

# The New NDP

Moderation, Modernization,  
and Political Marketing

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## ..... Introduction

This book traces the activity of the New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) from the night of the 2000 federal election to the night of the 2015 federal election. It is about a political roller coaster, about a party that went from near extinction to the cusp of forming the federal government only to be bitterly disappointed on an election night when it was supposed to make history.

On November 27, 2000, the federal NDP experienced one of the worst electoral defeats in its history. It received only 8.5 percent of the popular vote and barely clung to official party status in the House of Commons by winning thirteen seats. This disappointing outcome reversed the minor comeback that the party had experienced in the 1997 federal election after its unexpected electoral disaster in 1993. The glory days of the party seemed to be a distant memory, its morale was exceedingly low, and it was soon plunged into the instability of a leadership race.

Under the new leadership of Jack Layton, the party started to see incremental improvements in its electoral fortunes. In each of the 2004, 2006, and 2008 elections, its percentage of the popular vote and its number of seats crept upward. The NDP subsequently made a dramatic breakthrough in the 2011 federal election, forming the official opposition for the first time in its history and winning a large majority of seats in Quebec. When Layton's untimely death shortly after the election shocked the party and all Canadians, the NDP was forced into a leadership race that chose Thomas (Tom) Mulcair as the new leader. Entering the 2015 federal election, the party was a serious contender to form the next federal government for the first time in its history. Instead of fulfilling its long-held dream of attaining power, on October 19, 2015, the NDP lost half of its seats as its popular vote fell from 31 percent to 20 percent, and it was relegated to its traditional status as the third party in the House of Commons.

This book describes how this roller-coaster ride from being an afterthought in Canadian politics to being at centre stage as a potential governing party and then plummeting back to third-party status transformed the federal NDP. Through an analysis of the NDP's political marketing from 2000 to 2015, I make three interrelated arguments: 1) the NDP went through a process of moderation and modernization; 2) this process was driven by the agency of political operatives gathered around the leader of the party and changes to party financing rules; and 3) the moderation and modernization of the NDP positioned the party well to steal electoral market share from its left-of-centre opponents (the Liberal Party of Canada [LPC] and the Bloc Québécois [BQ]) as the popularity of these parties faltered during the 2000s. In short, a new set of agents came to control the party after Layton became leader, and these new actors played by new party financing rules, the most important being the creation of a per-vote subsidy that provided higher as well as more stable and predictable funding. Armed with innovative ideas and the financial resources to act on them, these agents changed how the NDP organized itself both inside and outside the House of Commons and how the party fought elections. The party revitalized itself and the "New NDP," one that was more modern and more moderate, was born.

However, the book ends with a paradox. The process of moderation and modernization brought the NDP closer to power than it had ever been, but this transformation of the party did not take it all the way. The culmination of this process was the highly professionalized and sophisticated 2015 campaign that NDP operatives had built around experienced leadership, safe change, and a two-way race between the NDP and the Conservative Party. Ultimately, large segments of electoral market share that the NDP had stolen from its competitors in previous elections returned to them. The NDP campaign was simply unable to generate the excitement and momentum needed to prevent its potential supporters from migrating to the Liberal Party or, to a lesser extent, the Bloc Québécois, as unexpected events arose during the campaign. The book ends by summarizing seven lessons emanating from this study for NDPers and political marketing scholars and by asking a difficult question: was the moderation and modernization of the NDP the way to go after all?

### Defining Moderation and Modernization: A Political Marketing Approach

To construct a definition of the process of moderation and modernization

that created the “New NDP,” I turn to the field of political marketing. It is a common misconception that political marketing is simply the study of advertising done by political parties during elections. Political marketing refers to a much broader swath of activities in which parties engage.

For the purposes of this book, I define political marketing as the study of how political parties win elections. It is a “constant process involving [the] gathering of market intelligence through informal and formal means, developing party policies and a party brand, mobilizing party members, building relationships with stakeholders, positioning in relation to competing parties, targeting certain segments of voters, allocating scarce resources, and communicating a party’s policy offerings through paid advertising and the management of news media” (McGrane 2011, 77–78). My definition of political marketing sees political parties as institutions made up of people, assets, and rules primarily dedicated to winning elections. As institutions engaged in running candidates in elections, all political parties do political marketing. Contesting an election requires a political party to perform all of the actions contained in the definition above, even if it does some of these actions unconsciously. Branding is a good example. Even if a political party does not engage in formal branding, it still has a brand that it presents to voters.

The struggles within political parties in the early twenty-first century are often disagreements over the type of political marketing that the party should adopt. Which types of voters should be targeted? What is the role of polling in determining the ideas contained in the election platform? Where should resources be allocated? How a party markets itself, in the largest sense of the term, is continually contested. Agents within political parties do not always agree on the type of political marketing to adopt. As the example of Layton and the NDP will illustrate, a tumultuous time within a party when it questions its identity and *raison d’être* often provides opportunities to transform that party’s political marketing. Such opportunities are enlarged when there are significant changes in the rules under which the party operates, such as changes to campaign financing rules. Under such conditions, a veritable revolution in a party’s political marketing can take place.

I refer to the “revolution” in the federal NDP’s political marketing from 2000 to 2015 as the process of moderation and modernization of the party. I conceptualize this process as encompassing two primary changes in its political marketing: tilting its political market orientation more toward voters

and competitors and adopting postmodern campaign techniques, including branding exercises and sophisticated electoral market segmentation. These two changes constituted the process of moderation and modernization of the federal NDP. They were funded by changes to campaign financing rules, specifically the advent of the per-vote subsidy, and their implementation was driven by the agency of Layton and his team of political operatives.

There are several theories of political market orientation, but the flexible model developed by Robert Ormrod is most suitable to the case of the federal NDP.<sup>1</sup> All contemporary political parties have a political market orientation that Ormrod defines as the manner in which “members of the party are sensitive to internal and external stakeholders’ attitudes, needs and wants, and synthesize these within a framework of constraints imposed by all stakeholders to develop policies and programmes with which to reach the party’s objectives” (2005, 51). According to Ormrod, all parties must simultaneously orient their organization, policy offerings, and strategies toward four distinct groups: voters, other political parties, powerful stakeholders in society, and party members. As can be seen in Table 1.1, Ormrod refers to these orientations, respectively, as voter, competitor, external, and member. Depending on their unique circumstances, parties emphasize certain orientations and de-emphasize others. Over time, they can become more oriented in one way and therefore less oriented in another way.

Formal market intelligence, defined as internal party polling or focus group data, often plays an important part in determining a party’s political market orientation (Ormrod 2006, 112–13; Ormrod 2007, 81). The extent to which a party uses market intelligence is the key component of Lees-Marshment’s (2001) popular concept of product/sales/market-oriented parties. A product-oriented party does not use market intelligence, preferring to base its policy offerings solely on its ideological principles; a sales-oriented party bases its policy offerings on its ideological principles but then tries to find the best ways to communicate those policies to targeted voters using market intelligence; and a market-oriented party uses market intelligence to discover the needs and desires of targeted voters and then crafts policy offerings that fit with its ideology to meet those needs and desires. In Ormrod’s framework, a market-oriented party can be said to have a voter orientation because its activities are largely determined by the wants and needs of its voters as opposed to the strategies of its opponents or the wants and needs of its members and external stakeholders. I use the work of Ormrod here because it encompasses Lees-Marshment’s point about the

TABLE 1.1

**Robert Ormrod's concept of political market orientation**

Orientation	Description of orientation
Voter	Discovering and satisfying the needs and wants of a party's targeted voters as determined primarily through market intelligence such as polling and focus groups.
Competitor	Campaign strategy and policy offerings shaped in light of political competition and the possibilities for future cooperation or conflict with other parties.
External	Engaging with powerful stakeholders in society such as churches, businesses, unions, and social movements by using their research to develop policy offerings, adopting policy positions that would garner their public approval, and entering into formal or informal alliances.
Member	Marshalling the financial and volunteer support of party members, involving members in policy development to ensure that party policies meet their approval, using members as sources of information to discern what targeted voters desire, and decentralizing campaign structures to increase members' ability to shape local and national campaign strategies.

SOURCES: Adapted from Ormrod (2005, 2006, 2007).

importance of market intelligence in political market orientation and provides analytical tools to understand how a political party is constantly pulled in different directions and must simultaneously act and react in relation to the actions and reactions of its members, stakeholders, and competitors.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the NDP's political market orientation was excessively geared toward party members and key external stakeholders – unions – and only superficially toward voters or competitors. During the Layton years, an important part of the party's moderation and modernization was becoming more voter and competitor oriented and less stakeholder and member oriented. Before Layton, the party's principles and the policies that an NDP government would enact to fulfill those principles were the foundation of any campaign. With the policies considered sacrosanct, the discussion revolved around how best to “sell” them to voters, believed to be open to changing their minds given good and rational arguments. Under Layton, the NDP had greater financial resources that resulted from changes to party financing, such as the per-vote subsidy, to increase its use of polling and focus groups. Using this formal market intelligence, Layton and his

team sought first to find out what targeted voters wanted and then to search for ideas congruent with party ideology to appeal to those voters. The NDP, under Layton, became more oriented toward voters, to use Ormrod's concepts, or moved from being a sales-oriented party to a market-oriented party, to use Lees-Marshment's terms.

This new orientation toward voters was an important part of the moderation and modernization of the party. In reaction to what its market intelligence was telling it about the needs and desires of voters, the party altered certain policy positions, emphasized its ideas on certain issues while downplaying its ideas on other issues, and framed platforms in terms of practical solutions to concrete problems as opposed to wide-ranging social changes. Whereas the previous approach was "preference shaping," the new approach was "preference accommodating" (Farrell and Webb 2000, 130). The NDP's aim became to accommodate what voters preferred using policies that fit with the party's social democratic ideology and not to try to change the minds of voters. The primary means of communicating to voters how the party was accommodating their preferences was paid media (i.e., advertisements) and earned media (i.e., televised and printed news stories). Hence, media relations and paid advertising became paramount functions of the party under the leadership of Layton.

During his time as leader, the NDP also became more competitor-oriented by aiming at soft Liberal Party voters and soft BQ voters, another important part of its moderation and modernization. In contrast to past campaigns, the NDP under Layton clearly stated the party's intention to form the government as opposed to being the "conscience" of Parliament. As such, it shifted its "market position" (Butler and Collins 1996) within the Canadian electoral market away from being a niche marketer and toward becoming the market leader. Instead of focusing on winning a handful of seats across the country using the appeal of being the defender of social justice and the voice of unions, the NDP explicitly attempted to replace the Liberal Party as the broad-based and pan-Canadian "progressive" alternative to the governing Conservative Party.<sup>2</sup>

As it increased its voter and competitor orientation, the NDP became less oriented toward external stakeholders and internal members. Gradually, the party reduced its reliance on the labour movement as its key external stakeholder and quietly dropped its ambitious plans to become more integrated with Canada's social movements that arose from the 2002–03 leadership race. The term "social movements" as it was used during this phase of



the NDP's history referred to a wide range of groups, from formal non-governmental organizations such as the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace, and Amnesty International, to think tanks such as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, to the transitory "antiglobalization" groups that sprouted up in opposition to the Free Trade Agreements of the Americas and protested at meetings of the World Trade Organization in Seattle and the International Monetary Fund/World Bank in Washington (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2002). By the time it took over as the official opposition following the 2011 election, the NDP came to focus on what the Leader's Office called "stakeholder relations" with all types of groups in civil society, including business, as opposed to trying to be the so-called party of social movements or political arm of labour. At the same time, the party's member orientation was reduced. The roles of NDP members and volunteers in providing informal market intelligence and in determining the party's platform and election strategies diminished. Also, the roles of local campaign managers and staff from provincial parties close to grassroots members spread across the country were overturned in favour of greater control of local campaigns by party headquarters in Ottawa.

The NDP's choice to adopt political market orientation more voter oriented and competitor oriented was accompanied by the adoption of what the literature on political marketing calls "postmodern campaigning." According to recent research, there was a modernization of campaigning during the twentieth century as it passed from a "premodern" phase to a "modern" phase and then to a "postmodern" phase. Table 1.2 is adapted from the works of several political scientists and illustrates the different elements of each phase.

This book illustrates that NDP campaigning was a mixture of premodern and modern characteristics in 2000. Its campaigns were premodern in their low budgets, short-term and ad hoc nature, dependence on local campaign managers and provincial party staff, and reliance on regional and cleavage-based voting behaviour. However, at the turn of the century, NDP campaigns did tend to be more modern in the sense that they were television centred, based on sound bites broadcast by national media, extensively used commercial phone banks, and engaged in mass direct mailings. By the 2015 federal election, the NDP had adopted postmodern campaigning techniques such as the permanent campaign, multimedia communication, micro-targeted canvassing, email and social media campaigns, upward-spiralling spending, and campaign units that used specialized consultants. As seen

TABLE 1.2

**Premodern, modern, and postmodern campaigning**

	Premodern	Modern	Postmodern
Means of communication	Party members and travelling politicians	Television dominated	Multimedia (television, radio, internet, robocalls)
Style of communication	Messages along party lines transmitted by party members	Sound bites on television	Narrow-casted and targeted micromessages through multiple media of communication
Dominant advertising media	Newspaper advertisements, posters, pamphlets, and mass rallies	Nationwide television advertisements, local radio advertising, mass direct mailing	Targeted direct mailing, email campaigns, social media campaigns, internet advertising to supplement radio and television
Voter identification	Local “party men” responsible for residents of their ridings	Foot canvass and phone banks aiming at all voters with data collection at local level	Foot canvass and phone banks targeting specific voters based on individual-level data with all data feeding into country-wide databases
Campaign coordination	Local campaign managers; decentralization	Leader and small group of advisers around leader; centralization of many campaign functions	Special campaign units in party bureaucracy working with specialized political consultants; growth of the leader’s office; decentralization with central scrutiny
Sources of feedback	Impressionistic or “feel”-based reports by foot canvassers and local volunteers	Occasional large-scale telephone polls, focus groups	Regular polling using a greater range of techniques (live telephone, online, Interactive Voice Response) and focus groups supplemented by assessments of social media activity

Focus	Centred on the local candidate as the representative of the party and part of the leader's team; elected MPs choose the leader	Party image and leader image are equally important; the focus on local candidates diminishes; leaders are chosen at delegated conventions	Presidentialization – the party moulds itself to the leader's brand after a “one-member-one-vote” leadership selection process; the party has a single overarching brand
Election preparation	Short-term, ad hoc	Long-term campaign with a specialist committee struck one–two years before an election	Permanent campaign
Campaign expenditure	Low budget	Moderate budget	High costs with spending spiralling up to election day
Vision of the electorate	Divided by enduring socio-demographic cleavages, stable voting behaviour, high partisan attachments	Catch-all, trying to mobilize voters across all categories	Segmented, issue based, leader-centric, highly volatile voting behaviour coupled with weak partisan attachments

SOURCES: Adapted from Farrell and Webb (2000); Marland (2012); Norris (2000); Plasser and Plasser (2002); and Strömbäck (2007)

following the elections of Layton and Mulcair as leaders, the party moulded itself to the leader's image following a one-member-one-vote selection process. The presidentialization of the federal NDP entailed market research and subsequent branding exercises to promote a singular leader/party brand – “Jack Layton's New Democrats” or “Tom Mulcair's NDP.” Simply put, the moderation and modernization of the NDP entailed fully embracing what political marketing scholars call postmodern campaign techniques by the time of the 2015 election campaign.

A transition to postmodern campaigning requires the growing professionalization of a party (Marland 2012; Strömbäck 2009). Several scholars have noted the professionalization of political parties that has taken place since the late 1980s (Gibson and Römmele 2001, 2009; Katz and Mair 1995, 2009; Panebianco 1988). This research has documented a change in the ethos and practice of political parties whereby they have come to rely almost exclusively on professionals for nearly all of their key functions, from communication and contact with voters to policy development to searching for candidates and mobilizing volunteers. This professionalization has led to the rise of political operatives who have come to play an increasing important role in party life.

In the early 2000s, the NDP was more reflective of premodern and modern campaigning by relying on local volunteers, labour unions, and part-time party employees who would gather together at election time to organize fundraising, identify supporters, and distribute campaign literature in the areas where they lived. NDP headquarters in Ottawa dealt with national advertising (e.g., television commercials) and organized leader's tours but generally let local volunteers, labour leaders, sitting MPs, nominated candidates, and part-time employees run local campaigns how they saw fit. In particular, staff and activists from provincial wings of the party had firm control of local campaigns. Volunteer activists also had a hand in constructing the party's platform through the Federal Council and Election Planning Committee (EPC).

With the changes in party financing rules such as the advent of the per-vote subsidy, the NDP had more money to hire professionals to take on the functions previously performed by volunteers. In its move to postmodern campaigning, the NDP became increasingly organized by professionals, and power became centralized in NDP headquarters. From fundraising to policy development to campaign strategy to vetting potential candidates, these professionals took over tasks traditionally performed by volunteers, local

party activists, and labour union leaders. Because of changes in campaign financing laws, staff from provincial wings began to play reduced roles in federal election campaigns. Rather, regional organizers who reported directly to Ottawa played influential roles in mobilizing local volunteers and setting up local campaigns.

In short, postmodern campaigning restructured how the NDP operated and changed the relationship between party activists and the central party apparatus in Ottawa. Professional political operatives working out of party headquarters became the dominant players influencing the NDP's political strategy and the way in which the party operated. For the time frame in this book, I define political operatives as permanent staff working at NDP headquarters on Laurier Street in Ottawa (now called the Jack Layton Building); permanent regional organizers employed by the federal NDP working in various cities across the country; and permanent staff working on Parliament Hill in the Leader's Office. Volunteers remained important in local campaigns, but they took direction from political operatives and no longer played large roles in the development of party policy. In the story of moderation and modernization that unfolds in this book, the political operatives are like the stars of the movie, whereas the volunteers, and even to a certain extent the elected MPs, are more like the extras.

The final element of the NDP's process of moderation and modernization is alluded to in the last row of Table 1.2: more sophisticated electoral market segmentation. In the first half of the twentieth century, political parties conceived of the electorate as being based on stable voting behaviour and high partisan attachments. Any divisions within the electorate were related to long-term and unchanging cleavages of race and religion. Starting in the 1960s, parties became more "catch-all" and tried to mobilize voters of all types. The principal idea was to develop policies to appeal to the largest number of voters possible, and get-out-the-vote tactics such as phone banks were used to reach the largest number of voters as possible. It has been well documented how, beginning in the late 1990s and early 2000s, political parties began to define subcategories of voters to allow for more efficient targeting of their communications and get-out-the-vote efforts (Baines 1999; Kavanagh 1995; Smith and Hirst 2001; Wring 2005). This type of electoral market segmentation encapsulates a different vision of the electorate. Voters are characterized by highly volatile voting behaviour and very weak partisan attachments. They are motivated by short-term factors such as the appearance of a controversial issue or the emergence of a charismatic leader. The

electorate is seen as being divided not just along sociodemographic lines. New categories of voters are envisioned, such as economy voters (citizens who believe that the economy is the most important issue in the election) or strategic voters (citizens who vote to get a certain party out of power). At its most sophisticated and creative level, electoral market segmentation combines several characteristics of a voter into a profile of the typical supporter of the party (Flanagan 2009, 220–25; Turcotte 2012, 84–86). For example, a federalist living in Quebec concerned about crime and high levels of immigration could be considered a core Conservative Party supporter. Parts of the party's platform are then crafted to appeal to such key voters, and voter identification efforts are made to find them.

Indeed, the division of electoral markets into distinct segments by NDP operatives during the Layton years becomes important in understanding how the party modernized itself. Segmentation became part of the party's lexicon during the Layton and Mulcair years in a way that it was not during the reigns of previous leaders. Professionalization was a necessary prerequisite for the NDP to embrace electoral market segmentation. With the flow of money into party headquarters from the per-vote subsidy, professional party operatives gradually gained the power to shape the party's communications using formal market intelligence and an assessment of the party's position within the electoral market. Electoral market segmentation required surgical precision to choose the issues that appealed to soft Liberal Party and BQ voters and to frame these issues within the complex context of multi-party competition, minority Parliaments, and strategic voting. By the end of the time period examined here, the party had both the financial resources and the professional expertise to perform the type of electoral market segmentation required of a political party using postmodern campaigning techniques.

### Why Political Marketing? Canadian Political Science and the NDP

Unlike most previous research on the federal NDP (formerly the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation or CCF), in this book I apply a political marketing theoretical framework. This approach allows me to take advantage of theoretical and conceptual advances within the field of political marketing that did not exist at the time of publication of seminal works on the NDP, such as Walter Young's *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932–1961* (1969) and Alan Whitehorn's *Canadian Socialism: Essays on the*

CCF-NDP (1992). For instance, there is now a large international literature on the political marketing of left-wing parties, especially work that examines the rise of “the third way,” Blairism, and New Labour in Great Britain (Scammell 2007; White and De Chernatony 2002; Wring 2005). There are parallels in the stories of the NDP and New Labour. Like Tony Blair’s Labour Party, the NDP adopted a voter political market orientation by shaping its policies through the use of market intelligence and reducing the roles played by rank-and-file activists in determining campaign strategies.

With a political marketing approach to examining the federal NDP, this book becomes part of the emerging literature on political marketing in Canada. This subfield has installed new concepts such as branding, the permanent campaign, microtargeting, and market intelligence into the lexicon of Canadian political scientists, and these new concepts are needed to understand the activities and contexts of Canadian political parties in the early twenty-first century (see Marland, Giasson, and Esselment 2017; Marland, Giasson, and Lees-Marshment 2012; and Marland, Giasson, and Small 2014). However, outside my previous work in this area (McGrane 2011, 2016, 2017), the NDP has generally escaped the attention of political marketing scholars in Canada, with the exception of two book chapters in which the party was analyzed among other cases. In *Political Marketing in Canada* (2012), Alex Marland examines the campaigns of political parties in the 1993 and 2006 federal elections and contends that the NDP’s campaign was more “amateur” or “semi-professional” than those of the other major political parties. In *Political Communication in Canada: Meet the Press and Tweet the Rest* (2014), Jared Wesley and Mike Moyes analyze the election platforms of the Manitoba NDP, Nova Scotia NDP, and federal NDP during the 1990s and 2000s to argue that these parties adopted a common formula for “selling social democracy” that encompassed inoculation (shifting the focus away from negative brand traits), moderation (toning down bold left-wing policies), and simplification (reducing the number of commitments in their platforms). Here I build on and expand these two book chapters as well as my previous work in this area to provide the first comprehensive account of the federal NDP’s political marketing in the twenty-first century.

Although the federal NDP has never formed government, it and its predecessor, the CCF, have been popular topics in Canadian political science. The older literature on the party provides a useful starting point, yet the explanation of the party’s current situation is enhanced when one uses the conceptual and theoretical advances of recent Canadian and international

literature on political marketing discussed above. One can illustrate this point by breaking down the literature on the federal party into three inter-related debates that focus, respectively, on ideology, internal party organization, and affiliation with the labour movement.

First, using sources such as internal party debates, campaign platforms, leaders' speeches, and surveys of party members, researchers have thoroughly discussed the ideology of the NDP. Two schools of thought have emerged. One school stresses that party ideology has gradually become less socialist and more liberal (Campbell and Christian 1996; Carroll 2005; Cross 1974; Evans 2012; Young 1969; Zakuta 1964). The other school focuses on how, despite changes in specific policies, party ideology remains true to social democratic principles (Archer and Whitehorn 1997; Erickson and Laycock 2002; Laycock 2015; Pétry 2015; Whitehorn 1992; Wiseman and Isitt 2007). The tone of this literature mirrors those of recent European debates on whether the third way of Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder was a betrayal of social democratic principles (Panitch and Leys 2003) or a necessary update of social democracy for the twenty-first century that stayed true to the original ideology (Giddens 1998, 2007).

The evidence in this book illustrates that, from 2000 to 2015, the federal NDP increasingly adopted an ideology that represented a moderate version of social democracy. However, this version did not entail an overhaul of its basic values or the adoption of policies representative of a reform liberal ideology similar to that of the Liberal Party. Important differences in the values and policy prescriptions of the two parties remain. More importantly, a political marketing lens can illustrate that moderation means more than changing a party's ideas. The NDP became more moderate in how it presented its ideas to Canadians, which ideas it emphasized, and even how it thought of itself. As such, moderation is a larger concept than just moving to the centre in terms of envisioning the policies that an eventual NDP federal government would enact. It involves deeper changes in the overall political marketing of the party, including its political market orientation, its campaign tactics, and how it sees its relationship with the electorate. Simply put, using political marketing to look at the NDP's branding, advertising, and electoral market segmentation can deepen our understanding of the moderation of its ideology. Indeed, how the NDP markets itself intertwines with its ideology. Members on the right of the party's ideological spectrum are much more comfortable with a shift toward voter and competitor political market orientations than members on the left. Indeed, older literature



on the party was fixated on describing its “right” and “left.” In Chapter 2, I use a political marketing approach to illustrate that a right/left division still exists, but it is more appropriate now to talk about “left-wing marketing skeptics” and “right-wing marketing enthusiasts.”

The second debate in the academic literature on the NDP revolves around internal party structures and arguments about the extent to which the party has shifted from being a “mass party” to a “cadre party” (Duverger 1963, 63–79). A mass party issues from and is affiliated with extraparliamentary movements such as churches or trade unions; encourages a large and active membership; ensures that party policy is determined by party members; possesses a rigid, doctrinaire ideology; and runs its election campaigns with local volunteers. A “cadre party” has the opposite characteristics: parliamentary origins; a small and inactive membership; party policy made by leaders; a flexible, catch-all ideology; campaigns run by a centralized group of professionals; and no formal affiliations with extraparliamentary groups. Again two schools of thought have emerged. One school has argued that the NDP is a “protest movement becalmed” (Zakuta 1964) as it incrementally shed its mass party characteristics as power became concentrated in the hands of leaders and party bureaucrats willing to water down the party’s socialist ideology in the name of electoral expediency (Avakumovic 1978; Brodie 1985; Camfield 2011; Palmer 2016; Penner 1992; Young 1969). The other school has argued that the NDP is the prototypical mass party of Canadian politics because of its enduring affiliation with unions and the important role played by party activists in ensuring that the party does not stray too far from its social democratic roots (Engelmann 1956; Morton 1986; Sayers 1999; Whitehorn 1992).

The NDP did increasingly adopt characteristics that Duverger (1963) would identify as being representative of a cadre party during its process of moderation and modernization from 2000 to 2015. The central party office came to determine party platforms, the leader obtained a considerable amount of power, and campaigns were primarily run by a group of professionals in Ottawa. However, the party continued to make efforts to mobilize its membership to be active in local campaigns and riding associations. In fact, one of the main tasks of the professionals in party headquarters was to mobilize local volunteers and increase the participation of rank-and-file members in party activities. The ideology of the party might have moved to the centre, but it is not completely flexible and catch-all. Certain values continue to underpin NDP ideology, and many policy positions

have undergone very little change. Most importantly, the conceptual framework of the postmodern campaign is broader than what the mass party/cadre party dichotomy allows. Professionalization and centralization of party operations are only two aspects of postmodern campaigning, which also entails new ways of communicating and engaging with the electorate, the permanent campaign, and branding exercises. These aspects of postmodern campaigning are not present in the mass party/cadre party dichotomy that emerged in the 1960s, and by using the conceptual framework of postmodern campaigning I can analyze a wider range of activities undertaken by the federal NDP in the early twenty-first century than if I were to stick to a mass party/cadre party conceptual framework.

The third debate in the academic literature on the federal NDP involves the affiliation of the party with organized labour. Scholars have examined both the tensions inherent in the relationship and how the labour movement influences the party's strategies and policies. The discussion in this literature centres on whether the NDP genuinely represents workers' concerns (Evans 2012; Horowitz 1968; Panitch 1961; Savage 2012) and on the extent to which the affiliation of the NDP with the labour movement might hurt its electoral chances (Archer 1985, 1987, 1990). Researchers have also looked at how a closer connection between the NDP and social movements could either supplement or replace the relationship that the party has developed with the labour movement (Cameron 2005; Erickson and Zakharova 2015; McLeod 1994). Recently, there has been an examination of how new party financing laws banning union donations to the NDP have affected its relationship with labour and whether the party should still be considered a "labour party." Whereas Jansen and Young (2009, 658) argue that "shared ideological commitment and overlapping personnel" are responsible for maintaining a labour influence in the NDP, Pilon, Ross, and Savage (2011, 33) contend that much deeper historical forces are at work and that the labour unions' continued support for the NDP is the product of "lessons learnt in the attempts to cope [with], respond to and resist changes in political economic structures."

The concept of "political market orientation" is effective in analyzing the complex relationship among the labour movement, social movements, and the federal NDP in the twenty-first century. On the one hand, the NDP is still a labour party in the sense that it remains officially affiliated with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), and both local and national labour leaders continue to be integrated into the party's structures. On the other hand,

the NDP has gradually become less oriented toward the labour movement as it key external stakeholder. Indeed, both the party and the labour movement have sought more independence from one another than in the past. Similarly, the NDP began to develop relationships with social movements on an informal level when it courted groups such as third-party validators for policy announcements during the 2015 federal election campaign even if a formal affiliation between the NDP and the social movement did not materialize. The concept of political market orientation allows us to think more deeply about how the labour movement, social movements, and the NDP interact with each other. It allows us to see how the NDP remains oriented to some degree toward the labour movement and social movements but how that orientation has been reduced in favour of a greater emphasis on building relationships with voters and engaging with competing political parties.

Overall, the evidence presented in this book indicates that the moderation and modernization of the NDP has moved its ideology to the centre, made the party more of a cadre party in Duverger's (1963) sense of the term, and made it less of a labour party. However, the new theoretical tools provided by political marketing allow for more nuance. We can look at old debates in new ways. We can see that the rigid dichotomies in previous academic literature on the NDP concerning its status as a mass party/cadre party, liberal party/socialist party, and labour party/nonlabour party do not adequately capture the recent transformation of the party. Thus, though distinctions in older academic literature on the NDP are useful starting points, the political marketing approach that I have outlined above takes a broader view of the transformation of the party in the early twenty-first century.

### Research Design and Outline of the Book

In this book, I adopt a "mixed methods research" design. Over the past two decades, mixed methods research has become more prevalent in the social sciences, and a number of methodologists have explored its potential and outlined its use (Creswell 2003; Greene and Caracelli 1997; Miles and Huberman 1994; Newman and Benz 1998; Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998, 2003). Indeed, the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* was launched in 2007. A broad definition of mixed methods research is "research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry" (Tashakkori and Creswell 2007, 3). A key consideration for mixed methods research is the extent to which it

*integrates* qualitative and quantitative findings so that the end product is more than just the sum of the individual quantitative and qualitative parts (Bryman 2007).

In this book, I have used mixed methods research in seeking to integrate the analysis of numerical data with the analysis of textual data. I have analyzed two main sources of numerical data using Stata, a statistical software package. First, from January 13 to 26, 2015, I administered an online survey of 2,440 NDP members. I compared this survey with an NDP member survey administered by Erickson and Laycock in 1997 generously provided to me for use in this book. Second, a custom survey of over 4,000 voters commissioned for this book and entitled the 2015 Canadian Federal Election Panel Survey on Social Democracy was administered during the first week of the 2015 federal election campaign and two weeks immediately following the 2015 federal election (the same voters were surveyed in both waves). I compared this survey with publicly available data from voter surveys in English Canada from the 2000 to the 2011 Canadian Election Studies and voter surveys done by Ipsos-Reid in Quebec on the days of the federal elections of 2006, 2008, and 2011.

The most important source of textual data that I use in this book is a set of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009) that I completed with over sixty NDP operatives, party activists, and politicians concerning their experiences from 2000 to 2015. Access to these party insiders was facilitated by my lifelong involvement in the NDP at federal and provincial levels, including elected positions with the youth wing, work with various riding associations, and being a member of the Saskatchewan NDP Provincial Council and Saskatchewan NDP Provincial Executive. About one year after finishing the interviews, I was elected president of the Saskatchewan NDP. Some of these interviews were conducted in person, and others took place by telephone. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, and some of the interviewees were spoken to more than once. I used a funnel interview protocol (Harrell and Bradley 2009, 50–55) that moved from broad to specific questions. As opposed to making recordings, I took handwritten notes during the interviews that were later typed. A list of the interviewees and short descriptions of their involvement in the federal NDP are contained in Appendix A.

Certainly, handwritten notes lack the exactitude of recorded interview data. However, several interviewees indicated that they would not participate in the project if discussions were recorded. Also, the absence of a

recorder undoubtedly made the interviewees more comfortable and open. I judged the imperatives of guaranteeing an appropriate level of participation of research subjects to carry out the project and ensuring that interviews remained candid to be more important than improving the precision of my data collection by recording the interviews. Since I decided not to record the interviews, it was important to add additional steps to the research design to ensure accuracy of the data from these semi-structured interviews. I subsequently sent a typed version of my handwritten notes to each interviewee to verify their accuracy; I also sent to the interviewees the sentences from the book in which they are cited as sources. These extra steps of verifying the accuracy of my notes from the interviews and ensuring that the interviewees validated their cited statements provide increased confidence in what I heard and wrote down during the interviews.

In addition to data from the sixty interviews featured throughout the book, there are three sources of textual data that I gathered and analyzed. Despite significant challenges in scheduling, my research assistants and I were able to administer anonymous, structured, and recorded interviews to fifty-eight sitting NDP MPs representing 60 percent of the federal NDP caucus from April to December 2014. If the 2015 federal election had gone differently, then these MPs would have formed the basis of the first federal NDP cabinet and government caucus. These interviews, composed primarily of open-ended questions, were subsequently transcribed and coded using NVivo 10. Also, using Stata, I constructed and analyzed a data set containing all of the 18,701 questions asked in Question Period by NDP MPs during the Thirty-Seventh to Forty-First Parliaments (2001–15). Finally, from internet archives (<https://archive.org/web>) and Alan Whitehorn's personal archives, I collected all of the platforms, news releases, and television commercials of the federal NDP from the 2000 to the 2015 elections. I also gathered the radio advertising for the NDP for the 2000 election when the party relied heavily on that medium. These platforms, news releases, and commercials were subsequently transcribed into a digital format and analyzed using NVivo 10. The analysis of these three additional textual sources helps to validate or invalidate the recollections of the interviewees related to me during the semi-structured interviews.

All of the Stata files for member surveys and the 2015 Canadian Federal Election Panel Survey on Social Democracy, as well as the Stata and Excel files for the Question Period data, have been placed in the University of Saskatchewan Archives. Transcripts of my notes from the semi-structured

interviews with NDP operatives, party activists, and politicians are also available at the University of Saskatchewan Archives, along with the platforms, news releases, and television commercials of the federal NDP from the 2000 to the 2015 elections. All of these documents are in PDF format. As per an agreement with the sitting NDP MPs interviewed, the transcripts of their fifty-eight recorded interviews will be made available to the public in 2024 in the University of Saskatchewan Archives. Since these MPs were assured anonymity, parts of the transcripts that could be used to identify them have been redacted. I hope that future researchers will be able to use these data to test and expand my findings in this book or to launch scholarly inquiries of their own.

This book is structured thematically to allow the reader to understand how agents within the NDP (primarily political operatives) used newfound financial resources from party financing reform to drive the process of moderation and modernization of the party and how this process contributed to its electoral success. In Chapter 1, I use the semi-structured interviews with NDP operatives and politicians as well as campaign materials from the 2002–03 leadership race to describe the dire situation of the party following the 2000 election, particularly its finances. In Chapter 2, using the semi-structured interviews with NDP operatives and Elections Canada data on NDP finances, I look closely at the adoption of postmodern campaigning in terms of the transformation of the organization of the party. Using interviews with NDP MPs and the Question Period data set, in Chapter 3 I explore how changes in the federal party's political marketing affected the functioning of the NDP caucus in the House of Commons. With a combination of semi-structured interviews with NDP operatives and content analysis of NDP advertising and news releases, in Chapter 4 I then look at the political marketing of the party by closely examining strategies followed by the party in the six federal election campaigns from 2000 to 2015. In Chapter 5, I analyze election platforms and surveys of NDP members, MPs, and potential voters to investigate how new approaches to political marketing of the party affected its ideology from 2000 to 2015. For readers interested in my explanation of the party's historic breakthrough in the 2011 federal election, particularly the surprising "orange wave" in Quebec, Chapter 6 is the best place to look. In it, I use publicly available voter surveys to explore the attitudes and behaviours of NDP voters from 2000 to 2011 through the lens of electoral market segmentation – a key part of the party's new political

marketing – and relate these findings back to the analyses of previous chapters. Following up on the analysis in the previous chapter, in Chapter 7 I examine the party’s heartbreaking defeat in the 2015 federal election using the 2015 Canadian Federal Election Panel Survey on Social Democracy, a custom voter survey commissioned for this book. In the conclusion, I try to understand the implications of the NDP’s disheartening 2015 campaign for the future of the party and literature on political marketing.

It is hard to deny that the NDP’s political roller-coaster ride from 2000 to 2015 is simply a great story. Popular books (Chow 2014; Gidluck 2012; Lavigne 2013; Turk and Wahl 2012) and even a CBC movie on Layton’s life have told the tale of a scrappy group of underdogs who believed so strongly in their cause that they succeeded against all odds. Subsequently, tragedy struck when Layton died, and his dedicated followers had to pick up the pieces to contest another election in which their Hollywood ending of realizing the dream of their fallen leader did not come true.

Here I intend to supplement the intriguing human elements of the story of the federal NDP with thorough academic analysis of its political marketing. Although moderation and modernization of the party did not propel it to power, the revolutionizing of its political marketing did allow it to reassert itself as an important player in Canadian politics and as a party whose activities can affect Canadian political discourse. As such, the transformation of the party’s political marketing rearranged Canada’s party system, and how the “new NDP” functions and where its internal politics are headed remain important for the future of Canada and continue to merit serious academic attention.

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