

Local Blackout in Effect?
Major Daily News Coverage of Three Municipal Elections
In Calgary, Alberta
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Abstract:

Voters in local elections (such as those for municipal offices, school boards, and other local entities) face a major barrier to making informed choices due to difficulties in obtaining information. Media coverage is allegedly getting worse as daily newspapers retrenchment and close across Canada. Although exclusively online sources have emerged that cover local politics, most lack the resources to do actual reporting and focus on commentary. Consequently, newspapers still play an important if imperfect role in informing municipal voters. This paper presents the results of a quantitative content analysis of coverage provided by Calgary's two daily newspapers of the city's 2010, 2013 and 2017 local elections. These papers are The Calgary Herald and Sun. In October 2014, The Herald's owner acquired the Calgary Sun. In 2016, the two newsrooms merged and several journalists were let-go. This paper tests three hypothesis about the impact of this restructuring on the coverage of local elections. One: When compared to 2010, in 2017 a greater proportion of the stories will be about the mayoralty contest or the election in general, as opposed to the contests for individual city council seats. Two: In 2017, a greater proportion of the stories will be opinion pieces (columns, op-eds and editorials) as opposed to news stories than in 2010. Three: In 2017 a lower proportion of the news stories will be written by local politics "beat reporters". The net effect, if these three hypothesis are shown to be true, is that not only has the merger further reduced the already low information that Calgarians have access to regarding municipal elections, but the breadth and quality of that information will also have been reduced. However, the evidence presented here only provides mixed results. Hypothesis 1 is not supported, hypothesis 2 is only somewhat supported, and hypothesis 3 could be supported if restated somewhat.

1. Introduction

Canada has a crisis of political participation. Voter turnout is in long-term decline and is particularly low in local elections (Nakhaie 2006; Sancton 2012: 193; Tindal and Tindal 2009: 319-20). Political scientists have found that there is a link between the availability of information to voters and voting. A finding recently confirmed for school board elections in Calgary by McGregor and Lucas (2019: 931-932). Meanwhile, the cost (in terms of effort and time) to voters of obtaining this information during local elections is steeper than for provincial and federal contests (Cutler and Matthews 2005: 363). The difficulty is assumed to have grown due to the increasingly difficult business conditions facing local newspapers (Tait 2016). Although the traditional news media, and especially physical newspapers, are becoming less relevant to Canadians, this does not mean that the newsgathering and producing organizations that create them are unimportant to our democracy. Even though paid readership of newspapers is in decline, Canadians still consume the news produced by newspaper organizations either directly on the internet or indirectly through the other internet, television and radio content that it inspires. Even as paid readership declines, an even bigger challenge has emerged. A small handful of global technology companies (such as Google) have used the large amounts of data they have acquired about internet users to become advertising brokers. They bring targeted ads on to the screens of individuals viewing content from newspapers and other websites based on this data to ensure that advertisers' messages reach the people they wish to target. This model has proven very attractive to advertisers. A further issue, if this were not enough is that rather than going to a newspaper website to read news, many Canadians instead use search engines, such as Google, to find news of interest to them, or are drawn to news by postings from contacts on social media. As a result, a small number of companies have also grabbed the vast majority of revenue from online advertising. This has further accentuated the financial pressure faced by

newspaper organizations who have invested large sums in going digital only to see others earn most of the revenue their content produces. As in other areas of business facing increased financial pressure, one way that the newspaper industry has responded is through concentration of ownership and cuts to staff and other costs. When looked at in Canada as a whole, this has coincided with a reduction of news coverage regarding civic topic, which would further raise the information costs confronting local voters. The crisis has now become so severe that some countries are considering public policy action to either support the traditional news media or require the internet giants to share some of their revenue with news media organizations (Cairncross 2019; Public Policy Forum 2017 and 2018; Mediapost.com 2020; Moore 2020).

This paper seeks to test the proposition that media concentration plays a role in creating a decline in not just the available news and information regarding civic topics, but also the quality and breadth of the available news and information. This possibility has been a persistent concern in Canada since at least the 1970s to both the state and academic researchers (Senate of Canada 1970; Kent et al. 1981; Jackson 1999; Blidook 2009; Goyette-Cote et al. 2012; Edge 2017). Specifically, it looks at the newspaper coverage of local politics in Calgary, Alberta during the 2010, 2013 and 2017 municipal elections. In 2014 the existing daily newspaper duopoly was ended when Postmedia (owner of the Calgary Herald), purchased Sun newspaper chain (owner of the Calgary Sun) from Quebecor. In 2016, Postmedia began a series reorganizations and downsizings across Canada, including the merger of the newsrooms of the Calgary Herald and Sun, resulting in 25 journalists being let go (Brownell 2014; Houpt 2016; Tait 2016; Edge 2017: 852).

Newsgathering and production, as with any other activity, is subject to certain basic economic principles. More specialized employees are more expensive than employees who can

perform a variety of tasks, and when production costs are equal, a product that is consumed by a larger population is more profitable than one that is only attractive to a smaller one, unless it is of such value, that the smaller population will pay a premium for it. This is because once the basic costs of producing the product are recovered, the profit derived from each additional sale falls.

Applying these principles to information industries such as the media, one author notes:

“information products and services are characterized by high fixed costs and low marginal costs. They are expensive to produce but cheap to reproduce and distribute. Technology keeps making reproduction and distribution cheaper, whereas the greater choosiness of users and the slower technical progress in information creation makes production often more expensive” (Noam 2009). When combined with the increasing reluctance of customers to pay for the news (rather than accessing it directly or indirectly online for free), as well as the also noted declining share of advertising revenue (Cairncross 2019; Public Policy Forum 2017 and 2018; Moore 2020), newspaper organizations are being squeezed on both sides with rising costs of production and falling revenue. The need to relieve these pressures, by generating news that will be interesting to the largest possible audience of readers at a lower overall cost of production, helps to generate the three hypotheses tested in this paper. They all revolve around reducing specialized labour costs (the number of journalists required and their degree of specialization by topic covered) and producing a product with as wide a potential audience of readers as is possible (everyone in Calgary and those interested in the general direction of the city). These hypotheses are not just that the volume of coverage of local elections produced by The Calgary Herald and Sun will have declined due to the purchase of The Sun by The Herald’s owners but that:

- 1.) When compared to 2010, in 2017 a greater proportion of the stories will be about the mayoralty contest or the election in general, as opposed to the contests for individual city council seats.
- 2.) In 2017, a greater proportion of the stories will be opinion pieces (columns, op-eds and editorials) as opposed to news stories than in 2010.
- 3.) In 2017 a lower proportion of the news stories will be written by local politics “beat reporters,” as opposed to those who are generalists, covering whatever topics are required.

The net effect, if these three hypothesis are shown to be true, is that not only has the merger further reduced the already low information that Calgarians have access to regarding municipal elections, but the breadth and quality of that information will also have been reduced. A quantitative content analysis of the coverage provided by the Herald and Sun during the 2010, 2014 and 2017 elections is performed to test these hypotheses. The analysis provides partial confirmation of hypothesis two. The evidence could support hypothesis three if restated somewhat. However, hypothesis one is rejected. The next section of the paper discusses certain contextual factors relevant to the study. Section 3 provides a summary of the methods used for data collection. Section 4 presents the analysis and results. The paper then concludes with a discussion as to how to interpret them, asking whether or not it matters that the amount of unique news coverage of municipal elections has declined.

2. Contextual Factors:

Calgary has a structure for local municipal government that is typical of many cities in Canada. It has an elected mayor and fourteen city council seats and there is no county or regional level of

government linking it with other municipalities in its region. As with other municipalities in Canada, the structure and powers of Calgary's municipal government are the product of provincial legislation, as is the timing and rules governing elections. During the period under study, one significant change that occurred in this legislation was the extension of the term in office for local officeholders from three to four years. Again, as with most other Canadian municipalities, Alberta's laws require mayoralty and council candidates to compete as individuals rather than as members of parties. The province's laws also provide for secular and Catholic school boards separate from the city administration, with their own elected members, one per city council ward. Elections for all three offices, mayor, city councilor and school board member, occur simultaneously in all cities and towns in the province (*RSA Alberta* 2000 Chapter L-21; *RSA Alberta* 2000 M-26; *S Alberta* 2012 Chapter E-0.3). However, informal alliances along ideological and policy-preference lines are common. In the 2013 election, some felt the incumbent Mayor had gone too far when he broke with a long standing tradition and endorsed a number of incumbents and actively campaigned for them (Calgary Herald 2013). Somewhat more unique, is that unlike many other large Canadian urban areas, the population of the Calgary region is concentrated within Calgary itself. For example, unlike the Toronto Census Municipal Area (i.e. Greater Toronto) where more than half the population lives outside of the City of Toronto, in Greater Calgary approximately 89% of the population live in the City (Statistics Canada 2017). Calgary's fortunes varied greatly during the years covered by this study. In 2010, the City was still recovering from the Great Recession but was beginning to benefit from the rising price of oil and natural gas. The clearest evidence of this was the rapidly increasing demand for office space in the city's business district (Toneguzzi 2010). In 2013, the city went to the polls only after a spring flood had devastated many of the neighborhoods near the centre of

the Calgary along the Bow River (Ewart 2013). By Election Day 2017, Calgary and the rest of Alberta were struggling to come to terms with the 2014-15 collapse of global oil prices and the increasingly shaky long-term prospects of Alberta's oil-sands (Varcoe 2018).

Although this paper looks at impact of changes that happened at Calgary's newspapers after the Herald's owners (Postmedia) acquired the Sun, creating a monopoly on daily newspaper ownership in the city, the reader should note that restraint and cutbacks had been occurring at both papers throughout the entire period under study. Most symbolic of these earlier cost-cutting efforts was the decision by Postmedia to discontinue publication of the Herald on Sundays, which occurred in May 2012 (Laudrantaye 2012).

Finally, it should be noted that the 2013 election was widely seen as both an election without many large issues to debate and also a somewhat dull horse race. Under 25% of those eligible to vote turned out at the polls and one re-elected incumbent member of council indicated that he was surprised turnout was even that high, ascribing it to the decent weather. More importantly for this study, those who wished to see a change of direction in the city accepted that they had little hope of unseating the incumbent mayor, Naheed Nenshi. This was a view even shared by his main opponent, Jon Lord. At one point in the campaign, Lord acknowledged he was running because someone had to agree to do it. He then demonstrated his commitment to the race by announcing he was going to skip the only open forum for mayoralty candidates so he could take part in a barbecue competition in Kansas City. He ultimately changed his mind, hurrying back to Calgary at the last moment. Consequently, those seeking change concentrated their efforts on electing candidates for city council whom they believed would take different positions on the issues from those of the Mayor and the incumbents who supported him (Bell 2013; Markusoff 2013; Platt 2013). As we will see later in this paper when we look at the data,

there was an unusually large proportion of coverage devoted to individual city council races by the Sun and Herald during the 2013 contest, and this might help to explain that anomaly.

3. Methodology:

Each of the newspapers was searched for thirty days prior to the most recent provincial municipal election date and election-day itself (meaning a possible 31 days). As noted above, the Herald discontinued publication of its Sunday edition in 2012. As well, in each of the three elections studied, the Thanksgiving holiday fell within the campaign period. In the first instance, the Factiva database was used to search the papers. Where this was not possible, microfilm copies were used, most notably for the Calgary Sun during the 2010 election. Each paper was searched individually for each day of the 31 day period. For the electronic search the following search string was used:

((elect* or vote*) and ((the first municipality listed by Statistics Canada in the CMA) or (the second municipality) or (the nth municipality)))

Articles identified were then saved to a separate file for each date and subsequently read to confirm relevance and so that they could be coded. As this paper is only concerned with coverage of Calgary's municipal election, stories about the other municipalities in the Calgary CMA (i.e. Greater Calgary), were discarded from the data set used for this specific study. When manually searching microfilm editions of the papers unavailable via Factiva, the search string was converted into keywords and each edition of the paper was reviewed from front to back. As with the electronic search, articles matching the keywords were saved to a separate file for each day's edition of the paper in PDF format and subsequently reviewed to confirm relevance, record details and to code for:

- Date
- Newspaper
- Section
- Page
- Article Type
 - News
 - Opinion [including both op-eds and regular columnists]
 - Editorials
- Municipalities covered
- Author(s) Last Name
- Author(s) First Name
- Type of Election
 - Mayoralty
 - Council
 - School Board
 - Other Elected Offices
 - General Coverage (includes election coverage that does not mention a specific office, more than one or is about the election in general)

Afterwards, the data was reviewed and those authors who wrote more than four articles (one per week) during any of the three elections, for either of the papers, were given a unique identifier as this was considered the least possible output that would qualify a journalist as having a full-time interest in local politics. Those whose work first appeared in the Calgary Herald were given unique codes starting with 10 and those whose work first appeared in the Calgary Sun were

given unique codes starting with 20. All other authors whose work first appeared in the Herald were coded as 1098 and those whose work first appeared in the Sun were coded as 2098.

Anonymous pieces in the Herald were coded as 1099 and those in the Sun were given the code 2099.

A serious problem that was encountered was that Factiva does not archive either the Sun nor the Herald's web-only content. In order to correct for this as best as possible, the "Way Back Machine" (web.archive.org) was relied upon. This is a not-for-profit organization that seeks to maintain a publicly accessible archive of the ever changing internet. The organizations computers continually crawl the internet and retain images of publicly accessible websites as they appeared when the crawler visited. Again it was searched using the keywords, articles were reviewed and copies retained for review as to relevance and coding when possible. Only those articles that provided additional content not present in the paper itself were retained. One difficulty encountered was that in some cases the image contains missing and broken links so that there are places where it is likely useful content exists but it cannot be read. The best example of this is the 2017 election coverage of the Calgary Herald. On its election sub-site one can see the headline "We asked Ward 1 candidates to take a stand" on a link and it leads to a brief piece where each nominated candidate was given a set of questions about issues and asked for answers. However, in the case of some of Calgary's 14 wards that link is either broken or does not exist at all. As it reasonable to assume the Herald sought answers and wrote a piece on all 14 wards, it can be inferred those stories existed. However, there is no way to be sure. Therefore, a new variable was created for web content as to whether the story was found or only inferred and inferred content was only included in the subsequent analysis were doing so would work against the hypothesis being tested. To take the above noted example again. One of the

hypothesis is that after the merger there would be fewer articles about individual city council elections. Therefore, the missing but inferred pieces from 2017 described above should be included in the analysis (as the impact is to increase the number of stories about specific local council races). A second difficulty encountered was that once posted on a paper's website, content tended to stay for the entire election. In some cases, stories were present with dates prior to the 31 day period being searched. As it was available to readers during the 31 day period, these pieces were retained for the database. However, their date was listed as the first day in the 31 day period for each election, as they would have been available to a reader on that date.

The original data-entry was done using Microsoft Excel. The resulting file was checked for errors and then converted into SPSS format. A further check for errors was then conducted and labels were attached to the codes being used for each variable before commencing the analysis. The resulting data base is composed of a total of 797 stories.

4. Analysis:

This analysis will start with a simple break down of the stories per paper per election.

Table 1: Total Local Election Coverage in the Calgary Herald and Calgary Sun

		Election			Total
		2010	2013	2017	
Newspaper	Herald	169	137	139	445
	Sun	145	92	115	352
Total		314	229	254	797

Unsurprisingly, when compared to 2010, coverage is down after Postmedia acquired the Sun during the 2017 local elections, by approximately 17% in the Herald and 20% in the Sun. The

drop increases further when one removes duplicate stories. Duplicates are stories written by the same author for one paper that also appear in the other one. The only changes being a light editing, adjustment to length and a new headline in keeping with the style of the second paper. The next table shows the results for the 2017 election for each paper after this restriction is put in place. It show the total number of articles for 2017 dropped by 72 articles. When only looking at unique articles there is a 42% drop in overall coverage for the two papers combined between 2010 and 2017.

Table 2: Coverage of 2017 Election Excluding Duplicate Stories

		2017
	Herald	111
	Sun	71
	Total	182

However, as noted above, that there was a decline in coverage is not surprising, the hypotheses being tested here are about the quality and breadth of that coverage, and there the results are mixed. We will begin with hypothesis three and work backwards. Tables 3 and 4 show the data for writers assigned a unique code, those who have contributed at least four pieces in any one election for each election. In the first table are writers whose work first appeared in the Herald and in the second table those whose work first appeared in the Sun.

Table 3. Articles Written by Authors for Each Election Whose Work First Appeared in the Calgary Herald

		Election			Total
		2010	2013	2017	
Author	Kyra Bird	0	0	4	4
	Don Braid	9	4	11	24
	Dave Breakenridge	4	3	0	7
	Yolande Cole	0	0	12	12

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Licia Corbella	1	2	5	8
Kelly Cryderman	11	0	0	11
Richard Cuthbertson	13	0	0	13
Eva Ferguson	4	6	16	26
Jen Gerson	4	0	0	4
Tamara Gignac	1	4	0	5
Trevor Howell	0	13	0	13
Annalise Klingbeil	0	0	47	47
Jamie Komarnicki	0	4	0	4
Jason Markusoff	21	38	0	59
Sean Myers	8	0	0	8
Tony Seskus	8	0	0	8
Reid Southwick	0	6	4	10
Susan Wilton	5	0	0	5
Michael Wright	0	7	0	7
Other Herald Writers	42	34	32	108
Anonymous Herald	42	20	24	86
Total	173	141	155	469

Table 4. Articles Written by Authors for Each Election Whose Work First Appeared in the Calgary Sun

		Election			Total
		2010	2013	2017	
Author	Rick Bell	21	19	20	60
	Roy Clancy	4	0	0	4
	Dave Dormer	17	21	0	38
	Eric Francis	0	0	5	5
	Renato Gandia	33	8	0	41
	Bill Kauffman	9	7	33	49
	Shawn Logan	9	0	11	20
	Kevin Martin	2	0	2	4
	Jenna McMurray	2	7	0	9
	Bryan Passifume	0	0	8	8
	Michael Platt	7	3	0	10
	Meghan Potkins	0	0	7	7
	Katie Schneider	9	3	0	12
	Damien Wood	0	4	0	4

Other Sun Writers	12	8	9	29
Anonymous Sun	16	8	4	28
Total	141	88	99	328

As can be seen, although a large number of reporters whose work first appeared in both papers wrote at least four articles in one election, very few did so in all three, Don Braid and Eva Ferguson among the Herald writers and Rick Bell and Bill Kauffman at the Sun. Braid and Bell are columnists who write more or less daily opinion pieces for their respective papers, meaning only two reporters in the entire set, Ferguson and Kauffman were regularly writing news pieces on local politics during all three elections. The next two tables, looks at the work produced by authors with a unique code, versus those who do not or are anonymous only for news stories. Duplicate pieces are only included in the first paper that the author wrote for.

Table 5. Calgary Herald News Articles by Type of Author for each Election, Excluding Stories First Appearing in the Sun

		Election			Total
		2010	2013	2017	
Type of Author	Unique Code (4 or more pieces in any election)	72	75	44	191
	No Unique Code	24	23	11	58
	Anonymous	33	14	22	69
Total		129	112	77	318

Table 6. Calgary Sun News Articles by Type of Author for each Election Excluding Stories First Appearing in the Calgary Herald

		Election			Total
		2010	2013	2017	
Type of Author	Unique Code (4 or more pieces in any election)	80	50	36	166

No Unique Code	7	1	2	10
Anonymous	6	3	0	9
Total	93	54	38	185

When the duplicates have been removed, the decline in number of news stories being written by authors deemed to have been spending a significant amount of their time covering the municipal elections (at least four stories during the election) is obvious for the Herald when 2010 is compared to 2017. The drop is almost 40%. The proportion of stories being produced by authors who have written four or more stories compared to those who have not however, remains roughly the same approximately 56%. For the Sun the problem is far worse. When only looking at articles that first appeared in the Sun (regardless of author type), the number of news articles drops by 59% from 2010 to 2017. However, once again when the proportion of these articles written by beat reporters is compared to the portion who are not, things remain roughly the same from 2010 to 2017.

Consequently, the data does not support the Third Hypothesis in its present form. When duplicate stories were excluded from the analysis, the proportion of news articles written by beat reporters did not decline. However, the absolute number of news stories written by these specialists dropped precipitously. Hence the large number of duplicates among news stories. When the lack of longevity of such reporters is considered, things also look somewhat pessimistic. Only two reporters (Ferguson in the Herald and Kauffman in the Sun) wrote four or more news stories regarding local politics during all three elections. It is possible that if a change were made in how a beat reporter was operationalized, the results might have been different. Specifically, rather than just specifying a minimum article production per election, a longevity of greater than one election might be considered.

The second hypothesis was that in 2017, a greater proportion of the stories will be opinion pieces (columns, op-eds and editorials) as opposed to news stories than in 2010. Table 7 presents the data for the number of stories in each of the three categories, combining the opinion and editorial categories gives the total number of opinion pieces. As can be seen, things do not appear to change much from 2010 to 2017. For the Herald the share of coverage made up of opinion pieces only increases slightly from approximately 24% to 27%. For the Sun it drops meaningfully from 36% to 30%.

Table 7. Articles by Article Type for Each Paper for Each Election

Article Type			Election			Total
			2010	2013	2017	
News	Newspaper	Herald	129	112	102	343
		Sun	93	54	81	228
	Total		222	166	183	571
Opinion	Newspaper	Herald	31	19	35	85
		Sun	43	33	30	106
	Total		74	52	65	191
Editorial	Newspaper	Herald	9	6	2	17
		Sun	9	5	4	18
	Total		18	11	6	35
Total	Newspaper	Herald	169	137	139	445
		Sun	145	92	115	352
	Total		314	229	254	797

However when we exclude duplicate pieces, the story does change somewhat. Table 8 shows results for the Herald when pieces originally appearing in the Sun are excluded and Table 9 shows this for the Sun when a similar constraint is applied and pieces originally appearing in the Herald are excluded. Meanwhile Table 8 contains the data for both papers combined when duplicates are excluded.

Table 8. Calgary Herald: Article Type by Election Excluding Pieces Originally in the Calgary Sun

		Election			Total
		2010	2013	2017	
Article Type	News	129	112	77	318
	Opinion	31	19	32	82
	Editorial	9	6	2	17
Total		169	137	111	417

Table 9. Calgary Sun: Article Type by Election Excluding Pieces Originally Published in the Calgary Herald

		Election			Total
		2010	2013	2017	
Article Type	News	93	54	38	185
	Opinion	39	29	29	97
	Editorial	9	5	4	18
Total		141	88	71	300

Table 10. Both Papers: Article Type by Election Excluding Duplicates

		Election			Total
		2010	2013	2017	
Article Type	News	222	166	115	503
	Opinion	70	48	61	179
	Editorial	18	11	6	35
Total		310	225	182	717

When the duplicates have been excluded from the analysis for the Herald, the share of opinion pieces (op-eds, columns and editorials) goes from approximately 24% in 2010 to 31% in 2017 and for the Sun from approximately 36% to 46%. Overall, when both papers are combined, the

change from 2010 to 2017 is 28% to 36%. Based on this analysis hypothesis two is partially supported: When you look at the entire coverage of the election available to a reader of the two newspapers (by removing duplicate stories), the proportion of the coverage made up of opinion piece, as opposed to news stories does increase from 2010 to 2017. However, if a reader were to look at only one newspaper (and/or its associated website), the proportion of the coverage made up of opinion pieces would not change much for the Herald and decreases for the Sun.

Finally, we turn our attention to the first hypothesis; in 2017, a greater proportion of the stories will be about the mayoralty contest or the election in general than in 2010, as opposed to the contests for individual city council seats. Table 9 shows the data for coverage in the two newspapers by election type.

Table 11: Election Coverage by Newspaper and Election type

Newspaper			Election			Total
			2010	2013	2017	
Herald	Election Type	Mayor	75	31	69	175
		City Council	21	28	35	84
		School Board	10	14	8	32
		Election In General	63	64	27	154
	Total		169	137	139	445
Sun	Election Type	Mayor	86	27	60	173
		City Council	24	23	16	63
		School Board	2	1	6	9
		Election In General	33	41	33	107
	Total		145	92	115	352
Total	Election Type	Mayor	161	58	129	348
		City Council	45	51	51	147
		School Board	12	15	14	41
		Election In General	96	105	60	261
	Total		314	229	254	797

Of the 169 articles about the 2010 Calgary local elections in the Herald, 10 were about the School Board contests. Eliminating them means that there were 159 articles and 21 were about individual city council races (approximately 13%). In 2017 there were 131 articles (excluding those about the School Board) and 35 were about unique city council races meaning the share roughly doubles to 26%. When we look at the Sun in 2010 there are 143 relevant articles and the share of those about individual city council races is roughly 17%. For 2017 the proportion falls slightly to 15%. Tables 12 and 13 remove the duplicate articles.

**Table 12: Calgary Herald: Election Coverage by Election Type
Duplicates Removed**

		2010	Election 2013	2017	Total
Election Type	Mayor	75	31	52	158
	City Council	21	28	29	78
	School Board	10	14	7	31
	Election In General	63	64	23	150
Total		169	137	111	417

Table 13: Calgary Sun Articles by Election Type Duplicates Removed

		2010	Election 2013	2017	Total
Election Type	Mayor	83	24	42	149
	City Council	24	23	9	56
	School Board	2	1	1	4
	Election In General	32	40	19	91
Total		141	88	71	300

Eliminating the duplicate articles causes the proportion of articles about unique city council races in the Calgary Herald's 2017 election coverage to further increase to roughly 28%, while for the

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Sun it falls a bit more to roughly 13%. Table 14 provides the results for both papers with the duplicates removed.

Table 14. Articles by Election Type Both Papers Combined and Duplicates Removed

		2010	Election 2013	2017	Total
Election Type	Mayor	158	55	94	307
	City Council	45	51	38	134
	School Board	12	15	8	35
	Election In General	95	104	42	241
Total		310	225	182	717

Taking out the 12 articles about the School Board contests, we are left with 298 articles in total from the 2010 election, 45 of which are about individual council races or roughly 15%. In 2017 there are 174 articles once the School Board pieces are removed and 38 pertain to individual council races or roughly 22%. Given this evidence, hypothesis one is rejected. The database allows us to go a bit further and isolate the reason for this. In 2017 and 2013 the Herald chose to use its website to publish content it had no room for in its pages, including blogs and videos by its writers. In 2017 there was a substantial amount of content unique to the website that pertained to individual council races. Table 13 shows the Herald's coverage of individual council races excluding material duplicated from the Sun and whether it appeared in print (in which case the web version was not included in the database) or uniquely on the website.

Table 15: Calgary Herald 2017 Election Coverage, Individual City Council Seats (Duplicates Excluded) Appearing in Print or Exclusives on its Website

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	PRINT	14	48.3	48.3	48.3
	WEB	15	51.7	51.7	100.0
	TOTAL	29	100.0	100.0	

During the 2017 election, more than half of the Herald's original coverage of individual city council races was available exclusively through the paper's website and this allowed it to publish more of this content than in prior elections.

5. Conclusion, the Mixed Impact of Concentration of Media Ownership:

This analysis shows that although the overall election coverage provided by the Calgary Sun and Calgary Herald has declined, it cannot be clearly said that the quality and breadth of that coverage has gotten worse. Starting with the benchmark we have used for quality, the proportion of articles produced by specialist "beat" reporters. Although the volume of stories produced by such reporters declined, in line with the decline in overall coverage, the proportion of stories produced by such reporters did not. More startling was how few reporters met the benchmark of producing four stories for a paper in an election (an average of one per week) for all three elections, only four in total, a columnist and a news reporter at each paper. Consequently, it was suggested that if hypothesis three were restated to consider only the volume of work produced by beat reporters it might be supported by the data. It is also possible that the benchmark for beat reporters was set too low and should have included some indicator of the reporters' longevity with their paper. Next turning to breadth, there was no support in the data that the proportion of coverage devoted to individual council seats had declined. In fact, the coverage increased in the Herald when considering either total content or only those pieces written for the Herald in the first instance. The reason for this was that The Herald made use of its website to produce a large number of unique pieces not available in the print edition during the 2017 election. Therefore hypothesis one should be rejected. Finally there is the second quality indicator, the balance

between news and opinion (with a higher news content being superior). Hypothesis two was that there should be a greater proportion of opinion pieces after the merger. The evidence supported this argument if one excluded duplicate stories from the count for each newspaper. This raises a question worth concluding on. Does the degree of duplication matter? It depends. If one assumes that a voter wants access to as much information as possible, then yes it does, as removing the duplicate stories not only causes the overall amount of coverage to fall even further, but also has some impact on the quality and breadth which are the subject of the three hypotheses here. However, if a voter only reads one newspaper and/or its associated website, then the presence of duplicate stories actually enhances the information available to them by providing more even if there is some impact on quality and breadth.

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