issue at hand as laid out by the leader, caucus, and party policy. A full 88 percent of the sample mentioned the party line as an important consideration in deciding how to vote on a bill and this response was popular among all of the sociodemographic groups examined.

MPs described how they trusted the advice of the leader, how they felt obliged to respect the will of the caucus after internal debate, how they wanted their activity to conform with policy of the party developed at conventions, and how they wanted to represent the platform on which they were elected. They also expressed the need for the caucus and party to remain united in what they perceived to be a hostile media and political environment. The emphasis on following the party line illustrates that NDP MPs from the Orange Wave prized a high level of party discipline, similar to the type of discipline that some observers have noted in Conservative Party under Stephen Harper (Flanagan 2013).

Table 3 also illustrates that 41 percent of MPs mentioned that they consider how a bill corresponds to their own personal values before deciding how to vote on it. Once again, this response was equally popular among all of the sociodemographic groups that we are examining. In somewhat idealistic terms, the MPs described how they wanted to ensure that bills would lead toward a society where their social democratic values are realized, where social democratic change was engendered. Indeed, MPs often stressed how they firmly believed that the party line consistently corresponded with their own

personal values. They believed that following the party line was a way to follow their own personal social democratic ideology because the party line reflects their own version of social democracy.

The view of a MP as a “delegate” that seeks to represent the majority view of voters in their constituency or the views of Canadians was present within the sample but not as popular as the considerations involving the party line or personal values. Again, considerations of ideology were wrapped up in how MPs saw themselves representing the views of their constituents. Often, when NDP MPs talked about how they thought about the views of their constituents’ in deciding how to vote on a bill, they highlighted their belief that their constituents held social democratic values similar to their own and similar to the NDP. After all, they noted, many of their constituents had voted NDP.

A closer examination of the MPs’ responses reveals no NDP MP defined themselves strictly as a “delegate” of voters. Indeed, no MP spoke only about the views of their constituents when describing how they decided to vote on bills coming in front of the House of Commons. Similar to Docherty’s findings on NDP MPs in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the NDP MPs surveyed for this study could be classified as “politicos.” Every time MPs in our sample mentioned the importance of the views of their constituents, they also mentioned either the party line, their own personal values, or both of those additional considerations.

The new NDP MPs from Quebec did not have a radically different view of representation than MPs from the ROC (most of whom had been first elected prior to the Orange Wave of 2011). The only code on which MPs from Quebec differed from MPs outside of Quebec was that they were less likely to mention their delegate role of representing the desires of their constituents. In this way, the influx of new NDP MPs from Quebec appeared to reinforce the tendency of NDP MPs to be “politicos” that was first observed by Docherty in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Overall, we can see the importance of the core variable of engendering social democratic change in the NDP MPs views on representation. NDP MPs saw their role in Parliament as pushing for the social democratic change embodied in their values, the values of their party, and the values of their constituents who voted for them. Regardless of sociodemographic group, the NDP MPs shared this common vision of the role of the MP within the legislative process.

Challenges, Likes, and Dislikes

The second part of the NDP MPs’ legislative experience that we examined relates to what they see as their challenges and what they like and dislike about being a MP: “What are some of the most challenging things that you have faced as a MP?” and “What do you like about being a MP? What do you dislike about being a MP?” (These data are contained in Tables 4 and 5 of the Appendix.)

We can once again see the core variable of social democratic change at work when MPs were asked to reflect on the greatest challenges that they face. Frequently, the challenges MPs cited reflected their underlying desire for social democratic change in Canadian society: the mean-spiritedness of the Conservative MPs and the Conservative government; being unable to enact social democratic changes in policy due to being in

opposition; the superficiality of media coverage; and the inability to garner attention to the social justice issues that mattered to them.

The MPs noted that the competitive nature of internal politics within their own party, by which they meant the jockeying for positions of power within the caucus (like critic positions, seats on committees, or House Leader), was tedious and frustrating. They lamented that these internal struggles for influence within the caucus diverted time and energy away from their overriding goal of advancing the cause of social democracy.

Even the challenge of balancing work and family, which was the most frequently mentioned obstacle, was often phrased in a way that is critical of the way that Canadian politics is currently structured. NDP MPs were clearly disturbed that their jobs as MPs did not allow a proper balance of their work and their family life and some focused on the need for reforms to the functioning of the House of Commons to correct this situation. They often stressed that the need for a more family friendly House of Commons should be a goal of Canadian social democrats.

When asking about the challenges facing Orange Wave NDP MPs, we would expect that problems relating to discrimination would be brought forth by MPs from traditionally underrepresented sociodemographic groups. Once again, female NDP MPs, particularly young female NDP MPs, are outliers among the four sociodemographic groups examined. If we look at the statistically significant findings in Table 4, we see that female NDP MPs are more likely to mention balancing work and family as a challenge compared to male MPs. The female MPs' difficulties finding time for their families could be related to their greater tendency to report finding their workload overwhelming.

The lens of intersectionality is important to fully understanding the challenges faced by female NDP MPs. A deeper analysis of the data shows that young female MPs were more likely to cite both workload and family/work balance as challenges than young male MPs. Without prompting, sexism was mentioned as a challenge for a quarter of the 20 female NDP MPs in the interview sample and ageism was mentioned as a challenge for one fifth of young MPs.

However, there was a distinction between young women and old women as well as young men and young women. None of the young male NDP MPs mentioned ageism as a challenge, but it was mentioned by 40 percent of young female NDP MPs without prompting. Four out of the five female NDP MPs who mentioned sexism as a challenge were young, while the one older female NDP MP who mentioned sexism as a challenge self-identified as a visible minority. One young female respondent (MP7) described how she encountered prejudice in Parliament on a daily basis. When asked what she found the most challenging in her job, she said "Je dirai qu'être une femme et être jeune. Je pense que déjà là on part avec une longueur non d'avance, mais de recul. Oui c'est sur qu'il faut combattre les préjugés tous les jours. Mais on est capable. C'est pas mal ça, la politique est encore un *métier* de vieil homme ... avec les cheveux gris. Il faudrait que je me teigne mes cheveux en gris, peut être, ils vont me prendre plus sérieusement. [I would say being young and being a woman. I think that already we're at a disadvantage. Certainly, yes, we have to fight prejudice everyday. ... It's pretty much that politics is still a job of old men, with grey hair. So, I should dye my hair grey, and maybe then they will take me more seriously.]"

MPs from Quebec and visible minority MPs did not mention discrimination based on their race or linguistic group. Indeed, we can see in Table 4 that the differences in

responses between MPs from Quebec and MPs from the rest of Canada were not very different, except that Quebec MPs were less likely to cite the meanness of the Conservative government as something that they found challenging about their job. Further, the challenges of visible minority NDP MPs versus non-visible minority NDP MPs were quite similar, except, like Quebec MPs, visible minority MPs were more perturbed with the meanness of the Conservatives.

The core variable of engendering social democratic change is present once again when we asked MPs what they liked and disliked about their jobs. We see the prominence of this theme in high incidents of codes such as rating “making change” as a top priority, liking representing my riding, and liking helping people in my riding as well as disliking the low quality of debate in the House of Commons and frustration with not attaining concrete results from their actions. Further, two of the popular responses related to personal development—the opportunity to meet people and to learn about Canadian society—could also be interpreted as falling under the theme of generating social democratic change. Through learning, the MPs become more effective agents of ideological change. Similarly, the process of making societal change inevitably requires engaging with others and meeting with various types of people to build a collective movement.

The female NDP MPs and young MPs, in particular, appeared to enjoy an extroverted and learning-based approach to politics. Female NDP MPs and young NDP MPs were much more likely than male MPs and older MPs, respectively, to mention that they liked meeting people and liked how much they learned through the exercise of their functions. As MP12 enthusiastically put it: “What I like about being an MP, what I love about being an MP, is getting to go to events and to meet people and to hear what their concerns as you know I’m a really social guy. Getting to meet people getting to learn about issues, I care about, with people who I normally wouldn’t get a chance to talk about them with, is something that’s really awesome.” Once again, the intersection of age and gender is evident. Young female MPs liked meeting people and learning more than young male MPs and old female MPs.

In terms of visible minority MPs, they appear to enjoy the representational aspect of politics—i.e., “representing my riding or region”—more than their counterparts who were not visible minorities. This segment of MPs also displayed a stronger dislike of lobbyists compared to non-visible minority MPs. But, visible minority MPs did not mention any dislikes directly related to race. The Quebec MPs were not unusually different from other MPs in their responses to this question. The Quebec MPs’ lower dislike of a heavy travel schedule may be simply attributed to their ridings being closer to Canada’s capital than the NDP MPs from the rest of Canada. Quebec MPs did not mention any dislikes of their job related to the French language or the minority status of the Québécois nation in Canada.

Issues and Personal Ideology

A final set of questions asked to NDP MPs related to their assessment of their own personal ideology and the political issues that they encounter. NDP MPs were simply asked the open-ended question, “How would you describe your personal ideology?” The MPs were also asked about which issues they felt passionately, which issues they felt get

undue attention, and which issues they felt are ignored: “What are the types of issues that you are passionate about? What types of issues do you want to bring into the House of Commons?” and “Are there some issues that are overplayed in federal politics? Are there some issues that are underplayed?” (These data are contained in Tables 6, 7, and 8 of the Appendix.)

The core variable of engendering social democratic change comes out strongly in Table 6. Many MPs spoke about their ideology in broad terms as encompassing a commitment to achieving greater equality and social justice. There was a strong emphasis on collectivism and cooperation to ensure that all members of society, especially the most vulnerable, have a minimum standard of living—something that, as they saw it, has not happened under previous Liberal and Conservative governments. The values of empathy and compassion were mentioned several times, and MPs were clear that society should avoid prioritizing individual rights over the needs of the community. Overall, the realization of this vision meant recognizing the class and structural inequalities in Canada. As MP20 put it, “there is no such thing as deserving and undeserving poor. And there’s just an economy that is serving a few rather than many.” For a smaller subset of MPs, a movement to a more social democratic Canada also included a commitment to participatory democracy through providing avenues for average citizens to become more involved in the governance of their country.

In terms of the labels used, most MP simply described themselves as being a “social democrat” with more general labels like “left-wing” and “progressive” being less popular. Very specific labels like “environmentalist,” “feminist,” “unionist,” “pacifist,” were used quite sparingly. Interestingly, 16 percent of NDP MPs felt a need to stress that they were pragmatic despite the sweeping societal change they desired as social democrats. This pragmatism was usually expressed in a preference for incremental change and ensuring that the new government programs to be introduced by an NDP federal government would work effectively and efficiently.

The responses in Table 6 did not vary by sociodemographic group to a great extent. There is little evidence that the new NDP MPs from Quebec were ideologically different than the ROC MPs in the survey (most of the latter were elected prior to 2011). MPs from the ROC did speak a bit more about bringing Indigenous perspectives into Canadian politics than Quebec MPs. Such a discrepancy could be explained by the relatively low percentage of Indigenous residents in Quebec compared to other provinces. Interestingly, no Quebec NDP MP described themselves as a Québécois nationalist or brought up how their ideology included nationalist themes like defending the French language or respect for provincial autonomy. In short, the influx of new NDP MPs from Quebec did not appear to drastically alter the ideological make-up of the federal NDP caucus.

Visible minority MPs were more comfortable with the label of “socialist” but a closer look at these responses reveals that they use this term because it is common terminology in their home country and are aware that the term “social democrat” is more popular in Canada. As such, they do not really see a difference between being a “socialist” and a “social democrat.” Anti-racism was not an important theme. Only two MPs did mention combatting racism as part of their ideology— one was a visible minority and one was not. When it comes to feminism, the intersection of age and gender is once again evident. Three NDP MPs volunteered that they were a “feminist” when asked about their personal ideology, and all of those MPs were women under the age of the 35.

In Table 7, we once again see the operation of our core variable: MP's desire for social democratic change in their society. The most important issues for NDP MPs were generally the types of issues where deep and systemic change is required to achieve social democratic goals of equality and social justice: the environment, poverty, Indigenous affairs, economic inequality, patriarchy, immigration policy, and electoral/democratic reform. In short, NDP MPs appear to be interested in broad and complex social issues that require significant transformations in Canadian society, the type of issues that would, according to their worldview, break Canada away from the policies of previous Conservative and Liberal federal governments.

Local issues of regional development and issues that deal with short-term economic concerns like job creation, taxation, and unemployment insurance were not popular among NDP MPs. Interestingly, while the NDP is often seen as the "party of health care" or Canada's "labor party," healthcare was not cited as an important issue for very many NDP MPs and no NDP MPs cited labor policy (e.g., collective bargaining rights) as an important issue. We would suggest that, since the healthcare system and the labor relations system are well-established in Canada and debates are usually not about radical reform, these two issues resonate less with NDP MPs' ideological desire for substantive societal transformation.

It is in this portion of the study that we were expecting NDP MPs to bring up issues that were directly related to their sociodemographic group. Certainly, there are some statistically significant examples of how female NDP MPs define the social democratic change that they seek differently compared to male NDP MPs. While 31 percent of male NDP MPs mentioned relatively narrow local and regional issues in response to this question, no female NDP MPs cited these types of issues. Rather, 42 percent of female MPs mentioned women's issues compared to just 6% of male MPs. While it is not strictly a women's issue, 11 percent of female NDP MPs mentioned childcare, whereas no male NDP MPs cited this issue.

There are also some limited examples of young and visible minority NDP MPs bringing up issues that directly affected their own sociodemographic group. Young NDP MPs were more likely to bring up youth issues (though, they were less likely to bring up environmental issues). Young NDP MPs, particularly female young NDP MPs, also mentioned the lack of racial diversity in politics and women's issues more than their older counterparts.

Visible minority MPs were clearly more passionate about immigration policy and human rights but less passionate about Indigenous affairs than non-visible minority MPs. Perhaps, this finding reflected that only one of the visible minority NDP MPs in the sample self-identified as Indigenous. Interestingly, visible minority NDP MPs were neither more nor less likely than non-visible minority NDP MPs to mention increasing racial diversity in politics as an issue that they were passionate about.

Reflective of the ideological proximity of the new NDP MPs from Quebec to the veteran NDP MPs from the rest of Canada, the differences in the issues profile between Quebec and non-Quebec MPs were quite minimal. Compared to their colleagues in the rest of Canada, Quebec MPs were less likely to name the environment and Indigenous affairs among their top issues are slightly more likely to mention the economic, immigration, military, and foreign policy. Reflecting the low saliency of issues relating to Quebec's place in the Canadian federation, only one MP from Quebec mentioned constitutional affairs and another two MPs from Quebec mentioned official languages (i.e., policies relating to the status of French and English in Canadian politics). For the purposes of comparison, one non-Quebec MP also

mentioned official languages and one non-Quebec MP mentioned intergovernmental relations between Canadian provinces and the federal government as an issue that was of particular interest to them.

Similar conclusions may be reached by examining the issues that Orange Wave NDP MPs felt were “overplayed” and the issues that they felt were “underplayed” in federal politics. NDP MPs clearly felt that issues requiring profound and substantive social democratic change were consistently underplayed in Canadian federal politics: the environment, Indigenous issues, poverty, and “social issues in general.” In the view of NDP MPs, issues that took attention away from the deeper inequalities within society like the emphasis on crime, terrorism, economic growth, the health of the oil industry, the military, scandal, and partisan gamesmanship (i.e., an emphasis on the political posturing in the House of Commons as opposed substantive issues affecting Canadians’ lives), were all “overplayed” issues

By concentrating on the latter, attention was drawn away from the more profound problems in society related to ecological damage and a general lack of social justice. In particular, NDP MPs believed that the Conservative government was obsessed with imposing tougher sentences on criminals to unfairly penalize the marginalized within society as opposed to realizing that the root cause of crime is actually the larger problem of poverty. MP55 made the following observation when asked about issues that are overplayed: “la question de sécurité publique. Ils en font une obsession quand dans les faits, il y a une baisse de la criminalité et que c’est pas la sécurité publique qui baisse la criminalité, mais ses conditions de vie. [*The question of public security. They’re obsessed with it, while, in fact, there has been a decline in criminality and it’s not public security that lowers criminality, but living conditions.*]”

There are also several interesting statistically significant differences among MPs from different sociodemographic groups concerning the issues that they feel are overplayed and underplayed. In terms of issues dealing with race and gender, female MPs (particularly young female MPs) were more likely than their male counterparts to see women’s issues and Indigenous issues as being underplayed. Only one MP, a female over 35, mentioned childcare as an issue that was underplayed. Compared to their older counterparts, young MPs were more likely to feel that Indigenous issues and youth issues were underplayed but less likely to feel that scandals and the military was overplayed. Despite 90 percent of the visible minority MPs in the interview sample being non-Indigenous, they were much more likely to cite Indigenous issues as being underplayed than non-visible minority MPs.

Similar to previous questions, the responses of the Quebec MPs were not drastically different than the responses of the non-Quebec MPs. With the exception of one Quebec MP who felt that official languages issues were underplayed, Quebec MPs did not mention that issues relating to Québécois culture, federalism, or the health of the French language.

Conclusion

The findings in this article point to important conclusions for the study of the federal NDP and the study of the legislative experiences of federal Canadian MPs, more generally. While the role of ideology and party affiliation was not found to be an important factor in shaping legislative experiences of Canadian MPs in previous studies, the analysis in this article points to the importance of ideology to understanding the

legislative experiences of federal NDP MPs within the Canadian House of Commons. Even when asked generic questions about their legislative experiences, the core variable that unites the responses of the Orange Wave NDP MPs was their strong ideological commitment to create social democratic change within Canadian society. No matter what aspect of their legislative experiences they were asked about, their social democratic ideology colored their responses. Indeed, literature on the CCF–NDP has always highlighted its strong ideological commitment as a defining feature of the party (Young 1969; Morton 1986; Whitehorn 1992; Sayers 1999; Laycock 2014). The analysis in this article confirms the traditional view that ideology is key to understanding the activity of the CCF–NDP and the role that it plays in Canadian politics.

Contrary to existing research on the topic, NDP MPs from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds generally were not more likely to highlight the discrimination that they face during their careers and did not emphasize political issues that relate directly to their sociodemographic group.

It is, however, possible our interviewing method and Glaserian open-coding approach caused the inconsistency with the established literature on our topic. Perhaps, asking specifically about issues related to gender, race, age, and language or allowing for questions to probe those issues after a generic question was asked would have yielded different responses. Further, a pre-determined set of deductive codes related to gender, race, age, and language, as opposed to an inductive open coding approach, could have produced different results. As such, it would be much too hasty to proclaim that the appreciation of diversity is not important to understanding legislative experiences.

However, our research design does point to the possibility that not all traditionally under-represented sociodemographic groups report the same level of unique legislative experiences. Certainly, the difference between Quebec and non-Quebec NDP's experiences were minimal. The infusion of new MPs from Quebec did not appear to drastically alter the legislative experiences of the federal NDP caucus. This finding may be surprising to many Quebec scholars, some of whom see the primary role of Quebec's political establishment, both federally and provincially, as being the vehicle for representing the province's particular nationalist interests (Dion 1975; McRoberts 1997; Gagnon and Boucher 2016). It is also at odds with the portrayal of Quebec politicians in rest of Canada, where they are often cast as very nationalistic, insecure about the status of Québécois culture and French language, and overly concerned with promoting the province's political agenda, sometimes at the expense of Canadian unity (Cook 1966; Russell 1993; Berdahl and Gibbins 2014). While one should guard against generalizing overall trends from a sample of MPs from one party, our article may point to the declining saliency of the unity question (i.e., Quebec's status in Canadian federation) within Canadian federal politics and the Canadian House of Commons. Or, MPs from Quebec may simply be less focused on so-called "Quebec issues" or "nationalist issues" than previously thought.

When it came to the other three sociodemographic groups examined, the reporting of unique experiences relating to NDP MPs' gender was relatively high while the reporting of unique experiences related to age and race were much lower. In particular, young female NDP MPs were outliers in terms of consistently highlighting the sexism and discrimination they faced within their political careers without prompting and were more likely than older female MPs to spontaneously bring up women's issues. As such, intersectionality, particularly between age and gender, should be studied further. The case of the young women in the Orange Wave

NDP caucus illustrates that there could be important differences in the legislative experience *within* different sociodemographic groups (e.g., younger women versus older women) as well as *between* different sociodemographic groups (e.g., women versus men). However, the difficulty around making firm conclusions regarding intersectionality and legislative experiences is the small sample size of legislators. Women, youth, and visible minorities are already underrepresented in legislatures. As such, combinations of these groups (e.g., young visible minorities) are even more underrepresented. Indeed, our sample was taken from an exceptionally diverse parliamentary caucus by Canadian standards and it consisted of only ten young female MPs and five visible minority female MPs.

To further research in the area of legislative experiences in the Canadian House of Commons, cross-party surveys with larger sample sizes would be very valuable. Cross-party research with high sample sizes could confirm the extent to which the legislative experiences of MPs from other parties besides the NDP are shaped by ideology, allow experimentation with different ways of asking interview questions, and provide data on “double minority” MPs such as visible minority women.

However, there are logistical challenges for future researchers wishing to adopt a model where they simultaneously administer a survey across party lines. In the contemporary Canadian political context, it is our experience that Canadian MPs have extremely busy schedules, do not place a high priority on participating in research projects, and are generally suspicious of the motives of academic researchers. Indeed, a recent cross-party survey of Canadian MPs concerning the relatively innocuous topic of their motivations for introducing private members bills yielded a response rate of only 16 percent (Blidook 2012, 123). A low response rate across the entire Canadian House of Commons on a legislative experiences survey may not yield the sample sizes necessary for comparisons between, for example, NDP visible minority MPs versus Conservative visible minority MPs.

Our ability to succeed in achieving a 60 percent response rate from NDP MPs came through both our tenacity and relationship with the MPs, but also our research design that focused on constructing a sample from a single party. The title of our research project was the “Canadian Social Democracy Study” and we indicated to MPs that we were only studying the NDP. Further, through personal contacts, we were able to get permission from the NDP Leader’s Office to administer the questionnaire and that permission was relayed at an NDP caucus meeting. We also used interviewers who had personal connections to the NDP as a way to build trust for our project. Trust in our project was also bolstered because McGrane had twenty years of involvement with the NDP including elected positions with the youth wing, various riding associations, and being a member of an NDP Provincial Council and NDP Provincial Executive. For his part, DesBaillets was well-known in NDP circles in Quebec and had worked in Thomas Mulcair’s office when Mulcair was a MP, as well as working on several elections campaigns as a volunteer.

This structure of our project created considerable advantages for attaining the participation of NDP MPs, but such advantages would generally not be available for researchers trying to construct a cross-party sample of MPs. As such, while cross-party research of a large number of Canadian MPs using a variety of different types of questioning techniques would be very valuable, data collection would be extremely challenging. This paradox will continue to pose an obstacle to further research in the field of how sociodemographic background affects the behavior and experiences of Canada’s federally elected representatives.

Notes

1. The Liberals caucus elected after the 2015 election had a lower percentage of women, MPs under 35, and Quebec MPs than the NDP caucus elected after the 2011 election. However, the 25 percent of the 2015 Liberal caucus self-identifying as visible minorities and Indigenous, is higher than the 15 percent of the 2011 NDP caucus that self-identified as visible minorities and Indigenous. See Andrew Griffith, *Because it's 2015: Implementing Diversity and Inclusion*. Ottawa: Lulu Publishing (2016).
2. The actual 96-member NDP caucus consisted of 56 percent Quebec MPs, 36 percent female MPs, 15 percent visible minority MPs, and 22 percent MPs under 35 years old. In comparison, our sample of 58 NDP MPs consisted of 57 percent Quebec MPs, 34 percent female MPs, 17 percent visible minority MPs, and 28 percent MPs under 35 years old.
3. The federal NDP caucus from 2011 to 2014 had a formal “youth caucus” within in it, whose cutoff age was 35.

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David DesBaillets is a sixth-year doctoral candidate at UQÀM’s legal studies program. His main area of research is comparative constitutional and human rights law in Canada. He is writing a dissertation about the evolution and current development of the right to social housing in

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Appendix

The tables below contain the percentage of the MPs in the whole sample or from a specific socio-demographic group that mentioned a particular legislative experience. For instance, in Table 1, we see that being “inspired by a specific issue” as a reason for seeking public office was mentioned by 32% of the entire sample of MPs and 38% of male MPs and 21% of female MPs. Since we are particularly interested in the variation of responses among the MPs from different backgrounds, asterisks have been placed beside the findings where statistically significant differences emerged.

While the entire sample was 58 MPs, there were some instances where the MPs declined to answer a question or the interviewer ran out of time. As such, the sample sizes in these tables are slightly lower than 58. Also, please note that VM stands for “visible minority” and ROC stands for “Rest of Canada.” Codes relating to a subject that was mentioned in the answer of only one MP were eliminated. The removal of these “one-off” responses was necessary to keep the size of the tables manageable. However, the text of the article does refer to some of these one-off responses that are of particular interest to our study. Finally, the percentages do not add up to 100% because MPs could have mentioned two or three topics in answers to our open-ended questions.

Table 1. Open coding of the question “Why did you decide to seek office?”.

	Whole sample (n = 56)	Male (n = 37)	Female (n = 19)	Over 35 (n = 41)	35 and Under (n = 15)	Not VM (n = 46)	VM (n = 10)	ROC (n = 25)	Quebec (n = 31)
Dislike of other parties, governments, and politicians	36%	35%	37%	39%	27%	37%	30%	52%	23%***
Make social change	32%	30%	37%	34%	27%	33%	30%	32%	32%
Inspired by a specific issue	32%	38%	21%**	39%	13%*	35%	30%	52%	16%***
I was asked	29%	27%	32%	27%	33%	20%	70%***	24%	32%
Realizing my values	27%	24%	32%	17%	53%***	28%	20%	20%	32%*
Inspired by Jack Layton's leadership	18%	19%	16%	17%	20%	15%	30%**	8%	26%**
Always wanted to do it	9%	11%	5%	10%	7%	9%	10%	20%	0%**
Not one else wanted to do it	9%	8%	11%	5%	20%*	9%	10%	4%	13%
Increase female representation in politics	7%	0%	21%**	2%	20%**	7%	10%	4%	10%
To bring personal and professional experience to politics	7%	11%	0%	10%	0%	7%	10%	12%	3%
Represent the people	5%	3%	11%	7%	0%	7%	0%	4%	6%
Because I came from my riding	4%	0%	11%	2%	7%	4%	0%	0%	6%
Represent my region	4%	3%	5%	2%	7%	4%	0%	8%	0%

*** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .01$.

Table 2. Open coding of the question “What are the most important things that you want to accomplish as a MP? What have been some your successes as a MP?”.

	Whole Sample (n = 57)	Male (n = 37)	Female (n = 20)	Over 35 (n = 41)	35 and Under (n = 16)	Not VM (n = 47)	VM (n = 10)	ROC (n = 25)	Quebec (n = 32)
Represent the people, give people a voice	28%	22%	40%**	24%	38%*	26%	40%*	12%	41%***
Influence actions of government	28%	32%	20%*	32%	19%*	26%	40%*	48%	13%***
Defend and promote my region	26%	32%	15%**	22%	38%**	28%	20%	28%	25%
Form government	25%	24%	25%	27%	19%	26%	20%	28%	22%
Wants to make general social change	23%	16%	35%**	27%	13%*	21%	30%	28%	19%
Casework for individual constituents	23%	14%	40%***	22%	25%	26%	10%*	16%	28%*
Proud of private members bill	21%	22%	20%	20%	25%	21%	20%	32%	13%**
Restore people's faith in democracy	19%	11%	35%	15%	31%**	21%	10%*	20%	19%
Bought benefit to people of riding	18%	16%	20%	12%	31%**	19%	10%	20%	16%
Wants to improve parliamentary democracy	11%	14%	5%	12%	6%	13%	0%*	12%	9%
Wants to improve lives of Indigenous people	9%	11%	5%	7%	13%	9%	10%	12%	6%
Wants better environmental protection	9%	11%	5%	12%	0%*	9%	10%	16%	3%*
Proud of work in my critic area	9%	11%	5%	10%	6%	9%	10%	12%	6%
Keep seat for the NDP	7%	11%	0%*	7%	6%	9%	0%	12%	3%
Getting the NDP's message heard	7%	8%	5%	7%	6%	9%	0%	16%	0%**
Cannot name a success as a MP	7%	8%	5%	10%	0%	6%	10%	4%	9%
Work on women's issues	4%	0%	10%*	0%	13%*	2%	10%	4%	3%
Improve Canada's international reputation	4%	0%	10%*	2%	6%	4%	0%	4%	3%
Represent and inspire young people	4%	0%	10%*	0%	13%	2%	10%	4%	3%
Proud of Parliamentary Committee Work	4%	5%	0%	2%	6%	2%	10%	0%	6%
Improve veterans affairs	4%	5%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	8%	0%

*** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .01$.

Table 3. Open coding of the question: “When deciding how to vote on bill what is the most important factor in your decision?”.

	Whole sample (n = 58)	Male (n = 38)	Female (n = 20)	Over 35 (n = 42)	35 and Under (n = 16)	Not VM (n = 48)	VM (n = 10)	ROC (n = 25)	Quebec (n = 33)
Party line (position of caucus, leader, and party policy)	88%	84%	95%	86%	94%	83%	100%	88%	88%
Personal values	41%	47%	30%	38%	50%	42%	40%	36%	45%
Desires of constituents in my riding	36%	37%	35%	29%	56%**	38%	30%	48%	27%*
Views of all Canadians	9%	11%	5%	10%	6%	10%	0%	12%	6%

*** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .01$.

Table 4. Open coding of the question “What are some of the most challenging things that you have faced as a MP?”.

	Whole Sample (n = 56)	Male (n = 36)	Female (n = 20)	Over 35 (n = 40)	35 and Under (n = 16)	Not VM (n = 46)	VM (n = 10)	ROC (n = 24)	Quebec (n = 32)
Work and family balance	29%	22%	40%**	28%	31%	28%	30%	29%	28%
Dealing with Conservative meanness	25%	28%	20%	28%	19%	22%	40%**	33%	19%*
Overwhelming workload	20%	14%	30%**	15%	31%**	20%	20%	21%	19%
Internal party politics	18%	22%	10%*	20%	13%	15%	30%*	21%	16%
Being in opposition	16%	19%	10%	18%	13%	15%	20%	21%	13%
Shallow media coverage	14%	19%	5%*	18%	6%*	15%	10%	21%	9%*
Getting attention for social justice issues	13%	11%	15%	13%	13%	15%	0%*	13%	13%
Travel and away from home	11%	14%	5%	13%	6%	13%	0%*	17%	6%*
Information overload	9%	11%	5%	8%	13%	11%	0%*	8%	9%
Sexism	9%	0%	25%***	3%	25%**	7%	20%*	4%	13%
Lack of resources	7%	6%	10%	8%	6%	9%	0%	4%	9%
Managing MP budget and staff	7%	8%	5%	5%	13%	7%	10%	4%	9%
Low level of debate in H of C	5%	3%	10%	5%	6%	7%	0%	8%	3%
Ageism	5%	0%	15%*	0%	19%*	7%	0%	4%	6%
Critiques for being too socially liberal	4%	3%	5%	5%	0%	4%	0%	8%	0%
Keeping emotions and passions in check	4%	6%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	4%	3%

*** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .01$.

Table 5. Open coding of the question “What do you like about being a MP? What do you dislike about being a MP?”.

	Whole sample (n = 56)	Male (n = 37)	Female (n = 20)	Over 35 (n = 40)	35 and Under (n = 16)	Non-VM (n = 46)	VM (n = 10)	ROC (n = 24)	Quebec (n = 32)
Like - making change and being heard on issues	38%	36%	40%	40%	31%	37%	40%	38%	38%
Like - meeting people	38%	25%	60%***	30%	56%***	35%	50%*	38%	38%
Like - representing my riding or region	32%	31%	35%	30%	38%	28%	50%**	42%	25%**
Dislike - hyper-partisanship and low level of debate	29%	31%	25%	33%	19%*	30%	20%*	25%	31%
Like - learn a lot	25%	14%	45%***	20%	38%**	24%	30%	13%	34%**
Dislike - being away from home and family	20%	22%	15%	23%	13%*	22%	10%*	33%	9%**
Like - everything	20%	17%	25%*	20%	19%	17%	30%*	17%	22%
Like - helping people in my riding	18%	22%	10%	20%	13%	22%	0%**	29%	9%**
Dislike - hard to see concrete results from my actions	16%	17%	15%	15%	19%	17%	10%	13%	19%
Dislike - public exposure	13%	11%	15%	8%	25%**	13%	10%	17%	9%
Dislike - travel	9%	11%	5%	13%	0%*	11%	0%*	21%	0%**
Like - working with caucus, staff, and party	9%	8%	10%	10%	6%	9%	10%	13%	6%
Dislike - constant events	5%	8%	0%	8%	0%	4%	10%	4%	6%
Dislike - media shallowness	5%	6%	5%	5%	6%	7%	0%	0%	9%
Like - travel	5%	8%	0%	8%	0%	4%	10%	13%	0%*
Dislike - not be able to look after myself	5%	6%	5%	5%	6%	4%	10%	4%	6%
Dislike - lack of recognition of MP parliamentary work	4%	6%	0%	0%	13%*	4%	0%	0%	6%
Dislike - lobbyists	4%	6%	0%	3%	6%	0%	20%*	0%	6%
Dislike - being disconnected from average citizens	4%	3%	5%	3%	6%	4%	0%	4%	3%
Like - the prestige	4%	6%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	8%	0%

*** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .01$.

Table 6. Open coding of the question: “How would you describe your personal ideology?”.

	Whole Sample (n = 56)	Male (n = 36)	Female (n = 20)	Over 35 (n = 40)	35 and Under (n = 16)	Not VM (n = 46)	VM (n = 10)	ROC (n = 24)	Quebec (n = 32)
Equality and social justice	48%	47%	50%	48%	50%	48%	50%	48%	48%
Social democrat	41%	42%	40%	40%	44%	40%	50%	44%	39%
Left-wing	16%	13%	20%	17%	13%	17%	10%	16%	15%
Pragmatic	16%	18%	10%	14%	19%	17%	10%	20%	12%
Participatory democracy	10%	8%	15%	10%	13%	8%	20%	4%	15%
Socialist	9%	11%	5%	7%	13%	4%	30%***	4%	12%
Environmentalist	5%	8%	0%	5%	6%	6%	0%	4%	6%
Feminist	5%	0%	15%**	0%	19%***	4%	10%	4%	6%
Indigenous perspective	5%	3%	10%	5%	6%	6%	0%	12%**	0%
Progressive	5%	8%	0%	5%	6%	4%	10%	8%	3%
Same as Jack Layton	5%	3%	10%	7%	0%	4%	10%	0%	9%
Anti-racism	3%	3%	5%	5%	0%	2%	10%	4%	3%
Left and right are meaningless labels	3%	5%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	8%	0%
Not a socialist	3%	5%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	4%	3%
Pacifist	3%	5%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	8%	0%
My region/riding comes first	3%	5%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	4%	3%
Unionist	3%	5%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	4%	3%

*** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .01$.

Table 7. Open coding of the question: “What are the types of issues that you are passionate about? What types of issues do you want to bring into the House of Commons?”.

	Whole sample (n = 55)	Male (n = 36)	Female (n = 19)	Over 35 (n = 39)	35 and Under (n = 16)	Not VM (n = 45)	VM (n = 10)	ROC (n = 23)	Quebec (n = 31)
Environment	27%	31%	21%*	31%	19%*	29%	20%	39%	19%**
Poverty	25%	25%	26%	31%	13%**	27%	20%	30%	23%
Regional development and local issues	20%	31%	0%***	21%	19%	22%	10%*	22%	19%
Women’s issues	18%	6%	42%***	10%	38%***	13%	40%***	22%	16%
Economy and job creation	15%	14%	16%	15%	13%	16%	10%	9%	19%*
Indigenous affairs	16%	11%	26%*	15%	19%	20%	0%*	26%	10%**
Immigration policy	13%	6%	26%**	10%	19%	7%	40%***	4%	19%*
Electoral/Democratic reform	13%	14%	11%	15%	6%	11%	20%	13%	13%
Housing	11%	8%	16%	15%	0%*	13%	0%*	17%	6%*
Economic inequality	13%	14%	11%	15%	6%	13%	10%	26%	3%**
Youth issues	9%	11%	5%	3%	25%**	9%	10%	9%	10%
Increasing racial diversity in politics	7%	3%	16%*	3%	19%**	7%	10%	4%	10%
Health care	7%	3%	16%*	5%	13%	7%	10%	4%	10%
Foreign policy	7%	8%	5%	5%	13%	7%	10%	0%	13%*
Employment insurance	7%	8%	5%	10%	0%*	9%	0%	4%	10%
Seniors	5%	3%	11%	5%	6%	4%	10%	4%	6%
Official languages	5%	6%	5%	5%	6%	7%	0%	4%	6%
Military	5%	3%	11%	3%	13%*	4%	10%	0%	10%*
Human rights	5%	3%	11%	3%	13%*	2%	20%**	9%	3%
Criminal justice system	5%	0%	16%**	8%	0%	7%	0%	9%	3%
Workplace health and safety	4%	3%	5%	3%	6%	4%	0%	4%	3%
Veterans affairs	4%	3%	5%	5%	0%	4%	0%	9%	0%
Taxation policy	4%	6%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	4%	3%
Road and rail safety	4%	6%	0%	3%	6%	2%	10%	0%	6%
PSE and skills training	4%	0%	11%*	5%	0%	4%	0%	4%	3%
International trade	4%	6%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	0%	6%
Childcare	4%	0%	11%*	5%	0%	4%	0%	9%	0%
Animal rights	4%	3%	5%	3%	6%	2%	10%	0%	6%
Scientific freedom	4%	6%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	0%	6%

*** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .01$.

Table 8. Open coding of the question: “Are there some issues that are overplayed in federal politics? Are there some issues that are underplayed?”.

	Whole sample (n = 57)	Male (n = 37)	Female (n = 20)	Over 35 (n = 41)	35 and Under (n = 16)	Not VM (n = 48)	VM (n = 9)	ROC (n = 25)	Quebec (n = 32)
Overplayed - Crime and terrorism	30%	24%	40%**	29%	31%	31%	22%	24%	34%
Underplayed - Environmental issues	26%	27%	25%	27%	25%	25%	33%	20%	31%*
Underplayed - Social issues in general	19%	16%	25%	22%	13%	19%	22%	16%	22%
Underplayed - Indigenous issues	14%	8%	25%**	10%	25%*	8%	44%***	12%	16%
Underplayed - Electoral/ Democratic reform	12%	11%	15%	12%	13%	10%	22%*	20%	6%*
Overplayed - The economy	12%	14%	10%	12%	13%	13%	11%	8%	16%
Underplayed - Poverty	11%	8%	15%	12%	6%	13%	11%	8%	13%
Overplayed - Scandal and corruption	11%	14%	5%	15%	0%*	13%	0%*	20%	3%**
Underplayed - International Affairs	9%	8%	10%	7%	13%	10%	0%*	12%	6%
Overplayed - Partisan Conflict and Gamesmanship	9%	5%	15%*	7%	13%	8%	11%	16%	3%*
Overplayed - Oil industry	9%	8%	10%	10%	6%	4%	33%***	4%	13%
Overplayed - Military and veteran affairs	9%	5%	15%*	12%	0%*	6%	22%**	4%	13%
Underplayed - Women's issues	9%	3%	20%**	5%	19%*	10%	0%*	8%	9%
All issues important	7%	5%	10%	5%	13%	8%	0%	0%	13%*
Underplayed - Youth issues	5%	3%	10%	2%	13%*	4%	11%	0%	9%
Underplayed - Local issues	5%	8%	0%	5%	6%	6%	0%	8%	3%
Underplayed - Job creation	5%	5%	5%	7%	0%	6%	0%	8%	3%
Underplayed - Health care issues	5%	8%	0%	7%	0%	4%	11%	8%	3%
Overplayed - Taxes	5%	8%	0%	5%	6%	6%	0%	8%	3%
Overplayed - Personalities of leaders	5%	8%	0%	7%	0%	6%	0%	12%	0%*
Cannot think of underplayed issues	5%	8%	0%	7%	0%	6%	0%	0%	9%
Underplayed - Immigration policy	4%	3%	5%	5%	0%	2%	11%	4%	3%
Underplayed - Daily work of MPs	4%	3%	5%	2%	6%	4%	0%	4%	3%
Underplayed - Animal rights	4%	3%	5%	2%	6%	4%	0%	4%	3%
Overplayed - Social conservative issues	4%	3%	5%	2%	6%	0%	22%**	0%	6%
Overplayed - International affairs	4%	5%	0%	2%	6%	2%	11%	4%	3%

*** $p \leq .01$, ** $p \leq .05$, * $p \leq .01$.