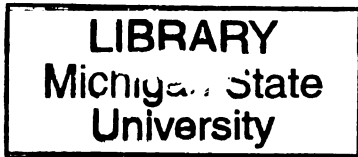




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FOXES AND TOADS: THE ELECTORAL CONNECTION AND PARLIAMENTARY  
ACTIVITY IN THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS

By

Stewart L French

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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## ABSTRACT

### FOXES AND TOADS: THE ELECTORAL CONNECTION AND PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY IN THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS

By

Stewart L French

The contribution of this dissertation is to expand the study of legislative decision-making beyond the roll-call vote by beginning the process of an in-depth analysis of the pre-voting activities individual members use to mitigate the costs associated with the electoral connection. In this dissertation, I present a theory of individual member legislative activities built on Mayhew's (1974) electoral connection.

Inherent in every legislative environment, there is a tension between the collective goals of the political party and individual members of the legislature. Members have multiple goals that they may seek, but the most important for an individual member is the goal of re-election. As such, the costs associated with individual members seeking to distance themselves from the party for the purposes of re-election are determined by two key institutional features: the electoral rules governing member's selection and the institutional relationship between the executive and legislature.

In the British House of Commons, the relationship between the need for a party vote versus a personal vote is different than what you would find in the US Congress. This is due specifically to the fact that the executive is contained within the parliament, thus raising the costs for defecting from the party on legislative votes. The need for the

personal vote, however, is similar to the US Congress in that the British system uses the same “first-past-the-post” electoral rules. The need for the opportunity to have “safety valve” activities that allow members to distinguish themselves from the collective goals is the same as the US.

All legislatures provide these types of safety valves for the purpose of mitigating the costs associated with supporting the collective goal of the party. They are higher for parliamentary environments due to the costs associated with failure to pass legislation for the party. This is the motivation behind participation from individual Members of Parliament in three key pre-legislative activities: Early Day Motions, Written Questions and Private Member Bills.

The core hypothesis examines the electoral environment’s impact on the three different pre-legislative activities. To wit: individual members from at risk districts should use these pre-legislative activities to engage in cultivating a personal vote. I build upon newly emergent research interested in the decision-making process of legislative bodies by providing a detailed analysis of the British House of Commons.

This dissertation is dedicated to Amanda, for all her support and understanding.

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

“The Government chief whip has been giving the toads ever simpler routines to perform, He used to prime each with a different question but, though Mr. Major could remember the answers, the toads kept forgetting the questions. So this week he seemed to have given nearly *all* of them the same one...”

Franklin and Norton (1993:74)

“Why do legislators collectively choose to zip their lips and tie their hands?”

(Krehbiel 1992:91)

In the British House of Commons, the relationship between the need for a party vote versus a personal vote is different than what you would find in the US Congress. This is due specifically to the fact that the executive is contained within the parliament, thus raising the costs for defecting from the party on legislative votes. The need for the personal vote, however, is similar to the US Congress in that the British system uses the same “first-past-the-post” electoral system. The idea of the electoral connection is considered non-viable, largely because of previous data, driven in a large part by the focus on roll-call data. Döring (1995a) asked the question “how” individual members of a legislature may shape bills working through the chamber; given the delegation of power, why would individual members care about the legislative process at all? If they are rational actors, why would they show up at all? There must be some return on investment for these members. I choose to focus on the “why” that explains the reason they show up at all.

This “textbook” version of the UK Parliament is too simplistic to explain the numerous examples of behavior that illustrate an entirely different role for backbenchers. Beyond the roll-call vote there is an entire world of activity that drives the legislative

process that gives us important opportunities to expand our understanding of not just the British parliament, but legislative bodies everywhere. Members that engage in these activities do so because it matters for their continued survival in the legislature.

The use of the word toadies is a derogatory term referring to individuals who do whatever they are told to curry favor. In the first quote above, the reporter was covering an instance where individual members of the majority party were so bad at asking the questions planted by the leadership that they had to simplify the questions so everyone could stay on message. This does a disservice to these legislators, because they are a product of their environment. These legislators must seek to satisfy the party leadership in order to secure their reelection to the chamber and pursue promotion/policy goals. But inherent in the slang used is the accepted idea that the role of backbench legislators is to be exactly this: toadies. The criticism shouldn't be that they are toadies, it is that they are so bad at the follow through.

Consequently, the proverbial foxes in the hen house are also there for a reason. These are legislators who need to distance themselves from the party positions, resulting in very untoad-like behavior. That reason is the electoral connection: Members from competitive electoral districts at time are required to stand apart from the party to secure reelection, or at the very least, appear to be doing so.

Following the Winter of Discontent in 1978, the Labour Party suffered a series of electoral defeats. This resulted in the moderate faction within the party gaining control and slowly moving the party to the center in what has come to be known as the "New Middle." A series of moderate party leaders (Neil Kinnock, John Smith, and Tony Blair) actively moved to diminish the control of the labor unions. Conventional wisdom held

that the result of these internal party organizational changes led to the eventual dramatic landslide election for Labour in 1997.

After being in the wilderness for almost 20 years, the party signaled a new Labour, united behind the new Prime Minister and ready to govern the country while avoiding all the pitfalls of previous Labour governments. Prime Minister Tony Blair broadcast the need for party unity to further the idea of a new Labour by making this stern warning to Labour MPs:

“Look at the Tory Party. Pause. Reflect. Then vow never to emulate. Day after day, when in government they had MPs out there, behaving with the indiscipline and thoughtlessness that was reminiscent of us in the early 80s. Where are they now, those great rebels? When the walls came crashing down beneath the tidal wave of change, there was no discrimination between those Tory MPs. They were all swept away, rebels and loyalists alike. Of course, speak your minds. But realize why you are here: you are here because the Labour Party under which you fought.”

(Cowley 2002:xx)

It took only two short months for the Labour Party to disregard this advice. In July of 1997, the Labour government announced the reduction of £60 million in funding for single parent families making new claims for government aid. The decision set off a firestorm of dissent within the party's rank and file.

“Fifty-five Labour MPs signed a critical Early Day Motion (EDM 333) put down by Audrey Wise. A similarly critical round-robin letter organized by Chris Mullin attracted 120 signatures. Many Labour MPs also contacted Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Harriet Harman, the Social Security Secretary, directly. The issue came up at a full meeting of the PLP on 19 November where Harman received what *The Times* described as ‘a grilling.’ It was also discussed in the PLP's various backbench groups – there were 60 present at the Social Security Committee when it discussed the topic – and it

was raised at the Parliamentary Committee on several occasions.”

(Cowley 2002:24)

The response from the Government was to completely ignore the concerns of the rank-and-file membership. In addition to simply ignoring the response, leadership also adopted a no-holds barred approach to implementing this bill. “...several MPs stressed the Government’s arrogance and lack of consultation” (Cowley 2002:27).

Emotions were running high on both sides. In the end, the number of rebels totaled forty-seven with four resignations from the Government. The Labour Party, which had won the landslide election just two months previously on offering a new, unified party, had publicly and ferociously torn itself apart. The most obvious question to ask is simply: why?

If the textbook version of the “Mother of all Parliaments” is to be believed, as so aptly expressed in Krehbiel’s quote at the beginning of the chapter, events like these should not occur (Richardson and Jordan 1979). They certainly shouldn’t occur two months after an historic election victory after wandering 18 years in the electoral desert. Given the near certainty of the end results and the damage caused to the Party as a result, why would individual members choose such a destructive course of action?

As with any legislative body, the most important activity members engage in is the production of legislation. As such, legislators are faced with various endogenous and exogenous forces that influence the decision-making cost-benefit calculus of each individual member. There is a level of uncertainty associated with the policy choices made, in addition to the multiple problems associated with a group of actors seeking a single policy position.

In parliamentary systems, it is of utmost importance to achieve party cohesion, as disunity sends dangerous signals to the voting public and could possibly place the government in a position of facing election coming off an embarrassing legislative failure. Because of this, political parties have developed tactics and rules which can be employed to generate informational clues that individual Members of Parliament (MPs) can use to make the important decision at vote time in addition to allowing for important “safety valves” for individual electoral concerns.

The purpose of this dissertation is to expand the study of legislative decision-making beyond the roll-call vote by beginning the process of an in-depth analysis of the pre-voting activities individual members use to mitigate the costs associated with the electoral connection-policy making nexus that comprise the legislative process. In this dissertation, I present a theory of electoral system supply and demand built on Mayhew’s (2004) electoral connection.

## **1.1: Review**

Legislators have managed to carve out for themselves the ability to influence legislation by “giving assent to binding measure of public policy” (Norton 1990:1). The granting of public assent in favor of public policy and the withholding of support are the two real powers left to backbenchers. These critical position-taking activities serve a need generated by the electoral environment individual legislators find themselves in: to allow for important “safety valve” opportunities.

David Mayhew’s seminal book, *Congress, the Electoral Connection* (2004), began a process of legislative study in American studies that is still being explored today. The

ramifications of his very simple proposition, that individual members of a legislative body pursue particularistic goals for the purpose of re-electoral success have expanded our understanding of how Congress and many other legislative institutions work. The reason for such longevity is the very simple truth that legislators must, first and foremost, win election in order to seek any other goals that may be desirous.

In the second edition, Mayhew sums up the scholarly attention to one of his three activities, position taking:

“...I have been somewhat disappointed by the academic community’s reception to position taking. I remain convinced that politicians often get rewarded for taking positions rather than achieving effects.”

(Mayhew 2004:xv)

This is due, in large part, to the exclusive focus of the community on the roll-call.<sup>1</sup> There have been several studies that have examined an expanded voting behavior, but this is still only scratching the surface of party members’ activities. Voting against the party is one of many different activities that members may engage in that runs counter to the wishes of the party leadership.

Party members can make the process of getting a bill before the chamber an easy or difficult one. There are multiple points within and outside the parliament that offer members the opportunity to express opposition to the leadership’s stance on a given policy proposal. Prime Minister’s question time, any of the three readings of the bills, within committees, contacts with the press and exchanges with the party whips all allow position-taking by individual members. All of the above were, until recently, beyond the ability of individual scholars to quantify. Because of this, there has not been much of an

---

<sup>1</sup> The literature here is vast. Beginning with Miller and Stokes (1963) and proceeding to the sophisticated vote-modeling research of Pool and Rosenthal (1997) which has continued apace.

examination of this behavior. With the exception of the exchanges between the whips and the members, the data are available, but the task of gathering such data remained daunting until now.

## **1.2: Legislative Literature**

The examination of political parties has progressed along two different paths. The institutional structure of the legislative body produces an individual-dominated or party-dominated legislature. Until recently, this division has resulted in little interaction between scholars who examine individual members of a legislative body and those who treat parties as unitary actors.

Rational Choice theory reintroduced the institutional approach in political science. Beginning with Downs (1957), the idea of actors using purposive behavior to gain desired goals has reshaped our understanding of what legislative actors do to pursue those goals and how they organize to achieve them. Unitary-parliamentary legislative structures require individual party members to surrender more power to the party leadership. This is the direct result of the agenda setting power required by the majority party to maintain control of the chamber. To lose this control is to trigger an early election. Presidential-Federal legislative bodies allow more freedom of action for the individual party member and dissent will not result in bringing down the entire government (Lijphart 1999).

The literature divided into two groups: those who focused on parliamentary governments and those who focused on the US Congress (Gamm and Huber 2002). The assumption among parliamentary scholars tended to treat parties as unitary actors, citing the strong institutional pull for party unity. Those who focused on the US Congress, and



specifically the US House of Representatives, chose to focus on the individual member. As a result, two different views of what legislative parties are and the roles that members play in the legislature emerged.

The United Kingdom became the natural model for parliamentary research. As the “Mother of All Parliaments,” Westminster was used as a pure model against which other similar legislative bodies were measured (Lijphart 1999). This view of the UK Parliament has evolved over the years to produce a more sophisticated model of majority party rule as exhibited in the UK.

This most recent theoretical treatment of Westminster Parliaments is the core executive. The core executive allows for an interpretation of actors’ actions based on a dynamic understanding of politics. “Because no actor or institution controls all the resources necessary to achieve their goals...actors within the central state depend on each other” (Smith 1999:1). Smith further explains that this situation varies due to context and the tactics employed by each actor in pursuit of those goals.

In the Westminster style parliaments, the concentration of power in a single unicameral legislative body, coupled with the fact that the executive is then selected by this legislature, as discussed earlier, provides an incentive for parties to have greater control over this nomination process.<sup>2</sup> The unicameral legislature is a major reason for the form of party organization. This also forces the parties to construct strictly disciplined

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<sup>2</sup> Technically, the UK is a bicameral legislature, but the House of Lords have been restricted to the role of delaying legislation for a matter of months. The executive is located within the House and most successful legislation begins there. In addition, only members of the House can be Prime Minister. The Labour government is attempting to further restrict the role of the House of Lords by limiting voting rights to lifetime peers only. For proposed changes to the House of Lords, see <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2002/rp02-002.pdf>

parties, control the nomination process and develop a highly organized, permanent party apparatus.

A second reason is that the location of the executive within the legislative body has drastically altered party strategies as well. The leadership and the members' eggs are all in one basket, and depending upon the electoral circumstance, the party's power within the Parliament (i.e. seat majority) and the size of factions within the party all contribute towards a highly coordinated leadership that focuses more on the whole party performance.

The career objectives of politicians who are ambitious are controlled by the party leadership (Mayhew 2004).<sup>3</sup> In order to get from the backbenches to a ministerial post, toeing the party line is paramount. Failure to follow the party vote line can lead to censure and expulsion. The whip system in the UK, for example, is used for enforcement as well as a means of polling the members, which is the case in weaker institutional systems.<sup>4</sup>

The organization of the government is different as well. The party or parties in government are a principle component of the core executive (Rhodes 1995, Smith 1992). This core is comprised of the PM, the cabinet and the bureaucracy. Control of the policy implementation process is directed by the party leadership in the form of the PM and

---

3 In the UK for example, the party is much more hierarchically organized. It is a permanent organization that charges dues for membership. Those groups meet regularly in party headquarters around the country. The party has an annual conference where leadership is selected. The money for running the operation is centralized at the national party headquarters (Smith 1992).

4 The reason for not focusing on the two alternatives to Fenno's (1973) three goals (re-election, influence within the chamber and good public policy) is simply that the "demand" created for influence and policy is shaped by the institutional need for party discipline. The party's need to control the agenda determines its continued survival in the majority. Therefore, ambition and policy demands are supplied within the context of service to the party. It is only through party promotion that a member gains access to influence policy. In order to gain access, a member has to become wholly a creature of the party. Members of competitive districts can neither afford to be perceived as rabid partisans, nor can they spend the valuable resource of time away from re-election to pursue ambition.

cabinet, with the party backbenchers in nothing more than a supportive role. The power to initiate and control policy lies with the leadership.

Comparative legislative studies have grown in recent years, but build out from the work done on the US Congress in the very same narrow approach looking at constituency influence on members behavior (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1984; Park 1988), building on committee literature to examine ministerial portfolios (Laver and Shepsle 1990, 1996), distributive politics (Huber 1992), veto players (Tsebelis 1994, 1995, 1999; Huber 1996; Bawn 1999), strategic voting (Rasch 2000), and bicameralism (Tsebelis and Money 1995, 1997) to name a few. This is a research that lacks an overarching theoretical approach that explains legislatures by identifying the legislative institutional environment as a component of a political system.

Recently, scholars have tried to bridge the two worlds, bringing the sophisticated and detailed examinations of the US Congress to understanding comparative legislative environments. Mayhew has gone international, and as a result, we have advanced our understanding of legislatures, adding valuable insight and lending strength to the underlying assumption inherent in Mayhew's work. Scholars have examined the electoral connection (Ames 1995, Carey and Shugart 1995, Pereira and Renno 2003, Stratmann and Baur 2002); political ambition (Crisp and Desposato 2004, Heller and Mershon 2005, Jones et al 2002, Leoni, Pereira and Renno 2004, Samuels 1999); and election related activities (Golden and Picci 2007, Samuels 2002).

Even with this groundbreaking work, the study of parliamentary governments is largely dominated by the belief that dissent in this setting is too costly to engage in, infrequently occurs and as such, parties may be treated as unitary actors. On the opposite

end of the legislative spectrum, presidential-federal systems result in loosely organized, highly candidate centered parties where dissent is so common place that the measure for cohesion must be reduced to a more easily reached standard on 50% +1 of the caucus voting in favor of a bill. Here the call is to ignore the party and focus on the individual member.<sup>5</sup>

The electoral environment is key, as Mayhew suggests, to understanding how legislatures function. But conventional wisdom holds that the electoral environment has no place in any study of parliaments due to the institutional setting. Mayhew's theory described a legislator free from party constraints. This is not a realistic assumption given what we observe in parliamentary systems, and I am not claiming such. However, Mayhew's assumption that voters hold individual members accountable through the vote cannot be ignored. The re-election need is still present in parliamentary environments, but the manner in which individual legislators seek to satisfy such demand is shaped by the institutional environment in which they compete. Without the re-election demand, we don't have accountability:

“...the reelection quest establishes an accountability relationship with an electorate and any serious thinking about democratic theory has to give a central place to the question of accountability.”

(Mayhew 2004:6)

This is a phenomenon familiar to American Congress scholars. Reforms in the institutional rules during the 1970s led to changes in the actions of individual members (Sinclair 1989; Rohde 1991; Aldrich 1995) due to the affect of democratic accountability. The theories that emerged failed to extend beyond the US example, or in some cases, even the US House itself (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993). The focus of

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<sup>5</sup> In fact, the question asked is if parties are important to the process at all (Krehbel 1993).

legislative literature in the American context, rather than seeking to expand to the comparative realm to provide a broader theoretical understanding, has proceeded in the opposite direction:

“...the questions seem to get narrower, the issues more arcane, and the findings less relevant to all but a small group of scholars pursuing that specific line of research.”  
(Mezey 1993:356)

### **1.3: The Electoral System Supply-Demand Model**

A recent area of legislative research has opened up the possibility to finally expand Mayhew to create a legislative model that builds in the re-election goal. The desire to gather data for testing wide ranging theories was hindered by the high costs of obtaining it. The reason roll call data was so widely used was its availability, specifically in the case of the US Congress.

What legislators have managed to carve out for themselves in the process is the ability to influence legislation by “giving assent to binding measures of public policy.” (Norton 1990:1) These critical position-taking activities serve one function: providing important “safety valve” opportunities for members to engage in individual position taking activities to meet the demand created by the electoral environment while avoiding dissent that harms their party.

The legislative environment is a series of agenda setting decisions as each piece of legislation is considered by every member based upon a cost benefit analysis. Individual legislators will expend individual resources in efforts to improve the benefits each will receive, all the time calculating costs involved. Costs vary amongst legislatures based upon the level of fragmentation within the majority and the amount of power ceded to the

leadership (Döring 1995b). The UK Parliament is not unique in this backbench-leadership dynamic. This dynamic is present in other Westminster-style parliamentary systems, both unicameral and bicameral (Kam 2002).

(Figure 1.1 about here)

In fact, this dynamic is present in every legislative body in some form. This need for agenda setting produces the need for organizational solutions to various problems familiar to students of organization studies. Endogenous and exogenous factors place pressure on legislators individually and collectively as part of the policy making process, as figure 1.1 illustrates above, that drive their preference ordering and decision-making process.

Demands, in the form of inputs are expressed to the different actors involved in the policy process. They can come from multiple sources involving different contextual environments. The legislative process incorporates these demands and produce a supply of legislative outputs in response. Legislative outputs can take many different forms, such as substantive output activities: legislation and oversight, and signifying output activities: advertising, credit claiming and position taking.

Institutional context can influence members' behavior on substantive outputs, and these activities have drawn the lion's share of research study. However, the signifying behaviors will also be influenced by institutional context. The importance of the lack of examination of the latter has lead to a narrow understanding of the legislative environment, especially in legislatures where freedom to engage in individual goal pursuit of substantive activities is limited, such as parliamentary environments. The

importance of signifying outputs are higher in that case, and failure to examine these relationships must be addressed.

Individual members have their own preferences and at times these can be at cross-purposes to the goals of the party. On one hand, it is necessary for members to seek out those individuals who share similar goals and produce an organization that is capable of maximizing multiple benefits while minimizing costs associated with transactions.

Therefore:

“...it is important to distinguish between how preferences can hold parties together, how parties can hold themselves together when preferences are not enough, and how electoral incentives can help or hinder both of these separate determinants of party unity in parliament [legislatures].”

(Hazan 2006:xx)

Clearly, the very nature of legislative environments creates a conflict shared in some manner by parties large enough to have wide ranging interests:

“Joining a legislative party and seeking to maximize the benefits of collective action, however, requires individual legislators to incur substantial transaction *costs*. These costs increase proportionally the greater the distance between the legislator’s preferences and the legislative party’s median point...”

(Owens 2006:xx)

This inherent conflict creates a need for individual legislators to acquire opportunities to allow for opportunities of alternative activities, dependent upon the cost-benefit calculus of the institutional setting. In a legislature where there are multiple principles

(and agents), the probability of matching preferences drops (Waterman and Meier 1998).<sup>6</sup>

As such, the costs associated with individual members seeking to distance themselves from the party for the purposes of re-election are determined by two key institutional features: the institutional relationship between the executive and the legislature and the electoral rules governing member's selection.

(Insert figure 1.2 about here)

(Insert figure 1.3 about here)

Figures 1.2 and 1.3 above model a possible goal overlap environment present in an SMD electoral system supply-demand relationship in a US and British style legislature with three actors: the Executive, the Majority Party and the Individual Legislator. How the institutional rules are constituted will determine the relationship among the actors, defining the areas of mutual cooperation and individual action. Demands are made on each actor; which, in turn, influence which supply of activities will become activated.<sup>7</sup>

The US example illustrates an environment that allows large areas of divergence about which demands are important to each actor, how frequent we would expect signifying behavior to emerge and the low shared costs associated with providing individual supplies. The British example illustrates the opposite, the convergence of the executive and majority party has combined the supply goals. The reduction of veto points has reduced the number of conflicting demands. The need to maintain majority status has

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6 In the case of a parliamentary system, the reduction of veto players in no means reduces the preference congruence problem. In order to achieve a governing majority, there must be the inclusion of individual members from competitive districts in the case of a majoritarian system, or the inclusion of coalition partners (or the entire chamber for minority governments) in a non-majoritarian system.

7 The reality is much more complex than what is illustrated here. Various factors will influence the relationships between each actor. Issues saliency, relative power of each actor in relations to the others, the introduction of the demands in a non-uniform manner, etc.



increased the costs related to substantive outputs, thereby making signifying outputs more attractive.

The electoral system present in a country will determine several types of demands that is placed upon individual legislators. Members engage in the activities that they need, to ensure their re-election and possible feedback is provided at the next election; either removing the legislator who has failed or rewarding/reshaping the demands needed to ensure reelection in the next electoral cycle.

Electoral systems are usually divided into three types: plurality, proportional and mixed member. The demands and supplies generated will vary with each type of electoral system.<sup>8</sup> Both the British and United States use the Plurality- Single Member District electoral system. This system is well documented as influencing the behavior of its members' preferences and goals. (Fiorina and Noll 1979; Weingast et al., 1981; Arnold 1990; Schwartz 1994).<sup>9</sup>

The legislative environment influences how these electoral demands will be satisfied. Take for example the US House of Representatives. Elected by the SMD rule, a Member of Congress (MC) enters the chamber where the executive is separate from the legislative body, so the costs of voting against the party are significantly lower than for a Member of Parliament (MP), where the government depends for its continued survival with the support of a majority of the parliament. Failure could result in triggering an early election. In addition to separation of powers, the MC exist in a bicameral setting in which

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<sup>8</sup> In fact, there are rule variations within each type of system that can affect an entire range of legislative behaviors. See for example Bawn and Thies (2003) for mixed member and the constituency and Robinson and French (2005) for comparative electoral systems on the decision to call early elections.

<sup>9</sup> In the case of the United State it is very pronounced. For the British case, research suggests that there is an effect, but that it is very weak (Cain, Ferejohn Fiorina 1984). The contention of this dissertation is that this is the case because the research is looking for it in the wrong place.

members of the two chambers also face different electoral and situational constraints, further influencing the types of supply activities that are available, and more importantly, useful.<sup>10</sup> Voting against the party is a much more high profile and beneficial activity for MCs to create distance from the party position and secure individual reelection.<sup>11</sup>

The need for the supply of “safety valve” activities that allow members to distinguish themselves from the collective goals is the same as in the US. Due to the nature of the institutional setting, the availability to engage in vote defection is limited. Therefore, individual members of parliaments must have alternative routes available for signifying behavior. The need for such “safety valve” activities does not vanish. In fact, due to the need for party cohesion on the roll-call vote, the need for such activities is more urgent than what exists in the US Congress. Alternative avenues for signifying activities other than the prohibitively costly vote defection are needed. As the example at the beginning of the chapter illustrated, failure to take this need into consideration can result in embarrassing legislative results.

Of the supply of activities available to MPs, position taking and advertising are the only viable option available. As mentioned previously, the nature of parliamentary legislatures, especially in a majoritarian system, requires a very firm grip on the agenda. The party label is very important and the policy process is the most immediate means of building that. Therefore, Fenno’s goals of promotion and policy are tied together, with

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10 Focusing in on a unitary parliament is by no means the only institutional and contextual constraints possible on supply activities. Further exploration of this model along the lines of examining the role of term limits, number of participants and the affect on time constraints, the institution of the Australian ballot, redistricting, professional versus citizen legislatures, minority and coalition governing (Canada offering an interesting case) are all areas of interest that need to be examined using the Supply-Demand model developed here.

11 This can be borne out by the ability of the Blue Dog Democrats to push through the recent FISA legislation against the wishes of the majority of the House Democratic caucus (Bolton 2008)

the party voting to produce policy wins on the floor. The ability to influence policy is tied to promotion within the party, so progressive ambition is tied to policy.

Of the three supply activities Mayhew identified, position taking and advertising are the only viable activities left to MPs. More specifically, position taking is vital for MPs who are in a position that does not allow for climbing the party leadership ladder. The job of MPs from marginal districts is to provide the numbers necessary for a majority. That means, they must continue to win elections, while at the same time voting for party bills on the floor. These MPs need an alternative means of position taking and advertising in order to signal constituents, which the party leadership in turn must supply.

Credit claiming is unavailable simply because the nature of the electoral environment is such that no one member of the backbenches can claim credit for legislation. To do that, the member would have to hold a ranking ministerial position for the claim to be credible.

Position taking and advertising are areas of activity to which the media and the voters pay close attention. Since the advent of TV in the Commons, the number of questions asked by members has grown significantly (Franklin and Norton 1993). Local media cover MPs' activities in all of the three activities I am exploring in this dissertation:

“...with large government majorities, the greater was the competition for attention among the large number of backbenchers on the government side of the House. For Members nursing a marginal seat, it provides also a mechanism for local publicity. A number of Members, notably newer ones, table the maximum number of starred questions permissible under the rules of the House.”  
(Franklin and Norton 1993:16)

So in addition to MPs from marginal seats, newer members demand a means to create name recognition with their voters and backbenchers constrained by the large volume of

other members seeking access must scramble for opportunities. This is even more true for new members from competitive seats. Individual members take full advantage of every opportunity to use these “safety valve” activities as a means of producing position taking and advertising supply to meet the reelection demand.

All legislatures provide these types of “safety valves” for the purpose of mitigating the costs associated with supporting the collective goals of the party. These costs are higher in parliamentary environments due to the costs associated with failure to pass legislation for the party. This is the motivation behind participation by individual Members of Parliament in three key pre-legislative activities: Early Day Motions, Written Questions and Private Member Bills.

My theoretical claim examines the electoral environment’s impact on the three different pre-legislative activities. To wit: *individual members from at risk districts, new members and members of the opposition use these pre-legislative activities to engage in individualistic position taking*. I build upon newly emergent research interested in the decision-making process of legislative bodies by providing a detailed analysis of the British House of Commons.

#### **1.4: Testing the Supply-Demand Model**

Chapter Two begins with the lowest cost supply side position taking activity, Early Day Motions. Early Day Motions (EDMs) are a unique window into the legislative priorities of individual Members of Parliament (MPs). Not subject to party discipline, EDMs allow members to engage in what Mayhew (2004) described as position taking and advertising. Of the three activities, introducing an EDM has the lowest entrance cost

associated with it. In addition to individual MPs introducing EDMs, other MPs may sign on, similar to co-sponsorship in the US Congress. This allows for a unique environment for testing the electoral influence on position taking activities in an environment otherwise typified by the “iron fist” of party discipline.

Chapter Three examines Written Questions (WQs). Unlike EDMs, individual members can not “co-sponsor” another member’s written question. This is an entirely solitary affair. Members engage in the written question stage of decision-making for the same purposes Mayhew outlined (2004): position taking and advertising. Members are allowed to follow up questions, allowing for members to showcase themselves. The party leadership is less likely to tolerate dissent, but understands that the activity does not impair legislation (usually). So while the entrance costs are higher for WQs than for EDMs, they are still not prohibitively high. The benefit is that this activity is heavily reported in the local news and offers a second activity which members use to facilitate their re-election.

Chapter Four concludes the dissertation with another low cost activity: Private Member Bills (PMBs). The very low success rate for PMBs (government bills account for over xx% of all successful legislation) raises the question of why MPs expend resources pursuing this activity. By far, the largest amount of PMBs are introduced using the lowest success rate of the four methods of introduction available. Session after session, MPs introduce the same piece of legislation with no hop of success. In addition to individual MPs introducing PMBs, other MPs may sign on, similar to co-sponsorship in the US Congress and EDMs in the Parliament. This process is another activity that

allows members to engage in position taking and advertising for the purposes of re-election.

Chapter Five will provide an evaluation of my dissertation and the findings. I will also explore what impact my research can have on the discipline.

# Chapter 2 – Early Day Motions

## 2.1: Introduction

Early Day Motions (EDMs) are an important feature of the British Parliament. Individual Members of Parliament (MPs) can introduce an unlimited number of motions during the course of a legislative session. Other MPs, similar to the US Congress cosponsorship of bills, can sign on to an EDM at any time after it is tabled until the session ends. Party's do not “whip” the membership on EDMs, allowing the equivalent of a free vote opportunity. Not all EDMs are harmless.

On March 22, 1979, the Right Honorable Margaret Thatcher, leader of the opposition Conservative party, offered a censure motion on the Labour government led by Prime Minister James Callaghan. The EDM was debated six days later and the motion was agreed to, triggering a General Election and a victory for Thatcher and the Conservatives. Most EDMs are motions that deal with trivial matters important to a small number of MPs introducing them, but the potential for drama is always present. It is clear why this activity is valuable for the minority party, but why would members of the majority party participate in the EDM process if the potential of damaging the party might in fact cost you the ability to enact actual policy?

Not much examination has been conducted on the “why” of member participation. The focus has been on the how EDMs reveal individual MPs preferences on policy, or looking for patterns in the data relative to the parliamentary calendar. The further exploration of the causes of MPs use of the EDM process is hampered by the belief that

backbenchers sole role is to support their party. This scholarly attitude is supported by the fact that very little defection occurs during roll-call votes.

I argue that it is precisely because of the high costs associated with rebelling against the whip during a roll-call vote that individual MPs will engage in lower costs activities for the purpose of position taking. The reason that members need these activities, and the level of costs for not providing them, is going to be determined by the type of electoral systems members find themselves in. Plurality, Single Member District electoral systems create a high level of need with regard to reelection, and the British system is just such a system. Therefore, individual members who are in electoral districts where reelection is a concern will be more likely to use EDMs as a means of providing position taking and advertising opportunities in order to mitigate the costs associated with toeing the party line on roll-call votes and satisfy the electoral connection demand.

## **2.2: Review**

The scholarly focus, except for a few legislative activity studies (Kam 2002, Pattie, Fieldhouse and Johnson 1994), has been on roll-call voting at the expense of the electoral connection in the United Kingdom. Due to the weak nature of the findings, it is largely conventional wisdom that the electoral connection is not a significant factor in need of study in the British context. The reason for the weak findings is that the researchers are looking in the wrong place.

Aside from some notable scholarship (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, Norton and Wood 1993), the literature has focused on party voting as the connection to voters. The role that executive policy positions and performance plays (Budge 1999, Crewe 1983,



Crowley 2002) or partisan loyalties (Butler and Stokes 1974) suggest that backbenchers have very little affect on the choices voters make come election time. This is not borne out by the scholarship on voters' attitudes, however (Johnson and Rosenblatt 2007). At the same time, voters prefer their representative to be loyal to the party, there is also a desire for an independent-minded representative.

Specific explorations of EDMs as a manifestation of the personal vote have fared no better than roll call studies, choosing to focus on EDMs as measures of individual MPs' preferences (Berrington and Hague 1998, Crowe 1983, Franklin and Tappin 1977, Leece and Berrington 1977). This research is driven by the idea that a roll-call is useless as an indicator of MP policy preferences precisely because of the need to support the party.

In another line of inquiry, the search for an explanation of the lack of activity by female MPs in the Blair government looked for alternative areas of activity for legislators, and found it in EDMs. Sarah Childs and Julie Withey (2004) focus on the expectation for women to act on women's issues and compare it to apparant failure of female Labour MP's to produce policy. These MPs have been reported as:

“...having failed women – the ‘proof’ being their failure to rebel against the government’s reduction in lone-parent allowance...Collectively dismissed in the media and amongst some of their parliamentary colleagues as ‘Blair’s babes,’ ‘clones’ and ‘Stepford wives’...”

(Childs and Withey 2004: 552-553)

Childs and Withey instead, identified the very important pre-legislative activities that members of all legislative bodies engage in, as identified by Mayhew (2004). Not surprisingly, they found that women MPs were “acting for women” by signing onto EDMs that supported women's policy issues. In other words, female MPs were engaging in position-taking. By choosing to focus on the roll-call vote, scholars are missing out on

large areas of activity that members engage in precisely because of the high costs of voting against the party.

This chapter will examine the electoral connection and Early Day Motions. The next section lays out the argument for why members engage in these behaviors and the underlying institutional and contextual forces driving the choice to use EDMs. Section four derives eight testable hypotheses based upon the previous section. Section five discusses the test I run, my variables and findings which is followed by section six, the conclusion.

### **2.3: Argument**

“...the electoral goal has an attractive universality to it. It has to be the *proximate* goal for everyone, the goal that must be achieved over and over if the other ends are to be entertained.”

(Mayhew 2004:16)

Individual members of the British House of Commons are driven by the electoral connection to engage in activities that allow each to distinguish himself or herself from the collective party identity. As Johnson and Rosenblatt (2007) demonstrate in British public opinion, the public inherently understand the conflict between the individual member's desire for re-election and the collective goals of the political party.

The unitary nature of the British Parliamentary system constrains the type of activities individual members can use to differentiate themselves. Unlike the US Congress, where members of Congress (MC) are relatively free to vote against the party and the executive, MPs are restricted. This is directly the result of the fusion of the executive within the

majority party control of the legislature. Failure to control the agenda may result in an early election and defeat at the polls (Mayhew 2004:22).

While the cost of voting against the party seems prohibitively high, the need to differentiate themselves from the party has not gone away. Members must find alternative means to improve their own electoral circumstances when they do run counter to the electoral interests of the party. Above all, members must work very hard to show constituents that they are working on behalf of the constituency, and if they can not do so with legislative outputs, they must find alternative activities.

“There will be differences in emphasis, but all members share the root need to do things – indeed, to do things day in and day out during their terms.”

(Mayhew 2004:49)

The question, ‘Who they do things for?’ is answered by the electoral system and its impact on the flow of demands from those who elect each member. In addition to the electoral system, the institutional setting is important as well in how it provides members the opportunity to engage in fundamental activities that help them stay in office. Mayhew (2004) lists three such types of activities: Advertising, Credit-Claiming and Position-Taking. In the US Congress, it is possible to perform all three tasks under the institutional setting, while at the same time the particular electoral system used in the US creates the greatest need for members to engage in each of these activities (Bawn and Theis 2003, Carey and Shugart 1995).

Both the US and Britain use the plurality, Single Member District method of selecting their legislators. The demands produced under such a system did not disappear. Some demands from the voting public were transferred to the party, due to the unitary nature of the institution. In fact, MPs are unable to effectively credit claim unless they are a

ranking member of the party, and then, only in the majority. So what is left? How do these members satisfy the remaining demands?<sup>1</sup>

The opening paragraph of the government factsheet about EDMs acknowledges the role EDMs play for members and the activity they seek to satisfy:

“The Early Day Motion is a *much-used device to publicise* the views of individual Members of Parliament, and to demonstrate the extent of support among MPs for a particular cause of point of view. In parliamentary terms, the EDM virtually never has any direct consequence. *Public interest in them, which is well known to Members, perhaps itself, demonstrates their purpose.* Even if an EDM does not attract wide national press coverage it may well receive attention locally or regionally.” [emphasis mine]  
(House of Commons 2008:2)

The conventional wisdom would have it that the executive and the cabinet have subsumed all the demands placed by the electorate; therefore there is no need to examine the individual members. And yet individual members take the time to engage in costly behavior that should be better spent servicing the party leadership (if the conventional wisdom holds). Further, why would a member ever sign on to an EDM that was critical of the party, or placed it in a bad light? Given the all encompassing power of the party, why engage in any activity at all short of showing up to vote?

The answer is simple. Individual members of legislatures engage in many different activities to try and make the case to the voters that they should remain in office. The menus of activities available to individual members of a legislature are going to be determined by the institutional setting they find themselves in. The electorates that

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<sup>1</sup> The activities of advertising and position-taking are hard to differentiate. Since they share so many similarities and it is impossible to get inside a member’s head and know for sure, the two activities will be treated as the same thing.

members seek to satisfy (and to a degree, the types of demands those electorates make) are going to be determined by the type of electoral system they find themselves in.

## **2.4: Prediction**

An understanding of any legislative environment begins with how the institutional setting influences what sorts of activities are available to individual members who are pursuing their own interests and ambitions. Some discussion of the British setting and the assumptions we can draw from it is warranted.

(Insert Graph 2.1 about here)

First, the control the Prime Minister and the cabinet have over the flow of legislation is significant. Very few bills that are not government initiated make it through the process to become laws. As Graph 2.1 illustrates above, the vast percentage of bills passed originate with the government. Introducing bills is controlled by the governing majority in the form of the cabinet.

(Insert Graph 2.2 about here)

Voting against the party is not generally an option. Graph 2.2 above illustrates the extent that party “rebellions” occur. The costs for dissenting appear to be far too high and only a party that faces serious internal cohesion issues should ever be observed to so publicly self-destruct. Hence the very low number of recorded rebellions, even through this tumultuous period for the current Labour government.

Given that the ability to create legislation independent of the majority party is minimal and given the prohibitively high costs associated with voting against the party, the assumption can be made that individual members will seek alternative means of

engaging in the fundamental activity of which individual legislating and roll-call dissent are manifestations; namely, position-taking and advertising.

As Mayhew suggests, members from marginal districts face a higher level of uncertainty with regard to their future electoral performance. Since members from these electoral districts are by definition away from their party's median in the parliament, the need to take positions that better fit their individual district is great. Therefore,

*H1: MPs in marginal districts will produce more EDMs than other MPs.*

Not every member will use this alternative form of position taking. Some members have access to influence the legislative process. Therefore it becomes important to consider what MPs will have access to more valuable sources of position taking and which will not. For the majority party, there is the very real and valuable aspect of actually producing legislation to satisfy voters. Members hold ranking positions within the party. They will devote their precious time and energy to servicing the party first. Members who would be likely to seek alternatives would be those members who do not have access: newer members or members who have been around a long time but are not part of the party leadership. Therefore,

*H2: MPs with less time in Parliament will produce more EDMs than MPs who have been in the parliament longer.*

*H3: MPs who have more time in Parliament but have not been included in the party leadership will produce more EDMs than MPs who are included.*

What about those who are not in the majority party? Minority party members have an incentive to use EDMs as a means of bringing forward issues they feel the majority party is ignoring and exploit any potential fractures by putting forward divisive EDMs (for the

majority that is). This is most effectively done through the party leadership as they will generate larger amounts of news through their efforts. Therefore,

*H4: MPs of the minority party's (or parties') leadership will produce more EDMs than MPs in the majority party's leadership.*

Since my data covers a time period where both the Labour and Conservative parties have experienced minority and majority party status, I am able to examine the relationship that being in the majority has on a single party. Clearly, as discussed above, access to agenda control through majority status reduces the need for position taking and advertising through the use of EDMs. Therefore,

*H5: MPs will produce more EDMs when their party has minority status in Parliament than when their party has majority control.*

Members who come from extremely safe districts can find themselves distanced from the party median as members from the marginal districts are. This is especially true if they find themselves out of the party leadership. The need to find some means of increasing their visibility is greater for extremely safe members. As Fenno (2003) discussed, the importance of which constituency legislators service needs to be considered. MPs from safe districts have electoral goals different than other MPs, just like marginal district MPs. Therefore,

*H6: Extremely safe MPs will produce more EDMs than MPs who are not*

There are other areas of possible access problems that would require alternative means of producing visibility. Differences based upon regional, race and gender could create a need for higher uses of EDMs. As Childs and Whitney (2004) suggest, female MPs have restricted access in the male dominated Parliament, therefore, they have a need to seek alternative sources of influence. If

females have a similar need, so to do minorities, who have had a difficult time getting into Parliament, let alone influencing the process. Therefore,

*H7: Minority MPs will produce more EDMs than non-minority MPs*

*H8: Female MPs will produce more EDMs than male MPs*

## **2.5: Test and Data**

In order to test these hypotheses, I have collected data on 12,374 cases of Early Day Motions from the House of Commons session 1989-1990 through to June of 2007-2008 for each legislative session during which 1,311 Members of Parliament served.<sup>2</sup> These signatures are comprised of one primary sponsor, up to five cosponsors allowed by the primary sponsor and any number of supporters of the EDM who have until the end of the session to sign on. For the purposes of this study, I will treat all three types of signatories as engaging in the same type of position-taking/advertising.<sup>3</sup> The dependent variable (DV) will be a count of the number of EDMs a member has signed onto per session.

The nature of the dependent variable requires that it be treated as a count variable (Kennedy 1998:236). This suggests an MLE test using the Poisson regression. However, concern with the fact that the distribution's mean is not equal to the variance led me to use the negative binomial regression (Long 1997:230).<sup>4</sup> There was also a concern that the large number of cases with zero WQs would affect the final results, but running both models resulted in similar tests. I decided in the end to use the negative binomial as this

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<sup>2</sup> These data were gathered from the House of Commons question book website (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmordbk.htm>).

<sup>3</sup> EDMs resemble the strategy employed for cosponsorship in the US Congress. In future work, I plan to examine this EDM process using the approach employed on US Congress cosponsorship. Also, the timing of signing is also of importance and will be examined in future work.

<sup>4</sup> The test for over over-dispersion was confirmed with the Chi-square test.



was the model to employ Clarify (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000, Tomz, Wittenberg and King 2001) to interpret the results.

(Insert Table 2.1 about here)

Table 2.1 above shows the breakdown for each variable category. Due to the interactive nature of hypotheses one and five, it is important to create independent variables that allow for the testing of both. As such, I have created a dummy variable for five different categories of competitiveness in electoral districts (Norris 2008). Each dummy measures competitiveness from “Ultra Marginal” to “Ultra Safe.” I expect that both the “Ultra Safe” and “Ultra Marginal” dummies to be positive and significant.<sup>5</sup>

To examine the relationship related to time in office, I use a count of the number of sessions an MP has served in the Parliament over time. I expect that as time increases, the number of EDMs will decrease. However, this may not be a linear relationship, as the longer an MP has been in office, the more “political capital” they gain. These members would also be valuable signatories to EDMs. I therefore will use Clarify to examine the relationship for longevity in office on EDM production. I expect that as the time spent in office without gaining a leadership role increases, the number of EDMs will be higher than those who have attained a leadership role.

Controlling for partisan affects, I develop a dummy variable to capture this relationship. I control for majority party control and being in the majority gives individuals access to much more productive avenues of activity. Therefore, I expect that MPs in the majority party will decrease the number of EDMs produced. Conversely, being in the minority reduces these same opportunities. In fact, EDMs become an

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<sup>5</sup> I dropped the Fairly Safe variable as I posit an increase in the number of EDMs in relation to this specific category.

increasingly important avenue of attack for the opposition leadership, who are now denied ministerial portfolios. Therefore, I expect that being MPs in the leadership of the opposition will increase the number of EDMs produced. Lastly, Cabinet Ministers do not use EDMs as a custom, but many other MPs are in junior ministerial positions or party leadership positions and are not precluded from using EDMs. Even so, I would expect that having alternative avenues for activity from these positions would reduce the number of EDMs MPs in House of Commons leadership positions will engage in. To examine these various scenarios, I use Clarify (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000, Tomz, Wittenberg and King 2001) to produce means for each type of situation outlined above.

The affects of being outside the mainstream of the average MP would also be an important factor. Therefore, I control for Gender and Minorities MPs. I expect that being both types of MPs would increase the number of EDMs.

(Insert Table 2.2 about here)

I began with a series of difference of means T-Tests to determine if the relationship between EDMs and the variables created to measure that my hypotheses holds. Table 2.2 above shows the results. Concerning those five variables where we expect an increase in the number of EDMs (Ultra Marginal, Ultra Safe, Gender, Race and Leadership), there is significant relationship for four, except for Ultra Safe, which shows a significant relationship in the opposite direction. The variable for Ultra Safe districts shows a decrease in the number of EDMs for this category and all other members. In addition, there are the three other electoral district categories where I expect there to be no significance. The Very Safe variable meets this expectation, however, the other two

categories show significance. So clearly there is a difference between individual MPs in seven out of eight of these categories and the other members of the Parliament.

(Table 2.3 about here)

Table 2.3 above shows the results from my zero inflated negative binomial MLE regression. I ran two models of this equation. Model one shows the results for a simple robust MLE negative binomial regression. Model two includes the same variables in model one, but with a zero-inflated robust MLE negative binomial regression. The results for all the variables are unchanged.<sup>6</sup>

Testing hypothesis one, which looks at the number of EDMs produced in marginal districts, in this case, Ultra Marginal districts, shows that the prediction holds. In addition, hypothesis six makes a similar prediction for MPs from extremely safe districts. The result of the regression supports this prediction as well. In order to illustrate that members from these electoral districts produce more EDMs than members who come from those towards the center of the electoral competitiveness for all MPs, I use Clarify to generate predicted means for MPs from each type of district. Table 2.4 below shows that in fact, Ultra Marginal and Ultra Safe, by far, out produce MPs from other electoral circumstances. Both extreme electoral circumstances encourage MPs to produce 1.25 times more EDMs than their counterparts towards the center.

(Insert Table 2.4 about here)

As predicted, Time is significant and signed in the anticipated direction by hypothesis Two. The longer an MP serves in the chamber, the lower the number of EDMs they

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<sup>6</sup> I also clustered on individual members of Parliament. The results showed that race, which is not significant here, becomes significant with clustering in the zero-inflated regression. I have erred on the side of reporting the models that show race as insignificant due to the possibility the small number of minority MPs may be causing this phenomenon.

produce. The Clarify estimation demonstrates the relationship predicted in hypothesis three in Table 2.5 below. The longer an MP has served in the chamber, the number of EDMs is reduced dramatically with the newest MPs producing 1.5 times more EDMs than MPs from the mean service time and 5.5 times more EDMs than their most senior colleagues.

(Insert Table 2.5 about here)

(Insert Table 2.6 about here)

Hypothesis three posits that time may also cause MPs who have been in the chamber longer will produce larger number of EDMs than their counterparts who are in leadership positions. As Table 2.6 illustrates above by comparing EDMs produced by House Leaders to rank and file MPs found in Table 2.5 above, not only is this true for senior MPs, but it holds across all MPs regardless of time. The most senior MPs out produce EDMs than their colleagues in leadership do by a ratio of nearly 4 to 1.

I expected the parties to be statistically significant, but was agnostic about their relationship towards each other. Hypotheses four and five were more interested in positing the number of EDMs produced by political parties and their leadership in opposition. Table 2.7 below shows the Clarify results for all three major political parties in Parliament, in addition to the estimates for the Labour and Conservative parties for their majority and minority periods. In the regression, Majority status was significant and signed as predicted by hypothesis five.

To better demonstrate the relationship between majority and minority status, graphs 2.3 and 2.4 below show the ratio of EDMs produced by the Labour and Conservative

parties respectively.<sup>7</sup> As is clearly illustrated, when a party enters minority status, the number of EDMs increase for both back benchers and leadership alike. This is due to the lack of access to actual legislative agenda control. The need for alternative activities makes the use of EDMs more attractive.

Also of interest, the Liberal Democrats produce, by far, the most EDMs than the other two. This of course makes sense, in that they are by far the smallest of the three parties and in greater need for position taking and advertising activities. The Conservative party, while it follows the pattern of minority-majority EDM production, produces by far less EDMs than the other two parties, suggesting that there is something different about the Conservative and Labour parties regarding their internal party dynamic.

(Insert Graph 2.3 about here)

(Insert Graph 2.4 about here)

Finally, hypotheses seven and eight predicted that minority and female MPs would have a need to produce larger numbers of EDMs because of lack of access to the white male dominated chamber. While Gender was significant, it was signed opposite of my prediction. In addition, Race was not significant. Table 2.8 below shows the Calrify estimates for the four categories of MPs: Minority Male, Non-minority Male, Minority Female and Non-minority Female MPs. Surprisingly, female and minority MPs produce EDMs at rates lower than male and non-minority MPs. Hypotheses six and seven are rejected. Examining the data, it is clear there is a very small number of minority MPs (fifteen currently in the Parliament) and female MPs are a small percentage of the

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7 The graphs were calculated by taking the number of EDMs, WQs and PBMs predicted using Clarify (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000, Tomz, Wittenberg and King 2001) and dividing by the mean number of each type of activity produced to give a ratio that can be compared across all three activities.

Parliament. As such, it is possible they are very likely to be drawn into leadership positions for the parties to show that they are diverse in membership.

(Insert Table 2.8 about here)

## **2.6: Conclusion**

The electoral connection is alive and well in the United Kingdom. MPs from marginal districts produce larger numbers of EDMs in an attempt to take positions and advertise due to the high costs associated with rebelling against the party line vote. Members of a legislature, driven by the need to produce positions for the electorate, will seek other means available to them if the costs for certain activities are prohibitive. Due to the electoral connection created by the single-member plurality district in the United Kingdom, the need doesn't disappear with a majoritarian-unitary form of legislative environment. Instead, MPs seek alternative activities to meet these demands than the roll call vote.

With regard to EDMs, MPs who are denied access to directly influence the legislative process come from other areas besides marginal districts. MPs that are not included in the majority party leadership and minority party leaders also have need to find access to position taking and advertising opportunities. Conversely, those MPs who find themselves in positions of power over the legislative process are less likely to engage in EDMs.

Some interesting finding deserves further research. While it is true that minority and female MPs are often located in leadership positions, it doesn't necessarily explain why, as a group, they are less likely to produce EDMs than anyone else. Is the fact that they are

likely to be given leadership positions giving these MPs better access than other MPs?

Are they likely to specialize on specific types of EDMs related to policy areas that could be getting lost in the data?

Further research in this area will have to take into consideration contextual factors, such as differences between party organizations, the culture of the parties if you will. The treatment of political parties as unitary actors needs to be reexamined. The electoral connection, as demonstrated in this chapter suggests, is active and influencing individual members of the British Parliament. The theoretical focus on American legislative organization has focused, firstly, on the Mayhewian electoral connection, followed by the Cox-McCubbins agenda setting cartels model to the more recent Squire focus on the combination of both forces as factors of explanation. These theoretical frameworks, coupled with the expanded idea of legislative activities outlined in this dissertation, will provide much needed data for any future examination.

The production of policy is influenced by the legislative organization. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the impact individual legislators in parliamentary environments can have on the production of policy. What impact do these position taking and advertising activities have on the evolution of legislation? Are they just safety valves that MPs use to satisfy the electoral connection, or are they actually providing useful information to the agenda setters in the step by step policy production process? For example, the data set makes no distinction between the kinds of EDMs employed. Clearly, the difference between an MP congratulating the Tottenham Spurs on winning the FA Cup and an EDM calling for a vote of confidence is huge. Therefore, a coding of EDMs by importance and by issues should reveal even more important information.

In the future, there is a rich area of information to be examined on EDMs. The process of cosponsoring EDMs is very similar to co-sponsorship in the US Congress. An examination of the cosponsorship network should reveal the relationships between MPs and the influence it has on the legislative process. Further, since EDMs can be signed at any time during a legislative session in which it was introduced, the timing of original introduction and the decision on when to sign an EDM would also yield valuable results.

The findings of this chapter should not be overstated. However, the continued focus on roll call data, even in the US Congress, should be expanded to include all activities that members of a legislature engage in. The role that electoral laws play in forming the environment which creates a demand for certain types of activities should also be expanded.



# Chapter 3 – Written Questions

## 3.1: Introduction

Why do Members of Parliament (MPs) use parliamentary questions? The conventional wisdom holds that individual MPs are nothing more than automatic voting machines, subject to the whims of the party leadership. This opinion is so strong that backbenchers are largely ignored in any examination of parliamentary systems. The focus is on the relationship between the cabinet and the prime minister. Given this understanding of the role of backbench MPs, why would they even show up, let alone engage in televised question sessions of cabinet ministers?

The prime minister Question Time has grown to become a much anticipated and watched event in the United Kingdom. What little examination there has been of question time focuses on the role such activity plays within the larger concept of representation. Conventional wisdom suggests that the entire process is nothing more than a dog and pony show designed for individual members to make their party look good while undermining the opposition. No attempt has been done to examine this relationship to see if it holds. Nor have any alternative theories been suggested.

I argue that the high costs associated with rebelling against the party whip on roll call votes, especially for the governing majority party, forces individual MPs to look for less costly activities that allow them to advertise and position take. This high cost is due to the institutional structure present in parliamentary systems, and exacerbated by a unitary legislative body. One important force driving the necessity of finding areas of advertising and position taking is the electoral connection. Plurality-Single Member Electoral

districts create a high level of importance for individual members to meet the reelection goal. This force does not go away with a different legislative environment (i.e.: unitary legislature), but is shaped to redirect this need towards other activities that will satisfy this goal. Therefore, individual MPs who find themselves in electorally competitive districts will be more likely to use Written Questions as a means of advertising and position taking in order to take advantage of the use of Written Questions to meet the reelection demand.

### **3.2: Review**

“The ways in which positions can be registered are numerous and often imaginative. There are floor addresses ranging from weighty orations to mass produced ‘nationality day statements.’ There are speeches before home groups, television appearances, letters, newsletters, press releases, ghostwritten books, Playboy articles, even interviews with political scientists.”

(Mayhew 2004:63)

The focus of legislative activity and reelection has largely been on roll call voting. The findings in this area have been relatively weak in comparison to the force that party id has on electoral success (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, Norton and Wood 1993). Given the nature of the institutional environment, this is to be expected. The result has been that research into backbenchers has been largely ignored. The focus has been on the relationship between the prime minister and the cabinet (Rhodes 1995, Smith 1999), the front benches between parties (King 1976, Andeweg and Nijzink 1995) and the party rebels (Cowley 2002). However, this doesn’t eliminate the need for individual MPs to distinguish themselves as active legislative participants for the voters at home. As Mayhew suggests above, individual members of a legislature have multiple opportunities

to engage in these types of activities, and frequently do. This is supported by the opinions of the voters, who support MPs who back their parties, but also expect them to be independent minded representatives of the constituency (Johnson and Rosenblatt 2007).

While parliamentary questions have largely been ignored due to the over-riding conventional wisdom that backbenchers have no role, there has been some important research done in small batches recently (Judge 1974; Franklin and Norton 1993; Wiberg 1994, 1995). An examination of the role that the electoral connection plays in the use of written questions is almost non-existent. One preliminary area of research does credit Mayhew's (2004) electorally connected activities as a justification for the "why" of legislative behavior (Wiberg 1995). This important first cut has identified and categorized parliamentary questions across multiple institutional settings. There has been no test of the influence of the electoral connection on parliamentary questions as legislative activity.

This chapter will examine the electoral connection and Written Questions (WQs).<sup>1</sup> The next section lays out the argument for why members engage in these behaviors and the underlying institutional and contextual forces driving the choice to use WQs. Section four derives eight testable hypotheses based upon the previous section. Section five discusses the test I run, my variables and findings which is followed by section six, the conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> Written questions are a specific subset of parliamentary questions. The number and forms of parliamentary questions varies across legislative settings. The focus here on written questions is due the traditional role they play in the UK House of Commons as an accepted form of backbencher activity. There is no limit on the number of written questions that a member may table, and they frequently publicize any answers they receive in the local media (Norton 1993: 18).

### 3.3: Argument

“What takes place at Question Time is essentially an attempt to secure favourable recognition for each party’s point of view and, perhaps as important, favourable recognition for individuals, both front benchers and backbenchers.”

(Borthwick 1993:78)

It seems to be accepted amongst Parliament watchers and former members that the use of questions are an important tool for individual members of Parliament. Even though this is the case, the study of this important activity is lacking. No attempt has been made to explore the reasons why this is the case, or to falsify it as anecdotal evidence. Rather, the standard conventional wisdom is that backbenchers have no role in parliament. In fact, the idea of a “presidentialization” of the Prime Minister has been posited, suggesting an even more asymmetric power relationship between the Prime Minister and the Parliament (Poguntke and Webb 2005). This theory offers a legislative environment even more hostile to individual backbenchers than the traditional parliamentary model.

Due to the institutional nature of the American Congress and the electoral environment these members face, the focus has been devoted towards an individual approach. The much studied US House of Representatives has led to some groundbreaking research into members of Congress. Beginning with the seminal works of Fenno (1973) and Mayhew (2004) and building on Downs (1957), these scholars focused on the electoral connection and its importance on how members conducted themselves in the legislature. Since the need for re-election was important, the activities of these members were to increase the likelihood that they could win an election. The parties’ role here was minimal, due to the institutional nature of the legislative body. One of the important

reasons party cohesion was not helped was because of the bicameral-federal nature of the US government.

The very same electoral force that is driving members of Congress reelection goal also impacts members of the House of Commons. The connection does not disappear; rather it is refocused due to the institutional setting of the British parliamentary system. While roll-call voting can be a costly affair in the US, it is not subject to the same level of costs associated with defecting on a roll call vote in the Commons (Bawn and Theis 2003, Carey and Shugart 1995). Therefore, individual members of Parliament need to seek alternative, less costly reelection goal seeking activities to raise their profile with the voters back home (Mayhew 2004:22).

Mayhew identifies three such activities: Advertising, Credit-Claiming and Position-Taking. Written Questions offers members an opportunity to satisfy advertising and position taking activities. As Brothwick suggests,

“For Backbenchers and for ministers, there are reputations to be made and, perhaps more significantly, lost at Question Time.”

(Borthwick 1993:79)

Further, members themselves are aware of the opportunity and importance parliamentary questions play for all members of the Parliament. New members use questions to showcase themselves to party leaders and “promising backbenchers” fulfill their role of constituency representative (Borthwick 1993:83). Members see Question Time as an activity reserved for backbenchers (Bowring and Chester 1962). Franklin and Norton (1993) find that the two top reasons for asking questions by members of the House of Commons was to hold ministers accountable and to defend or promote constituency

interests. These two responses seem to fit well with the idea of questions used to further the reelection goals of the collective party and the individual member.

The government factsheet on Parliamentary Questions (of which WQs are an important subset) outlines the role and importance PQs have for members of Parliament:

“Parliamentary questions are tools that can be used by Members of Parliament to seek information or press for action. They oblige Ministers to explain and defend the work, policy decisions and actions of their departments.”  
(House of Commons 2007:2)

Clearly, parliamentary questions are a major tool available to all members of parliament and an important percentage of the day to day business of the chamber.<sup>2</sup>

Individual members devote a large amount of time and resources towards parliamentary questions, for example, directing their staffs to write and submit the WQs in large number. What role does the electoral connection have on the propensity for members to engage in written questions? If backbenchers are truly unimportant, what then explains all this activity?

The answer is that individual members have a need to engage in advertising and position taking activities due to the electoral environment they face. The fact that roll call defection is prohibitive under normal circumstances, they seek alternative activities to satisfy the reelection goal. The use of written questions is one of these activities.

### **3.4: Prediction**

Individual members of any legislative environment are shaped by the institutional setting that they find themselves in. There will be universal rules that are similar to all

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<sup>2</sup> On average, 80,000 questions are asked per year (roughly 3,000 per year orally) (House of Commons 2007) and the House of Commons devotes eight percent of its time to answering oral questions in addition to trying to answer all written questions by the end of the session (Borthwick 1993:75).

legislative bodies, rules that are unique to the executive-legislative relationship, rules that are unique to each legislative body and rules that change over time for all of the previous situations. For the future development of a theory of legislatures, it is imperative that the whole spectrum of these rules and the activities that legislatures engage in be examined. We need to move beyond the roll call legislative studies and start examining the numerous legislative activities that individual legislators use to facilitate the goals outlined by Mayhew (2004).

Due to this focus on the roll call vote, parliamentary legislative studies have assumed that backbench members are nothing more than party shells, their only purpose to show up and vote for the party line whenever a whip is applied. This assumption ignores the numerous activities that members engage in, because as rightly assumed under the previous approach; the costs of voting against the party are too high. The need for advertising, credit claiming and position taking haven't vanished.

The electoral connection is paramount to understanding why members engage in these activities. We must consider the role that electoral laws in place have on this aspect of a legislator's life in parliament. Single member plurality districts create a need for individual centered candidates (Bawn and Theis 2003). Even if the party leadership has the power to determine who is going to run in each district, this is rarely used and has been overturned by local party selections in the past.<sup>3</sup> Members know this and act accordingly.

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<sup>3</sup> There are various reasons suggested for this. Some have suggested that while the power existed, it is never employed regularly for a variety of reasons (Penning and Hazan 2001). Others suggest it is the changing nature of the electorate (Flanagan and Dalton 1984, Mair 1989, Poguntke 1996). Some scholars claim the opposite effect, that in fact the recent changes to the selection process have strengthened the party leadership (Hopkins 2001, Pennings and Hazan 2001).

The agenda control over the legislative process by the majority party creates an environment that requires members to toe the party line to have access to any credit that the party accrues as a result of legislative production (Mayhew 2004). This means that credit claiming in the British parliamentary environment is near impossible for a backbencher. Very few private member bills get passed (Laski 1925, Norton 1993).

Members who find themselves in the most electorally vulnerable position have the greatest need to secure opportunities to advertise and position take. If they are not in position of power within the majority party, they are precluded for any ability to claim credit for any legislative accomplishments.

Also, MPs in the most competitive districts from time to time may find that the legislation proposed by the party puts them in conflict with the voters in their district. To lie down and tow the party line in this particular scenario is to court disaster. Members must have the ability to show the people back home that they are fighting to make the changes they desire. They will seek alternative activities other than voting against the party position, because to do so could defeat the government and trigger an early election in the least optimal environment. In the normal course of a legislative session, these members will find themselves in need of finding alternative advertising and position taking activities to engage in. Therefore,

*H1: MPs in marginal districts will produce more WQs than other MPs*

Other members who find themselves excluded from the policy making process and agenda control will also have a need to advertise and position take. Members who are part of the majority but find themselves excluded from the party leadership will be in a position similar to members from marginal districts. This situation gets worse as time



goes on and members realize that the opportunity to join the leadership diminishes (Kam 2002). Conversely, members who are new and unknown to the voting public will also have need of opportunities to increase name recognition, not having had the chance to climb the leadership ladder yet. Based upon these two assumption then,

*H2: MPs who have more time in Parliament but have not been included in the party leadership will produce more WQs than MPs who are included*

*H3: MPs with less time in Parliament will produce more WQs than MPs who have been in the parliament longer*

All members of the minority are excluded from the opportunity to legislate and control the agenda. The opportunity to use Written Questions to publicize the majority party's weakness on policy and highlight their alternatives makes this activity to valuable to pass up. Leadership of minority parties will have greater need of this solution due to being outside of government. This becomes more so the smaller the party caucus is within a parliament, as the ability to make legislative impacts diminishes as a party's faction size decreases as a proportion of the chamber.<sup>4</sup> Therefore,

*H4: MPs of the minority party's (or parties') leadership will produce more WQs than other MPs*

*H5: The smaller a minority party caucus' share of seats in parliament, the more WQs will be produced by the leadership*

As Fenno (1973) suggests, there are different constituencies to be considered. Members from extremely safe districts, while not having to worry about winning the general election, are concerned with securing the local party's nomination each electoral period. Members who come from extremely safe districts will also engage in high levels

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<sup>4</sup> This would only be the case of non-government parties in coalition government parliaments.

of Written Questions. This is due to the fact that safe districts tend to be districted to secure a large number of partisans in these districts, so the higher number can produce a pull away from the party caucus median. Policies produced by the party to secure electoral support for a general election may be more moderate than these members are comfortable with and there will be pressure to respond to their electoral environment as a result. Therefore,

*H6: Extremely safe MPs will produce more WQs than MPs who are not*

Members who do not match the gender or racial composition of parliament may also find themselves in need of alternative legislative activities. Female MPs have a difficult time gaining access to the legislative process, especially those not in the Labour party (Childs and Whitley 2004). Minority MPs, who are an even smaller segment of the parliamentary population than female MPs face an even steeper access problem.

Therefore,

*H7: Minority MPs will produce more EDMs than non-minority MPs*

*H8: Female MPs will produce more EDMs than male MPs*

### **3.5: Test and Data**

I collected data on the number of Written Questions submitted per month for 1,304 Members of the British House of Commons.<sup>5</sup> The time period runs from December of

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<sup>5</sup> The data on individual members of Parliament comes from various websites and data sets. The data on election results comes from the Keele University website for the United Kingdom (<http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk.htm>), information on individual member's party positions comes from a combination of the Guardian Newspaper website (<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/person/browse/mps/az/0,9379,,00.html>) and Wikipedia information on individual members biographies ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_British\\_MPs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_British_MPs)).

1997 through October of 2008 and comprises a total of 110 months.<sup>6</sup> The result is a total of 71,328 observations. The dependent variable is the total number of WQs a member submits per month.

The nature of the dependent variable requires that it be treated as a count variable (Kennedy 1998:236). This suggests an MLE test using the Poisson regression. However, concern with the fact that the distribution's mean is not equal to the variance led me to use the negative binomial regression (Long 1997:230).<sup>7</sup> There was also a concern that the large number of cases with zero WQs would affect the final results, but running both models resulted in similar tests. I decided in the end to use the negative binomial as this was the model to employ Clarify (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000, Tomz, Wittenberg and King 2001) to interpret the results. Table 3.1 below has the list of the major variables I constructed to test my fourteen hypotheses.

(Insert Table 3.1 about here)

Table 3.1 above shows the variables I have constructed to test my hypotheses and the expectations of direction. My first hypothesis requires a comparison across the different districts members find themselves in. As such, I have constructed a group of five dummy variables to represent the different electoral climates possible (Norris 2008). Each dummy measures competitiveness from "Ultra Marginal" to "Ultra Safe." Table 3.1 above shows the breakdown for each category. I expect that both the "Ultra Safe" and "Ultra Marginal" dummies to be positive and significant. I dropped the middle category, "Fairly Safe" as my baseline category against which my other four categories will be

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<sup>6</sup> These data were gathered from the House of Commons question book website (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmordbk.htm>). This is the only time period available online. Future work will seek to expand the data to include Written Questions over a longer period of time.

<sup>7</sup> The test for over over-dispersion was confirmed with the Chi-square test.

measured. The examination of the sixth hypothesis will use the same categories as discussed above for hypothesis one. In this case, I expect that the dummy variable for “Ultra Safe” to be positive and significant.

Hypotheses two and three examine the relationship between MPs by looking at the number of years they have served in the Parliament. This is captured using the variable labeled “Time” which is a count of the number of sessions a member has served in the Parliament. I expect this dummy to be negative and significant.

Hypotheses four and five examine the relationship between minority parties and the governing Labour party. The Labour party is in control during this entire period, so the parties of interest are the Conservative and Liberal Democrats, which each get a dummy variable and the minor third parties which get a single dummy variable labeled “Other.” I drop the dummy for the “Other” category because they are such a small percentage of the number of members. Therefore, I expect the dummy for each of the remaining party variables to be significant, but I am agnostic about the direction. The ability to answer hypotheses four and five will be answered using Clarify by illustrating that opposition leaders and the smallest parties should have the greatest need for WQs.

The Minority and Gender hypotheses (seven and eight respectively) will be tested using a simple dummy variable for each. Both Female MPs and Minority MPs (meaning non-white) will be coded as 1. My expectation is that these two variables will be positive and significant.

(Insert Table 3.2 about here)

Table 3.2 above shows the results from my negative binomial MLE regression. I ran two models of this equation. Model one is the complete “kitchen sink” model that

includes all one hundred and ten dummy variables for each month.<sup>8</sup> Model two includes the same variables in model one, but without the one hundred and ten dummy variables. The results for all the variables are relatively unchanged.

Many of my predictions, while the variables are significant, are signed in the wrong direction, suggesting the opposite relationship than I argued. Female MPs produce less WQs than their male counterparts. This finding supports claims made about the role of female MPs, as far as the use of WQs are concerned (Childs and Whitley 2004). In addition to female MPs, members from more competitive electoral districts produce less WQs than members from safer districts. Liberal Democrat party members produce more WQs than any other party, including the numerous smaller parties in Parliament.

(Insert Table 3.3 about here)

I use Clarify to provide probability estimates for the number of WQs likely to be produced under the various scenarios outlined by my hypotheses. I ran 73,000 simulations on Model Two to get my predicted mean values for WQs. Table 3.3 above shows the results to interpret hypotheses one and six.<sup>9</sup> You can see that the results demonstrate the increase in the number of WQs as the districts become safer. The highest category appears to be Very Safe. Both marginal categories produce lower levels of WQs than the two safe categories. My assumption leading to hypothesis one is incorrect while hypothesis six stands.

Running a regression by alternately dropping different categories of the electoral districts revealed two pieces of information; first, the five categories can be collapsed into three due to Ultra Marginal/Fairly Marginal and Very Safe/Ultra Safe not being

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<sup>8</sup> With two months (the 38th and 77th dropped).

<sup>9</sup> The results for the different electoral variables is computed with all the dummies set to zero (except for the variable being estimated, and three variables set at their mean value (Time, CIEP and Voter Intention).

significantly different from each other. Second, the number of WQs produced can be ranked as follows: Ultra Marginal/Fairly Marginal, Fairly Safe, Very Safe/Ultra Safe.

(Insert Table 3.4 about here)

(Insert Table 3.5 about here)

Hypotheses two and three examine the relationship between time in office for new MPs and MPs who have longevity, but no leadership role. I expected both these categories of MPs to produce higher levels of WQs. As Table 3.4 about illustrates, the longer an MP is in office, the lower the number of WQs are produced per month, supporting hypothesis two's assumption. The newest MPs produce a ratio of 1.7 to 1 WQs per month than the most senior MPs

Table 3.5 shows the number of WQs produced by MPs who are in leadership positions with their respective parties. Comparing the results for each percentile from the two tables above illustrates the much lower rate for MPs in leadership positions as compared to their non-leadership counterparts from the same time period. This relationship holds across time. Non-leadership senior MPs produce a ratio of 1.7 to 1 WQs per month than MPs with similar seniority in leadership.

(Insert Table 3.6 about here)

The hypotheses examining the relationship between MPs from the governing majority party and the opposition are illustrated in Table 3.6 above. Hypothesis four predicted that the leaders of the opposition, due to their no longer having access to agenda control, will use WQs at a higher rate than those in leadership in the Labour Party. This is clearly the case. Also, hypothesis five posited that as a party's caucus became a smaller proportion of the chamber as a whole, the number of WQs produced would be higher. Not only does

this hold for MPs in each party's leadership, but this pattern hold for all MPs, no matter their role in the party. Conservative backbench MPs produce a ratio of 4 to 1 WQs per month than their Labour party counterparts, while Liberal Democrat MPs produce a ratio of 6.6 to 1. For the party leadership, this ratio is even high with 3.7 to 1 and 6.6 to 1 for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats respectively.

(Insert Table 3.7 about here)

The role of female and minority MPs in Parliament was posited to be higher than their male and non-minority counterparts in the use of WQs as predicted in hypotheses seven and eight. As the results showed, females were signed in the opposite direction than expected. Table 3.7 above provides a better illustration of where we should be looking for an explanation of why this is occurring. Clearly, minority MPs produce higher numbers of WQs than non-minority MPs, as was predicted by a ratio of 1.5 to 1. The puzzle over female MPs seems to be an issue of non-minority female MPs. They come in last while minority female MPs come in second, showing a possible intervening impact of race on the number of WQs produced for female MPs.

### **3.6: Conclusion**

The electoral connection can be overcome with alternative activities like advertising and position taking. Considering the conventional wisdom that members from the majority and opposition use Written Questions for political posturing, with a large number of members for the majority stepping in to ask softball questions while the opposition tries to trip them up, the individual electoral concerns for MPs may be getting pushed aside by the collective electoral concerns of the party.

What is needed is an examination of the content of the questions asked, when they are asked and under what circumstances. A more nuanced approach is necessary, because there is activity going on as demonstrated by this chapter, but several of the findings lead to some interesting puzzles for several areas of research.

One conclusion is obvious from my research into this area of legislative activity; Written Questions are used by almost every member of the Parliament for various reasons. Clearly, my theory governing the use of written questions as regards the electoral connection is rejected in part. MPs from the most electorally vulnerable districts produce the lowest number of WQs. However, it is clear that the process is much more complex than my model is able to capture and further study is warranted. One thing is for certain, there needs to be a more systematic and deliberate examination into the activities of backbench members of a parliamentary system beyond WQs.

The findings with regards to MPs from very safe districts open up an interesting avenue for investigation. Are members engaging in this activity because they are rebelling to satisfy the more partisan electorate they face or are they in fact asking softball questions to help the party maintain a majority? The research on party rebels continues to focus on the roll-call, but clearly, rebels will use every tool at their disposal and examining the pre-vote period could illuminate the circumstances that lead to a vote rebellion by considering the legislative process from beginning to end. This could demonstrate how parties are able to influence the levels of rebellion that occurs during the roll call vote.

Roll-call studies examine the very last act of a legislative process teaming with multiple actors seeking varying goals. The vote cast is too costly to engage in rebellion in



most circumstances, so any examination that is attempting to look for independent legislators being governed by forces such as the electoral connection miss the mark. It is clear that much more work needs to consider this aspect going forward (Döring and Hallerberg 2004).

“...preferences over alternative rules cannot be understood without a more thorough understanding of the comparative consequences of rules” (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1989). Collective Choice studies should find ample work by expanding our understanding of the role of the legislator in a parliamentary environment. Such study will allow for the expansion of our understanding with the full spectrum of comparative rules. How important is the Mayhewian affect of the electoral connection on various legislative activities? How is this shaped by the Cox-McCubbins addenda controlling cartel model (Cox and McCubbins 1993)? Is it a function of both as is suggested by Squire (Squire 1992)?

These findings suggest an examination of internal party structure is necessary with more focus on the role an individual member can play in the legislative process. In addition, the UK Parliament has evolved the current rule system in place, so it will be important to consider the effect this has had (Rohde 1991, Cox and McCubbins 1993).

The comparative legislative research to date has been dominated by a functionalist approach. As Gamm and Huber (2002) suggests:

“One notable feature of almost all of the typological research...is the absence of testable, causal arguments. Instead, the research has a highly descriptive quality, with the primary goal being to interpret the actual role that legislatures or legislators are playing in different political systems.”

(Gamm and Huber 2002:320)

Expanding the collection of data to include activities beyond the roll call arena, coupled with the advanced quantitative research done on the US Congress, can help to expand our understanding of parliamentary environments and help forge a better theoretical understanding of legislatures as a whole. This chapter takes a step in that direction by examining the use of Written Questions (a subset of Parliamentary Questions) and illustrates a relationship for individual Members of Parliament separate from the traditional understanding of MPs in Parliament.

# Chapter 4 – Private Member Bills

## 4.1: Introduction

Why do Members of Parliament (MPs) take the time to introduce and cosponsor legislation, given its very low success rate? In the course of studying inter- and intra-party interaction in a parliamentary setting, the focus has been on the votes cast by individual party members at the exclusion of all other activities. All our ideas of rational, purposive legislators acting in parliamentary environments rest on this metric. This is a limited view of what constitutes behavior available within the parliamentary environment. This has resulted in legislative parliamentary studies that ignore the role rank and file members play, and the forces that drive their behavior.

Engaging in voting against the party is considered high cost due to the institutional structure of Parliament. It has been shown that party cohesion in parliamentary systems is relatively high, so scholars have focused on leadership. In order to understand the true relationship between party leaders and the rank and file members, our understanding of the role of all members and the use of non-roll call voting behavior must be explored. Legislative studies must allow for backbench activities that are part of the process of legislative control.

It is precisely because of the high cost of voting against the party that individual members seek alternative sources to ensure that they are able to engage in position taking and advertising activities. The driving force shaping a legislator's need is going to be influenced by the electoral rules in place. Single Member Plurality electoral systems create a high reelection demand. A broader understanding of parliamentary individual

MP Private Member Bill (PMBs) activity is necessary to accomplish this goal. This chapter attempts to advance a broader understanding of MPs private bill introduction behavior and examines the role of the electoral connection as an influencing factor. I examine the number of private bills a member introduces or sponsors in the UK parliament to illustrate the importance of this non-voting activity in the legislative environment. Therefore, members who face competitive electoral environments and those who do not have access to leadership roles will be more likely to engage in Private Member Bill production.

## **4.2: Review**

Studies of the parliamentary system focus mainly on political parties that exhibit strong connections with the electorate (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1984), highly centralized organizational design (Rhodes 1995, Smith 1992) and governing parties in which dissent is not tolerated and carries a heavy penalty for members of the party who threaten to bring down their government (Mayhew 2004, Benn 1980; Crossman 1963; Mackintosh 1968, Burch 1983; Seymour-Ure 1984; Young 1989). The important actors are the party leadership in the form of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister. Much of the focus is aimed at the ability to place a constraint on any attempt to lose control of the government (Bagehot 1963, Smith 1999, Alderman and Carter 1991). Not much consideration is given to rank and file members' role in the governing process.

Richard Fenno (1973) identified five goals that individual elected officials can potentially pursue. Those goals are: 1) election (or reelection), 2) power within the chamber, 3) policy goals, 4) progressive ambition and 5) corruption. Individuals are not

limited to just one of these goals, in fact, as Rohde (1979) suggests for progressive ambition, if individuals were able to acquire all of these goals without cost, they would. I believe that Fenno is in fact correct, and that we must include in any discussion of legislatures the idea of multiple goals being sought by each member. Any decision that members make will be shaped by these individual goals at any stage in the political process, as well as the collective goal of agenda control for the governing majority party.

Clearly, an individual faces a legislative environment where in order to satisfy any of the other four goals they must first satisfy the election goal (Mayhew 2004). Without the election goal, there is no fulfilling the others. Once elected, an individual faces a multidimensional environment composed of many different individuals pursuing a multitude of goals. This environment is heavy on costs and sparse on benefits.

Some recent research has attempted to close this gap by focusing on various legislative activities (Kam 2002, Pattie, Fieldhouse and Johnson 1994) and an attempt to build a cross national approach as well (Döring 1995). The decision to focus solely on roll call voting has led to a very important component of the legislative world view that is impeding the development of a universal theoretical approach.

This chapter will examine the electoral connection and Private Member's Bills. The next section lays out the argument for why members engage in this behavior and the underlying institutional and contextual forces driving the choice to take part in PMBs. Section four derives eight testable hypotheses based upon the previous section. Section five discusses the test I run, my variables and findings which is followed by section six, the conclusion.

### 4.3: Argument

“Without the rights to propose legislation, to debate the content and consequences of legislation, to propose amendments, and to negotiate compromises an MP cannot contribute meaningfully to legislation.”

(Mattson 1995:451)

The study of individual party member behavior has mostly been treated as a zero sum affair. Either a member supports the party, or they vote against. To ensure that such behavior is not common, the party leadership has developed tools that it can use to reward and punish the behavior of its members. Voting against the party is the most drastic form of dissent for members of parliaments to engage in, short of resigning cabinet posts or leaving the party outright.<sup>1</sup> However, without the opportunities to engage in Mayhew’s (2004) advertising and position taking, members put themselves in peril of reelection loss.

The idea that behaviors of political party members are mutually exclusive primarily because of the institutional structure of the legislative body is an assumption that, in its more simplistic forms, leaves out a considerable area of research. Those who study parliamentary governments believe that “rebellion” in this setting is too costly, infrequently occurs, and as such, parties may be treated as unitary actors for empirical examination. It is important to note that the pull of the electoral connection does not disappear simply because the legislature assumes a different institutional setting than in, say, the US Congress.

This inability to nail down the “Backbencher factor” has a lot to do with the way we approach the question. To date, backbencher independence is largely measured through an individual member’s decision to vote against the party. The reason for this is the ease,

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<sup>1</sup> These instances are so rare they are often ignored in studies that examine membership behavior.

in most countries, but specifically in the United States, of gathering this data. However, this is a very limited view of legislative activity. There are all types of behavior in which individual members may engage in that can be considered, but which are not captured by any measure used in the literature.

In fact, it is more likely that any purposive behavior that members may engage in, due to the high costs associated with this activity, occur elsewhere than on the roll call vote. As such, any study that seeks to understand the internal workings of legislatures must compare the range of activities available in any given legislature to the full range of activities potentially available in all legislatures. The very narrow consideration of the role of backbenchers in examinations of the British system has reinforced the artificial separation in our theoretical approaches, respectively, to parliamentary and presidential systems. A richer theoretical evaluation is required.

The legislative environment should create opportunities to facilitate individual needs and collective needs. Every party is comprised of individual members, all of whom have multiple interests that can produce varying behavior, depending upon the goals, preferences and context in which they find themselves. Key to the success of any party is its ability to get individual members into a cohesive force that will consistently and predictably produce outcomes that will benefit the party as a whole, thereby making membership in the party electorally valuable. This produces value of party membership to the collective body.

Members are also responsive to their constituents. Members must be concerned about the goals and preferences of their constituents in the electoral context, concerns which in turn informs the demands they make of the party. Therefore, examining the condition

under which an individual member will chose to engage in alternatives to roll call rebellion is paramount to understanding the role of individual MPs in a parliamentary setting. It is this very tradeoff between individual member's needs and the needs of the party as a whole that makes legislatures interesting organizations from a scholar's perspective. In the UK, the electoral connection between the constituents and their representatives is assumed to be much weaker than in the US (for instance), but it is not absent. Indeed, Cain et al (1984) find that member's constituency service in the UK that can have a slight but significant impact on their chances of reelection. Norton and Wood (1993) note the increasing importance of constituency activities and the importance of the electoral connection.

In the UK, "all but the most technical of decisions are affected by some considerations of party management" (Cowley 2002). As is known to anyone who observes British parliamentary affairs, legislation is subject to frequent changes, and even removal from consideration based upon the behavior of backbench party members (Cowley 2002:2).

Therefore, individual members of any legislative body, who find themselves in need of legislative activities to meet the reelection goal, will choose activities that allow them such opportunities that are not too costly to the party's and their electoral survival. Who would these members be and under what circumstances would they engage in activities for such a purpose? The answer to this question can be found by examining the electoral connection and therefore, those members who find themselves in electoral districts that are competitive have the greatest need to satisfy the reelection demand. One of these activities is the use of private member legislation, introduced in an environment not



favorable to any chance at becoming law, on issue that are important to legislators for the purposes of position taking and advertising.

Table 4.1 below provides evidence that show that poor performance of legislative success for PMBs in the British parliament relative to government legislation over the last twenty-four legislative session showing greater success lies in controlling the agenda as the government<sup>2</sup>. Hence, MPs who seek to satisfy the reelection demand through legislative outputs must seek positions within the party leadership. Still, roughly 12% of all PMBs put forward become law. There are, however, many methods for introducing PMBs into parliament. The most widely used method is through the ten-minute rule; about 49% of all PMBs were introduced using this method. This allows members an opportunity to make a brief speech in favor of the legislation, suggesting the attractiveness of position taking and advertising is high. Bills introduced under the ten-minute rule:

“...are not considered always serious attempts at legislation. The process is used much more as a means of making a point on the need to change the law on a particular subject.”

(House of Commons 2008:3)

(Insert Table 4.1 about here)

By far, the most successful method of having a PMB become law is to use the Ballot.<sup>3</sup> Of the 281 bills introduced during the time period illustrated by Table 4.1 above, nearly 63% of successful PMBs came from using this method. Yet, ballot PMBs only constitute about 20% of all PMBs submitted. Graphs 4.1 and 4.2 below illustrate the disparity between the methods of submission and the level of success. Clearly, the best way to

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<sup>2</sup> Legislators introduce the same bill over contiguous legislative session with the same outcome: no legislation becomes law.

<sup>3</sup> The ballot is a system whereby individual MPs, regardless of party, place their names into a lottery, from which 20 names are pulled.

achieve success is to go the ballot route. The only problem is that this is restricted to 20 bills a session. In order to get a bill through this process, members must be lucky in the drawing of names, and the order in which this occurs. Many members don't even go as far to have a subject for the bill:

“Over 400 Members normally enter the ballot, however a substantial proportion have no particular subject for a bill in mind. If they are drawn high in the ballot, they will be besieged by pressure groups, other organizations and their own colleagues who will suggest subjects and offer draft bills.”

(House of Commons 2008:2)

(Insert Graph 4.1 about here)

(Insert Graph 4.2 about here)

Clearly, individual members recognize the importance of this method of participation and frequently line up to use it. Within the British parliamentary system, there are many opportunities to engage in position taking and advertising. Given the very small success rate of private members' bills, the question to be answered is simply: why would purposive actors seek to engage in activities that provided no benefits?

The answer is that individual members have a need to engage in advertising and position taking activities due to the electoral environment they face. The fact that roll call defection is prohibitive under normal circumstances, they seek alternative activities to satisfy the reelection goal. The use of private member bills is one of these activities.

## 4.4: Prediction

In Westminster parliamentary legislatures, parties control advancement and policy, they are inseparable (Kam 2002, Norton 2001, Palmer 1995).<sup>4</sup> In order for the member to influence policy, one must advance to a position of power within the party hierarchy. Due to this, members seeking promotion or policy influence should share the same goal of reward, in this case, in the form of promotion.

Members who have electoral concerns may be faced with problems because of the type of policy offered. Members who come from marginal districts could face electoral pressures because of supporting unpopular policies. Members from safe districts could face problems from their local constituency in the form of reselection, if they are seen as sacrificing policy for promotion or electoral gain. Also, MPs cannot be seen as doing nothing but voting. The British electorate expects MPs to work for the district (Johnson and Rosenblatt 2007). Alternative opportunities are needed where a member in this situation can show the voters back home that they are working through position taking and advertising activities. Therefore:

*H1: MPs in marginal districts will produce more PMBs than other MPs*

*H2: Extremely safe MPs will produce more PMBs than MPs who are not*

Counter to this situation, members who have access to the reins of power will not have need for alternative activities, as they have direct access to the policy making process and agenda control. Kam (2004) also shows that time is a factor in the process, with newer members not having had the time to gain these powerful positions and

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<sup>4</sup> On the issue of control of access to the party nomination, both the party leader and party constituency have a veto over the nomination process, but it has very rarely been invoked (Gallagher and Marsh 1988).

members who have been in Parliament for a very long time, but locked out of leadership.

Therefore,

*H3: MPs who have more time in Parliament but have not been included in the party leadership will produce more PMBs than MPs who are included*

*H4: MPs with less time in Parliament will produce more PMBs than MPs who have been in the parliament longer*

The majority party controls the Parliament. Minority parties have few opportunities to stop the legislative agenda of a unified and determined majority party precisely due to the institutional situation, the unitary legislative branch and unified executive-legislature.

Because of this, minority party members, and the leaders themselves will seek alternatives to be able to have position taking and advertising activities. Therefore,

*H5: MPs of the minority party's (or parties') leadership will produce more PMBs than other MPs*

*H6: The smaller a minority party caucus' share of seats in parliament, the more PMBs will be produced by the leadership*

Members who also find themselves in the “minority” would be female members and minority members. Since the chamber is dominated by white males, I would expect that individual MPs who are not part of the “majority” would seek opportunities to express positions that better reflect their descriptive racial and gender preferences. Therefore,

*H7: Minority MPs will produce more PMBs than non-minority MPs*

*H8: Female MPs will produce more PBMs than male MPs*

## 4.5: Test and Data

I collected data on the number of Private Member Bills submitted per session for 905 Members of the British House of Commons.<sup>5</sup> The time period runs from May of 1997 through October of 2008 and comprises a total of 11 sessions.<sup>6</sup> The result is a total of 7,166 observations. The dependent variable is the total number of PMBs a member submits per session, this includes the primary- and co-sponsors.<sup>7</sup>

Since the dependent variable, the number of PMBs submitted per member per legislative session, is a count variable, this suggests an MLE test using the Poisson regression (Kennedy 1998:236). However, concern with the fact that the distribution's mean is not equal to the variance led me to test for over-dispersion using the Chi-square (Long 1997:230). The result confirmed that a negative binomial model was warranted. Due to the large number of cases of members with zero PMBs, this could affect the final results. Running both the negative binomial and zero-inflated negative binomial models revealed similar results. I decided in the end to use the negative binomial as this was the model to employ Clarify (King, Tomz and Wittenberg 2000, Tomz, Wittenberg and King 2001) to interpret the results. Table 4.2 below has the list of the major variables I constructed to test my eight hypotheses.

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5 The data on individual members of Parliament comes from various websites and data sets. The data on election results comes from the Keele University website for the United Kingdom (<http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk.htm>), information on individual member's party positions comes from a combination of the Guardian Newspaper website

(<http://politics.guardian.co.uk/person/browse/mps/az/0,9379,,00.html>) and Wikipedia information on individual members biographies ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_British\\_MPs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_British_MPs)).

6 These data were gathered from the combination of the House of Commons Hansard website (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhansrd.htm>) for sessions 1997-1998 through 2001-2002 and the website for private member bills (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/pubmenu.htm>) for sessions 2002-2003 through 2007-2008. Future work will seek to expand the data to include Private Member Bills over a longer period of time.

7 Cosponsorship is also signifying behavior that seeks to engage in advertising and position taking. PMBs resemble the strategy employed for cosponsorship in the US Congress. In future work, I plan to examine this PBM process using the approached employed on US Congress cosponsorship.

(Insert Table 4.2 about here)

I have constructed a group of five dummy variables to represent the different electoral climates possible to test my two hypotheses (Norris 2008). Each dummy measures competitiveness from “Ultra Marginal” to “Ultra Safe.” Table 4.1 above shows the breakdown for each category. I drop the middle category (fairly safe) to test that “ultra marginal” and “ultra safe” electoral districts will be positive and significant.

It is also a prediction that members who are new to the parliament and members who have been in longer, but fail to achieve any leadership position will produce larger numbers of PMBs (hypotheses three and four). I expect that the time variable will be neagtive and significant and a direct test of hypothesis four. I will be able to extrapolate the relationship for hypothesis three using Clarify.

Given that the majority party has such great control over the policy making process, hypotheses five and six examine the relationship between the minority parties in parliament. I exclude the category for “Other,” which includes all the minor parties in the British parliament.<sup>8</sup> I expect that, due to the smaller need from the larger parties for these activities, that the variable for Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats will be significant but I am agnostic about the direction. The ability to answer hypotheses five and six will be answered using Clarify by illustrating that opposition leaders and the smallest parties should have the greatest need for PMBs. I also expect that the variable House Leader will be negative and significant.

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<sup>8</sup> The three major parties are each represented by a dummy variable. These parties are (in order of size of caucus): Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrats. These three parties comprise almost 94% of the membership, the other 6% being divided up between eleven smaller parties (four of which contain one member).

The final area of examination will look at the relationship between two underrepresented groups in most legislative sessions: women and minorities. The final two hypotheses posit that as these members comprise a very small percentage of the membership, the need to engage in position taking and advertising will be greater. Therefore, I expect that both variables, Gender and Minorities, will be positive and significant.

(Insert Table 4.3 about here)

Table 4.3 above shows the results from my negative binomial MLE regression. The party, time and personal variables were significant and signed in the predicted direction. However, Minority was in the opposite direction than expected. Table 4.4 below shows the Clarify results for hypotheses five and six for the three major parties.<sup>9</sup>

(Insert Table 4.4 about here)

What can be seen for the within party relationship is that rank and file members from each party engage in more PMBs than their party's leadership. Across parties, it is clear that the Labour Party rank and file produce PBMs of a ratio of 1 to 1:2 with Conservative counterparts and 1 to 1:4 with Liberal Democrats. Conservative Party leaders produce PMBs at a slight higher rate while Liberal Democrat leaders achieve a 2:1 ratio to the Labour leadership.

Looking at the two personal variables, gender and minority, both are significant. However, minorities are signed in the opposite direction than expected. Given the very small number of minority Members of Parliament as a percentage of the total chamber, the major political parties may seek to promote these few members into leadership

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<sup>9</sup> I use Clarify to provide probability estimates for the number of PMBs likely to be produced under the various scenarios outline by my hypotheses. I ran 7,000 simulations to get my predicted values for hypotheses.

positions in an attempt to garner electoral support from these voting groups thereby offering a more valuable activity for position taking and advertising. In comparison, women are much less of a rare “commodity” than are minority MPs. Table 4.5 below shows that Clarify results for hypotheses seven and eight.

(Insert Table 4.5 about here)

Non-minority female MPs produce the highest level of PMBs as compared to the other MPs by an almost 2:1 ratio over both minority female and all male MPs. The second most prolific producer of PMBs is minorities with non-minority males coming in last. Given the dominance of this group, that is not surprising. Female and male minority MPs produce almost the same number of PMBs with non-minority males producing on average, a half a PMB less.

Time is both significant and signed properly. The longer an MP serves in Parliament, the lower the number of PMBs they produce. In order to illustrate that hypothesis four is correct, I use Clarify. Tables 4.6 and 4.7 below shows the results for back bench and leadership MPs over time.

(Insert Table 4.6 about here)

(Insert Table 4.7 about here)

Both tables show that over time, the number of PMBs produce declines. The difference between backbench MPs and party leaders is shown through a comparison of the two tables, with backbenchers out producing party leaders by a ratio of nearly 2.5:1.

Turning to the District Variables, the only variable to be significant was the Fairly Marginal districts. All other categories were insignificant, suggesting that there is something about members who find themselves in districts that are won by between 5-



10% of the vote.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, hypothesis two is rejected outright while hypothesis one is partially confirmed. Table 4.8 below shows the Clarify results for hypothesis one.

(Insert Table 4.8 about here)

Even though significant, the resulting differences are slight. MPs from Fairly Marginal districts produce slightly more PMBs than do members from other electoral circumstances. There are many different activities that members may employ, including, but not limited to Early Day Motions, Written Questions, Floor Debate, etc. It is possible that far more beneficial activity presents themselves to each member, and that the use of PMBs is simply not high quality opportunities from them.

#### **4.6: Conclusion**

“Individual members’ influence on legislative matters is constrained by political parties, but – as in the nature of most institutions – parties also enable individual members to attain effective influence, as he or she can act within the party group to create support for his or her cause.”

(Mattson 1995:450)

Since Western Europe has often been described as the home of classic “party government” style, it is through membership and control of the majority party that the majority of legislative outputs occur (Katz 1986). Members who find themselves without access to membership and/or control must seek alternative activities to satisfy the electoral connection. It is clear that an entire area of activity, full of individual members seeking particularistic goals exists even within parliamentary legislative systems, contrary to our basic understanding of these institutions. Future work should seek to expand our understanding of the role of rank and file members in all legislative

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<sup>10</sup> This relationship held up across all models of dropping alternative electoral dummy variables.

environments. The electoral connection and the institutional environment shape the calculus in which cost-benefits are determined.

Keith Krehbiel (1991) outlines the argument for further study by explaining the importance of Private Member Bills and other such activities, because

“...without parliamentary rights – such as the rights to propose legislation, to debate the content and consequences of legislation, to propose amendments, and to negotiate compromises – a legislator cannot make a noteworthy contribution to the legislative product.”

(Krehbiel 1991:2)

As Johnson and Rosenblatt (2007) demonstrate, while voters prefer their representative to be loyal to the party, there is also a desire for an independent-minded representative. This is the electoral connection, and members must be allowed to pursue the goals Krehbiel has identified.

What is needed is a further examination of the activities of individual legislators beyond the roll call vote. A more nuanced approach is necessary, because there is activity going on as demonstrated by this chapter. Several of the findings lead to some interesting puzzles for several areas of research. Three such areas suggest rich avenues of research.

First, Private Member Bills may be introduced using four different procedures. As Graphs 4.1 and 4.2 above illustrated, there are varying levels of success. Several questions arise as a result. Given that about 400 members put their names in the hat for the ballot, who are these members, which members have their bills ready and which are just reserving spots for the future and what kind of benefits are accrued by members who “sell” the opportunity to present a bill using the ballot measure? As the House of Commons’ Factsheet (2008) illustrated, members are able to attract interest through winning one of the coveted ballot positions.

Second, why are members from Fairly Marginal districts more prone to using private member bills than their counterparts in other electoral circumstances? What is it about winning by 5-10% that makes a member more likely to use this tactic than the others? Perhaps members find themselves in a grey zone of assistance from party leaders. Members from more competitive districts, the first line of defense for the party's majority, receive spots in leadership or perhaps they use other activities that are more high profile and provide better benefits.

Third, why are non-minority female MPs more likely to use PMBs than minority MPs of both gender? What is it that creates a greater demand for this type of activity? As Childs and Withey (2004) showed with Early Day Motions, women are also using PMBs to provide the very same opportunities available using this procedure. Perhaps the lower number of minority members in Parliament ensure a higher level of participation in leadership positions. This would offer minority MPs access to the agenda and policy making powers not available to the larger number of women MPs. There are only so many leadership positions to go around.

“One notable feature of almost all of the typological research...is the absence of testable, causal arguments. Instead, the research has a highly descriptive quality, with the primary goal being to interpret the actual role that legislatures or legislators are playing in different political systems.”

(Gamm and Huber 2002:320)

Expanding the collection of data to include activities beyond the roll call arena, coupled with the advanced quantitative research done on the US Congress, can help to expand our understanding of parliamentary environments and help forge a better theoretical understanding of legislatures as a whole. This chapter takes an important first step by

examining Private Member Bills and illustrates a relationship for individual Members of Parliament separate from the traditional understanding of MPs in Parliament.

# Chapter 5 – Conclusion

“In the prodigious amount of research that has been devoted to the US Congress, scholars have rarely investigated whether their findings were generalizable to legislative institutions outside the United States or, conversely, whether research on other legislatures had implications for the understanding of Congress.”

(Kiewiet et al 2002:3)

The examination of legislatures has a long and storied history in political science. The failure to make progress towards a unifying theory of legislatures has been limited by the theoretical arguments that have been developed to suit the unique legislative environments available to scholars of particular legislative systems. This has led to theoretical blind alleys that actually inhibit the growth of a unified theoretical approach to legislatures. Comparative legislative studies must expand upon the narrow focus that has developed over time and expand our understanding of what constitutes a legislative environment and the forces that shape legislative behavior.

Theoretical approaches developed to study the US Congress have added much muscle to our approach to legislatures but have been limited by their failure to place the US Congress within a larger legislative understanding; simply suggesting that the US Congress is different is not good enough. As I have demonstrated in this dissertation, the same basic forces at work in the US Congress are also at work in the British Parliament. We have missed this relationship to date because of our failure to stretch the “American” legislative approach to consider the ramifications of alternative institutional structures on a Mayhewian and Fennoian universe.

David Mayhew’s seminal work helped spark a theoretical and methodological examination of legislatures in the United States that expanded our understanding into new

and interesting findings. Building on Downs and others with the very simple idea that purposive individuals seek to satisfy goals, and that those goals are shaped by the institutional setting they find themselves in with the view of legislative institutions as both cause and effect, has something to add to our understanding of legislatures beyond the US context.

Expanding our studies to include non-American legislative environments, in addition to bringing a theoretical rigor to comparative legislative studies, also allows us to find leverage on the great theoretical debates current in Congressional studies. Most specifically in the case of this dissertation, the question of whether the electoral effect or the institutional environment shapes the organizational structure of the legislature is illuminated. It is clear that, in the very strong agenda control environment required by the Westminster parliamentary system that the electoral connection still requires opportunities for members to engage in Mayhewian activities.

It was Mayhew, and the work inspired in the American context that led me to reexamine the relationships present between rank and file members and the party leaders in the UK Parliament. The conventional wisdom, largely driven by the reliance on roll call data to test for the importance of the reelection imperative, discounts the role backbenchers play in the legislative process.<sup>1</sup> This scholarly focus has led, in part, towards a decreased likelihood of developing a theory to explain legislatures. This dissertation seeks to address this shortcoming.

Theoretical views of the UK Parliament are dominated by the focus on the executive and the cabinet, while individual members are largely ignored and treated as automatic voting machines for the majority party's legislation. Far worse, this majoritarian

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<sup>1</sup> If not ignores backbenchers outright.

approach ignores the activities that minority parties play in the legislative arena. This over simplified model of the UK Parliament finds its way into American literature also (APSA 1950, Mayhew 2004, Wilson 1885). Given this theoretical assumption, why is it that members frequently engage in a whole slew of activities prior to voting, let alone show up at all?

I posited a far more dynamic legislative environment that raises the importance of the electoral connection, which does not disappear in the parliamentary setting. In fact, purposive legislators are influenced by the electoral rules governing their selection and the institutional setting that governs agenda control. It is in this environment that members seek to satisfy Fenno's goals (1973).

“A positive theory of legislative institutions is interested in explaining, by appealing to consequentialist arguments, why legislators go about their business in particular ways and with what effects...[Legislators'] purposes derive in part from the electoral connection, in part from personal notions of good public policy, in part from institutional ambition, and in part from the influence of others. In any decision-making circumstance, heterogeneity of tastes concerning the aims and uses of legislative authority is the result.”

(Shepsle and Weingast 1994:154)

Taking the need for agenda control as the defining characteristic of the executive-legislative relationship in the UK Parliament, we can see how the costs associated with decentralized legislative production are too high. But individual members still need opportunities to distinguish themselves due to the electoral connection.

In the case of a future unified theoretical approach of the legislature, it is the argument of this dissertation that it is the two pronged forces of the electoral rules of a political system and the institutional rules of the legislature, specifically the immutable rules laid out in the constitution, that create the organizational structure that emerges.

More specifically, the increase in one area may lead to the decrease in expected probability of behavior in the other area. Like a balloon, squeeze one end and the other inflates due to the “displaced” air, so too do the types of activities legislators engage in change due to the change in the cost-benefit equation generated by these two inputs.

The Electoral System Supply-Demand model developed in chapter one attempts to bridge this gap in the literature. Individual legislators are inundated with “demands” from various political actors across varying political contexts; they then seek certain legislative “supply” outputs in response. These outputs can take many different forms, such as substantive output activities: like legislation and oversight, and signifying output activities like: advertising, credit claiming and position taking. The lion’s share of legislative research has focused on the substantive while this dissertation seeks to expand our understanding of the signifying activities. This is extremely important in the case of parliamentary legislatures as the costs of resisting the control of substantive outputs by the governing majority party is too high.

The value of signifying outputs is through position taking and advertising (Mayhew 2004). Due to the lack of substantive output, credit claiming opportunities for those who have no influence on the agenda are limited, creating the need for signifying outputs. Who would find themselves in a position to be in need of these types of activities? Based upon the underlying assumption of my theory, I posit that any member who find themselves outside the governing majority party and agenda control nexus will have greater need to engage in these activities.

Members with electoral concerns may be faced with problems because of the type of policy offered. They will seek alternative activities other than voting against the party



position, because to do so could defeat the government and trigger an early election in the least optimal environment. Members from safe districts could face problems from their local constituency in the form of reselection, if they are seen as sacrificing policy for promotion or electoral gain. This is especially true if they find themselves out of the party leadership. The need to find some means of increasing their visibility is greater for extremely safe members. Alternative opportunities are needed where a member in this situation can show the voters back home that they are working through position taking and advertising activities

Members who have access to the reins of power will not have need for alternative activities, as they have direct access to the policy making process and agenda control. For the majority party, there is the very real and valuable prospect of actually producing legislation to satisfy voters. Members who hold ranking positions within the party will devote their precious time and energy to servicing the party first. Kam (2002) also shows that time is a factor in the process, with newer members not having had the time to gain these powerful positions and members who have been in Parliament for a very long time but have been locked out of leadership are more likely to engage in higher numbers of roll call defections than other MPs.

The majority party controls the Parliament. Members of the minority are excluded from any significant opportunity to legislate and control the agenda. Minority parties have no ability to stop the legislative agenda of a unified and determined majority party precisely due to the institutional situation, the unitary state and fused executive-legislature. Because of this minority party members and their leaders will seek position taking and advertising opportunities.

As Childs and Whitley (2004) suggest, female MPs have restricted access in the male dominated Parliament and therefore have a need to seek alternative sources of influence. If females have such a need, so too do minorities, who have had a difficult time merely getting into Parliament, let alone influencing the process. Since the chamber is dominated by white males, individual MPs who are not part of the “majority” would seek opportunities to express positions that better reflect their descriptive racial and gender issue preferences.

This dissertation examined three forms of signifying behavior: Early Day Motions (EDMs), Written Questions (WQs) and Private Member Bills (PMBs). They all share one thing in common, in that they are activities that, at first blush, appear to have no benefit to individual members. However, this is a scholarly assumption driven by the current theoretical conventional wisdom that is not shared by those who cover the day to day work of the Parliament. As outlined above, there are very important reasons members engage in these activities (and many other activities) and this section will assess the findings and draw some conclusion based upon the three chapters preceding this one.

As this dissertation illustrates, the relationship for these variables fluctuates across the different types of activities. Clearly, some activities are more important for different members facing different electoral and chamber power circumstances. This dissertation just scratches the surface of the complex signifying activities present in the UK Parliament. Examining differing legislative structures and electoral environments should help to establish a broader theoretical approach to the study of legislatures.

Leadership roles and majority party status have an intrinsic value that suppresses the need for alternative avenues of satisfying the electoral connection. As the previous

chapters illustrated, the predictions of less EDMs, WQs and PMBs was correct. Leaders of the majority party have less need for these alternative position taking and advertising activities. This relationship holds across parties for both backbenchers and leaders of minority parties. They simply need more opportunities for alternative activities due to being excluded from agenda control and legislative production. It is also important to note that the relationship changes as parties move from minority to majority status.

Time in the chamber also shows strong significance and the predicted relationship. Newer members have a far greater need for alternative legislative activities because they are not well known within the electorate and are unlikely to have powerful party positions. The longer a member has been in the chamber, the lower the number each activity examined. I was able to demonstrate that the affect of longevity and lack of party leadership role increases the need for alternative activities. While MPs with longer time in the chamber do not need to engage in more of these activities than their newer colleagues, they still exceed the number produced by MPs from the same time frame with leadership positions.

Perhaps most interesting, the findings for both the district variables and personal variables are mixed. The relationship for both female and minority MPs across all three activities examined in the dissertation shows that, with regard to the personal variables, Gender is significant for all three activities, but is signed in the opposite direction predicted for EDMs and WQs. The one area females produce more than their male counterparts is in the area of PMBs. This raises the important question of why this is so. The same can be said for minority MPs. For EDMs, minority MPs are not significantly different than any other member, while for PMBs they are significantly different, but less

likely to produce PMBs. Clearly, there must be varying levels of costs and benefits associated with each of these activities that create alternative strategies for women and minority MPs.

In the case of the district variables, in the case of EDMs, MPS from these electoral environments fit perfectly the predicted distribution of my Electoral System Supply-Demand theory. With regard to WQs, while all electoral circumstances are significant, MPs from the marginal electoral districts produce far fewer WQs than those from safer districts. Is the conventional wisdom about party control of the question process borne out here? As for PMBs, the only category that is significant and properly signed is Fairly Marginal. What is it about MPs from electoral districts that won with between 5-10% margins using this activity at a significantly higher rate than other MPs?

A large area of research examines the role of female and minority legislative members. Considering the mixed results across the three activities studied here, the question of why certain activities hold more value than others suggests a more nuanced model is necessary. Perhaps “Blair’s Angels” appear to be failing to address issues important to females is due in large part to scholars looking in the wrong place. Consider the very large research on minority members of the US Congress and the impact of gathering this new source of data can have on investigating this issue across all legislative environments.

The three different activities, largely off the radar of study for the electoral connection, produced results that show evidence of a strong electoral connection. There are many more activities beyond just these three, and I would expect similar results. This dissertation is the tip of the iceberg with regard to this area of research. The findings of

these three chapters raise interesting questions for various subgenres of legislative research.

Several major questions in the research, as identified by Roderick, Loewenberg and Squire (2002), deals with the legislative setting:

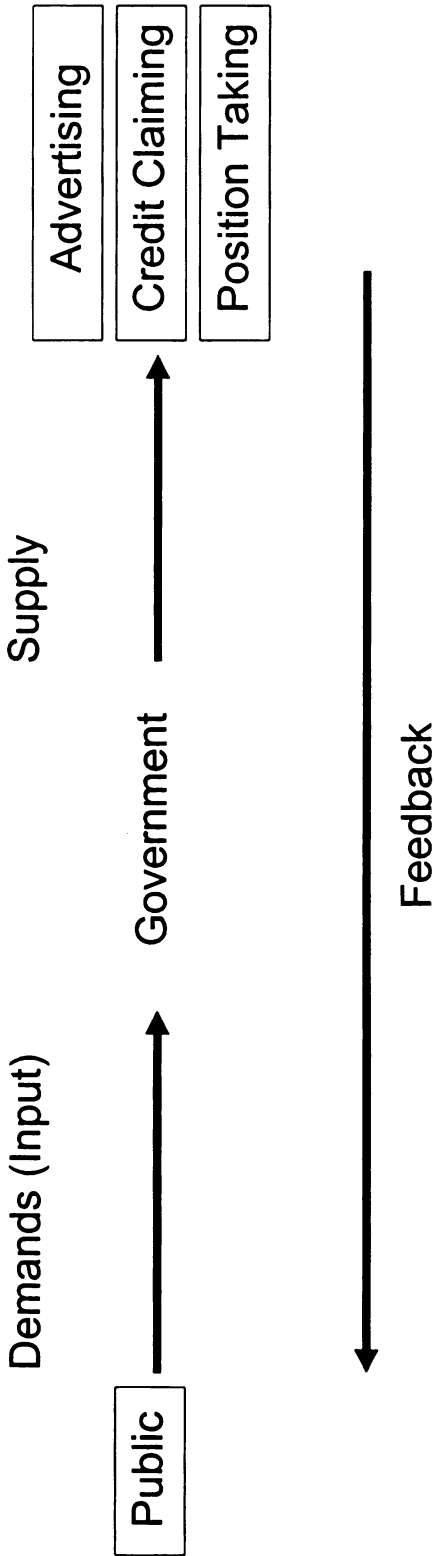
- “1. What are the major features of the electoral connection between members of the legislature and the voters, and how do they affect the behavior, strategies, and career choices of individual legislators?
2. What is the underlying rationale for the organizational structure of the legislature?
3. To what extent can we usefully regard the political party within the legislature to be a unitary actor?”

(Kiewiet et al 2002:8-9)

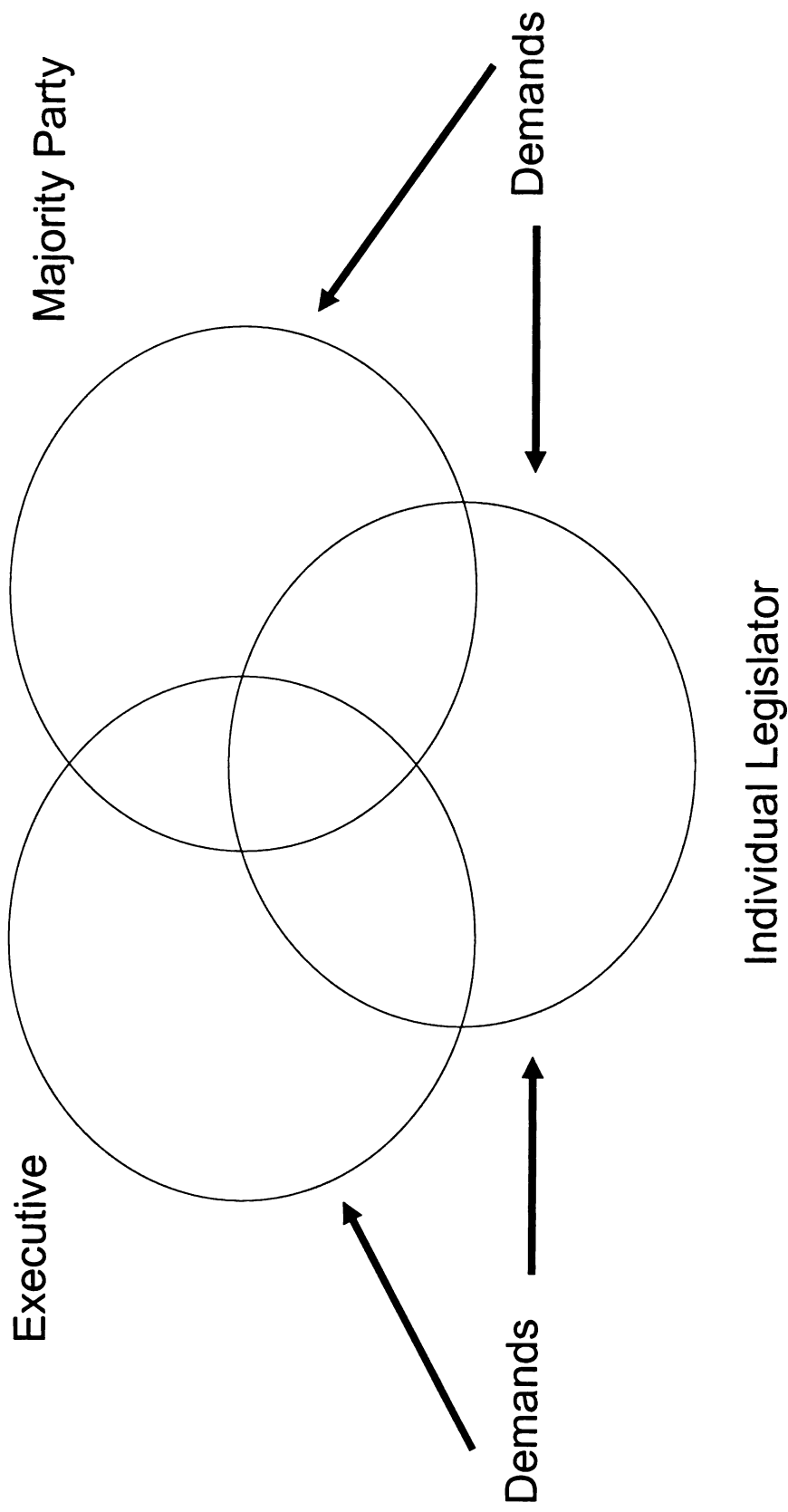
My dissertation offers an avenue of exploration for further research for these particular research questions. By pursuing these particular questions and expanding our examination beyond the roll call, we can begin to build a unified theoretical approach for legislatures and the actors involved in the legislative process, both endogenous and exogenous.

Building on the work done by the Döring and others, this dissertation begins the process of expanding our research focus and bridging the gap between the theoretically driven American approaches with the variability across legislative settings. Mayhew, Fenno and more are as important to legislative environments outside the United States as Duverger was to our understanding of the American electoral system. As the quote at the start of this sections suggests, only through a comparative approach to legislatures can we gain greater understanding of legislatures to achieve a generalizable theory of legislatures.

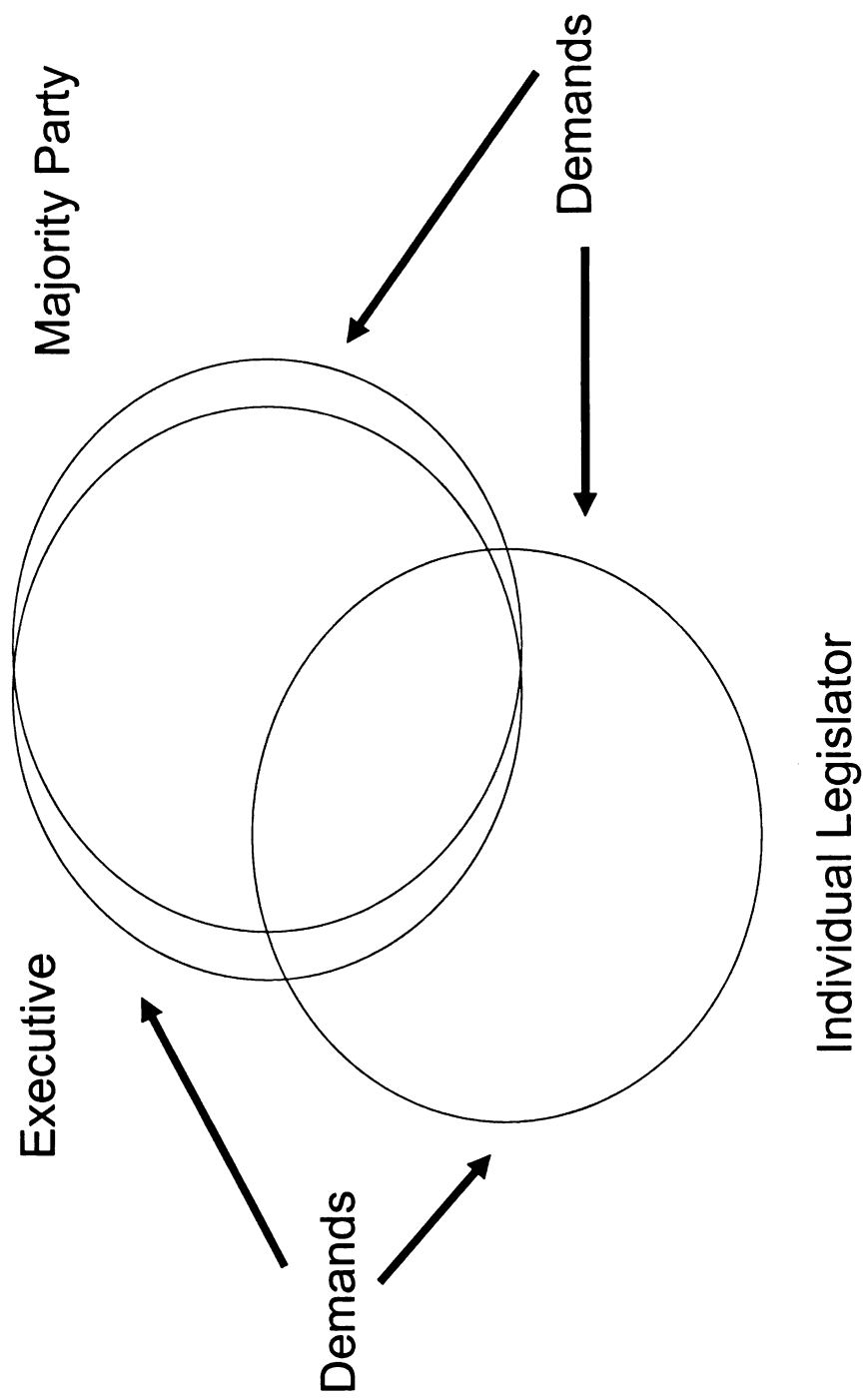
**Figure 1.1: Model of the Supply-Demand Policy Process**



**Figure 1.2: Three Actor US-Style Legislative Model of Goal Overlap**

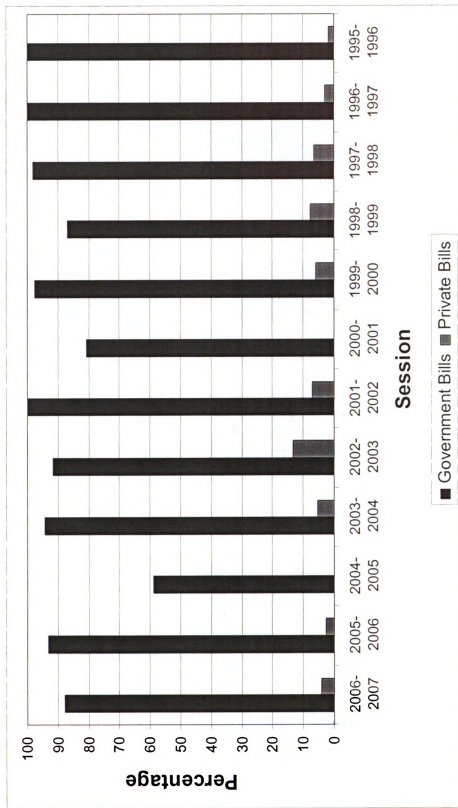


**Figure 1.3: Three Actor British-Style Legislative Model of Goal Overlap**



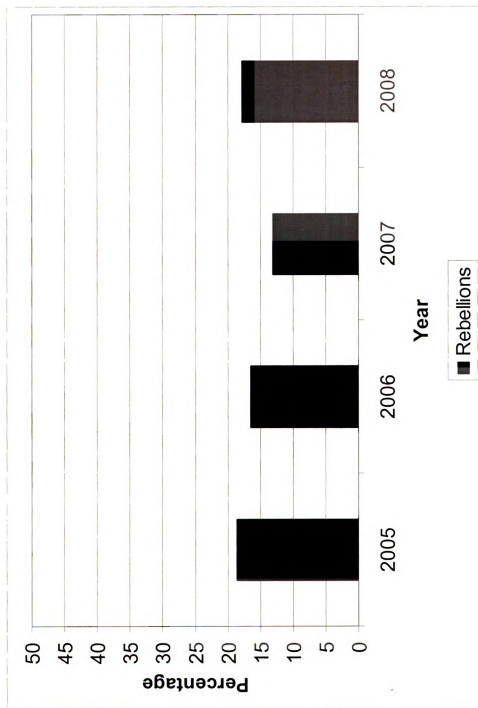


**Figure 2.1: Percentage Bill Success – Government versus Private 1995-2007**



Data Source: British House of Commons (2008) "Sessional Information Digest" <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmsid.htm>.

**Figure 2.2: Percent Labour Party Rebellions 2005-2008**



Data Source: Public Whip (2008) "Parliamentary Divisions: 1995-present" <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/divisions.php?house=commons&sort=subject>.

**Table 2.1: Explanatory Variables, Coding and Expected Direction**

| Category            | Name              | Coding   | Range     | Predicted Direction |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|-----------|---------------------|
| Dependent Variable: | Early Day Motions | Count of the number of Early Day Motions submitted per session | 0 to 2113 |                     |
| Party Variables:    | Conservatives     | 1 if Conservative Party member, zero otherwise                 | 0, 1      | .                   |
|                     | Labour            | 1 if Labour Party member, zero otherwise                       | 0, 1      | .                   |
|                     | Liberal Democrats | 1 if Liberal Democrat Party member, zero otherwise             | 0, 1      | .                   |
|                     | Other             | 1 if any other Party member, zero otherwise                    | 0, 1      | Dropped             |
|                     | Majority Party    | 1 if member's party is in the Majority, zero otherwise         | 0, 1      | -                   |
| Time Variable:      | House Leader      | 1 if member is in party leadership position, zero otherwise    | 0, 1      | -                   |
|                     | Time              | # Terms served   | 1 to 50   | -                   |
| District Variables: | Ultra Marginal    | x<5%   | 0, 1      | +                   |
|                     | Fairly Marginal   | 5%?x?10%   | 0, 1      | +                   |
|                     | Fairly Safe       | 10.1%?x?15%  | 0, 1      | Dropped             |
|                     | Very Safe         | 15.1%?x?20%  | 0, 1      | +                   |
|                     | Ultra Safe        | 20.1%?x  | 0, 1      | +                   |
| Personal Variables: | Gender            | 1 if member is female, zero otherwise                          | 0, 1      | +                   |
|                     | Minority          | 1 if member is a minority, zero otherwise                      | 0, 1      | +                   |

**Table 2.2: Two Sample T-Test Results with Early Day Motions**

| Variable               | Expectation | Observations |      | Mean  |       | Mean (1)-Mean(0)<br>Difference | Ha<br>Significance | Std. Err. |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------------|------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------|
|                        |             | 0            | 1    | 0     | 1     |                                |                    | 0         | 1      |
| <i>Ultra Marginal</i>  | +           | 10985        | 1389 | 82.8  | 119.8 | 37.0                           | 0.000              | 1.795     | 5.918  |
| <i>Fairly Marginal</i> | .           | 10802        | 1572 | 84.0  | 106.9 | 22.9                           | 0.000              | 1.797     | 5.718  |
| <i>Fairly Safe</i>     | .           | 10809        | 1565 | 86.0  | 93.4  | 7.4                            | 0.077              | 1.870     | 4.503  |
| <i>Very Safe</i>       | .           | 10769        | 1605 | 86.6  | 88.9  | 2.3                            | 0.330              | 1.853     | 4.829  |
| <i>Ultra Safe</i>      | +           | 6131         | 6243 | 101.7 | 72.5  | -29.2                          | 1.000              | 2.624     | 2.246  |
| <i>Gender</i>          | +           | 10567        | 1804 | 84.6  | 99.7  | 15.0                           | 0.001              | 1.854     | 4.744  |
| <i>Race</i>            | +           | 12208        | 166  | 86.5  | 115.4 | 28.9                           | 0.028              | 1.747     | 10.837 |
| <i>Commons Leader</i>  | -           | 7612         | 4762 | 107.3 | 54.4  | -52.9                          | 0.000              | 2.523     | 1.893  |

**Table 2.3: Two Model MLE Negative Binomial Regression Results**

|                   | Model 1     |       |       | Model 2     |       |       |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|
| Variable          | Coefficient | SE    | P> z  | Coefficient | SE    | P> z  |
| Conservatives     | -1.020      | 0.121 | 0.000 | -1.019      | 0.079 | 0.000 |
| Labour            | 0.728       | 0.123 | 0.000 | 1.051       | 0.086 | 0.000 |
| Liberal Democrats | 0.742       | 0.146 | 0.000 | 0.565       | 0.092 | 0.000 |
| Other             | .           | .     | .     | .           | .     | .     |
| Majority          | -1.697      | 0.056 | 0.000 | -1.524      | 0.049 | 0.000 |
| House Leader      | -1.339      | 0.057 | 0.000 | -0.789      | 0.042 | 0.000 |
| Time              | -0.046      | 0.003 | 0.000 | -0.021      | 0.002 | 0.000 |
| Ultra Marginal    | 0.234       | 0.094 | 0.013 | 0.201       | 0.060 | 0.001 |
| Fairly Marginal   | 0.153       | 0.090 | 0.090 | 0.205       | 0.058 | 0.000 |
| Fairly Safe       | .           | .     | .     | .           | .     | .     |
| Very Safe         | 0.079       | 0.090 | 0.384 | 0.082       | 0.058 | 0.155 |
| Ultra Safe        | 0.024       | 0.075 | 0.002 | 0.223       | 0.049 | 0.000 |
| Gender            | -0.388      | 0.068 | 0.000 | -0.150      | 0.044 | 0.001 |
| Minority          | -0.078      | 0.198 | 0.693 | -0.188      | 0.118 | 0.111 |
| Constant          | 5.265       | 0.173 | 0.000 | 4.814       | 0.107 | 0.000 |

**Table 2.4: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Early Day Motions by Electoral District**

|                  | Mean    | SE     | [95% Conf. Interval] |         |
|------------------|---------|--------|----------------------|---------|
| Ultra Marginal:  | 245.895 | 39.878 | 176.371              | 332.311 |
| Fairly Marginal: | 225.698 | 35.031 | 165.645              | 302.117 |
| Fairly Safe:     | 193.539 | 27.524 | 144.995              | 253.098 |
| Very Safe:       | 209.397 | 30.473 | 155.707              | 275.058 |
| Ultra Safe:      | 244.930 | 33.396 | 185.176              | 316.105 |

**Table 2.5: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Early Day Motions by Length of Time in Office**

|                     | Mean    | SE     | [95% Conf. Interval] |         |
|---------------------|---------|--------|----------------------|---------|
| MP 1st percentile:  | 322.192 | 46.260 | 240.785              | 420.314 |
| MP 25th percentile: | 267.973 | 38.034 | 200.761              | 350.062 |
| MP 50th percentile: | 212.899 | 30.169 | 159.838              | 278.462 |
| MP 75th percentile: | 154.346 | 22.352 | 114.798              | 202.603 |
| MP 99th percentile: | 59.009  | 10.317 | 41.389               | 81.568  |

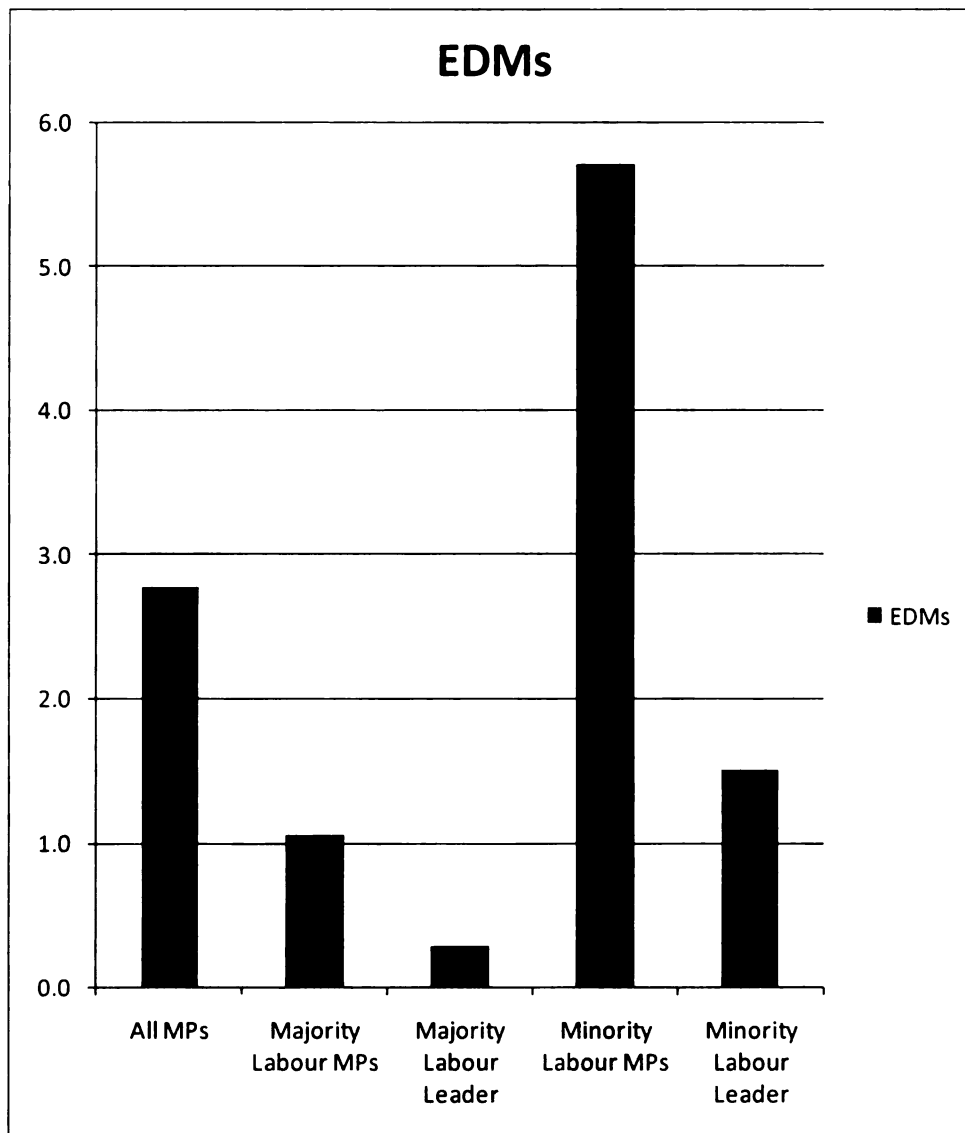
**Table 2.6: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Early Day Motions by Length of Time in Office for House Leaders**

|                     | Mean   | SE     | [95% Conf. Interval] |         |
|---------------------|--------|--------|----------------------|---------|
| HL 1st percentile:  | 84.397 | 11.859 | 63.568               | 109.718 |
| HL 25th percentile: | 70.194 | 9.744  | 53.008               | 91.291  |
| HL 50th percentile: | 55.768 | 7.728  | 42.218               | 72.539  |
| HL 75th percentile: | 40.430 | 5.731  | 30.418               | 52.892  |
| HL 99th percentile: | 15.457 | 2.663  | 10.933               | 21.257  |

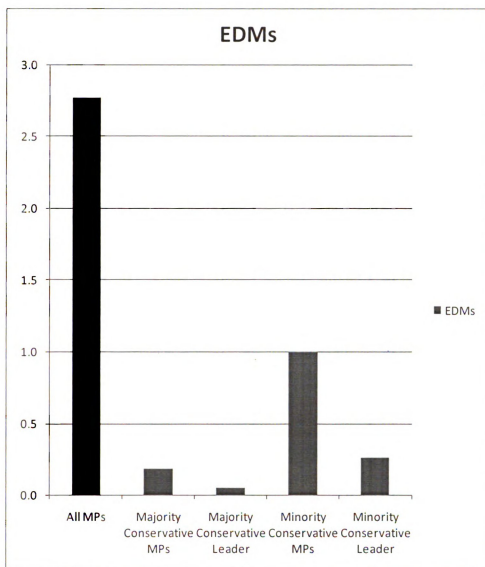
**Table 2.7: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Early Day Motions by Party for Backbenchers and Leaders**

|                              | Mean    | SE     | [95% Conf. Interval] |         |
|------------------------------|---------|--------|----------------------|---------|
| All MPs                      | 193.539 | 27.524 | 144.995              | 253.098 |
| Majority Labour MPs          | 73.128  | 7.537  | 59.293               | 88.981  |
| Majority Labour Leader       | 19.207  | 2.362  | 14.958               | 24.088  |
| Minority Labour MPs          | 399.360 | 46.962 | 314.596              | 498.960 |
| Minority Labour Leader       | 104.794 | 13.462 | 80.664               | 133.728 |
| Majority Conservative MPs    | 12.758  | 1.560  | 9.950                | 16.097  |
| Majority Conservative Leader | 3.344   | 0.421  | 2.587                | 4.225   |
| Minority Conservative MPs    | 69.469  | 7.691  | 55.360               | 85.440  |
| Minority Conservative Leader | 18.197  | 1.938  | 14.643               | 22.208  |
| Liberal Democrat MPs         | 405.759 | 51.265 | 314.947              | 516.491 |
| Liberal Democrat Leader      | 106.159 | 11.950 | 84.642               | 131.464 |

**Figure 2.3: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Early Day Motions for the Labour Party Minority-Majority Status**



**Figure 2.4: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Early Day Motions for the Conservative Party Minority-Majority Status**



**Table 2.8: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Early Day Motions by Gender and Minority Status**

|                         | Mean    | SE     | [95% Conf. Interval] |         |
|-------------------------|---------|--------|----------------------|---------|
| Minority Male MPs       | 180.043 | 32.069 | 125.230              | 252.291 |
| Non-Minority Male MPs   | 193.539 | 27.524 | 144.995              | 253.098 |
| Non-Minority Female MPs | 131.631 | 20.498 | 95.822               | 176.255 |
| Minority Female MPs     | 122.326 | 22.437 | 83.867               | 172.290 |



**Table 3.1: Explanatory Variables, Coding and Expected Direction**

| Category            | Name  | Coding   | Range                                | Predicted Direction         |
|---------------------|---|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Dependent Variable: | Written Questions   | Count of the number of Written Questions submitted per month   | 0 to 1427                            |                             |
| Party Variables:    | Conservatives<br>Labour<br>Liberal Democrats<br>Other<br>House Leader       | 1 if Conservative Party member, zero otherwise<br>1 if Labour Party member, zero otherwise<br>1 if Liberal Democrat Party member, zero otherwise<br>1 if any other Party member, zero otherwise<br>1 if member is in party leadership position, zero otherwise | 0, 1<br>0, 1<br>0, 1<br>0, 1<br>0, 1 | .<br>.<br>.<br>.<br>Dropped |
| Time Variable:      | Time  | # Terms served   | 1 to 50                              | -                           |
| District Variables: | Ultra Marginal<br>Fairly Marginal<br>Fairly Safe<br>Very Safe<br>Ultra Safe | x<5%<br>5%?x?10%<br>10.1%?x?15%<br>15.1%?x?20%<br>20.1%?x  | 0, 1<br>0, 1<br>0, 1<br>0, 1<br>0, 1 | +<br>+<br>Dropped<br>+<br>+ |
| Personal Variables: | Gender<br>Minority  | 1 if member is female, zero otherwise<br>1 if member is a minority, zero otherwise   | 0, 1<br>0, 1                         | +<br>+                      |

**Table 3.2: Two Model MLE Negative Binomial Regression Results**

| Variable          | Model 1     |       |       | Model 2     |       |       |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------|-------|
|                   | Coefficient | SE    | P> z  | Coefficient | SE    | P> z  |
| Conservatives     | 0.357       | 0.042 | 0.000 | 0.377       | 0.046 | 0.000 |
| Labour            | -0.950      | 0.041 | 0.000 | -0.987      | 0.044 | 0.000 |
| Liberal Democrats | 0.831       | 0.045 | 0.000 | 0.810       | 0.048 | 0.000 |
| Other             |             |       |       |             |       |       |
| House Leader      | -0.513      | 0.024 | 0.000 | -0.516      | 0.026 | 0.000 |
| Time              | -0.015      | 0.001 | 0.000 | -0.016      | 0.001 | 0.000 |
| Ultra Marginal    | -0.085      | 0.034 | 0.014 | -0.084      | 0.037 | 0.025 |
| Fairly Marginal   | -0.076      | 0.033 | 0.022 | -0.086      | 0.035 | 0.014 |
| Fairly Safe       |             |       |       |             |       |       |
| Very Safe         | 0.109       | 0.032 | 0.001 | 0.139       | 0.034 | 0.000 |
| Ultra Safe        | 0.086       | 0.028 | 0.002 | 0.065       | 0.029 | 0.026 |
| Gender            | -0.145      | 0.025 | 0.000 | -0.113      | 0.027 | 0.000 |
| Minority          | 0.380       | 0.083 | 0.000 | 0.444       | 0.081 | 0.000 |
| Constant          | 1.235       | 0.120 | 0.000 | 2.536       | 0.050 | 0.000 |

**Table 3.3: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Electoral District**

|                  | Mean     | SE       | [95% Conf. Interval] |          |
|------------------|----------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Ultra Marginal:  | 22.50502 | 1.728547 | 19.30535             | 26.07133 |
| Fairly Marginal: | 22.07965 | 1.694057 | 18.94821             | 25.57825 |
| Fairly Safe:     |          |          |                      |          |
| Very Safe:       | 28.20082 | 2.203093 | 24.13443             | 32.74255 |
| Ultra Safe:      | 27.04296 | 2.029453 | 23.27998             | 31.23286 |

**Table 3.4: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Length of Time in Office**

|                     | Mean     | SE       | [95% Conf. Interval] |          |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| MP 1st percentile:  | 29.05905 | 2.240534 | 24.92021             | 33.69298 |
| MP 25th percentile: | 27.36481 | 2.079708 | 23.51368             | 31.65894 |
| MP 50th percentile: | 25.77014 | 1.940284 | 22.18433             | 29.77408 |
| MP 75th percentile: | 23.55204 | 1.76631  | 20.27706             | 27.19577 |
| MP 99th percentile: | 16.9419  | 1.381962 | 14.39565             | 19.80335 |

**Table 3.5: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Length of Time in Office for House Leaders**

|                     | Mean     | SE       | [95% Conf. Interval] |          |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| HL 1st percentile:  | 16.81146 | 1.290685 | 14.42267             | 19.48233 |
| HL 25th percentile: | 15.83143 | 1.199579 | 13.61517             | 18.32015 |
| HL 50th percentile: | 14.90898 | 1.120701 | 12.83073             | 17.22681 |
| HL 75th percentile: | 13.62589 | 1.022412 | 11.73171             | 15.7418  |
| HL 99th percentile: | 9.802063 | 0.805254 | 8.321248             | 11.48173 |

**Table 3.6: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Party for Backbenchers and Leaders**

|                         | Mean     | SE       | [95% Conf. Interval] |          |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Labour MPs              | 4.347592 | 0.121101 | 4.114676             | 4.589467 |
| Labour Leader           | 2.515798 | 0.08711  | 2.349939             | 2.690887 |
| Conservative MPs        | 16.14311 | 0.538695 | 15.11633             | 17.22213 |
| Conservative Leader     | 9.337849 | 0.258191 | 8.843269             | 9.854312 |
| Liberal Democrat MPs    | 28.39493 | 1.131196 | 26.22204             | 30.67668 |
| Liberal Democrat Leader | 16.42285 | 0.51936  | 15.42464             | 17.46327 |

**Table 3.7: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Gender and Minority Status**

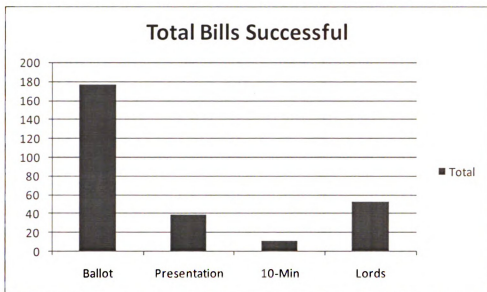
|                         | Mean     | SE       | [95% Conf. Interval] |          |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Minority Male MPs       | 37.76429 | 4.146062 | 30.25811             | 46.46837 |
| Non-Minority Male MPs   | 25.02792 | 1.879458 | 21.55038             | 28.90543 |
| Non-Minority Female MPs | 21.59282 | 1.677688 | 18.48035             | 25.065   |
| Minority Female MPs     | 32.58007 | 3.626356 | 26.03285             | 40.26773 |

**Table 4.1: Success Rate of Private Member Bills since 1983-1984**

| Successful Bills |        |              |        |       |       | Total Bills Introduced |        |              |        |       |       |
|------------------|--------|--------------|--------|-------|-------|------------------------|--------|--------------|--------|-------|-------|
|                  | Ballot | Presentation | 10-Min | Lords | Total |                        | Ballot | Presentation | 10-Min | Lords | Total |
| 1983-84          | 9      | 2            | 0      | 2     | 13    | 1983-84                | 20     | 21           | 66     | 11    | 118   |
| 1984-85          | 11     | 4            | 2      | 4     | 21    | 1984-85                | 20     | 28           | 42     | 7     | 97    |
| 1985-86          | 13     | 4            | 0      | 4     | 21    | 1985-86                | 20     | 31           | 56     | 5     | 112   |
| 1986-87          | 7      | 4            | 0      | 4     | 15    | 1986-87                | 20     | 29           | 30     | 6     | 85    |
| 1987-88          | 9      | 2            | 0      | 2     | 13    | 1987-88                | 20     | 37           | 58     | 4     | 119   |
| 1988-89          | 6      | 2            | 0      | 1     | 9     | 1988-89                | 20     | 64           | 54     | 3     | 141   |
| 1989-90          | 8      | 2            | 0      | 1     | 11    | 1989-90                | 19     | 54           | 48     | 5     | 126   |
| 1990-91          | 11     | 8            | 0      | 1     | 20    | 1990-91                | 20     | 48           | 46     | 5     | 119   |
| 1991-92          | 8      | 2            | 0      | 3     | 13    | 1991-92                | 20     | 17           | 17     | 4     | 58    |
| 1992-93          | 6      | 3            | 2      | 5     | 16    | 1992-93                | 20     | 63           | 74     | 9     | 166   |
| 1993-94          | 8      | 2            | 0      | 6     | 16    | 1993-94                | 20     | 37           | 49     | 10    | 116   |
| 1994-95          | 9      | 1            | 3      | 4     | 17    | 1994-95                | 20     | 32           | 52     | 9     | 113   |
| 1995-96          | 12     | 1            | 1      | 3     | 17    | 1995-96                | 20     | 17           | 43     | 9     | 89    |
| 1996-97          | 14     | 0            | 1      | 7     | 22    | 1996-97                | 20     | 23           | 26     | 7     | 76    |
| 1997-98          | 5      | 2            | 1      | 2     | 10    | 1997-98                | 20     | 27           | 88     | 12    | 147   |
| 1998-99          | 7      | 0            | 0      | 1     | 8     | 1998-99                | 20     | 18           | 55     | 11    | 104   |
| 1999-00          | 5      | 0            | 0      | 1     | 6     | 1999-00                | 20     | 20           | 57     | 7     | 104   |
| 2000-01          | 0      | 0            | 0      | 0     | 0     | 2000-01                | 20     | 17           | 24     | 2     | 63    |
| 2001-02          | 5      | 0            | 2      | 1     | 8     | 2001-02                | 20     | 24           | 65     | 5     | 114   |
| 2002-03          | 13     | 0            | 0      | 0     | 13    | 2002-03                | 20     | 18           | 55     | 4     | 97    |
| 2003-04          | 5      | 0            | 0      | 0     | 5     | 2003-04                | 20     | 13           | 56     | 13    | 102   |
| 2004-05          | 0      | 0            | 0      | 0     | 0     | 2004-05                | 20     | 16           | 18     | 1     | 55    |
| 2005-06          | 3      | 0            | 0      | 0     | 3     | 2005-06                | 20     | 17           | 75     | 18    | 130   |
| 2006-07          | 3      | 0            | 0      | 1     | 4     | 2006-07                | 20     | 19           | 48     | 9     | 96    |
| Total            | 177    | 39           | 12     | 53    | 281   |                        | 479    | 690          | 1202   | 176   | 2451  |

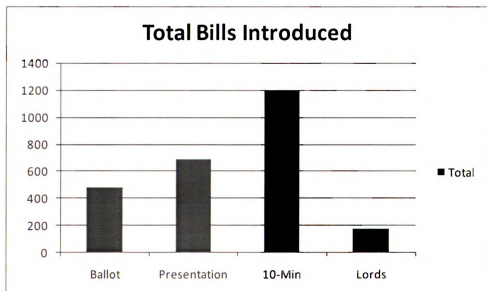
Source: House of Commons (2008) *Parliamentary Factsheet L2 Legislative Series*.

**Figure 4.1: Percentage of Private Member Bills Success by Procedure**



Source: House of Commons (2008) *Parliamentary Factsheet L2 Legislative Series*.

**Figure 4.2: Percentage of Private Member Bills Submitted by Procedure**



Source: House of Commons (2008) *Parliamentary Factsheet L2 Legislative Series*.

**Table 4.2: Explanatory Variables, Coding and Expected Direction**

| Category            | Name                 | Coding  | Range   | Predicted Direction |
|---------------------|----------------------|---|---------|---------------------|
| Dependent Variable: | Private Member Bills | Count of the number of Private Member Bills submitted per session | 0 to 19 |                     |
| Party Variables:    | Conservatives        | 1 if Conservative Party member, zero otherwise                    | 0, 1    | .                   |
|                     | Labour               | 1 if Labour Party member, zero otherwise                          | 0, 1    | .                   |
|                     | Liberal Democrats    | 1 if Liberal Democrat Party member, zero otherwise                | 0, 1    | .                   |
|                     | Other                | 1 if any other Party member, zero otherwise                       | 0, 1    | Dropped             |
|                     | House Leader         | 1 if member is in party leadership position, zero otherwise       | 0, 1    | -                   |
| Time Variable:      | Time                 | # Terms served  | 1 to 50 | -                   |
| District Variables: | Ultra Marginal       | x<5%  | 0, 1    | +                   |
|                     | Fairly Marginal      | 5%?x?10%  | 0, 1    | +                   |
|                     | Fairly Safe          | 10.1%?x?15%   | 0, 1    | Dropped             |
|                     | Very Safe            | 15.1%?x?20%   | 0, 1    | +                   |
|                     | Ultra Safe           | 20.1%?x   | 0, 1    | +                   |
| Personal Variables: | Gender               | 1 if member is female, zero otherwise                             | 0, 1    | +                   |
|                     | Minority             | 1 if member is a minority, zero otherwise                         | 0, 1    | +                   |

**Table 4.3: MLE Negative Binomial Regression Results**

| Variable          | Model       |       |       |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
|                   | Coefficient | SE    | P> z  |
| Conservatives     | 0.223       | 0.108 | 0.038 |
| Labour            | -0.210      | 0.106 | 0.047 |
| Liberal Democrats | 0.827       | 0.116 | 0.000 |
| Other             | .           | .     | .     |
| House Leader      | -0.830      | 0.039 | 0.000 |
| Time              | -0.017      | 0.002 | 0.000 |
| Ultra Marginal    | -0.046      | 0.058 | 0.426 |
| Fairly Marginal   | 0.104       | 0.057 | 0.070 |
| Fairly Safe       | .           | .     | .     |
| Very Safe         | -0.013      | 0.057 | 0.817 |
| Ultra Safe        | -0.065      | 0.049 | 0.182 |
| Gender            | 0.251       | 0.038 | 0.000 |
| Minority          | -0.246      | 0.122 | 0.044 |

**Table 4.4: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Party for Backbenchers and Leaders**

|                         | Mean  | SE    | [95% Conf. Interval] |       |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| All MPs                 | 1.814 | 0.206 | 1.445                | 2.246 |
| Labour MPs              | 1.464 | 0.095 | 1.287                | 1.660 |
| Labour Leader           | 0.639 | 0.045 | 0.557                | 0.733 |
| Conservative MPs        | 2.260 | 0.151 | 1.977                | 2.571 |
| Conservative Leader     | 0.986 | 0.066 | 0.864                | 1.119 |
| Liberal Democrat MPs    | 4.133 | 0.343 | 3.487                | 4.845 |
| Liberal Democrat Leader | 1.802 | 0.136 | 1.547                | 2.084 |

**Table 4.5: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Gender and Minority Status**

|                         | Mean  | SE    | [95% Conf. Interval] |       |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| Minority Male MPs       | 1.435 | 0.245 | 1.021                | 1.981 |
| Non-Minority Male MPs   | 1.814 | 0.206 | 1.445                | 2.246 |
| Non-Minority Female MPs | 2.334 | 0.278 | 1.840                | 2.926 |
| Minority Female MPs     | 1.845 | 0.322 | 1.304                | 2.566 |

**Table 4.6: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Length of Time in Office**

|                     | Mean  | SE    | [95% Conf. Interval] |       |
|---------------------|-------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| MP 1st percentile:  | 2.145 | 0.243 | 1.712                | 2.660 |
| MP 25th percentile: | 2.040 | 0.231 | 1.631                | 2.530 |
| MP 50th percentile: | 1.876 | 0.212 | 1.496                | 2.321 |
| MP 75th percentile: | 1.669 | 0.192 | 1.320                | 2.074 |
| MP 99th percentile: | 1.177 | 0.155 | 0.901                | 1.502 |

**Table 4.7: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Length of Time in Office for House Leaders**

|                     | Mean  | SE    | [95% Conf. Interval] |       |
|---------------------|-------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| HL 1st percentile:  | 0.936 | 0.112 | 0.737                | 1.173 |
| HL 25th percentile: | 0.891 | 0.106 | 0.700                | 1.115 |
| HL 50th percentile: | 0.819 | 0.098 | 0.642                | 1.028 |
| HL 75th percentile: | 0.729 | 0.089 | 0.567                | 0.916 |
| HL 99th percentile: | 0.514 | 0.072 | 0.386                | 0.669 |



**Table 4.8: Clarify Estimation Results on Number of Written Questions by Electoral District**

|                  | Mean  | SE    | [95% Conf. Interval] |       |
|------------------|-------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| Ultra Marginal:  | 1.734 | 0.196 | 1.388                | 2.149 |
| Fairly Marginal: | 2.015 | 0.232 | 1.600                | 2.512 |
| Fairly Safe:     | .     | .     | .                    | .     |
| Very Safe:       | 1.793 | 0.204 | 1.430                | 2.230 |
| Ultra Safe:      | 1.701 | 0.194 | 1.353                | 2.111 |

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