Cross-Level Partisanship in Concurrent Federal-Provincial Elections:
A Case Study of Three Canadian Provinces

By: Steven Patterson
McGill University
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Dr. Christian Leuprecht, Royal Military College of Canada, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations at Queen’s University

**Contact Information:**
Address: Royal Military College of Canada
13 General Crerar Crescent
Kingston
ON, K7K 7B4

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Email: federalismeditors@gmail.com

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The purpose of this project is to explore the following research question: Do same day (i.e. concurrent) provincial-federal elections exhibit a higher degree of cross-level partisanship than non-concurrent elections? This paper proposes that concurrent elections lead to a convergence in voters evaluations of federal-provincial co-partisans, and that this results in a higher degree of cross-level partisanship than in non-concurrent elections. Using 2011 Canada Election Studies (CES) data on federal party vote choice and provincial party preference, this paper will project the results of concurrent federal-provincial elections for three Canadian provinces. The results of these projected concurrent elections will be compared to actual party vote shares received in the first provincial election held following the 2011 Canadian federal election. The comparison of these data will be used to test the hypothesis that concurrent elections have a higher degree of cross-level partisanship than non-concurrent elections.

This paper consists of five sections. First, I introduce the aims of this research and discuss its theoretical and substantive significance by referencing relevant literature. Second, a comprehensive theoretical framework is developed to explain why cross-level partisanship is expected to be higher in a concurrent election. Third, I will outline the research design and methodology used to test this causal hypothesis. Fourth, I will report and interpret my findings, which show that overall cross-level partisanship was slightly higher in projected concurrent elections. I conclude by discussing the implications and limits of this study.

I. Theoretical and Substantive Significance

This paper addresses two significant issues. The first is the substantive and empirical question concerning the effect of election timing on cross-level partisanship. The second issue is the theoretical consideration of what implications these empirical findings have for the nature of Canadian federalism, including intergovernmental relations and the potential for constitutional reform.

A significant body of research has been devoted to studying election timing (see Anzia 2011; 2014; Smith 2004) and cross-level partisanship (see Blake 1982) independently. The intent of this paper is to contribute to the scholarly debate about the relationship between these two concepts. To begin, consider: what does the literature say about the presence of cross-level partisanship in Canada under the existing, non-concurrent system? Cross-level partisanship can be defined as the extent to which voters, either individually or as a group, hold the same partisan affiliation at both levels of government. According to Stephenson and Bélanger (2009, 2), it is generally accepted that “party preferences at one level have an effect on identification and vote choice at the other level”. However, the diversity of provincial party systems, which are not always similar to the nature of federal parties, makes national assessments of cross-level partisanship challenging. This is not to suggest that there have been no robust studies of the linkages between federal and provincial partisans. Stewart and Clarke (2007, 101) found that rates of ‘split identification’ in Canada, in which voters’ party preferences were different for federal and provincial politics, ranged from 17 to 31 percent from 1974 to 1993. This result is generally consistent with Blake (1985) who argued that provincial and federal partisans operate in two
separate ‘political worlds’ (also see Blake 1982). Conversely, a more recent study by Stephenson and Bélanger (2009) found evidence of strong cross-level partisanship in both Quebec and Ontario.

The substantive contribution of this paper will be to explore the linkages between election timing and cross-level partisanship for provinces whose party systems are similar to the federal party system. This paper differentiates from previous research in several ways. First, many studies on cross-level partisanship in the Canadian context have not systematically accounted for the variable of election timing (see Koop 2004). Second, the research design utilized in this paper compares cross-level partisanship at two time points, under two conditions, whereas previous research has typically used data from a single election (see Stephenson & Bélanger 2009). Third, my case selection methodology focuses specifically on provinces whose party systems are congruent, which differs from both national studies (see Koop 2004) and hybrid approaches (see Stephenson & Bélanger 2009). Note that party system congruency in this context entails that the same major political parties dominate at both the provincial and federal levels (see Stephenson & Bélanger 2009). Finally, this paper uses the most recently available federal election data, which will update our understanding to apply to the contemporary configuration of provincial and federal party systems.

The approach of this paper lends itself to a theoretical discussion about the relevance of cross-level partisanship in the context of Canadian federalism. In other words, why might cross-level partisanship be significant or desirable? The primary reason is that greater cross-level partisanship among the electorate could strengthen electoral externalities for subnational political parties. The presence of stronger electoral externalities would be significant because they could offset the costs that have often prohibited provincial actors from engaging in constructive constitutional negotiations and collectively beneficial intergovernmental relations (Rodden 2006, 228). The logic of this argument was articulated by Rodden (2006, 126): “Provincial officials face incentives to cooperate with the center because their electoral fates are determined in good part by the fates of their co-partisans at the federal level.” The competition to, as Simeon (2000, 240) puts it: “win credit for positive developments, and avoid, or transfer, blame for negative ones”; would be reduced – thus improving the functioning of Canadian federalism and intergovernmental relations in particular. This achievement would be particularly significant given that Stevenson (2004, xv) and others have argued that Canadian federalism in its present conception has weak “mechanisms for resolving federal-provincial conflict”.

II. The Relationship between Election Timing & Cross-Level Partisanship

Before presenting the findings of this quantitative analysis, it is necessary to further develop my theory concerning the relationship between election timing and cross-level partisanship. In other words, why do we expect election timing, and in particular concurrency, to influence cross-level partisanship? The proposed causal mechanism driving the change in the dependent variable of cross-level partisanship is that concurrent elections promote a convergence in voter’s evaluations of federal-provincial co-partisans. The nature of this convergence is that provincial elections will become more nationalized. To put it another way, this paper contends that in same day elections a significant number of voters will use federal party preferences to judge their provincial counterparts.
Thus, the core theoretical argument of this paper is that a stronger convergence of voter’s evaluations of co-partisans through nationalized concurrent elections can lead to greater cross-level partisanship among the electorate. A significant body of research provides direct and indirect support for this theoretical conjecture. Most notable are Rodden and Wibbels (2005, 15) who found that election timing strongly impacts the “nationalization of subnational elections”. The convergence theory developed in this paper consists of two propositions that will be demonstrated in turn. The first is that the nationalization of subnational elections has the potential to (and currently does) influence provincial party vote choice. Second, these convergent effects are intensified under the condition of a concurrent election.

The Nationalization of Provincial Elections: The nationalization of elections can be described as a fusion of voter’s perceptions of federal and provincial co-partisans. The important feature of nationalization for our purposes is the process by which federal party preferences come to influence provincial vote choice. To begin, it should first be established that nationalization has already occurred to some extent in the Canadian context. In their comparative study of four federations, including Canada, Rodden and Wibbels (2010, 632) found that subnational elections were nationalized to varying degrees in all four cases. Their review of the literature noted that there is a surge in research suggesting that “national dynamics loom large for subnational election outcome[s]” in Canada and other federations (Rodden & Wibbels 2010, 634; also see Gélineau & Bélanger 2005). They go on to contribute to this scholarship through an empirical analysis which confirms that “Canadian provincial premiers who share the partisan affiliation…. [of the] prime minister can do slightly better than otherwise when the national economy is doing very well” (Rodden & Wibbels 2010, 648). That being said, Rodden and Wibbels do concede that the decentralized nature of Canadian federalism generally means that provincial and federal elections operate in relative isolation from one another, especially when compared to other more centralized federations.

Stephenson and Bélanger (2009) also found direct evidence that federal parties can influence subnational political preferences. The results of their logistic regression indicated that “federal partisanship is significantly related to provincial party identification and vote choice” in both Quebec and Ontario (Stephenson & Bélanger 2009, 10). In terms of magnitude, they “observe that cross-level effects are important in both provinces, but that they are much greater in Ontario than in Quebec”, a result which they note is consistent with the “congruency of the party systems argument” (Stephenson & Bélanger 2009, 10).

The process of nationalizing subnational elections can be understood in relation to the broader category of cross-level federal coattail effects. Hogan (2005, 587) defines this as a “spillover effect whereby an election for an upper-level office influences an election for a lower-level office”. The logic underlying this phenomenon is that: “Many voters are brought to the polls by a high-profile campaign (such as for president or governor) but end up casting ballots for lower level elections as well” (Hogan 2005, 587). The critical point is that these spillover effects tend to influence the voting results for lower-level office candidates who share the same party label – leading to more straight ticket voting among the electorate (as opposed to split tickets). The extension of this argument is that as more people align their provincial and federal voting behavior, the gap in vote share between co-partisans should also decrease.
It should be noted that there is substantial evidence of coattail effects in American elections (see Mattei and Glasgow 2005; Meredith 2013; Stoll 2015). The focus of the research agenda has been on the presence of presidential coattail effects in congressional elections (i.e. interbranch) in the United States (see Mattei and Glasgow 2005; Stoll 2015). There is also evidence of gubernatorial coattail effects on races for state legislatures (Hogan 2005) and concurrently elected statewide executive candidates (Meredith 2013). The difference in all of these cases of course is that coattails effects were present within or between branches of the same level of government (i.e. horizontal), and not across levels as this research aims to explore.

There are however a number of studies on coattail effects that provide evidence for the relationship between national and subnational political preferences. For example, Soares (2013) found a connection between the strength of state gubernatorial candidates and elections to Brazil’s national legislature. In Burns’ (1999) analysis of five states, he similarly found that gubernatorial coattail effects had an impact on elections to the US Senate. Overall, the research on cross-level coattail effects has been limited, and studies have predominantly focused exclusively on horizontal presidential coattail effects on congressional races in the American context (for exceptions see Samuels 2000; Huang and Wang 2014).

Burns (1999) outlined a number of factors that can contribute to cross-level coattail effects. For example, he argued that gubernatorial contests generally attract more media and public attention than the senatorial races which are occurring at the same time (Burns 1999, 151). This increased visibility, along with the fact that the “governor is more prominent in the eyes of the voters” (Burns 1999, 152), both help to explain why many voters take into account the party of their preferred gubernatorial candidate when casting a vote for US Senator. These underlying principles of coattails theory are generally transferable to the convergence theory developed in this paper. For instance, this paper contends that the relatively high visibility and media coverage received by gubernatorial candidates is comparable to the relative attention received by federal campaigns in comparison to provincial campaigns. It can be said that the phenomenon of coattail effects is similar to the causal mechanism suggested in this paper, which is that voter’s evaluations of co-partisans will converge because the higher profile nature of national politics will ultimately influence voter’s provincial choices.

In addition to the insights derived from research on nationalization and coattail effects, we can also draw from the literature on individual voter behavior to further understand why a convergence in voter’s evaluations would take place. To begin, we might ask: do voters actually make decisions on the basis of partisanship identification? Do party labels influence Canadians’ vote choice? If voters largely made decisions on the basis of local candidates, irrespective of their party label, then our theory would have difficulty getting off the ground. Fortunately, the consensus in the literature is generally that partisanship identification is a significant factor in influencing vote choice (see Bartels 2008; Gidengil et al. 2012). Johnston and his colleagues (1992, 4) even made the point that “party identification is always the single best predictor of the vote”. The framing of this paper, which places co-partisanship among the electorate as central to explaining voting behaviour, is broadly in line with previous research which has consistently shown that party identification correlates with individual vote choice. Our claim that high profile election campaigns can influence vote choice has also been widely substantiated (see Schmitt-Beck & Farrell 2002).
Thus far we have drawn from diverse research to show how the nationalization of subnational elections could lead to a greater convergence in the processes by which voters evaluate their choices for provincial and federal representation. Our articulation of the effect of nationalization on cross-level partisanship was done under the assumption that greater nationalization is the default outcome of a concurrent election. However, it is conceivable that a voter in the context of a same day election could instead respond to provincial cues in order to decide which party to support at the federal level (Clough 2007). Alternatively, voters could continue to treat provincial and federal elections as relatively distinct and independent events (Blake 1985). The process by which concurrent elections come to be nationalized is a key component of this theory which merits further elaboration.

The primary reason we expect concurrent elections to become nationalized is because voters tend to be more interested and pay greater attention to federal rather than provincial politics. This is also why the principle of visibility and importance, which Hogan (2005) introduced in the context of coattail effects, is easily transferable to the theoretical framework developed in this paper. To support this claim, we can turn to the second order elections thesis, which posits that “voters perceive ‘less at stake’ in all elections other than the major government-forming national general election in their country” (Cutler 2008, 492). In the Canadian context, it has been argued that local and provincial elections are second order elections, in which voters “are less interested, less informed, participate less, and are less forcefully mobilized by parties” (Cutler 2008, 493).

There are several empirical indicators which support classifying provincial contests as second order elections. For example, despite an increase in provincial voter turnout over time, election data from 1945-1999 shows that mean turnout in federal elections is slightly higher than mean turnout for provincial elections (Studlar 2001, 307). This is perhaps not surprising given the extensive media coverage and the significant resources that tend to be invested in contesting federal elections (see Fletcher 1987; Marland & Giasson 2015, 64-84). Fletcher (1987, 342) makes the point that even within federal campaigns, the focus is on “national parties, their leaders, and the issues they raise”, rather than local constituency races. The overall greater interest amongst the electorate in national politics suggests that the nature of the campaign (e.g. key issues, themes) and voter’s evaluations of provincial choices will be disproportionally influenced by their impressions of national parties. The relative apathy towards provincial politics suggests that the opposite effect (i.e. voters shaping their federal preferences based on provincial cues) is less likely to occur, and if it does, to be less significant.

The principal claim of this paper is that if provincial elections become nationalized, and perceptions of national parties become central to evaluations of provincial choices, then this would ultimately result in a higher degree of cross-level partisanship. In short, more people would cast their provincial ballot in a way that matches their federal party preference, thus reducing the practice of split ticket voting. This effect would be empirically observable as greater cross-level partisanship amongst the electorate would translate to more consistency in the vote share received by provincial-federal co-partisans (i.e. a smaller gap). The task for the second half of this paper is to perform such a test.
The Role of Concurrency and Election Timing: The next stage of this theory is to show how election timing, and in particular concurrency, will intensify the convergent effects of nationalization described above. This is a straightforward but critical argument. The basic idea is that when provincial and federal elections are separated by a longer period of time, we expect that nationalizing effects will be weakened.

Consistent with the logic of coattail effects, my theory argues that if voters are forced to make two vote decisions at one time, we can expect that they will rely to a greater extent on their perception of the ‘higher profile’ national race in order to inform their provincial vote choice. Given the broad similarities between federal and provincial co-partisans (e.g. in logo, party label), we can expect that many voters in a same day election would come to view provincial-federal co-partisans as interrelated; particularly if they have been only been paying attention to one of the two campaigns. Furthermore, it is reasonable to expect that many people could split their time unevenly between provincial and federal events, particularly if they view the federal election as more significant, or if information concerning federal parties is more accessible.

If these voting decisions are made non-concurrently, it is less likely that the voter will have developed strong preferences towards the federal parties. Thus, national considerations will be much less relevant to them when casting a provincial ballot. The modest suggestion of this paper is that the national character of provincial party choices will become less salient the further voters are removed from a federal election. By extension, the closer the elections, with the extreme and unique case being concurrency, the more federal politics will weigh on the minds of voters who are tasked with evaluating provincial parties.

This theory accepts that the regular occurrences of national politics should still have some influence on non-concurrent provincial elections. Federal dynamics will matter for subnational preferences, even if provincial voting does not perfectly coincide with a federal campaign (Stephenson & Belanger 2009, 10). There are however at least three additional factors to explain why the nationalization of subnational elections would tend to occur to the greatest extent in a concurrent campaign. The first is that election campaigns are “signal events” that are associated with intense media coverage of politics unlike any other (Fletcher & Everett 1991, 181). Second, the public’s attention and interest towards politics is heightened during campaign periods, which serve an important “informational role” (Arceneaux 2005, 159; see Lefevere et al. 2015). Finally, political parties will be most engaged in direct outreach and persuasion efforts during election campaign periods (Schmitt-Beck & Farrell 2002).

In a non-concurrent provincial election, where these three forces are not at play with respect to federal politics, voters are more likely to make an independent evaluation of provincial party choices. Federal undercurrents may be in the background, such as national economic performance or the popularity of the Prime Minister (Rodden & Wibbels 2010), but they are not likely to be central to the campaign or to voter’s decision making process. In a concurrent situation, the dynamics of federal politics have an opportunity to intrude upon voters independent evaluations of provincial choices, and these decisions will no longer be able to be made in relative isolation. In sum, all of these factors relate to how elections bring politics to the forefront of the media and voters’ attention. As such, they help to explain why the nationalization of provincial
elections is more likely to occur in the event of a concurrent election, and why they will be progressively lessened if there is a gap in time between provincial-federal elections.

A fourth feature of concurrent elections that reinforces convergence is that voters may be motivated to go to the polls because of the high-profile federal race, but also use that opportunity to cast a ballot for the provincial election which is occurring on the same day. According to Hogan (2005, 588), if these voters are “less knowledgeable of campaign issues, they rely more often on heuristic cues such as partisanship in making their choices for down-ballot offices”. This reasoning is supported by a long tradition of research of the United States and other settings which shows that party labels can act as heuristic aids in shaping voters’ opinions (see Downs 1957; Popkin 1994). According to Conroy-Krutz et al. (2016, 3), partisan cues “influence political decision making” and are often used to “assess candidates’ capabilities, preferences, and electoral viability”. Consistent with the prediction of this paper, the authors found that partisan cues increased “straight-ticket ballots, and votes for copartisans” (Conroy-Krutz et al. 2016, 3). The implication of this is that the provincial party affiliated with a voters federal preference will benefit electorally. If more people align their voting preferences in such a way, the overall observable effect will be a smaller vote disparity between co-partisans, and thus greater cross-level partisanship.

While research has shown that national events do in fact influence subnational elections in Canada under the existing non-concurrent system (Gélineau & Bélanger 2005; Rodden & Wibbels 2010), these effects would only be intensified if a concurrent election campaign brought federal politics out from the background. In sum, this theory builds on the assessment of the status quo taken by Stephenson and Bélanger (2009, 2), that “party preferences at one level have an effect on identification and vote choice at the other level”, by suggesting that this effect is heightened when voters are most tuned in, when the media is most actively covering politics, and when political parties are engaged in their most direct persuasive exercises. The overall conclusion is clear: an election campaign puts a spotlight on federal politics unlike any other event, and provides a unique capacity for provincial elections to be nationalized.

**Beyond Concurrent Elections:** Using multiple provincial cases studies, with different election dates, will also enable this study to explore the effect of election timing more broadly – beyond the binary comparison of concurrent and non-concurrent elections. In other words, because provincial elections were held at different times, our results may provide insights into whether the length of time between federal and provincial elections has an effect on cross-level partisanship. Our theoretical framework, which argues that a longer time between provincial-federal elections will reduce co-partisanship, allows for several possible outcomes. The intuitive result is that a longer period of time following the 2011 federal election will weaken the nationalization of the subnational election, and thus reduce cross-level partisanship. The second possibility is that a provincial election will occur late enough so that it overlaps, or comes close to overlapping, with the next federal election. If this were the case, we might expect the nationalizing factors established above to influence provincial vote choice, much like a concurrent election. As such, election timing should be conceptualized as the relative time between federal and provincial elections – rather than simply the length of time between the 2011 federal election and the next provincial election.
Theoretical Critiques: What are other possible outcomes of a concurrent election? The prevailing counter-position to this theoretical framework comes from the literature on split ticket voting. A common explanation of ticket splitting is Fiorina’s (1992) groundbreaking theory of policy balancing, which suggests that voters split their votes in order to divide power between different institutions, with the expectation that this will produce more moderate policy outcomes (Sanz 2008, 109). Note that a great deal of research on other political jurisdictions has found that split ticket voting features prominently in concurrent elections (see Burden & Helmke 2009; Ames, Baker & Renno 2009).

There are several reasons why it may be problematic to generalize these findings and Fiorina’s theory to concurrent federal-provincial elections in Canada. First, this literature has overwhelmingly focused on horizontal ticket splitting within the American political system (Burden & Helmke 2009; Sanz 2008). An emerging field of research has tested these theories in mixed member plurality systems, but according to Burden and Helmke (2009, 2) “the vast bulk of studies focus on simultaneous ticket splitting between presidential and legislative elections on a single ballot”. Fiorina’s theory of policy balancing is helpful to explaining the phenomenon of horizontal or interbranch ticket splitting in the US. However, this theory hinges on the American principle of the separation of powers and the widespread perception that Congress is a check on the power of the presidency. We should be skeptical about applying this theory to concurrent cross-level elections in Canada. The perceived and actual roles of the provinces and the federal government cannot be equated to the relationship between the legislative and executive branches in the US. Whereas passing legislation in the US requires the approval of these two institutions, federal and provincial governments are often able to act unilaterally, and occupy relatively distinct and constitutionally protected policy domains. In sum, the incentive to split one’s ticket in order to produce moderate policy outcomes is much stronger in the US, where the relevant institutions (the Presidency and Congress) are required to work together to enact policies. This incentive is weaker in Canada where the actors, provinces and the central government, have much greater independence from one another.

III. Research Design and Methodology

For this research, the timing of elections is the independent variable, and cross-level partisanship at the population level is the dependent variable. Measurement of the dependent variable consisted of calculating the absolute difference in vote share received by provincial and federal co-partisans. The magnitude of the gap in vote share received by co-partisans is inversely related to the degree of cross-level partisanship for that set of elections.

Federal party support is fixed for each provincial sub-sample at the levels calculated from the 2011 Canadian Election Study post-election survey (see Appendix A). These data were drawn from participant’s responses to the question: ‘which party did you vote for?’ The level of federal partisan support will be compared to provincial partisan support under two different time conditions. The first captures the projected level of provincial partisan support for a same day or concurrent election (t1). This value was operationalized using responses to the question: ‘If a provincial election were held today in [fill PROVINCE], which party would you vote for?’ Because both of these questions were asked as part of the post-election survey, this measurement provides an estimate of the vote shares that co-partisans would have received if an election were held on the same day. It should be noted that data for the post-election survey was collected within
a reasonable period of time following the federal election on May 2nd 2011. To be precise, approximately 50% of the interviews for this survey component were conducted within the first 14 days, and 70% were completed within 22 days.

The second time point is the first provincial election held following the 2011 federal election \((t_2)\). For this condition, the value of provincial party support is the actual vote share received by the party in that election. The intent of this measurement is to calculate the degree of cross-level partisanship in non-concurrent elections. The source for these data are official election returns, which are available on provincial government websites.

The overall purpose of this research design and methodology is to measure the dependent variable in two periods, in order to infer what effect same day elections would have on cross-level partisanship within the electorate. This papers hypothesis predicts that there will be smaller differences in vote share between co-partisans, and thus a higher degree of cross-level partisanship for elections that occur on the same day \((t_1)\) compared to non-concurrent elections \((t_2)\).

**Case Selection:** The criteria for case selection was twofold. The first factor was congruency between the federal and provincial party systems. This paper examines cross-level partisanship among Canada’s three major federal political parties: Conservative, NDP and Liberal. A systematic evaluation of the provincial party systems produced a sample of five congruent provinces: Alberta, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Ontario. The procedure for assessing the congruency of provincial party systems is outlined in Appendix B. This sample was further narrowed when the representativeness of the CES provincial sub-samples were taken into account. To ensure internal validity, the CES data for federal party vote choice was compared to the actual vote distribution for that province in the 2011 federal election. A range of plus or minus 5 percent for each of the three party’s vote shares was considered acceptable for inclusion in this study. Together, these two criteria – congruency and representativeness – produced a sample consisting of three provinces: Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia.

**IV. Results: Cross-Level Partisanship in Concurrent and Non-Concurrent Elections**

The following section presents the results for our projected concurrent and non-concurrent elections. Following brief descriptive analysis of each provincial case study, this section concludes by summarizing our findings in terms of the degree of cross-level partisanship observed in concurrent and non-concurrent elections. Data and figures referenced in this section can be found in Appendix C.

Manitoba: Similar Vote Distribution for Concurrent and Non-Concurrent Elections

Manitoba held a provincial election on October 4th 2011, 155 days after the Canadian federal election on May 2nd. The Progressive Conservative (PC) vote share in this provincial election was the closest to their federal counterparts, with a difference of about 7 points. The provincial Liberal and NDP vote share differed much more substantially from their federal co-partisans, at 13.82 and 18.94 points, respectively (see Figure 1).

The results for the projected provincial election are remarkably similar to the actual provincial election. In the projected concurrent election, both the PC and NDP fell in the mid-high 40’s, and the Liberals once again received less than 10 percent of the vote. Overall, the average
difference between the projected and actual provincial elections was just 1.28%. Given this similarity, it is unsurprising that the concurrent and non-concurrent elections exhibited approximately the same degree of cross-level partisanship. The average difference in vote share with the federal parties for the concurrent election was 14.21%, just one point higher than the average difference for the non-concurrent election, which was 13.20% (see Figure 4). These findings do not support our working hypothesis. In fact, they suggest that there was slightly greater symmetry in provincial-federal vote share for the non-concurrent election.

**Ontario: Moderate Increase in Cross-Level Partisanship for the Projected Concurrent Election**

Ontario held a provincial election on October 6th 2011, 157 days after the May 2nd 2011 federal election. In this election, only the NDP received a similar level of support as their federal co-partisans, with a difference of just 1.4 points. The PC and Liberal party’s vote shares differed much more substantively from their federal affiliates, at 8.5 and 10.1 points, respectively (see Figure 2).

For the Ontario PC’s and Liberal’s, the projected concurrent provincial election vote shares are closer to their federal co-partisans compared to the non-concurrent election by 7.7 points and 4.9 points respectively. Conversely, the NDP’s vote share in the actual provincial election was slightly closer to their federal co-partisans (2.7 points). The net effect is that there are greater disparities in vote share between co-partisans in the non-concurrent election (6.67 points) compared to the concurrent election (3.37 points) (see Figure 4). Since the vote shares received by co-partisans aligned more closely in the concurrent election, these findings are supportive of our hypothesis that cross-level partisanship is higher for same day elections.

**Nova Scotia: Strongest Increase in Cross-Level Partisanship for the Projected Concurrent Election**

Nova Scotia held a provincial election on October 8th 2013, 890 days after the federal election on May 2nd 2011, and 741 days before the next federal election on October 19th 2015. The vote distribution in this election for all three party’s differed fairly substantially from their federal co-partisans. Respectively, the provincial PC’s and NDP received 14.7 and 4.19 percent fewer votes than their federal co-partisans. On the other hand, the provincial Liberal’s garnered 20.74 percent more votes than their national counterparts received in the 2011 Canadian federal election.

Similar to Ontario, and unlike Manitoba, these data exhibit significant deviations between the projected and actual vote shares received by each party. In the non-concurrent situation, the average difference between co-partisans was 13.21 points. This value dropped by 8.91 points or about 67% to an average difference of just 4.3 points for the projected concurrent election (see Figure 4). In sum, the vote distribution for the projected concurrent election was much closer to the federal results than the actual provincial election. This provides strong evidence for the hypothesis that cross-level partisanship will be comparatively higher in a same day election.

**Summary of Empirical Findings:** Figure 4 summarizes the average difference in vote share between co-partisans in concurrent and non-concurrent elections. These data show that the degree of cross-level partisanship in Manitoba is virtually identical for concurrent and non-concurrent elections. In both cases, the provincial party’s deviated on average between 13 and 14 points from their federal co-partisans.
The results for Ontario and Nova Scotia demonstrate more significant differences in cross-level partisanship between the concurrent and non-concurrent elections. In Ontario, the gap in vote share for a concurrent election was approximately half as large as the gap for a non-concurrent election, dropping from 6.67 to 3.37 points. The strongest evidence of convergence can be seen in Nova Scotia, where the average gap between provincial and federal co-partisans was considerably larger for the non-concurrent elections (13.21 points) than for the projected concurrent election (4.31 points).

Both Ontario and Nova Scotia show evidence of greater cross-level partisanship occurring in concurrent elections. Concurrency in these cases was found to be associated with greater consistency in the vote shares received by co-partisans. The case of Manitoba indicates otherwise. Given that the average difference between co-partisans remained essentially the same under both concurrent and non-concurrent conditions (13.22 and 14.20 percent), we cannot infer that concurrency had any effect. In sum, two provincial case studies, Ontario and Nova Scotia, support our hypothesis, whereas one case, Manitoba, supports the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between concurrency and cross-level partisanship.

Now that the data for each case has been analysed independently, we can take a broader perspective by averaging the differences between co-partisans for concurrent and non-concurrent elections across our case studies. This reveals that the average gap between co-partisans for concurrent elections was 7.29%, whereas the average gap for non-concurrent elections was 11.03%. These findings suggest that concurrency may moderately and positively correlate with cross-level level partisanship in congruent provinces.

Given that the provincial case studies have different values of t2, we can also attempt to test whether the relative time between provincial-federal elections negatively correlates with the degree of cross-level partisanship. If this were the case, the non-concurrent provincial election which was the furthest removed from a federal election should exhibit the greatest disparities between co-partisans. These data do not support this prediction. Despite holding provincial elections at very different times relative to the closest federal election, 155 and 741 days respectively, Manitoba and Nova Scotia had virtually identical levels of cross-level partisanship in their non-concurrent provincial elections. Furthermore, despite holding elections just two days apart, Ontario and Manitoba’s non-concurrent provincial elections had very different levels of cross-level partisanship, with an average gap of 6.67% for Ontario, and 13.22% for Manitoba.

V. Discussion: Implications and Limitations of This Study

There are two overall conclusions which can be inferred from these results. The first, which is consistent with our hypothesis and theoretical framework, is that two of the three cases, concurrency appears to moderately and positively correlate with smaller vote disparities between co-partisans and thus greater cross-level partisanship. The second is election timing. Beyond the binary comparison of concurrency and non-concurrency, it did not appear to have an independent effect of cross-level partisanship. The implications and limitations of these findings will be discussed in turn.

So what are the broader implications of the observed relationship between concurrency and cross-level partisanship? The prospect that concurrent elections could strengthen electoral
externalities is significant. If voters and parties view the electoral fates of co-partisans as intertwined, it is possible that subnational political actors could face stronger incentives to cooperate with national parties, thereby improving the capacity for constitutional negotiations and productive intergovernmental relations. Since the linkage we identified was limited to party affiliates, these cooperative effects may only be present when co-partisans are in power at both levels of government. This study was also limited to provinces with congruent party systems, so the dynamics of co-partisanship in non-congruent provinces remain uncertain.

There are also potentially negative implications associated with stronger electoral externalities and greater cross-level partisanship. If concurrent elections lead to an increase in cross-level partisanship, and voters come to view co-partisans as interrelated, it is possible that the federal principle of dual accountability could be undermined. The rationale for dual accountability relies on subnational and central governments having “mutually exclusive spheres of authority” which allow voters to evaluate policies on various issues and “assign responsibility to the appropriate level of government” (Rodden & Wibbels 2010, 632). Dual accountability demands that matters relating to one level of government should not exert undue influence on electoral results in the other. If voters increasingly fuse their perceptions of co-partisans based on national preferences and stop treating provincial and federal domains as distinct political worlds, this federal principle could breakdown. Greater nationalization of voter’s evaluation of co-partisans through concurrency could undermine the ability of voters to effectively keep subnational and central governments accountable for their performance in office. As such, the potential trade-off between strengthening electoral externalities through greater cross-level partisanship and preserving the principle of dual accountability presents a normative dilemma that ought to be carefully considered.

There are several limitations to the approach undertaken in this paper. First and foremost are the difficulties related to accurately projecting a concurrent election. The consequence is that there are several elements of our theoretical framework that could not be operationalized. First, the model used cannot account for the fact that provincial and federal campaigns would be occurring in tandem. The use of respondents answer to a hypothetical question about who they would vote for, cannot fully substitute for the role of an actual provincial election campaign. We contended that if campaigns did occur concurrently, the prominence of national politics would overshadow the provincial campaign, leading to more voters relying on federal cues when casting their provincial ballot. In our projection, however, there was no provincial campaign to compete with, making it difficult to confirm this particular conjecture.

A related aspect of the nationalization of elections that our model does not take into account is how political party integration could reinforce or mitigate these effects. Esselment (2010) and Pruysers (2015) have both provided evidence of cross-level co-partisan integration, including sharing of party activists and technology. The extent to which these effects occur in concurrent elections could have important implications for the degree of cross-level partisanship. The first possible outcome is that parties could take advantage of the concurrency of campaigns to pool limited campaign resources, coordinate conversion and mobilization strategies, and share critical voter data. This increased integration in terms of voter targeting and campaign messaging could lead to more similar vote shares being received by co-partisans, a result which is consistent with our theoretical framework. In addition, it could as Esselment (2010, 888) argues have the broader
effect of “forging unity between these party organizations”. An alternative outcome is that federal and provincial political actors would become particularly sensitive to their own electoral fortunes, and as a result be even more reluctant to share resources. A third plausible outcome is that parties would be more willing to integrate in areas of perceived mutual benefit, such as voter data, but become more adverse to sharing finite resources such as political staff and volunteers. The difficulties in accurately projecting a provincial election and accounting for the effect of concurrency on political party integration constitute significant challenges to the external validity of this study.

Above are some of the elements of our theoretical framework that could not be operationalized by projecting a provincial election. Notwithstanding these limitations, there are of course features of our theoretical framework that were tested by this method. In the projected concurrent election, voters still expressed their federal and provincial preferences simultaneously. According to the convergence theory developed in this paper; this simple act could lead to voters perceiving federal and provincial co-partisans are interrelated. Even more importantly, the projection conducted in this paper would still capture the many voters who use federal party labels as a heuristic to inform their subnational choice (Hogan 2005, 588). Because a full federal campaign did take place prior to voters responding to the CES survey, this projection still provides an opportunity to test whether national forces influenced subnational preferences. However, as discussed above, the extent to which these national forces would be mitigated or reinforced (e.g. by campaign integration) if a provincial campaign also took place is difficult predict. In sum, part of this theoretical framework was supported by our findings, but other elements remain unconfirmed.

These data were also interpreted to explore the potential effect of election timing more broadly on cross-level partisanship. No pattern was found to emerge. Upon reflection, it is clear that given the variations amongst congruent provinces, it is not reasonable to attribute election timing to the difference in cross-level partisanship between provinces when comparing only a single pair of non-concurrent elections. While the test of concurrency also contrasted provincial case studies, this test differed in that it was concerned with the relative differences in cross-level partisanship between concurrent and non-concurrent elections, and not the absolute differences between provinces. Future research interested in exploring the effect of election timing on cross-level partisanship should consider employing a longitudinal design covering multiple provincial and federal elections. This research could compile a dataset of provincial and federal election pairs to determine whether the gap in time between elections correlates with cross-level partisanship. This method may be more successful than the approach undertaken in this paper.

Conclusion
This paper developed a research design and theoretical framework to explore the linkages between election timing, concurrency and cross-level partisanship. The results for two of the three case studies provide tentative support for our hypothesis that concurrent elections exhibit a higher degree of cross-level partisanship in congruent provinces. These conclusions also provide direction for further research. For example, research on this subject could explore whether the moderate, positive association between concurrency and cross-level partisanship is replicated in non-congruent provinces. Stephenson and Bélanger’s (2009) model for comparing congruent and incongruent provinces could be applied in this research. Our macro-level study of party systems
would also be complimented by research involving deeper analysis of cross-level effects for particular party affiliates. Does the degree of cross-level partisanship vary across parties? Future studies of both concurrency and election timing should also consider using a longitudinal study of multiple elections to determine whether the findings of this paper can be generalized. The method of projecting concurrent elections using CES data, and the systematic approaches used to assess both the congruency of provincial party systems and the representativeness of provincial sub-samples (see Appendix B), are useful tools that provide a template for future research. The fact that concurrency may produce a tension between dual accountability and strengthening electoral externalities offers a compelling reason for scholars to conduct such investigations.
Appendix A: Background on the 2011 Canadian Election Study

Data for the 2011 Canadian Election Studies (CES) were provided by the Institute for Social Research, York University. The 2011 CES was conducted by Patrick Fournier, Fred Cutler, Stuart Soroka and Dietlind Stolle. The study consisted of a campaign period, post-election, mail back and web-based survey using a sample of Canadian citizens 18 years of age or older. The data along with technical documentation is available online through the Canadian Opinion Research Archive (CORA): http://www.queensu.ca/cora/ces.html. Additional information about the survey is available on the CES website: http://ces-eec.arts.ubc.ca/english-section/home/

The post-election survey (PES) was the second of four surveys conducted as part of the 2011 CES. Calling for the survey began the day after the election, May 3rd 2011, and continued until July 5th 2011. Note that 70 percent of the interviews were conducted by the 22nd day after the election. The sample for the PES consists of respondents to the campaign period survey (CPS). A total of 4,308 Canadian citizens completed the CPS, and 3,362 respondents completed the PES. The CPS sample design is both clustered – in terms of the number of adults in the household – and stratified in terms of the provincial distribution of respondents.

This research utilized two questions from the post-election survey. These questions are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Invalid</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which party did you vote for?</td>
<td>discrete</td>
<td>3019</td>
<td>1289</td>
<td>Which party did you vote for? The Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the NDP (the New Democratic Party), [if PROV eq &lt;24&gt;] the Bloc Quebecois, [endif] the Green party, or another party?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a PROVINCIAL election were held today in [PROVINCE], which party would you vote for?</td>
<td>discrete</td>
<td>3362</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>If a PROVINCIAL election were held today in [fill PROVINCE], which party would you vote for? Liberal, Conservative, N.D.P., or another party?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Case Selection Methodology

Congruency Criteria: In the most recent provincial election preceding the 2011 federal election, the provincial Conservative (or Progressive Conservative), Liberal and the NDP must have collectively received at least 80% of the vote share. In addition to this, each of these parties must have received at least 5% of the popular vote, and successfully elected at least one member to the legislative assembly.

The purpose of this approach is to select provinces who have provincial party systems which are generally congruent with the federal party system. This methodology allows for the inclusion of provinces with small fourth party or independent representation, but excludes provinces in which non-federally aligned parties constitute a significant part of the vote share and/or legislature (e.g. Saskatchewan and Quebec). This standard is consistent with the discrete values that were available to respondents in answering the question of which provincial party they would support in a hypothetical provincial election (see Appendix A). These criteria produce a sample consisting of five provinces: Alberta, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Ontario.

Representativeness Criteria: The CES data for federal party vote choice was compared to the actual vote distribution for that province in the 2011 federal election. A range of plus or minus 5 percent for each of the three party’s vote shares was considered acceptable for inclusion in this study. Data on the actual federal election vote distribution were obtained from Elections Canada:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Provincial Election Date</th>
<th>Conservative / Progressive Conservative</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>NDP</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Three Parties Elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>March 3, 2008</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>April 14, 2009</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>May 22, 2007</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>Sept. 27, 2010</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>Oct. 9, 2007</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>June 9, 2009</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>Oct. 10, 2007</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>May 28, 2007</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>Dec. 8, 2008</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>Nov. 7, 2007</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vote Share for First Provincial Election Preceding the 2011 Canadian Federal Election

Source: These data come from official past election reports which are available on the respective provincial websites, and listed in the bibliography.

Note: The ‘Conservative/Progressive Conservative’, ‘Liberal’ and ‘NDP’ cells contain the percentage of vote share received by the party (relative frequencies) in that provincial election. The ‘Three Parties Elected’ column relates to whether the legislature includes members from the three parties considered in this paper.

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Appendix C: Cross-Level Partisanship in Concurrent and Non-Concurrent Elections for Three Canadian Provinces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Projected Vote Shares Using CES Data¹</th>
<th>Actual Vote Share in October 4th 2011 Manitoba General Election² (t₂)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federal Election</td>
<td>Projected Provincial Election (t₁)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative/PC</td>
<td>50.4% (71)</td>
<td>44% (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>21.3% (30)</td>
<td>5.7% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>27% (38)</td>
<td>47.5% (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other party/spoil ballot</td>
<td>1.4% (2)</td>
<td>2.8% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-Concurrent Elections for Three Canadian Provinces

Figure 1: Projected vs Actual Vote Share: Manitoba

1 Source: Canadian Election Study 2011.

Figure 2: Projected vs Actual Vote Share: Ontario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Projected Vote Shares Using CES Data¹</th>
<th>Actual Vote Share in October 6th 2011 Ontario General Election² (t₂)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Federal Election</td>
<td>Projected Provincial Election (t₁)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative/PC</td>
<td>43.9% (372)</td>
<td>43.1% (339)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>27.6% (234)</td>
<td>32.8% (258)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>24.1% (204)</td>
<td>20.0% (157)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other party/spoil ballot</td>
<td>4.5% (38)</td>
<td>4.1% (32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Source: Canadian Election Study 2011.
### Figure 3: Projected vs Actual Vote Share: Nova Scotia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Party</th>
<th>Projected Vote Shares Using CES Data¹</th>
<th>Actual Vote Share in October 8th 2013 Nova Scotia General Election² (t₂)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Federal Election</strong></td>
<td><strong>Projected Provincial Election (t₁)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative/PC</td>
<td>41% (41)</td>
<td>35.8% (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>25% (25)</td>
<td>24.2% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>31% (31)</td>
<td>37.9% (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other party/spoil ballot</td>
<td>3% (3)</td>
<td>2.1% (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Source: Canadian Election Study 2011.  

### Figure 4: Average Gap in Vote Share between Co-Partisans for Concurrent and Non-Concurrent Elections
Bibliography


