"Facts or Rhetoric? Elite Media Debate about
Voting Systems in the 2007 Ontario Referendum Campaign"

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Introduction

On May 15, 2007 the Ontario Citizens' Assembly (OCA) officially announced their support for a mixed member proportional (MMP) form of proportional presentation (PR) as their recommendation to the people of the province. The OCA was a collection of 'ordinary citizens', 107 women and men, chosen somewhat randomly from each riding in the province, who were tasked by the provincial government to deliberate about Ontario democracy, specifically the workings of the voting system. They could recommend that Ontario stick with the province's traditional single member plurality (SMP) system or they could recommend a specific alternative. If they chose the latter, their recommendation would go to a referendum – the first in the province since 1924 – that would accompany the province's fixed election date set for October 10, 2007. In the end, their announcement did not come as a surprise. Indeed, media anticipated the decision in reports throughout April and early May. But the May 15 announcement made the decision official and effectively moved the discussion out of the university seminar-like setting of the OCA into the realm of public debate and vested political interests. That left Ontario voters just six months to examine the recommendation and come to some conclusions about how to cast a referendum ballot on the issue.

The OCA, and its predecessor the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly (BC-CA), has attracted considerable attention from democratic activists and reform-minded academics. Democratic theorists associated with the deliberative democracy school have claimed a particular affinity with the projects, which they see as a concrete manifestation of their more theoretical ideas about how to improve conventional democracy. In a nutshell, deliberative democracy advocates believe that electoral democracy is too shallow while calls for more substantive mass participatory democracy are unrealistic. Instead, they argue that conventional representative electoral democracy can be supplemented or augmented by the work of small scale, apolitical citizens' juries or assemblies. These groups, if properly selected to represent the diversity of the larger society, could then function as a kind of 'mini public' to deliberate over matters of public policy in the public interest. More to the point, these bodies enjoy a qualitatively different experience of participation and decision-making as the deliberative model is explicitly motivated by a deep engagement with the subject matter rather than being motivated by partisan interests (Warren; Chambers; Snider). In the BC and Ontario CAs, members made decisions based on a systematic appraisal of competing expert knowledge and the evidence brought to bear about the workings of different voting systems and their past and potential future

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outcomes. Thus far, the two Canadian provincial CAs have received rave reviews from both their participants and their academic observers (Macdonald; Warren and Pearse).

But where there is less agreement amongst public commentators and academics concerns the precise relationship between these 'mini publics' and the larger society they are standing in for. Some say that CAs need not effectively transmit the content of their experience to the larger public, that if CAs are representative the public will accept their recommendations as legitimate (Thompson 47-9). But others claim that CAs must connect more directly with the broader public if they are to be viewed as legitimate (Bohman 15; Baum 14-5). Certainly the BC and Ontario governments' believed that CAs would communicate their deliberative findings to the larger public somehow as they factored in a public judgment on the process – a referendum that would decide whether the public approved of the CA recommendations or not. In addition, some might argue that given the enormous cost of the CA process, they cannot simply be about getting a good result for the participants and academic observers. Indeed, if CAs can't figure out how to connect their efforts to the larger public, support for this kind of expenditure will likely plummet.

In practice, the sponsors of the CA process – the provincial governments in BC and Ontario – explicitly stated that conventional media and civil society would link the CA work to the citizenry. In both cases this was echoed by various commentators in civil society and by the media itself. So how well did the media do in linking the two? Or, to put the question more specifically, to what extent did the media convey the substance of the CAs' deliberations in coming to their recommendations? If the distinctive value of the CA process is that citizens can make decisions in an informed and systematic way, to what extent does the value of this process rub off on the larger public when it is translated through the media? The answer to this question will go some way in addressing the perceived gap between the undeniable value of CAs as mini-publics and their broader value to society at large. For instance, if it can be demonstrated that media cannot connect the two, then deliberative democracy theorists and activists that support the CA process have a serious – perhaps fatal – deficiency in their model that must be addressed somehow.

This paper will examine the 2007 referendum campaign on the voting system in Ontario as waged in the mass circulation broadsheets between 1 May 2007 and 10 October 10 2007. Specifically, it will examine elite opinion as manifest in editorials, regular columnist commentary, and op/eds. This will involve a qualitative content analysis to elicit the numeric and proportional levels of coverage in the different papers over the course of the campaign, and assess both the range of opinion (the balance of pro and con positions) and the depth of coverage. To assess 'depth' the paper will code all relevant newspaper articles in terms of the form of arguments utilized by various authors. The range of arguments coded will include speculative arguments (i.e change X could produce result Y), logical arguments (given what we know about X, change X can be expected to produce Y result), appeals to evidence (change X has produced Y results elsewhere), and appeals to expertise (this expert on change X says Y may occur). After presenting this data, it will be supplemented by a more context-driven assessment of the

different newspapers' treatment of the issue and the political objectives that may have influenced them. Ultimately, the point of this effort will be to assess how well the newsprint media showcased the range of debate, used appropriate evidence, sought out relevant experts, etc.

The media as communicators/deliberators

"This newspaper is really you, after all. No newspaper can ever be more or less than the community it serves, because the newspaper is simply a mirror that shows us our own face." Stephen Hume, *Vancouver Sun*, September 23, 1993.

"A good newspaper … is a nation talking to itself." Edward Greenspon, *Globe and Mail*, Oct 27, 2007.

As demonstrated in these quotes, media strongly believe that they are neutral, accurate and fair public spaces, ones where the full range of opinions on the important issues of the day will be heard and discussed. Academic analysts agree that media are central as a kind of public space for political deliberation, even if they are more critical about how media actually function in this role. Basically, academics agree that in the context of modern complex societies, the public is necessarily reliant on media sources for information about the political issues of the day (Taras 4; Zaller 6). Indeed, most note that members of the public have opinions about all sorts of issues that they have no direct experience with. In fact, their only information about most issues comes through media (Iyengar and Kinder 2). Clearly, media are crucial for the public to gain the necessary information to make informed choices. But academics are less convinced that media are as representative, balanced, and informed as they claim. The media's performance in reporting on the Ontario voting system referendum campaign then offers us an excellent chance to judge the quality of the media's actions amidst these conflicting assessments.

As the point here is to judge how the media communicate, a few words about what might be considered reasonable expectations vis-à-vis the media's ability to translate the CA experience would appear to be in order. First, neither media analysts nor deliberative democracy advocates expect that media can recreate the depth of engagement or face-to-face immediacy of the contact that occurs in small-scale deliberative spaces (Zaller; Chambers 10). Second, it would also be unrealistic to expect that media can reproduce the theory or empirical detail of academic studies. But in seeking to assess whether media can function deliberatively in a manner akin to – but not identical with – a CA, we might reasonably expect that media showcase two elements that were arguably key to the success of the CA process: a balanced treatment of the options under consideration and an attempt to ground that treatment by recourse to evidence and relevant expert opinion. If media consumers can get a sense of the range of opinions and why different proponents hold them, along with some evidence by which they might attempt to independently assess such claims, then citizens might just get a taste of what the CA process had produced.

It should be noted that referendums offer particular challenges in raising public knowledge about the decisions to be decided upon, aside from our interest in a

specifically deliberative approach to knowledge acquisition. For instance, in elections with political parties, the public can use a host of proxies for direct or deep knowledge about the political issues of the day, such as party label, ideological predisposition, etc. But in a referendum, such cues may be muted or absent (Leduc 174-6). Indeed, in both the BC and Ontario referendums most political parties and politicians refused to publicly take a position. While most deliberative democracy commentators see limited political party participation as a positive, others argue that media influence intensifies in these sorts of campaigns precisely because there are so few organized countervailing forces that might act as a political party does in a conventional election (Chambers 11). In the absence of the political party helping to organize public opinion, whom can voters turn to for direction? After all, the media themselves are also an elite who, for a host of well-documented reasons, cannot be assumed to mirror the public interest.

Media analyst John Zaller agrees that media form an elite, one that depends on other elites – politicians, academics, community leaders – for 'attributed opinion'. But in a complex modern society, he says, elites are inevitable. What is crucial for Zaller is the extent to which media representations of elite positions create conditions where their consumers are "permitted to choose between alternate visions of what the issue is" (Zaller 8). This is just where critics of mass decision-making instruments like referendums raise concerns. Traditional opponents of referendums have argued that as the public cannot really become informed on the depth of the issues being decided, they may be led to vote against their interests (Qvortrup 62-3). Zaller calls such results 'elite domination', a situation where "elites induce citizens to hold opinions that they would not hold if aware of the best available information and analysis" (Zaller 313). There is considerable debate about whether these problems are consistent and extend across all referendums or can be considered contingent and thus influenced by other factors – like the behaviour of elite media (Qvortrup 88-9). This study then offers us a chance to bring together these insights on deliberative democracy, elite media, and referendums in assessing the media's representation of the Ontario voting system debate.

Media analysts utilize a number of methods to assess the performance of media (Berg; Kaid and Wadsworth). Some work focuses on quantitative content analysis to "provide an accurate statement of what is in the text" (Nesbitt-Larking 251). While some contend that such an approach cannot tell us much about the intentions of the work or its possible impact, others suggest that it can "reveal recurring processes of representation that affect our values and beliefs across a large number of cases" (Gillespie and Toynbee 121). Other work utilizes more qualitative discourse analysis that is less concerned with obvious 'manifest' content than the more subtle 'latent' meanings that are embedded in the content. Here analysis focuses less on representation (what is in the text) than the way meaning is created, shaped or manipulated (Gillespie and Toynbee 122). Still others dispute what they see as an arbitrary distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches to studying media content (Kohlbacher 11).

The approach that will be pursued here to analyze the media's treatment of the Ontario voting system referendum does not fit neatly into any of the prescribed categories of media analysis, though it might broadly fit beneath the rubric of qualitative content

analysis. Our approach here will involve two steps. The first step will involve counting all the relevant coverage and coding it in terms of affiliation (newspaper), the kind of coverage it represents (reporting, editorial, column, op/ed), its position on changing the voting system (pro, con, information), and the kind of rhetorical strategies it employs to make its case (speculation, logic, evidence, expert). The second step will involve a more contextual assessment of each newspaper's coverage of the referendum and the possible rationales for its coverage decisions. The paper will not address media effects. Instead the focus on representation works on the assumption that the presence or absence of balanced debate or informed discussion must be ascertained first. Indeed, in the absence of balanced or informed debate, the measurement of effects would be irrelevant to our concern here, which is the ability of media to function as a deliberative space.

Evidence and method

As the point of the exercise here is to assess the quality of the link between the 'mini-public' represented by the Ontario Citizens' Assembly and the larger public as effected by media, we need to focus on media that has both breadth and depth. Specifically, we want to know if media can retain any of the value of depth and expertise that was reflected in the positive aspects of the CA process. This necessarily reduces 'media' to newsprint, as most analysts recognize that other forms of media lack substance almost by definition. Both television and radio convey less quantitative content and structurally limit how viewers can reflect on it as the temporal element is typically outside the individual's control (unlike, say, reading a newspaper). Internet sources do offer similar opportunities to print media but are beyond the scope of this paper. Amongst print media in Ontario there are many choices in terms of magazines, large-scale print dailies, local dailies, and various weekly, biweekly, or monthly papers. However, given our interest in media as a deliberative space for the province as a whole, mass daily newspapers with province-wide circulations would give us the best sense of that broad coverage.

Some explanatory remarks about what is under study here. The articles examined were culled using the following criteria. First, to achieve depth and breadth, the study focuses on mass circulation broadsheet newspapers with a daily circulation in excess of 100,000. Circulation figures were obtained from Ontario Press Council and Canadian Newspaper Association websites. This limited the study to articles drawn from the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *National Post*, the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *Hamilton Spectator*. The *Toronto Sun* met the criteria for breadth with a daily circulation in excess of 100,000 but as a tabloid arguably might be seen by some analysts to fail in terms of achieving depth and, as such, was excluded. Assessing the actual depth of coverage provided by tabloids like the *Sun* is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that the broadsheets represent themselves as 'serious' newspapers and thus more easily allow us to hold them to such claims. Second, the newspapers were searched for content in a number of ways. Automatic Google search term locators produced a daily list of items during the period under study for the terms 'electoral reform', 'proportional representation', and 'voting system'. Fair Vote Canada, an advocacy group supporting voting system reform, also made available their media monitoring results for the period. The academic database

Canadian Newstand provided full text searching of all newspapers, excluding the *Hamilton Spectator*, though full text searching of the latter was available on its website. These two sources were then searched using the following terms: 'mixed member proportional', 'MMP', 'referendum', 'proportional representation', 'PR', 'Ontario Citizens' Assembly', and 'electoral reform'.

The search parameters extended over the period May 1, 2007 to October 10, 2007. The choice of this period reflected a number of concerns. First, October 10 was the provincial election date and, as such, offered the last opportunity for media to influence voter intentions. A suitable choice for a starting date of the study was less clear. The OCA made their official announcement about their decisions on May 15, though the decision was actually widely reported by late April. There was also coverage of the OCA and its deliberations and decisions in March and April. The resulting problem was not to confuse coverage of the OCA with coverage of the referendum debate. Thus May 1 was struck upon as a compromise where media attention seemed to shift from a focus on the OCA to a more sustained focus on its recommendation, which became official May 15.

Searches of the various sources produced items in excess of 180 distinct articles. These articles were then separated into four different types of coverage of the issue: reporting, editorials, columns, and op/eds. As this paper seeks to examine elite opinion about the voting system debate, the focus is more on contributions from editorialists, columnists, and op/ed writers than on journalists covering the story as 'news'. As journalists are trained to balance competing views on an issue and avoid clear declarations of their own position, assessing their opinions on the issue would obviously be more difficult. While a critical discourse analysis of reporter treatments of the issue would also be illuminating, it is beyond the scope of this paper. However, reporting was counted and used to assess the relative interest of the different elite media sources examined in the paper, both over time (month by month) and in total. With reporting excluded from the rest of the coding part of the paper, the number of items to be examined was reduced to 83 articles. After an initial reading and coding of all pieces, a number of exclusions were made on the basis that a given item did not focus *enough* on voting system reform (e.g. David's Warren's one line comment on the referendum in his October 6, 2007 column in the *Ottawa Citizen*) or that they did not touch upon the substance of the voting system debate (e.g. Ian Urquart's three columns on referendum communication issues over the campaign period in the *Toronto Star*). This reduced the group of articles under study to 70 items (for a complete list of the opinion items and their coding, see Appendix A).

The coding process involved making distinctions in two key ways: support or opposition to the proposed MMP voting system, and a four-fold distinction about the rhetorical strategies employed by writers to make their case. In the former case, support was coded as 'pro' and opposition coded as 'con'. Where the position of the writer was unclear or neutral, the article was coded as 'info' for information. The four rhetorical strategies were meant to capture degrees of depth, ranging from the weakest (speculative and logical arguments) to the strongest (evidentiary or expert-informed arguments). These were assigned a corresponding number from one to four. The thinking behind this classification was that there is an important qualitative difference between articles that

assert or deduce their conclusions and those that provide some evidence to back their claims. From the point of view of conveying something of the substance of the CAs, articles that provide evidence simply offer readers more to deliberate over. A breakdown of each rhetorical strategy follows:

Code 1: Speculative arguments

These are arguments that are asserted, with no logically argued support or evidence provided. Examples would include simply asserting that MMP would lead to instability or the proliferation of small parties. Also included here would be any unsustained speculation about political or party behaviour.

Code 2: Logical arguments

These arguments involve an effort to produce a logical structure to support them, though without any evidence. Examples would include arguments that suggest that an increase in the number of parties would result from the adoption of MMP because the threshold to get elected would be reduced. While this argument makes sense logically, it does not follow that it is necessarily true or can be demonstrated to have occurred in practice without recourse to evidence.

Code 3: Arguments supported by evidence

These arguments are supported by appeals to evidence. Examples would include arguments that suggest the adoption of MMP would lead to party fragmentation which are then supported by specific evidence from countries using MMP.

Code 4: Arguments supported by experts

These arguments are supported by recourse to an expert opinion on the matter, typically an academic whose specialization touches on democratic institutions like voting systems.

Challenges in coding

After coding about half of the pieces, a number of coding challenges emerged. First, a majority of the pieces contained more than one argumentative strategy. For instance, many authors invoked both speculative and logical arguments, which raised questions about which one should be coded. Should a piece that was primarily speculative but added a logical argument at the end be tagged as speculative on the basis that most of its arguments were speculative, or should it be tagged as *both* speculative and logical? Second, what should be considered 'evidence' for the purposes of this classification scheme was not clear after reading a majority of the articles. For instance, could the observation that Israel's party system was unstable in some way be counted as 'evidence' and then used to support the more general view that PR systems create instability? Or should evidence require the citation of more specific information? So when MMP

proponents talked about better representation of women under the system in New Zealand should they have to cite the specific results to make it count as 'evidence'?

After coding all the articles the criteria was revisited and then revised to give articles multiple codes where relevant. Such an approach might err in essentially granting equal weight to different rhetorical strategies where perhaps one was dominant but this seemed more appropriate than assigning just one code based on an impression about which strategy was more dominant. As an example, Carleton political scientist Jonathan Malloy's 26 September 2007 op/ed in the *Ottawa Citizen* contained primarily speculative and logical arguments against the MMP proposal but he did provide one piece of evidence to sustain his dim view of minority government and as a result was coded 1 (speculative), 2 (logical), and 3 (evidence).

So too with evidence, a decision was made to focus on defining what constituted 'evidence' more clearly. Here the point was to highlight articles that "show, not tell". Evidence-based arguments should create conditions that allow readers to make their own independent assessment about the issue in question, despite the judgment of the writer. So vague allusions to conditions in other countries would not count as evidence whereas linking specific historical or comparative detail to arguments about a voting system would. Nor would evidence that could not be considered germane to the debate at hand be counted as evidence for the purposes of judging the quality of debate over the current or proposed alternative voting system.

Given that the presence or absence of 'evidence' is central to the argument of the paper, let's review some specific examples of what has and has not been considered evidence from our sources in a bit more detail. Strong examples of the use of evidence would include most of the columns by Andrew Coyne in the *National Post*. In 'Why PR Works' Coyne responded to concerns about how party lists would be constructed by noting that the law in New Zealand required some internal democratic process to exist within parties just for this purpose (Coyne, *National Post*, October 3, 2007). In 'PR: Debunking the fearmongers' he cited specific elections results from New Zealand and Germany to respond to concerns about the potential power of small parties under MMP (Coyne, *National Post*, 29 September 2007). And in 'The case against first-past-the-*Post*' he provided specific election data to back up his claims about the performance of the current voting system (Coyne, *National Post*, 26 September 2007). On the con side of the debate, Charles Gordon cited the positive benefits of by-elections in our present system, noting a host of specific historical examples to back up his claim (Gordon, *Ottawa Citizen*, 23 September 2007). Weaker, but arguably still counting as a use of evidence, would be Lawrence Solomon's use of the rise of the 'pirate party' in the last Swedish election to sustain his concern about the possible rise of small nuisance parties with the adoption of MMP (Solomon, *National Post*, 4 October 2007). It should be underlined that this analysis is not addressing the quality of evidence presented but simply its presence or absence by this definition. Thus evidence-based arguments are held to be better than speculative or logical arguments in this analysis simply because they offer readers more accountability, more opportunity for an independent assessment of the information provided.

Examples of arguments that might look like they are sustained by evidence – but are not by this definition – include the *National Post* editorial from 3 October 2007, as well as op/eds from Nelson Wiseman, Tom Kierans, Philip Green, and Woolstencroft et al. The *National Post* editorial tells us that small parties have proliferated under their PR system and notes a few examples but fails to provide any specific data to judge what they mean by 'proliferation'. Without citing any specific elections results or comparative election data over time, readers just have to accept their assessment. By contrast, the op/eds all provide evidence to back up various claims; the problem here is that the evidence marshaled supports claims unrelated to the voting system debate. Wiseman cites data on Italian unhappiness with their PR system, which cannot be counted as evidence about how the system works because he provides no information about why Italians are unhappy with their system (Wiseman, *Toronto Star*, 23 September 2007). Kierans cites experts on newcomer integration but has no evidence linking this problem to the use of different voting systems (Kierans, *Globe and Mail*, 12 September 2007). Green complains that a 1970 federal law gives too much influence to party leaders over nominations, which says nothing about either voting system on offer as such a rule is not necessarily intrinsic to either system (Green, *National Post*, 25 September 2007). Woolstencroft et al provide some evidence about how New Zealand's voting system reform process played out, which, while interesting, is irrelevant to the debate about how different voting systems work (Woolstencroft, *National Post*, 29 September 2007). Again, if the evidence provided in articles examined here did not relate specifically to claims about voting system effects, then such articles were not coded with a '3' for evidence-based argument. After re-evaluating the coding criteria, the group of articles was reviewed twice to assess whether codes were assigned consistently.


Discussion of the findings

The content analysis of the five daily newspapers produced 185 articles relating to some aspect of voting system reform in the campaign period. While commentators had assured concerned groups on both sides of the issue that the six-month campaign period would be used effectively to educate Ontario about the upcoming referendum, newspaper coverage of the issue was focused mostly in September and October. After an initial burst of attention around the official announcement of the OCA's recommendation in May 2007, coverage plummeted in June, July and August. In the end, 77% of the coverage on the issue occurred in September and October, with 32% in the ten days that the campaign stretched into October. 62% of the coverage involved reporting with 38% focused on opinion pieces. If we bracket out the reporting side of the coverage (115 articles) the remaining 70 pieces can be broken down into 8% editorial, 41% columns, and 47% op/eds. The *Toronto Star* led the group of newspapers with 36% of the total coverage, followed by the *Hamilton Spectator* with 24%, while the other three papers ranged between 12 to 15% of the total. However, the *Spectator*'s reporting relied heavily on wire services, which amounted to 51% of their pieces. If we focused simply on material produced by each newspaper's reporting staff, the *Spectator* would fall to the bottom of the papers in terms of coverage. If we compare just opinion coverage, the gap between

the papers narrows with the *Toronto Star* leading with 29%, the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* at 24% and 21% respectively, and the *Hamilton Spectator* and *Ottawa Citizen* tied with 13%.

Table 1: Total Newspaper Coverage by Month

Table 2: Comparative Newspaper Coverage by Month
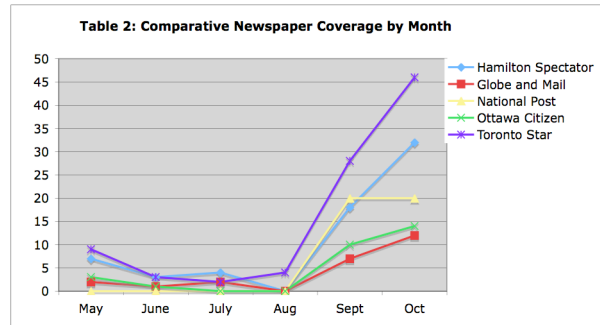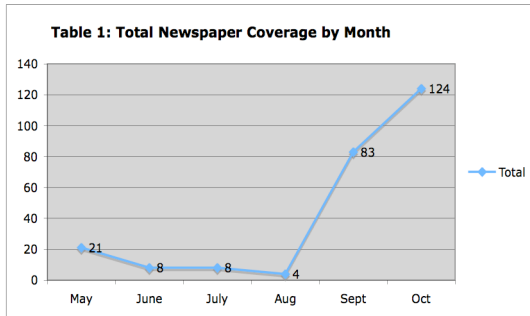
Questions about the adequacy of this coverage – i.e. did the newspapers give the referendum enough attention – are harder to determine without comparing treatment of this issue with another issue, a task beyond the scope of this paper. However, the *Toronto Star* did provide an illuminating snapshot of comparative issue coverage in a 'media watch' column in mid-September. The breakdown suggested a fairly low level of coverage on electoral reform, compared to other issues – just 3% of election-related stories dealt with the referendum in their sample (*Toronto Star*, 13 September 2007). As another point of reference, in the week following the provincial election the *Ottawa Citizen* featured a multi-page pull-out section on the new hockey season. Needless to say, it did not consider the reform of Ontario democracy to be worthy of that degree of coverage.

Table 2.1: Position by Article Type

Table 2.2: Position by Newspaper
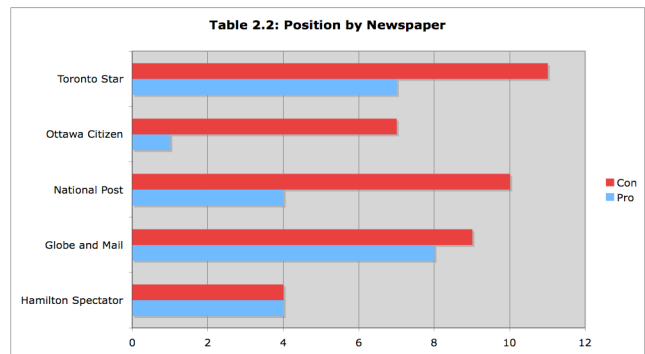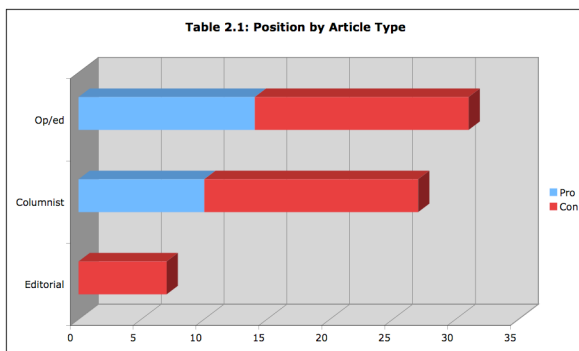
Coding the pool of opinion articles in terms of being pro or con about the OCA's recommended MMP voting system produced a lopsided result: 59% were con, 34% were pro, and 7% were unclear or neutral and coded as 'info'. Editorials were the least balanced with 88% con, 0% pro, and 12% info. Columnists offered more diversity but were still unbalanced with 59% con and 34% pro. The most balanced group were the op/eds, with 52% con and 42% pro. But these totals masked some wide divergences amongst the newspapers in terms of balance. The *Globe and Mail* and *Hamilton Spectator* were fairly evenly balanced in terms of opinion pieces on the referendum, while the *National Post* and *Ottawa Citizen*, incidentally both part of the CanWest media chain, were much more one-sided. 67% of *National Post* articles and 78% of *Ottawa Citizen* articles were con. Indeed, if not for Andrew Coyne's regular column the *National*

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Post would have featured 100% con positions on the referendum, assuming his absence would not have spurred them to find an MMP supporter. The *Toronto Star* coverage was more evenly distributed by comparison but still unbalanced: 55% of opinion pieces were con compared to just 35% that were pro. In sum, the newspaper coverage was unbalanced in all cases in terms of editorial and columnist opinion, which were overwhelming opposed to the MMP proposal. This finding is important as some media analysts argue that these opinion sources have the highest profile, public recognition and, ultimately, influence. Some papers appeared to attempt to correct for this imbalance by supplying alternative views through op/eds, though others did not.

That two of the major papers managed to balance competing pro and con views in the referendum might satisfy some observers about the media's ability to carry out debate in the public interest. Additionally, some papers themselves might argue that the imbalance in accurately represented what Ontario voters themselves were thinking, if polling and the referendum results are used a point of comparison. Obviously both points are contentious. That only two of the five major papers achieved balance in opinion coverage leaves a great deal of readership, and by extension the public, without a fair sense of the debate. More to the point, balance would be considered a minimal condition for translating the value of the CA process to the larger society.

But balance itself is not the only criteria we have used to judge the value of the media's deliberation over the voting system issue. We have also attempted to measure the depth of the discussion conducted, recognizing that a distinctive element of the CA process was the fact that participants were able to delve into the issue at a fairly high level of depth, with a deliberative process fueled by facts and arguments, rather than partisan self interest. To assess whether the media managed to convey this depth, articles were coded in terms of the kinds of arguments – speculative, logical, evidence, expert – that were used to make either a pro or con case. These totals can be broken down by the proportions of distinct argumentative styles, or the particular combinations of the styles, as well as how such approaches divided in terms of pro and con positions on the MMP proposal and the newspapers in which they appeared.

In terms of distinctive arguments, 20% of the articles relied solely on speculative claims, 19% on logical appeals, 11% on evidence, and none on experts. The remaining 50% of the articles utilized more than one rhetorical strategy to make a case. For instance, another 20% of the articles utilized both speculative and logical arguments. The proportions of the other combinations are featured in the table below. For the purposes of this paper, arguably the most important distinction amongst the data is the presence or absence of evidence in supporting the arguments made, pro or con. If we divide the results this way, 40% made some appeal to evidence while 60% did not. Though the use of experts was initially considered unproblematic for judging positively the depth of debate, it proved to be not entirely reliable. In one case, an expert was cited to support the con side of the debate but neither the expert nor the columnist cited any evidence to back their claims (Reynolds*, Globe and Mail*, September 5).[1] In terms of the different

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[1] Reynolds cited the work of Queen's University economist Daniel Usher, referring to a paper written specifically on Ontario's proposed MMP system, and to Usher's published work on the relationship of economics to democracy. A

kinds of opinion pieces, editorials hardly drew on evidence at all, while columnists and op/ed writers were more evenly split between those relying on assertion and those relying on facts.

Table 4: Argument Breakdown
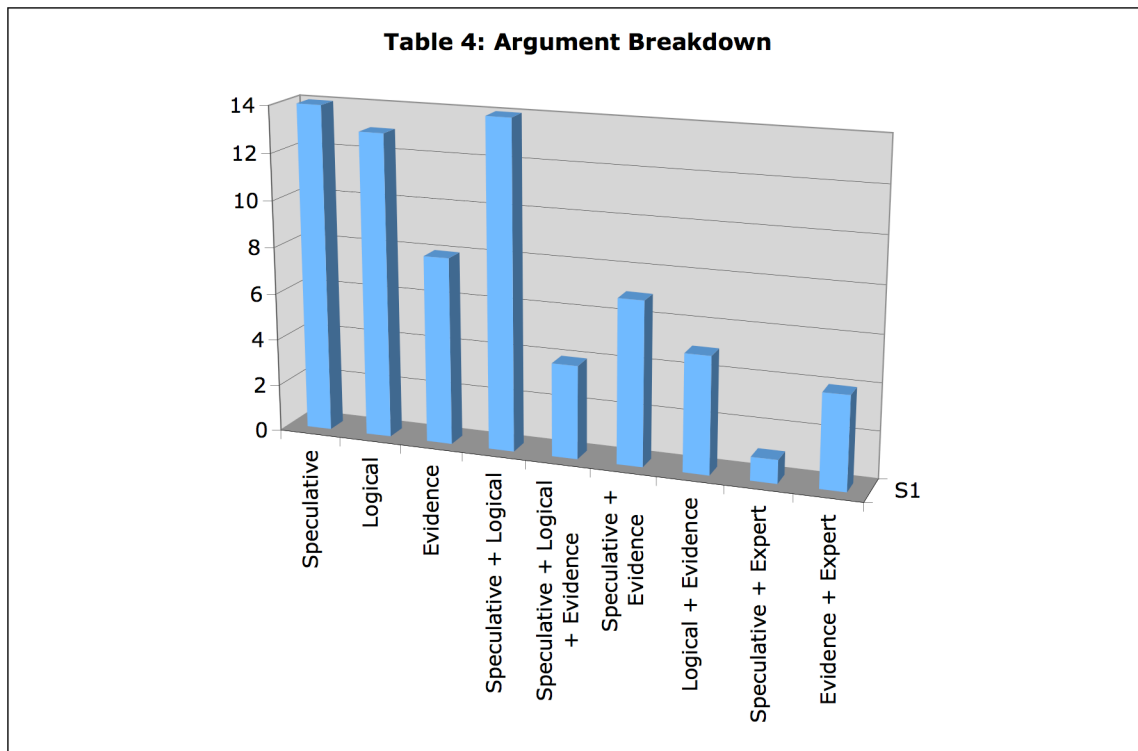
More striking than the imbalance in the use of different argumentative approaches was how these were utilized in very different proportions by the pro and con sides of the date. For instance, excluding the two articles deemed 'info', all of the purely speculative arguments utilized in the debate were marshaled by the con side. At the same time, there were no articles opposed to the MMP proposal that relied exclusively on evidence or some combination of evidence and experts to sustain their position. In fact, only 22% of the con articles utilized any evidence at all. Fully 78% relied either on speculation, logical argument, or some combination of the two to make their case against reform. Meanwhile, the pro side of the argument was the inverse of this picture. There were no proponents of MMP who relied solely on speculative arguments and just 8% who tried to argue by logic alone. Cumulatively, 75% of pro arguments featured some kind of evidence to back up their claims. Turning to the newspapers themselves, all but the *Globe and Mail* featured more articles based on speculation and logical assertion rather than evidence. The *Globe and Mail* and the *Hamilton Spectator* featured slightly more and slightly fewer articles along these lines while the others were more strongly lopsided

copy of the paper cited in Reynolds column, "A flawed proposal for electoral reform in Ontario," was obtained from the Queen's Economics Department and was revealed be entirely speculative and logical in its argumentation. In other words, Usher provided no concrete evidence to back any of this claims about what might result from the introduction of an MMP system in Ontario. Of course, this is not surprising when one examines what kind of 'expert' Usher is – an economist who applies purely logical reasoning to the study of human behaviour in abstract settings. He does not investigate what actually happens empirically under comparative democratic institutions.

in their coverage. The *Toronto Star* was the most unbalanced with 70% of its items relying on speculative and/or logical appeals. Interestingly, very few articles drew on expert knowledge directly – just 7%. Most of these – 4 of the 5 items – were written by the experts themselves. Only one columnist cited an expert but, as noted above, provided no evidence that might back up his expert's claims. This lack of engagement with experts is surprisingly given that the pro-MMP camp circulated a list of 152 Ontario political scientists supporting the change in mid-September. For a detailed numeric breakdown of the coding, see Appendix B.

Table 5: Use of Argument by Position

Table 6: Use of Evidence by Position
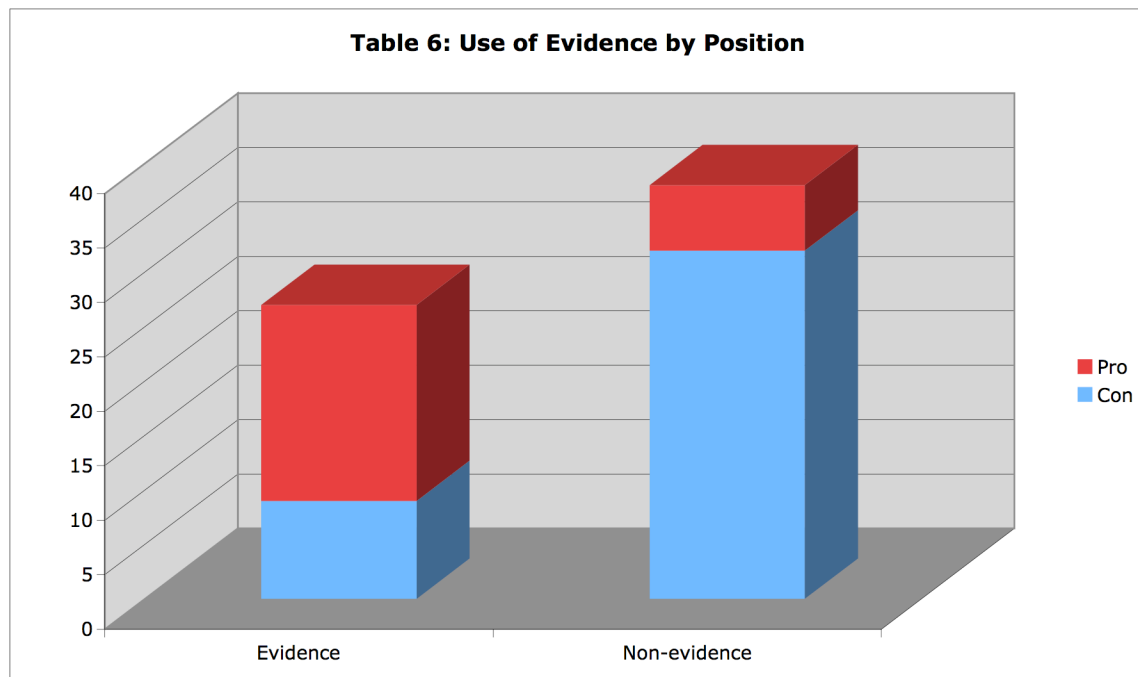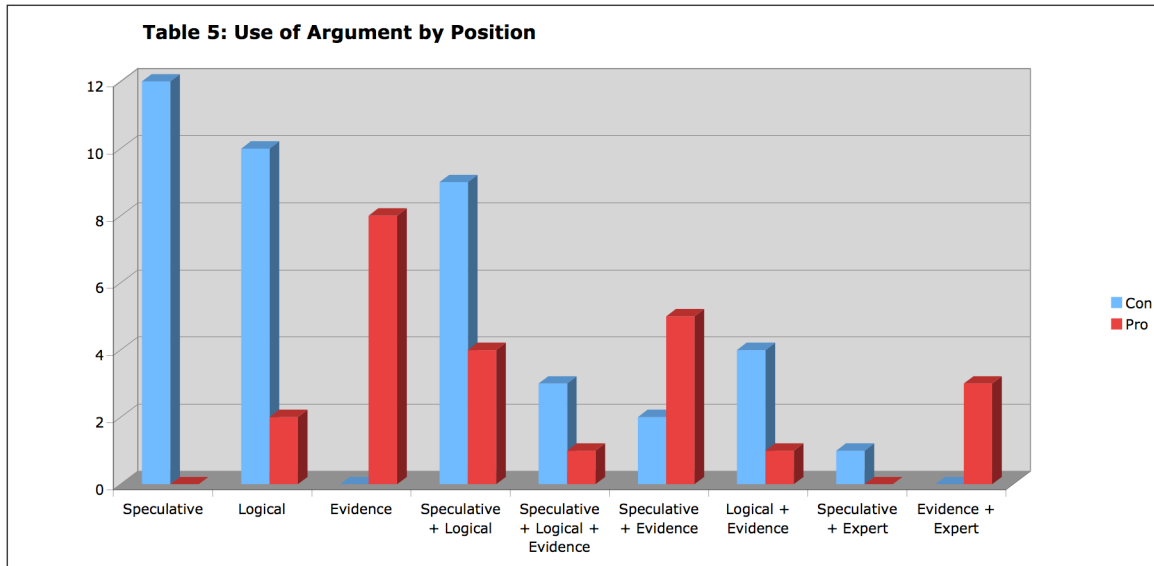
Analysis of the coding presented here suggests that the newspaper coverage of the MMP referendum on Ontario was both unbalanced and lacked depth. Regular editorial and opinion writers particularly were strongly opposed to the referendum. A majority of the coverage relied solely on speculation or logical argument, avoiding any engagement with evidence about the workings of different voting systems. As a rule, the newspapers avoided any systematic engagement with evidence or experts that might have shed some light on the topic. As such, the evidence seems to support the view that the media did not manage to translate much of the benefit from the OCA process to the citizens of Ontario.

Table 7: Use of Evidence by Newspaper
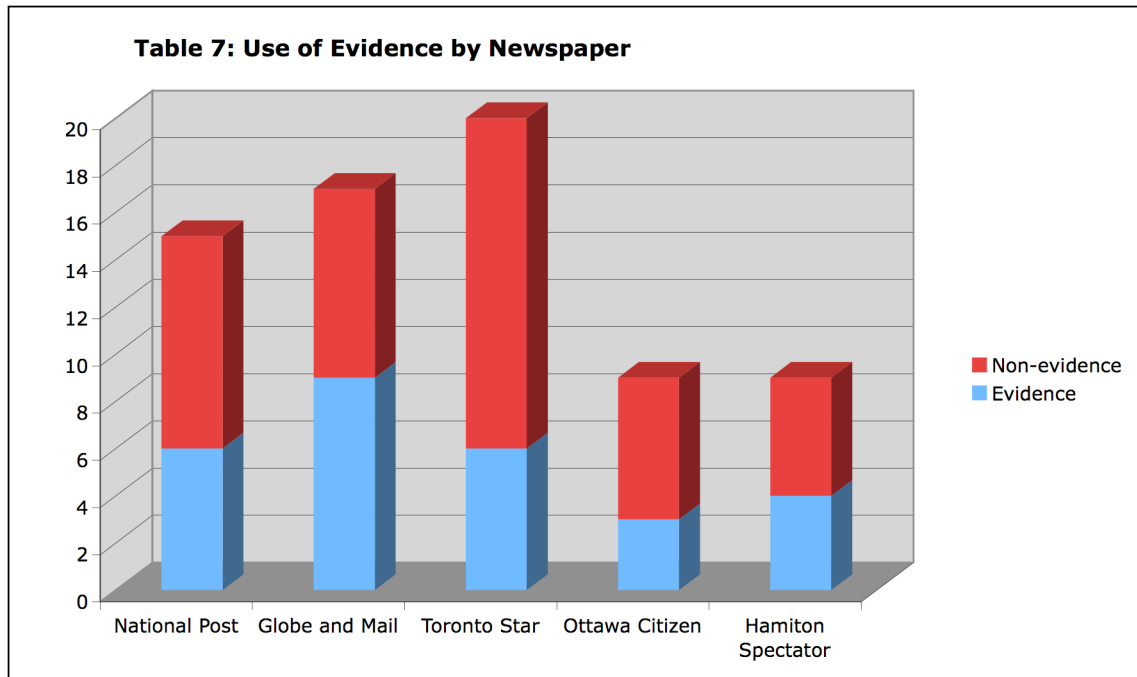
The newspapers and their coverage: discussion

Why did the newspapers cover the Ontario referendum as they did? Given the findings presented here, the most obvious answer might be that they wanted it to fail. Of course, the papers claimed both before and after the referendum campaign that they had no agenda and that they were committed to balanced coverage. At one level, of course, we'll never know. Obviously we can't simply accept the media's claims about their motivations at face value. But neither can we unproblematically read off their intentions from any quantitative pattern of coverage. Instead, we have to try to triangulate between what we know of their coverage and what they may have said in the past about their objectives with voting system reform and politics more generally. For instance, if we know that a paper supports a particular party or policy agenda, it is not unreasonable to suggest that this may have influenced their thinking about the MMP proposal. Assessing these various factors in light of the coverage revealed here may shed some further light on the media performance as a deliberative public space.

As noted above, the media have a high opinion of their balance, fairness, and objectivity. But there are a host of reasons to doubt these claims as they relate to the Ontario's voting system referendum campaign. This paper has demonstrated the actual lack of balance above, which is clearly at odds with their claims. The fact that all the major papers eventually came out against voting system reform also tends to reinforce the view that the larger public discussion, as conveyed through the media, was not representative or balanced. And yet this should hardly be surprising as most of the major papers and many of their key columnists had staked out their positions on the voting system reform debate long before the Ontario referendum campaign got underway. These positions appear to have everything to do with factors that are supposed to be anathema to the CA process – namely, partisan political objectives. In the end, it would appear that the papers were more interested in securing the result that would further their political objectives than foster an open-ended public discussion on the issue. A review of each papers' position on the issue and its coverage of the referendum will make these political objectives more clear.

Toronto Star

On September 8 the *Toronto Star* promised 'high voltage election coverage' of the parties and the issues that would dominate the election, including the electoral reform referendum. The characterization of their coming behaviour was one of balance, deliberation and – after assessing the performers and the merits of the issues – leadership in terms of endorsing them or not. But most attentive analysts could have predicted the paper's positions on most issues, including their choice of Premier and the 'best' result in the referendum. The *Toronto Star* has long been a provincial and federal Liberal party booster and few were surprised to see them eventually endorse Dalton McGuinty for Premier on the eve of the election. But the paper's virulent opposition to voting system reform confused a number of analysts, and readers, who thought that the paper's consistent championing of reform themes meant they should logically get behind this latest one as well. Indeed, in a September news piece reflecting on Ontario's previous referendum in 1924, the writer noted how the *Star* had campaigned strongly for prohibition as a key plank its more general social reform agenda (Mayers, *Toronto Star*, September 24, 2007). However, this time around, the *Star*'s reform agenda was linked to the success of the provincial Liberal party, not electoral reform.

Still, the *Star* presented itself as deliberating over the question right up until their endorsements editorial of October 9 (though a September 30 editorial trashing the MMP proposal made their coming 'decision' somewhat obvious). Indeed, in defending the *Star*'s coverage of the referendum, public affairs editor Kathy English claimed that "the *Star*'s editorial board, under the direction of Editorial Page Editor Bob Hepburn, was researching and debating electoral reform in order to decide and declare the *Star*'s position on this important issue" (English, *Toronto Star*, October 13). Hepburn also characterized the editorial board as engaging in 'debate' on the issue, before coming down against the MMP proposal (Hepburn, *Toronto Star*, October 9). This was hardly the case. In fact, the *Star* has had a long history of editorial opposition to any form of proportional representation, denouncing it in various editorials in 2002, 2003, and 2005

(*Toronto Star*, October 27, 2002; December 16, 2003; September 25, 2005). In an editorial board meeting with a delegation from PR advocates Fair Vote Canada on 3 March 3 2004 Bob Hepburn condemned PR solely on the basis of its use in Israel and would brook no opposition, repeatedly interrupting members of the delegation who attempted to bring up other relevant points. No member of the editorial board dissented from his opinion.[2] More recently the *Star* complained in the editorial 'Bad electoral medicine' that PR would lead to 'legislative chaos' and that 'for proof, one need look no further than Israel and Italy' (*Toronto Star*, February 23, 2007). Other than Hepburn, arguably the most influential member of the *Star*'s opinion team was Queen's Park political columnist Ian Urquart. He also has had a long history of negative columns on electoral reform. As early as 2001 Urquart asserted that PR would lead to fringe parties and instability, a theme he continued to expand upon in further columns in 2003, 2004 and 2006 (*Toronto Star*, November 19, 2001; May 27, 2003; November 13, 2004; March 28, 2006). More recently, he stepped up his coverage – and attacks – as the OCA appeared closer and closer to endorsing an MMP form of PR, expanding the scope of his speculative assertions along the way (*Toronto Star*, February 22, 2007; March 5, 2007; April 4, 2007).

Instead of a substantive engagement with the various issues concerned with the use of different voting systems, the *Star*'s most pressing concern in their coverage of the referendum seemed to be that it might pass due to a combination of public ignorance and a general populist rejection of all political institutions associated with status quo politics. A series of editorials as well as columns by Urquart urged voters to become informed on the issue, sometimes noting how the strong showing for STV in BC in 2005 occurred despite widespread public ignorance about the details of the proposals and that such a result could be in store for Ontario (*Toronto Star*, April 16, 2007; *Toronto Star*, August 6, 2007; Urquart, *Toronto Star*, May 16, 2007; Urquart, *Toronto Star*, July 2, 2007). Near the end of the campaign Urquart was still worried, warning that 'MMP could sneak to victory' in manner similar to that in BC, as a kind of ignorant voters' revolt against politics as usual (Urquart, *Toronto Star*, September 26, 2007). So too the editorial board remained concerned about public ignorance about the issue right up to election day. On September 25 an editorial entitled 'Get message out on referendum' called the lack of public awareness "deeply troubling" complaining that the "referendum is simply too important for people to cast their ballots without really knowing what it is all about" (*Toronto Star*, September 25, 2007). On election day itself the editorialists reported that "[r]ecent polls have shown a staggering number of Ontarians know little or nothing about the choices before them in the referendum" and they encouraged voters to become informed as decision was too important to "make blindly" (*Toronto Star*, October 10, 2007).

But any concerns the *Star* had about public levels of knowledge about the referendum evaporated when the results came in. The *Star*'s *Post*-election editorial on the referendum headlined the defeat of the MMP proposal as the "People's verdict on voting reform" (*Toronto Star*, October 12, 2007). The previously skittish *Star*, which just two

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[2] The author attended this meeting with Fair Vote board members Doris Anderson and John Deverell, along with FVC executive director Larry Gordon.

days earlier had worried that voters were not well informed enough, now declared that supporters of PR had "had a fair chance to make their case" and that the public had "wisely" rejected reform. So too Ian Urquart, who feared MMP might "sneak to victory" due to public ignorance, now claimed "voters in this province simply judged MMP on its merits and found it too complicated and too unhinged from the familiarity of our current system to warrant support" (Urquart, *Toronto Star*, October 12, 2007). Clearly, given the gist of Urquart's and the editorialists' discourse over voter knowledge in the previous year, if the result had been in favour of reform the paper would have called it into question, arguing that voters didn't really know what they were voting for. But when complaints about the referendum process were aired when the new legislature met for the first time a month later, the *Star* dismissed the concerns, suggesting that proponents of reform should just "accept the wishes of the voters and resist the urge to harangue Queen's Park until they get the result they want" (*Toronto Star*, November 29, 2007). This, despite the fact that that was clearly the strategy that the *Star* itself was priming its readers for if the MMP forces had won the referendum.

The *Toronto Star*'s coverage of the voting system referendum on its opinion pages was both unbalanced in its treatment of the various sides of the issue and weak in making its arguments, for the most part neglecting much engagement with evidence about voting system effects. While the paper appeared to be a natural constituency for the pro-MMP position, given its long association with progressive causes and reform in general, the paper was decidedly against changing the voting system. This confused its progressive readership, which had expected the paper's concern for social fairness to extend to institutional questions as well. Not surprisingly, the *Star*'s letters page featured many complaints about their position. Though the *Star* defended its coverage as "scrupulously fair and extensive … provid[ing] twice as much coverage of MMP as the average … Ontario newspaper" it could not produce any evidence to back up its claims, when pressed (Kathy English, *Toronto Star*, October 13, 2007).[3] But readers were missing the political angle. Though its readership spans a considerable swathe of progressive opinion – from Green, to NDP, to red Tory – the *Star* only endorses provincial Liberalism. Thus a recognition of the paper's bias for a one-party majority Liberal government helps make sense of their behaviour. The *Star* concern that voters 'get informed' on the referendum seemed limited to them reading the paper's largely one-sided assertions about alternative voting systems. Given the breakdown of their coverage contained here, and the paper's clearly self-serving flip flop about voter knowledge after the defeat of the referendum, the paper's actions seem to have motivated by their desire to protect an institution that would create the political result that they desired, regardless of what the public interest might be in deliberating over democratic reform.

Globe and Mail

Even before the defeat of the proposed MMP system, the *Globe and Mail* characterized the referendum as 'Ontario's missed opportunity', suggesting it represented a "missed

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[3] In an email exchange with English, she claimed to have media monitoring report from a firm called Media Influence but could not, or would not, produce a copy for independent examination. Instead, she referred me to the company itself, which would not respond to repeated email queries.

opportunity to improve the province's democracy" and make the province "a fairer place" (*Globe and Mail*, 4 October 2007). They recommended to their readers that the reform be defeated. At a glance, this might seem curious as the *Globe* itself, alone amongst the major print media, had actually written positively about PR throughout the previous decade and half and specifically recommended an MMP system – using the same name as the proposal Ontario would vote on – as the best option for Canada nationally. Media observers might wonder, just who missed the opportunity here? The paper had endorsed MMP repeatedly in various editorials over the previous years but when a chance to gain an MMP system emerged, they counseled against voting for it. But the *Globe* position reflected more an inconsistent use of language than purpose. A look back at the paper's goals with electoral reform may shed some light about why they did not support the proposed Ontario MMP voting system.

The *Globe* was largely missing in action during the Ontario campaign on the referendum. The paper's reporting on the issue was weak – they didn't even assign a specific reporter to cover the story or run reports from wire services, something every other paper did. Where the *Star* produced 47 distinct stories on the referendum during the campaign period, the *Globe* produced just 7. In terms of opinion, though the paper gives substantial coverage to Ontario and employs numerous columnists who focus on its provincial affairs, key commentators appeared to have little to say on the issue during the campaign period. And this was surprising because, as with the *Star*, both the *Globe* editorial board and its columnists had had strong opinions on the issue for some time. Murray Campbell, who wrote just one column during the campaign period, had previously condemned PR in series of columns stretching back to 2004 (Campbell, *Globe and Mail*, 16 November 2004). While the OCA was still deliberating he wrote three separate columns attacking PR as a recipe for chaos and extremism (Campbell, *Globe and Mail*, 7 April, 2007; 17 April 2007; 19 April 2007). Jeffrey Simpson also had previously written negatively about PR back in 1997 following the federal election and again in the debate that accompanied the 2005 BC referendum, complaining that small parties would prevent governments from making 'tough' decisions (Simpson, *Globe and Mail*, 18 June 1997; 20 November 2002; 28 May 2005; 20 September 2005). On the pro side, John Ibbitson had written positively about PR but was reassigned to cover American politics shortly before the referendum campaign began (Ibbitson, *Globe and Mail*, 7 June 2003; 23 31 March 2004; December 2004). That left only Rick Salutin to defend the proposed MMP system, with occasional support from the urban columnist John Barber, both of whom had also supported PR for some time (Barber, *Globe and Mail*, 20 November 2001).

In taking the longer view of the *Globe and Mail*'s position on voting system reform, an interesting picture emerges of debate amongst the opinion leaders in the paper. A shift in editorial position was announced boldly in 1992 with the headline 'First past the *Post*, last with voters' where the editors claimed that "[r]eform of the electoral system is one of the great untreated issues of the current constitutional round" (*Globe and Mail*, 25 September 1992). From here through editorials in 1997, 2000, 2004, and a four part series published just before BC's STV referendum in 2005, the editorial board made its case for a voting system reform that would better represent the regional strengths of the largest parties, allow some new voices to gain representation (like the Greens), prevent

marginal forces from winning office (like the NDP) but for the most part maintain single party majority government (*Globe and Mail*, 25 September 1992; 27 January 1997; 13 December 2000; 15 November 2004; 2 May 2005; 3 May 2005; 4 May 2005; 5 May 2005). Though they often called it PR or MMP, what the *Globe* really supported was a majoritarian mixed-member system, one that would combine single member ridings with a small and non-compensatory top up list, similar to the one introduced in Japan in 1994. In comparing this with opinion from their columnists, a consensus emerges – they all appeared to agree that the trend toward neoliberal economic policy and governments that would 'act tough' with voters was desirable. Where they seemed to disagree was whether voting system reform needed to be a part of the program to maintain and/or legitimate this policy agenda. Ibbitson and the board seemed to think it was needed while Simpson did not.

The *Globe* appeared to be supportive of an effective referendum campaign in an editorial before the official decision was announced (*Globe and Mail*, 14 April 2007). But once the campaign started it would appear the paper decided to sit on its hands, saying little and contributing little to the campaign in the way of journalistic resources. As in the aftermath of the STV referendum in BC, when the *Globe* finally did speak up editorially on the MMP proposal just before election day, it counseled defeat and called for a push for a better result in the future, i.e. one more in line with the specifics of the *Globe*'s own proposal (*Globe and Mail*, 20 May 2005; 16 September 2005; 4 October 2007). Their reasoning was fairly straightforward – too much PR would mean no more 'strong' governments like Mike Harris and too much influence for 'small' parties, clearly meaning the NDP or the Greens. What the *Globe* seemed to really want was a reform that would cast more legitimacy on the policy prescriptions they supported, one that would limit the extreme representational distortions of the plurality system without removing its tendency to create single party majority governments. Though they had long called for reform, the Ontario MMP proposal was not the 'opportunity' they were looking for.

And the rest …

The *Globe* and the *Star* both had longstanding positions on voting system reform, a state of affairs that provided us with more context in analysing their motivations in the Ontario referendum campaign. But the other papers in our group have less clear track records. While the *National Post*, *Hamilton Spectator* and *Ottawa Citizen* may have focused on the topic from time to time, none gave the topic the kind of sustained focus or carved out a clear position like the *Globe* and *Star*. This limits our assessment of them to what they produced in the Ontario referendum campaign period.

Beginning with the CanWest papers, neither the *National Post* nor the *Ottawa Citizen* made any pretence of neutrality or objectivity in their opinion coverage of the Ontario voting system referendum. Nearly 100% of their columns and op/eds on the issue were opposed to MMP. The *Citizen* allowed one arguably pro op/ed piece to appear on election day (Eberlein and Rupprecht, *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 October 2007) while the *Post* granted no space for op/eds favouring MMP. No columnists favoured MMP in the

Citizen while Andrew Coyne was the only one to argue for MMP in the *Post*. Editorialists in both papers argued that voters should reject the MMP proposal (*National Post*, 3 October 2007; *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 October 2007). Nearly all of this critical coverage relied on speculation or logical argument to make its case. Why did these papers object so strongly to MMP? Variously, they argued that MMP would be a 'force for division', strengthen party bosses, give small parties too much influence, increase government influence, fuel extremism, diminish local representation and generally ruin everything that was good and proper about the existing state of affairs. Many commentators simply mocked the proposal and those who had developed it (Cosh, *National Post*, 4 October 2007). The politics behind such positions were not often explicitly stated but the libertarian, small government, pro-market assumptions often used to justify them seemed to fit with the general pro-Conservative party bias of both papers. Though some conservatives support voting system reform – Andrew Coyne being a prime example – most could not be convinced even when competition amongst federal right wing parties severely limited their competitive situation between 1993 and 2005 (Pilon 167). Since the merger of the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative parties in 2004, PR appears to be even less tolerated in conservative circles.

The *Hamilton Spectator* did not announce an editorial position on the referendum, the only paper in the group studied here not do so. Instead, it began the campaign period calling for all views to be heard and did feature two positive op/eds early on (Elliot, *Hamilton Spectator*, 16 May 2007; Harwood, *Hamilton Spectator*, 15 June 2007; Cooper, *Hamilton Spectator*, 10 July 2007). But that doesn't mean its coverage can be characterized as neutral. The *Spectator* reported sporadically on the referendum in the summer months, more so than any other paper other than the *Star*, though much of it comprised of wire copy from Canadian Press. In terms of opinion coverage, however, the *Spectator* produced even less than the other papers, particularly if the focus is on the latter part of the campaign. Between July 11 and mid September the paper had failed to provide any column, editorial, or op/ed coverage of the referendum. Then, *Star*ting on September 24, the paper published a different negative piece on MMP for three days in succession (Curtis, *Hamilton Spectator*, 24 September 2007; Little, *Hamilton Spectator*, 25 September 2007; Dreschel, *Hamilton Spectator*, 26 September 2007). The coverage appeared so unbalanced that the chair of Hamilton's McMaster Political Science department wrote to complain about the lack of balance; he was assured by the features editor that some pro op/eds were in the pipeline.[4] Eventually two pro pieces did emerge closer to the election date (Peters, *Hamilton Spectator*, 3 October 2007; Cooke, *Hamilton Spectator*, 6 October 2007). The *Spectator* is part of the TorStar chain that also owns the *Toronto Star* and the paper did feature some copy from the latter paper, specifically *Star* columnist Ian Urquart's warning about voters supporting change out of ignorance (Urquart, *Hamilton Spectator*, 26 September 2007). But for the most part, the paper did not share the *Star*'s intense focus on ignorance as a problem. In fact, despite echoing the *Star*'s endorsement of the Liberals for provincial office, the paper mostly ignored the referendum question.

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[4] Communication with Robert O'Brien, Chair, McMaster University Political Science Department, May 8, 2008.

Can we say that politics shaped the decisions of the different newspapers in terms of their coverage and content re the referendum campaign? Not conclusively – in any event, it is doubtful that powerful media organization would admit to such behaviour as it would obviously compromise their legitimacy with the broader public. Nonetheless, most astute readers know that media do have political positions – that the *Star* is a Liberal newspaper while the *Post* is a Conservative one – though such commitments hardly mean that each paper would line up with their chosen party on the details of most issues. Indeed, the *Globe* is more committed to a broad set of neoliberal, pro-market policies than a specific party. But what all this does mean is that success for their chosen party or policies is a priority for each paper and anything that might interfere with that success may be taken up in a less than balanced manner. In the case of the voting system referendum it is telling that our newspaper group were largely united in rejecting it, even though they disagreed about who should win the election. This could mean that they really thought it was a bad proposal for the people of Ontario. Or it could mean that they wished to maintain an electoral game space with room only for their preferred Liberal and Conservative competitors.

Conclusion

This paper set out to assess the role of the elite media in Ontario in translating some of the benefits of the OCA process to the broader public in the run-up to the referendum decision about the voting system. Specifically, the point was to address the gap between the substantive engagement with the issues offered by the deliberative environment of the CA and an engagement with the public at large. So far, government and opinion-leaders appear to believe that conventional media can and will make the link. The Ontario referendum campaign as portrayed in the media offers us a concrete opportunity to assess whether this is the case. Through a qualitative content analysis, Ontario's five major daily broadsheets were examined for coverage of the referendum campaign in terms of kind of coverage, position on the issue, and the style of argument used to defend a position.

The findings suggest that conventional media is not up to the task of linking CAs to the larger public in a way that can convey any of the benefits of the CA process. The analysis found low levels of coverage overall, a lack of balance in terms of showcasing different sides in the debate, and a tendency to use speculative and logical arguments rather than ones based on evidence or recognized experts. Those opposed to MMP were over-represented and relied on speculative and logical arguments to a much greater extent than those supporting MMP. Editorally, there were no examples of support for MMP. Thus the papers failed in Zaller's fairness test of providing adequate competing elite views of the issue under consideration. Furthermore, in a more contextual assessment of the papers' positions, it was argued that their various political commitments ultimately influenced their decisions about the voting system and the voting system debate.

Since the end of the referendum campaign a host of analyses have emerged to explain the results, with various participants arguing that poor education efforts and political party

machinations hampered the pro side while the con forces insist the results be understood as an unproblematic 'verdict from the people'. However, early academic analysis appears to provide support to the longstanding critics of referendum processes, specifically those that argue that in such situations voters cannot gain adequate information and as a result may actually vote against their interests. In an analysis of a surveys conducted during the referendum campaign, Cutler and Fournier argue that a majority of voters actually reported supporting the broad values represented by the MMP proposal (proportionality, coalition government); the problem was that too few understood that the option facing them on election day would provide them with those results (Cutler and Fournier).

Such findings suggest that supporters of deliberative democracy as practiced by CAs need to think about some other way to link their process to the larger public, at least as concerns voting systems, as conventional media appear unwilling to play such a role.

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Appendix A: List of Opinion Articles and Coding

Author	Media	Date	Type	Position	Arguments	
Barber, John	Globe and Mail	9/5/07	column	pro	1, 3	
Broadbent, Ed and Hugh Segal	Globe and Mail	5/15/07	op/ed	pro		2
Campbell, Murray	Globe and Mail	9/17/07	column	con	1, 2, 3	
Cavanagh, Kevin	Hamilton Spectator	10/9/07	editorial	info		1
Cohen, Estella	Toronto Star	9/27/07	op/ed	con		2
Cooke, Terry	Hamilton Spectator	10/6/07	op/ed	pro		3
Cooper, Tom	Hamilton Spectator	7/10/07	op/ed	pro		3
Cosh, Colby	National Post	10/4/07	column	con		2
Coyne, Andrew	National Post	9/29/07	column	pro		3
Coyne, Andrew	National Post	9/26/07	column	pro		3
Coyne, Andrew	National Post	9/22/07	column	pro	1, 2	
Coyne, Andrew	National Post	10/3/07	column	pro	1, 3	
Curtis, Vincent	Hamilton Spectator	9/24/07	op/ed	con		1
De Souza, Father Raymond	National Post	9/27/07	column	con		1
Denley, Randall	Ottawa Citizen	9/9/07	column	con		1
Denley, Randall	Ottawa Citizen	10/4/07	column	con	1, 2	
Dreschel, Andrew	Hamilton Spectator	9/26/07	column	con		1
Eberlein, Burkard and Klaus Rupprecht	Ottawa Citizen	10/10/07	op/ed	pro	3, 4	
Elliot, Howard	Hamilton Spectator	5/16/07	editorial	con		1
Fraser, Garnet	Toronto Star	10/7/07	column	info		1
Gibson, Gordon	Globe and Mail	10/8/07	op/ed	con		2
Globe and Mail	Globe and Mail	10/4/07	editorial	con	1, 2, 3	
Gordon, Charles	Ottawa Citizen	9/23/07	column	con	2, 3	
Gordon, Larry	Toronto Star	10/5/07	op/ed	pro	1, 2	
Green, Philip	National Post	9/25/07	op/ed	con		1
Gunter, Lorne	National Post	10/9/07	op/ed	con		1
Gwyn, Richard	Toronto Star	5/22/07	column	con		1
Harwood, Bob	Hamilton Spectator	6/15/07	op/ed	pro	1, 3	
Henry, Brian	Toronto Star	10/5/07	op/ed	con	1, 2	
Holcroft, Christopher	Globe and Mail	7/8/07	op/ed	con	1, 2	
Jonas, George	National Post	9/29/07	column	con		1
Kent, Tom	Globe and Mail	10/3/07	op/ed	pro	1, 2, 3	
Kierans, Tom	Globe and Mail	9/12/07	op/ed	con		2
Leduc, Larry	Globe and Mail	7/26/07	op/ed	pro	3, 4	
Little, Joan	Hamilton Spectator	9/25/07	op/ed	con		1
MacGregor, Roy	Globe and Mail	10/1/07	column	pro	1, 3	
Malloy, Jonathan	Ottawa Citizen	9/26/07	op/ed	con	1, 2, 3	
McKenna, Peter	Toronto Star	8/27/07	op/ed	info	1, 2	
McQuaig, Linda	Toronto Star	9/18/07	column	pro	1, 2	
Mintz, Jack	National Post	9/27/07	op/ed	con		2
Monahan, Patrick and Finn Poschmann	Globe and Mail	10/8/07	op/ed	con		2
Murray, Joe	Toronto Star	5/3/07	op/ed	pro		3
National Post	National Post	10/3/07	editorial	con	1, 2	
Ottawa Citizen	Ottawa Citizen	10/10/07	editorial	con		2
Peters, John	Hamilton Spectator	10/3/07	op/ed	pro		3

Pilon, Dennis	National Post	10/2/07	op/ed	info	3, 4	
Pilon, Dennis	Toronto Star	10/7/07	op/ed	pro	3, 4	
Radwanski, George	National Post	9/11/07	op/ed	con	2, 3	
Reynolds, Neil	Globe and Mail	9/5/07	column	con	2, 4	
Robb, Peter	Ottawa Citizen	5/31/07	column	info		2
Salutin, Rick	Globe and Mail	9/21/07	column	pro		2
Salutin, Rick	Globe and Mail	6/15/07	column	pro		3
Salutin, Rick	Globe and Mail	10/5/07	column	pro	2, 3	
Simpson, Jeffrey	Globe and Mail	5/16/07	column	con		2
Simpson, Jeffrey	Globe and Mail	10/5/07	column	con	2, 3	
Slinger, Joey	Toronto Star	9/20/07	column	con		1
Smith, Cameron	Toronto Star	9/8/07	op/ed	pro	1, 3	
Solomon, Lawrence	National Post	10/4/07	op/ed	con	2, 3	
Speirs, Rosemary	Toronto Star	5/21/07	op/ed	pro		3
Speirs, Rosemary	Toronto Star	9/14/07	op/ed	pro	1, 2	
Sutcliffe, Mark	Ottawa Citizen	10/6/07	column	con		2
Taylor, George	Toronto Star	9/14/07	op/ed	con	1, 2	
Toronto Star	Toronto Star	8/6/07	editorial	con		1
Toronto Star	Toronto Star	9/30/07	editorial	con	1, 2	
Toronto Star	Toronto Star	10/9/07	editorial	con	1, 2	
Urquart, Ian	Toronto Star	9/28/07	column	con	1, 3	
Walkom, Thomas	Toronto Star	5/19/07	column	con	1, 3	
Warren, David	Ottawa Citizen	9/30/07	column	con	1, 2	
Wiseman, Nelson	Toronto Star	9/23/07	op/ed	con		2
Woolstencroft, Peter, Rob Leone and Mark Yaniszewsk	National Post	9/29/07	op/ed	con	1, 2	

Appendix B: News Coverage by Type and Newspaper: May 1 - October 10, 2007										
	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	*Total*	Pro	Con	Info
Hamilton Spectator										
Reporting	6	2	3	0	15	9	*35*			
Editorial	1	0	0	0	0	0	*2*	0	1	1
Columnist	0	0	0	0	1	0	*1*	0	1	0
Op/ed	0	1	1	0	2	2	*6*	4	2	0
Globe and Mail										
Reporting	0	0	0	0	2	5	*7*			
Editorial	0	0	0	0	0	1	*1*	0	1	0
Columnist	1	1	0	0	4	3	*9*	5	4	0
Op/ed	1	0	2	0	1	3	*7*	3	4	0
National Post										
Reporting	0	0	0	0	11	2	*13*			
Editorial	0	0	0	0	0	1	*1*	0	1	0
Columnist	0	0	0	0	5	2	*7*	4	3	0
Op/ed	0	0	0	0	4	3	*7*	0	6	1
Ottawa Citizen										
Reporting	2	1	0	0	6	4	*13*			
Editorial	0	0	0	0	0	0	*1*	0	1	0
Columnist	1	0	0	0	3	2	*6*	0	5	1
Op/ed	0	0	0	0	1	1	*2*	1	1	0
Toronto Star										
Reporting	5	3	2	2	19	16	*47*			
Editorial	0	0	0	1	1	1	*3*	0	3	0
Columnist	2	0	0	0	3	1	*6*	1	5	0
Op/ed	2	0	0	1	5	3	*11*	6	4	1
Totals	21	8	8	4	83	59	*185*	24	42	4