The Changing Commons: The individual-collective balance of MPs in committees

By Kelly Blidook

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Canadian Political Science Association, Edmonton AB, June 13-15, 2012

Recent research in Canada has explored the varying manners in which Members of Parliament act in an individual manner in order to represent constituents, bolster electoral fortunes, and exert influence in policy making (Soroka et al. 2009; Kam 2009; Blidook 2010, 2012). Nevertheless, there is accumulating evidence that the balance of individual and collective/partisan behaviour changes in both directions at different points in time. Over time and in stages, political parties appear to take advantage of the parliamentary venues where MPs may have once had a good deal of autonomy.

This paper will be a preliminary exploration into trends in committee behaviour, using a simple content analysis of MP statements in Parliamentary Standing Committees. Its purpose is to contribute to understanding this power dynamic as it has changed over time, and attempt to explain why it has done so. Standing Committees are seen here as a parliamentary venue that is often less partisan than other venues on the House floor, and in which MPs have traditionally had some degree of autonomy. Nevertheless, recent examinations have suggested that MPs feel this venue has increased in partisanship and has consequently become less effective (CBC 2012). MPs' committee statements should provide an effective measure for understanding the individual-collective behavioural balance of MPs within this venue.

This paper seeks to provide responses to 2 questions:

1.) Has the partisan nature of committee proceedings changed in recent history?

2.) Is there a trade-off between partisan action and constituency attention?

Context

This research will contribute to at least two substantial areas of research in the study of Canadian and comparative politics and policy. These include the literature on political – in this case "substantive" or "standing for" (Pitkin 1967) – representation, as well as parliamentary and legislative politics. Of course, the manner of studying each will be done rather simply in the study to follow, where simply attention to "constituency" versus attention to "party" will be analyzed. Nevertheless, such questions speak to broader issues in the Canadian and comparative literature.

Representation

The question of representation in Canada is particularly salient, as much recent research has suggested a significant and growing public perception that elected representatives are unresponsive to electors (Blais and Gidengil 1991; Jenson 1995; Howe and Northrup 2000; Anderson and Goodyear-Grant 2005; Docherty 2005; Smith 2007). As Smith (2007) points out with regard to Canada's House of Commons: "Despite sustained criticism of Parliament's lower house, particularly for being 'unresponsive' to public opinion, that chamber and parliament generally remain remarkably understudied"(x).

Exploring different venues aids in better understanding the nature of representation, but is also a useful means of understanding the difference in motivating factors that affect the "focus" of legislators (Wahlke et al. 1962; Fenno 1978; Docherty 1997; Heitshusen et al. 2005). Individual representative actions are important to contrast with collective (often partisan) behaviours, which is especially relevant for comparative cases that exhibit significant party cohesiveness, or 'party discipline' such as Canada (Huber 1996). In turn, the manner in which political issues are addressed may simply be one in which parties take ownership of certain topics, and neglect others, while choosing positions on those issues that solidify the parties' perceived ownership of those issues (Petrocik 1996; Belanger 2003), but it is also possible that behavior itself simply becomes more "partisan" and that debate may focus upon parties themselves in the course of discussing (or neglecting) issues.

Parliamentary and Legislative Politics

While there is a substantial literature on legislative politics and behaviour that focuses on the U.S. Congress, there are key differences between these congressional institutions and parliamentary institutions. Nevertheless, the U.S. literature is both informative for this endeavor and inviting of comparative insight where possible. Most important is the broad suggestion in the U.S. literature that the chosen avenues of participation by legislators are motivated by various personal incentives including election considerations, gaining personal influence, and developing good policies (Fenno 1973; Kingdon 1989; Hall 1996; Wawro 2000; Crisp et al. 2009).

Further, there has been reasonable attention given to the degree to which political parties shape the function of legislatures, with the U.S. and U.K. being among those of critical

comparative importance for the Canadian case (Beer 1965; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Searing 1994; Krehbiel 1998; Norton 2005). In Canada, most literature points to the political party as the dominant influence on parliamentary behaviour (Hockin 1966; Hoffman and Ward 1970; Stewart 1977; Thomas 1985; Franks 1987; Docherty 1997; Savoie 1999, Blidook 2011) though some attention has been given to variance in the influence of individual MPs (Kornberg 1967; Kornberg and Mishler 1976; Blidook 2012) and to MP behaviour that deviates from party norms (Kam 2009; Malloy 2003; Garner and Letki 2005).

As is often the case with studying the various venues of parliament, the value of the research cannot be directly linked only to the size of the perceived policy impact of the policy venue studied, though this is nevertheless an important consideration. Behaviours matter both in terms of representation, and in terms of governance. Ultimately, understanding behaviours should aid in assessing what a given institution and its members accomplish and why, but should also aid in addressing what is actually desired of that institution and how those desires might be accomplished through different mechanisms.

Committees in the Canadian Parliamentary system serve a range of potential roles, which include discussing and exposing policy issues (Malloy 1996). They also remain the primary venue through which members of the public speak directly to Parliamentarians, and the only venue in which this communication is fully documented (Skogstad 1985). Previous research also indicates that committee proceedings are less adversarial than those on the House floor (Skogstad 1985; Stewart 1977).

As to the policy impact of parliamentary committees in Canada, it is likely that they have some independent effect on policy outcomes, though it is generally expected to be small (Malloy 1996). On the other hand, Smith has more recently suggested that committees have increased in importance in the past few decades (2007: 82). It is certainly possible that committees have played an increasing role in policy development due to the nature of minority governments in recent years, and media reports also increasingly refer to committee deliberations as affecting the legislative process. Docherty suggests that committees tend to deal more directly with issues of public policy than does the House as a whole (2005: 165). While committees may only play a minor role in determining the legislative agenda, they are charged with studying and reporting upon legislation and other policy proposals. It is for these reasons that gaining a better

understanding of committees (and most, if not all, parliamentary venues) is crucial, as they provide an open window on what items are receiving attention and what form that attention takes.

My own recent research argues that institutional rule changes have far reaching effects in terms of the power dynamic of Parliament, and this is evident in MPs having an increased impact on government policy in recent years (Blidook 2012). Nevertheless, there is accumulating evidence that this trend is changing and may have even reversed. Political parties appear to be seeking to take advantage of the parliamentary venues where MPs once had a good deal of autonomy. One example of this is found in Standing Order 31 'members' statements', where MPs' attention to their partisan opponents has increased significantly in recent years, presumably to the detriment of other interests (Blidook and Byrne, forthcoming). It is expected that the analysis in this paper will shed light on this trade-off. That is, that while MPs may have some incentives to engage in constituency-focused behavior, partisanship will encroach upon individual behavior and decrease constituency focus. This might suggest that the two behaviours are both mutually exclusive and zero-sum.

In assessing the nature of these behaviours, this study will also incorporate some assessment of MPs' individual motivations in the form of electoral interests. If legislative action matters for vote getting, MPs will desire opportunities in committees that will aid them in electoral advertising – though this seems weak motivation, or at least a minor one, in the Canadian committee system. In short, institutional rules and incentives (partisan and personal) should affect behaviour in legislative committees.

Committees in Canadian Parliament:

Due to the sheer amount committee transcripts, this paper focuses only upon a small group of Standing Committees in the Canadian system. Briefly, Standing Committees are those that have a stable and on-going role in both deliberating and reporting on legislation and in exploring policy topics and past government action.

According to O'Brien and Bosc (2009), Standing Committees:

…are empowered to study and report to the House on all matters relating to the

mandate, management, organization and operation of the departments assigned to them. More specifically, they can review:

- the statute law relating to the departments assigned to them;
- the program and policy objectives of those departments, and the effectiveness of their implementation thereof;
- the immediate, medium and long-term expenditure plans of those departments and the effectiveness of the implementation thereof; and
- an analysis of the relative success of those departments in meeting their objectives.

In addition to this general mandate, other matters are routinely referred by the House to its standing committees: bills, estimates, Order-in-Council appointments, documents tabled in the House pursuant to statute, and specific matters which the House wishes to have studied. In each case, the House chooses the most appropriate committee on the basis of its mandate.

Committees are most commonly presented with legislation after it has passed 2nd reading on the House floor, meaning that committees play a lesser role in selecting and amending legislation than those in many other legislatures. Standing committees will sometimes review this legislation, or create a sub-committee to do so. The House may also construct a legislative committee for examination and reporting of a bill, or to draft a bill, rather than send it to a Standing Committee. Standing committees may present substantive reports to parliament that include appendices or dissenting views, and are also empowered to meet with other standing committees or sub-committees (O'Brien and Bosc 2009).

It is also noteworthy that the sample of committee data uses only 'members', though there is little reason to feel that the behaviour of members differs significantly from associate members, aside from the fact that most members probably spend more time and have more experience on a given committee. Associate Members are essentially substitutes for Members of committees, and they hold all the same rights as regular members during the time when they sit on the committee.

Recent concerns of MPs:

In recent years, MPs have begun to suggest that committees are less effective as policy venues due to increased partisanship. Face-to-face interviews conducted with MPs in 2010 suggested both that this was the case generally in Parliament, while others spoke specifically to the problem of committees.

Liberal MP 1:

… things become more political … I have seen the collegiality between the government members and the opposition members not as good as it was 6 or 7 years ago and … things are just becoming more tense, more rivalrous, probably more political and less policy driven.

Marlene Jennings (Liberal):

The reason behind some of the [membership] movement that we see in committees … sometimes it's perfectly justified but sometimes it's because a member of the particular party is not comfortable with the direction their party wants them to take on the particular committee and isn't going to make a public stink about it but behind the scenes says no and if you insist on doing that then they want to be taken off the committee or they get told you are off that committee.

Liberal MP 2:

I have seen over the last 13 years a movement towards these committees being treated like branch plants of the ministers offices and the current government has given manuals to government committee members on how to make your committee dysfunctional; on how to basically screw up its work.

Conservative MP 1:

I firmly believe committees are better and more focused, and more useable data is put forward, when there is a majority government. The committees are where a lot of the adversarial stuff starts. It starts there and now we've got committees televised, so here we go, let's all get dressed up and go make asses of ourselves at committee.

Conservative MP 2:

I'd say the most important thing is whether or not you toe the line, whether or not you conform to the wishes of the leader of the party in the execution of your duties as a parliamentarian, whether that's in the house or whether that's in committee. In other words, how you vote. How willing you are to read pre-scripted questions into the record? How willing you are to read, ask questions that have been prepared by the leader`s office in Question Period? How ready you are to read SO31s to the record? How willing you are to keep to the script during committee business?

I like the word autonomy. Any degree of autonomy is increasingly being snuffed out. I will give another example, Parliamentary chairs, standing committee chairs are increasingly being asked to vet each and every decision they take as standing committee chairs, through the minister's office and through the parliamentary secretary. That's unheard of.

Each of these MPs speaks, in varying ways, about perceived weaknesses in committees during the 40th Parliament, or to changes in recent years. Each also implies that partisanship plays a role in committee proceedings – alongside other perceived problems that occur beyond the committee members' control – and that this affects what committees accomplish.

Data

The data were collected by identifying those MPs listed as members of their respective committees (this includes chairs and vice-chairs and is usually 12-16 MPs in total, but does not include associate members, of whom there are many) and collecting all of their statements using the transcripts of committee proceedings available online.[1] Regrettably, at his stage it also only includes data from the 37th Parliament up to the first session of the 39th Parliament (2001-2007). Counts of specific words spoken were generated using Lexicoder.[2] Data for each member is broken into months, so that counts are available for each month in which an MP spoke on a given committee. However, the graphical results below are presented as years (2001-2007), or as parliamentary sessions.

The unit of analysis is the MP, and counts are given for each month in which the MP said something in a committee. Where results are regressed, robust standard errors are used to adjust for multiple cases of the same MP.

The committees selected for exploration in this paper include: Environment and Sustainable Development, Finance, Government Operations and Estimates, Health, Justice and Human Rights, Public Accounts, Public Safety and National Security, Status of Women. However, at this time, not all committees have been completed for every session under investigation – results are preliminary.

A brief explanation of how the counts for each MP are constructed will be made with 2 examples. The first is with regard to the forms of partisan attention that are collected. Peter MacKay (Conservative), while on the Public Safety committee during 38th Parliament (November 2004), stated:

> "Do you know the point that seems to escape everybody on the **Liberal** side
> and anybody who argues forcefully for this farcical firearms registry? Do you
> know the point that seems to escape everybody? Criminals don't register their
> guns. They just don't."
>
> …

---

[1] See http://www.parl.gc.ca .

[2] See http://www.lexicoder.com/ .

"The **Conservative** Party brought in the most comprehensive safety measures around gun control ever seen in this country."

While Mr. MacKay made many other statements during that month, these are the only references to political parties during this month for Mr. MacKay. His counts for that month are as follows:

Party Mention	Own Party	Other Party
2	1	1

Second, each MP is also analyzed for constituency references. Every MP's text is searched for the term "constitue" (which will capture terms such as "constituents" or "constituency") as well as for personalized constituency terms. The latter is determined by using 1 or more terms that could refer to the constituency name, or parts of the constituency name that could be referred to separately in cases where constituency names have multiple parts. As an example, former Liberal MP Karen Redman's riding was Kitchener Centre. The search term in this case is simply "Kitchener" as it is assumed that any reference to the constituency will include this word.[3]

While on the Environment Committee during the 37th Parliament's 1st session (October 2001), Ms. Redman stated:

"My riding is **Kitchener** Centre, and water and air quality were probably the two issues I heard most about from my **constituents** this summer."

As these are the only constituency references for Ms. Redman during that month, her counts are:

---

[3] Counts are more complicated for multiple term constituencies, and these likely present some error in the analysis. Where an MP has a constituency with multiple city or region names, each term is searched separately, because each could be used on its own. However, if an MP gives the full constituency name at once, it will count as multiple mentions. As an example, NDP MP Nathan Cullen's constituency name is Skeena-Bulkley Valley. Search terms include both "Skeena" and "Bulkley". Further complicating the analysis is that the riding includes a number of small towns or cities, such as Terrace, Prince Rupert and Kitimat, yet these names are not included in the search, as doing so for each MP would become too large a task.

Constituency Reference	Constituency Name	"Constitue"
2	1	1

While "constituency name" is counted separately from "constitue", only the combined total "constituency reference" is used in the analyses in this paper.

Party references, then, are utilized as measures of partisan attention[4], or more broadly as partisan/collective behavior, while constituency references are utilized as constituency attention, or more broadly as individual behavior.

Finally, each MP's total word count for the month is also collected, so that the number of relevant statements can be more effectively compared across MPs. Other data included in the analyses to follow are provided by the Library of Parliament and include relevant variables such as the MP's experience (number of parliaments elected to), and the MP's win margin in the previous election.

Results

The first set of results simply shows the nature of partisan mentions by committee members over the 2001-2007 period. Mentions of one's own party, opposing parties, as well as constituency references are shown for each as a proportion of counts per 10,000 words. Keep in mind that these counts are based on each month in which the MP spoke in committee, and only upon "members" of committees – associate members, who sometimes attend and speak more than members, are not included.

**Figure 1: Mentions per 10,000 words (by year)**

---

[4] "Own party" references are normally seen as "positive" statements about one's own party, and "other party" references are normally seen as "negative" statements (see Blidook and Byrne forthcoming), but this plays little role in the current analysis.
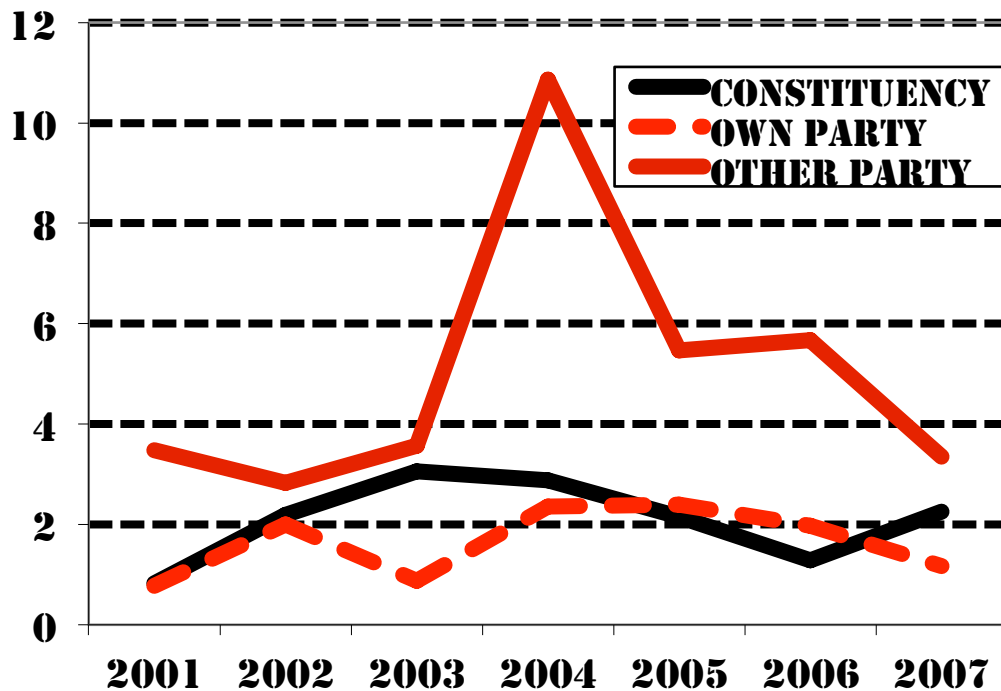
The increase in "other party" mentions is most striking in 2004, though there is also a noteworthy proportional increase in constituency mentions in 2003 (that is, 2003 and 2004 are approximately 3 mentions, whereas most other years are 2 or less). For the record, these are not big numbers – the minimum levels for constituency references and "own party" references would be comparable to approximately one mention in a transcript the size of this research paper.

The graph below is adjusted to look at the same data presented as parliamentary sessions rather than years, in order to determine if these increases appear confined to minority or majority periods (as the election year of 2004 straddles each).

Figure 2: Mentions per 10,000 words (by session)
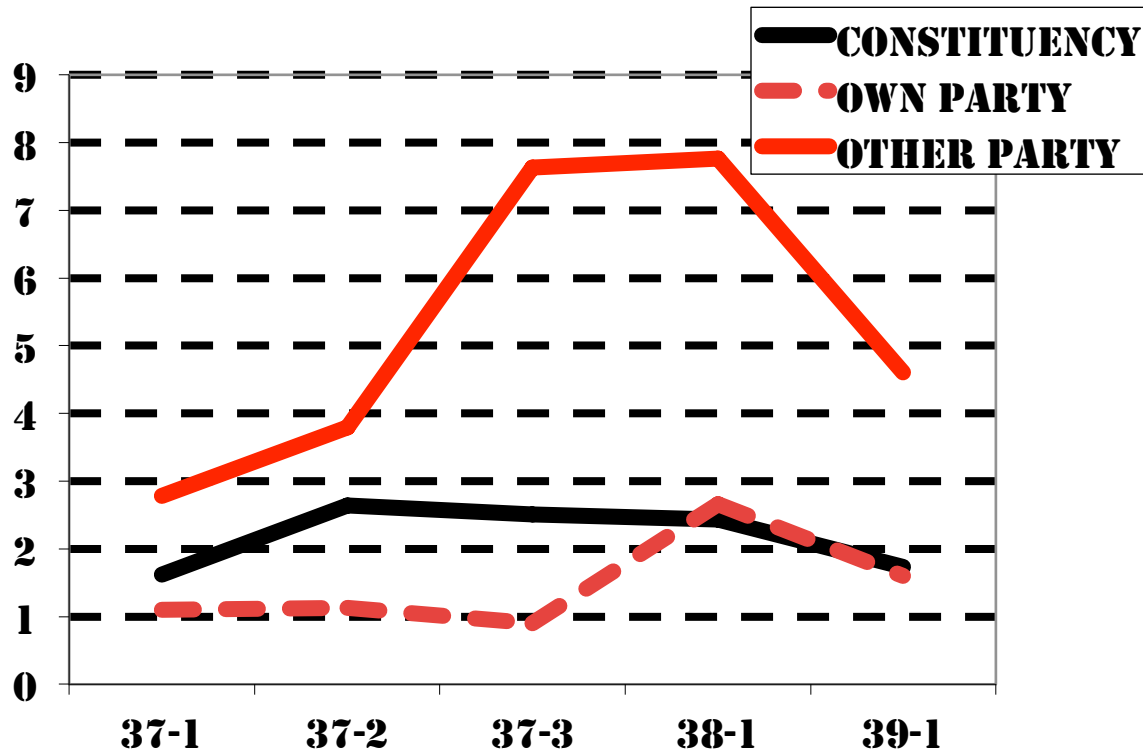
Viewing the counts across parliamentary sessions, it appears as though the jump in "Other party" mentions increased notably in the brief third session of majority government in the 37th Parliament (the first in which Paul Martin was Liberal Prime Minister), and continued into the single session of the 38th Parliament, during which the minority Liberal government held office. There is also a notable increase in "Own Party" mentions during the 38th that is absent from the 37th.

Finally, in order to give a sense of the distribution of mentions among MPs across the same years shown above, the proportions of MP/months for each amount of mentions (up to 5 or more) are shown graphically below. Note that in every case, the majority of cases has zero mentions of the relevant terms, though the proportion of "zero" cases does vary by more than 10% for both types of partisan mentions and for constituency mentions.

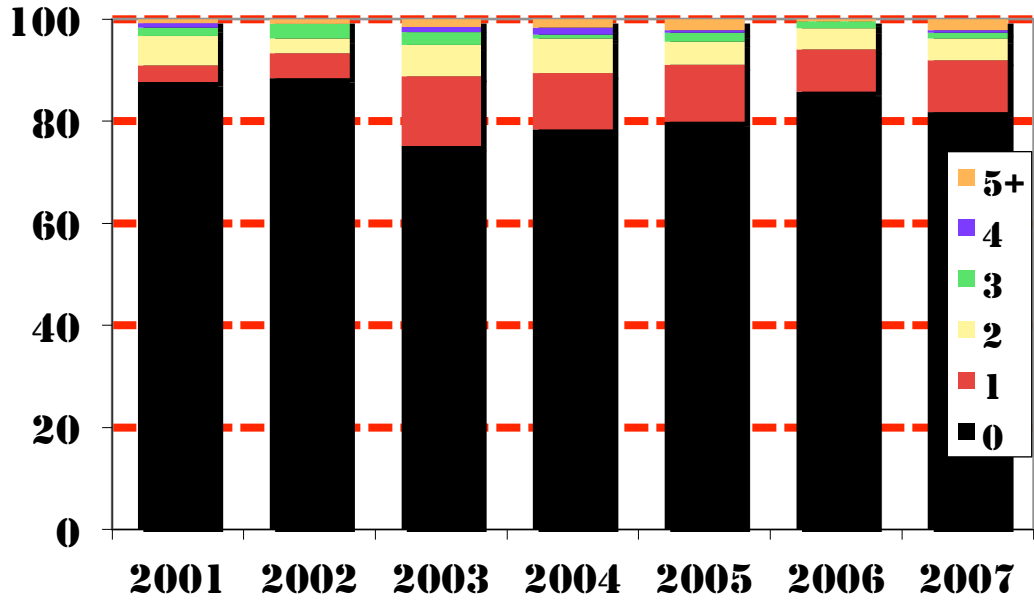**Figure 3: Proportion of Constituency mentions for each MP/month**

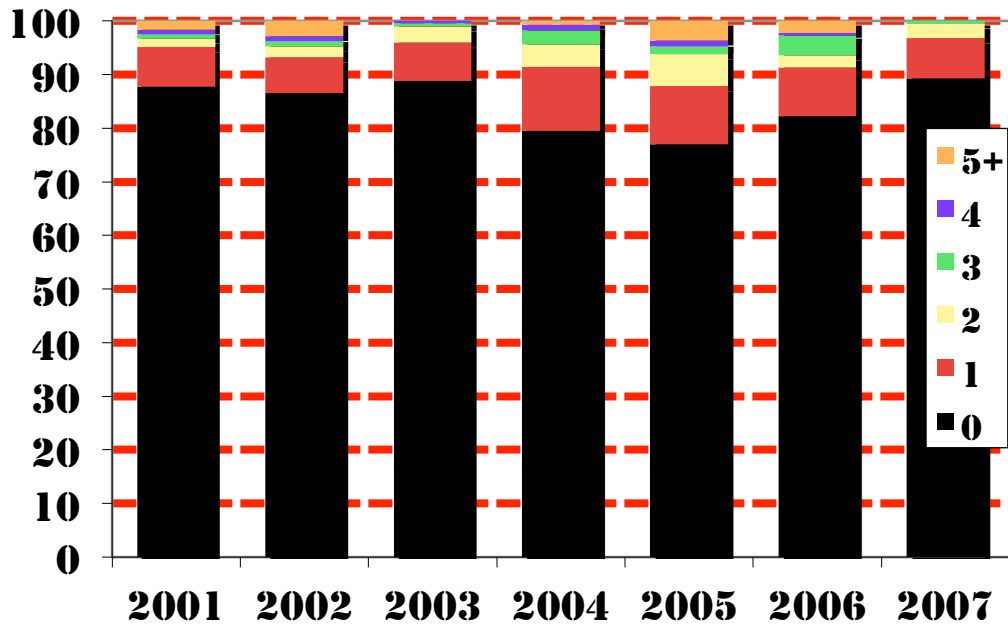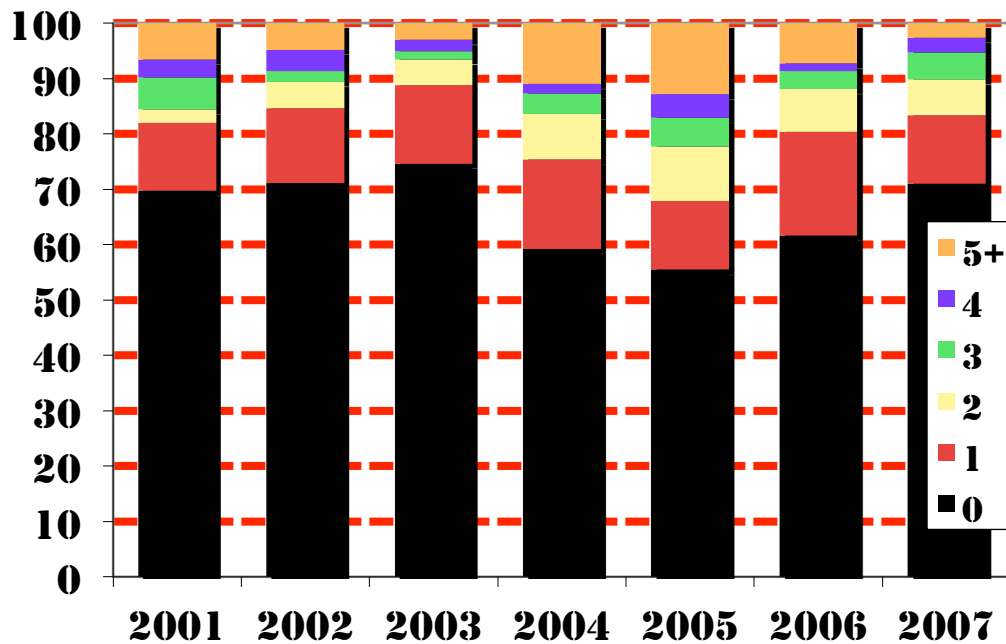**Figure 4: Proportion of Own Party mentions for each MP/month**

Figure 5: Proportion of Other Party mentions for each MP/month

As already seen in Figures 1 and 2, the most notable differences are with "Other Party" mentions. Not only does the proportion of MPs making no mentions decrease notably (from almost 75% of MP/month cases down to only 55%), but the increase on the 5+ category also accounts for half of this change. This also suggests that the difference across 2004-2006 in terms of average mentions of parties is somewhat different than portrayed in Figure 1, where 2004 stood out as far different from all other years. In fact, the change that occurs in 2004 appears to be sustained more evenly until about 2007 in Figure 5.[5]

What factors appear to affect these counts? The tables below indicate the factors that appear to have the greatest impact on who is making mention of both constituencies and parties. Each table uses a negative binomial regression model, which is appropriate in cases where the dependent variable is a count and where the mean is less than the variance (or "overdispersion").

---

[5] 2004 includes some outliers that may drive the difference in average in Figure 1. The maximum mentions per 10,000 for that year was over 500, though such average could be driven in part by relatively short statements by MPs who said very little, yet mentioned parties frequently when doing so. The next highest maximum is approximately 130 (2006), with all other years being under 90.

Further, the dependent variable in each is a simple count of mentions, with word counts included in the model through "exposure"[6]. Since cases are not independent (the same MP makes up multiple cases) robust standard errors are used.

Here the model is relatively simple, in that it looks only at the political party as the independent variable (dummy variables with Liberal as the control), and separately whether the MP was a member of the governing party at the time.

Table 1: Factors affecting Party mentions – Combined, Own, Other

Party Mention		Own Party		Other Party	
Gov MP	.01 (.17)	-.18 (.28)		.06 (.19)	
Conservative	.63 (.17)***	.99 (.29)***		.54 (.2)***	
NDP	.4 (.35)	.81 (.43)*		.29 (.41)	
CA	-.45 (.35)	-.78 (.31)**		-.35 (.39)	
BQ	.49 (.28)*	1.03 (.38)***		.31 (.27)	
Cons	-7.56 (.17)***	-9.18 (.27)***		-7.8 (.18)***	
N (clusters)	1526 (144)	1526 (144)		1526 (144)	
Wald Chi2	18.12***	80.66***		9.57*	

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

The only factor that is consistently significant in all 3 models and which clearly stands out regarding "Other Party" mentions is the Conservative Party.[7] It is also noteworthy that the Canadian Alliance, as a predecessor to the Conservative Party, is the only party that stands out as significant and negative in any model ("Own Party" mentions). The Bloc Quebecois and, to a lesser extent, the NDP both tend to refer to their own parties more often than Liberal MPs.

Do these factors – both attention to parties and partisanship – affect constituency mentions? The models that follow look at these factors, alongside two other factors that are believed to impact constituency attention based on previous research (Blidook 2012). The first is the MP's win margin in the previous election, which is believed to correlate inversely with action

---

[6] Exposure is essentially the unit of time during which a given event – in this case a "mention" – can take place. The word count is the most relevant unit for such events.
[7] Note that model 3 as a whole is not particularly strong. The Wald Chi-Square statistic tests the likelihood that all coefficients in the model are zero, and with only the single variable showing significance, this results in the weaker Wald significance for the model.

on behalf of the constituency. That is, MPs who are more marginal in their electoral prospects should have a greater focus upon their constituency. The second is parliamentary experience, where the experience of an MP (number of parliaments sat) should tend to temper constituency focus.

It is also important to again point out an assumption in the theoretical link between the two behaviours, which drives the following analysis. That is, that partisanship – or attention to political parties by MPs – affects constituency (or other representative) attention, and not vice versa.

Further, there could be concern about the statistical necessity of an inverse correlation between the constituency mentions and partisan mentions due to the fact that both are drawn from the same speech samples. In any given set of words, if more of the words are allocated to one "type" then less must be allocated to the other "type".[8] However, this should present little concern in the current case because of the proportions shown in the figures above. First, the proportions are relatively small, such that one should have little impact on the other in terms of probability of occurrence based upon the numbers alone. Second, in the aggregate, the proportions of each (partisan mentions and constituency mentions) are not inversely correlated.

We can see that when the model is adjusted to account for constituency mentions across the 3 types of partisan mentions (combined, own, other), there is some evidence that the two types of attention move in opposite directions. Tables 2, 3 and 4 below consider the impact upon mentions of constituency.

Table 2: Factors affecting Constituency mentions – Combined Party Mentions

Party Mention	-.03	(.01)**	-.02	(.01)*	-.02	(.01)*
Experience	-	-	-.1	(.09)	-.06	(.09)
Win Margin	-	-	-.96	(.76)	-1.5	(.86)*
Gov MP	-	-	-	-	-.08	(.3)
Conservative	-	-	-	-	.19	(.34)
NDP	-	-	-	-	.26	(.34)

---

[8] For example, if one were to look for 2 mutually exclusive types of words in a sample of 10 words, and if 5 of the words were type 1, then a maximum of 5 could be type 2. If the number of type 1 words were to increase to 6, then the maximum for type 2 would decrease to 4. As the sample increases and the number of relevant terms is proportionally smaller, this concern remains probabilistic depending upon the proportions.

CA	-	-	-	-	1.03	(.45)**
BQ	-	-	-	-	-.27	(.57)
Cons	-8.42	(.14)***	-8.	(.22)***	-8.06	(.4)***
N (clusters)	1526 (144)		1526 (144)		1526 (144)	
Wald Chi2	6.51**		20.57***		48.72***	

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 3: Factors affecting Constituency mentions – Own Party

OwnParty	-.11	(.06)*	-.11	(.06)*	-.11	(.05)**
Experience	-	-	-.11	(.09)	-.07	(.09)
Win Margin	-	-	-1.01	(.76)	-1.54	(.86)*
Gov MP	-	-	-	-	-.1	(.3)
Conservative	-	-	-	-	.18	(.34)
NDP	-	-	-	-	.27	(.34)
CA	-	-	-	-	1.01	(.44)**
BQ	-	-	-	-	-.26	(.57)
Cons	-8.43	(.14)***	-7.97	(.23)***	-8.01	(.4)***
N (clusters)	1526 (144)		1526 (144)		1526 (144)	
Wald Chi2	3.67*		10.93**		29.39***	

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Table 4: Factors affecting Constituency mentions – Other Party

OtherParty	-.03	(.01)***	-.02	(.01)	-.02	(.01)
Experience	-	-	-.1	(.09)	-.06	(.09)
Win Margin	-	-	-.97	(.76)	-1.52	(.86)*
Gov MP	-	-	-	-	-.08	(.3)
Conservative	-	-	-	-	.18	(.34)
NDP	-	-	-	-	.23	(.34)
CA	-	-	-	-	1.03	(.45)**
BQ	-	-	-	-	-.28	(.57)
Cons	-8.43	(.14)***	-8.01	(.22)***	-8.06	(.4)***
N (clusters)	1526 (144)		1526 (144)		1526 (144)	
Wald Chi2	8.31***		21.94***		47.13***	

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Party mentions do appear to play some negative role in affecting constituency mentions, however the link is not particularly strong. The most consistent type of mention is "Own Party" mentions, which is significant at p<.05 in the full model. The simple correlation between counts of "Other Party" mentions and constituency mentions is significant, but it does not stand up when other variables are included in the model. Notably, win margin does play a weakly significant and expected role in that those with lower win margins are more likely to mention constituencies. Further, MPs of the former Canadian Alliance stand out as more likely to mention constituencies in their committee statements.

It is possible that these results show weak or non-significance due to the relatively small sample size (144 MPs), though at this point any assumptions about the link between partisan attention and constituency attention as each is measured here, should be done cautiously.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at forms of partisan and individual behavior in parliamentary committees in Canada with the purpose of determining if these forms of behavior have increased or decreased over time, and if there is a trade-off between them. There is evidence that partisan behavior increased significantly in the final session of the 37th (majority) parliament and during the 38th (minority) parliament. This increase appears to fall off late in the analysis period (2007), though MPs in years following this statistical analysis (2010) referred to increasing partisanship even at that time. In light of this, it is possible that 2007 is simply a down year, or that partisanship may have become exhibited in a different form that is not captured in party mentions. Unfortunately, the analysis does not yet extend to the most recent years leading up to the current Conservative majority government.

Further, Conservative MPs appear to engage in "Other Party" references more than their counterparts, while Conservatives, Bloc Quebecois and, to a lesser extent, NDP MPs seem more likely to engage in "Own Party" references. There has been some criticism leveled at the Conservative party for instigating greater levels of partisanship in parliament by non-Conservative MPs (See Blidook 2011), and this evidence would suggest that, at least as far as "Other Party" references, this criticism has some validity.

Finally, with regard to a trade-off between partisan attention and constituency attention in MP statements, there is some evidence that this occurs. Although there is no clear correlation in the aggregate that constituency references decrease at the same times that partisan references increase, based on the individual level analysis provided here it appears at least plausible that individual MPs who mention parties more often tend to refer to constituencies less often. However, this seems to be a stable relationship only where references to "Own Party" occur.

All of this suggests that partisan behavior fluctuates, and has done so in relatively recent history, and that such fluctuations appear likely to affect the forms of representation that occur in

Parliament. Nevertheless, as the time period of the analysis is somewhat short, these results should be understood as preliminary.

Bibliography

Anderson, Cameron D., and Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant. 2005. Conceptions of Political Representation in Canada: An Explanation of Public Opinion. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 38:1029-1058.

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. 2012. "Parliamentary committees are 'weak', 'waste of time'". Accessed May 7, 2012, on the World Wide Web: http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/05/07/pol-cp-parliamentary-committees-partisanship.html

Beer, Samuel Hutchison. 1965. *Modern British politics; a study of parties and pressure groups*. London: Faber and Faber.

Bélanger, Éric. 2003. Issue Ownership by Canadian Political Parties 1953-2001. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 36 (3): 539-558.

Blais, André, and Elisabeth Gidengil. 1991. *Making representative democracy work: the views of Canadians*. Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing. Ottawa: Canada Communication Group Supply and Services Canada and Dundurn Press.

Blidook, Kelly. Forthcoming. *Legislative Representation in Canada.* UBC Press.

Blidook, Kelly. 2010a "Exploring the role of 'legislators' in Canada: Do Members of Parliament influence policy?" *Journal of Legislative Studies, 16 (1):32-56.*

Blidook, Kelly. 2011. "Symbol vs. Substance: Theatre, Political Career Paths, and Parliamentary Behaviour in Canada", Canadian Study of Parliament Group.

Blidook, Kelly and Matthew Byrne. Forthcoming. "Constantly campaigning and partisan discourse in the House of Commons". in *Change and Continuity in Canadian Political Parties and Elections.* Amanda Bittner and Royce Koop, eds. UBC Press.

Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative leviathan: party government in the House, California series on social choice and political economy ; 23.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Crisp, Brian F. et al. 2009. The Electoral Connection and Legislative Committees. *Journal of Legislative Studies* 15(1): 35-52.

Docherty, David Campbell. 1997. *Mr. Smith goes to Ottawa: life in the House of Commons*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

———. 2005. *Legislatures*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Fenno, Richard F. 1973. *Congressmen in committees*. Boston: Little Brown.

———. 1978. *Home style: House Members in their districts*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Franks, C. E. S. 1987. *The Parliament of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Garner, Christopher, and Natalia Letki. 2005. Party Structure and Backbench Dissent in the Canadian and British Parliaments. *Canadian Journal of Political* Science 38 (2):463-482.

Hall, Richard L. 1996. *Participation in Congress*. New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press.

Heitshusen, Valerie, Garry Young and David M. Wood. 2005. Electoral Context and MP Constituency Focus in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (1):32-45.

Hockin, Thomas A. 1966. The Loyal Opposition in Canada: An Introduction to its Ideal Roles and their Practical Implementation for Representative and Responsible Government, Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Hoffman, David, and Norman Ward. 1970. *Bilingualism and biculturalism in the Canadian House of Commons.* Ottawa: Queen's Printer.

Howe, Paul, and David Northrup. 2000. Strengthening Canadian Democracy: The views of Canadians. *Policy Matters* 1:1-104.

Huber, John D. 1996. The Vote of Confidence in Parliamentary Democracies. *American Political Science Review* 90 (2):269-282.

Jenson, Jane. 1995. Representation and Policy-Making in Canada. In *Canada's century: governance in a maturing society: essays in honour of John Meisel*, edited by C. E. S. Franks and J. Meisel. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Kam, Christopher. 2009. *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

Kingdon, John W. 1989. *Congressmen's voting decisions*. 3rd ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kornberg, Allan. 1967. *Canadian legislative behavior; a study of the 25th Parliament*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Kornberg, Allan, and William Mishler. 1976. *Influence in Parliament, Canada*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal politics: a theory of U.S. lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Malloy, Johnathan. 2003. The House of Commons Under the Chretien Government. In Bruce Doern (ed) *How Ottawa Spends 2003-2004: Regime Change and Policy Shift*. Don Mills ON: Oxford University Press.

Malloy, Jonathan. 1996. Reconciling expectations and reality in House of Commons committees: The case of the 1989 GST inquiry. *Canadian Public Administration* 39(3): 314-335.

Norton, Philip. 2005. *Parliament in British politics*. Houndmills England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Brien, Audrey and Marc Bosc. (2009) House of Commons Procedure and Practice. 2nd ed. Ottawa: House of Commons.

Petrocik, John R. 1996. Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections, with a 1980 Case Study. *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (3): 825-850.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. 1967. *The concept of representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Savoie, Donald J. 1999. *Governing from the centre: the concentration of power in Canadian politics*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Searing, Donald. 1994. *Westminster's world: understanding political roles*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Skogstad, Grace. 1985. Interest Groups, Representation and Conflict Management in the Standing Committees of the House of Commons. *Canadian Journal of Political Science 18* (4): 739-772.

Smith, David E. 2007. The People's House of Commons: Theories of Democracy in Contention. University of Toronto Press.

Soroka, Stuart, N., Erin Penner, and Kelly Blidook. 2009. Constituency Influence in Parliament. *Canadian Journal of Political Science, 42 (3)*.

Stewart, John B. 1977. *The Canadian House of Commons: procedure and reform*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Thomas, Paul G. 1985. Parliamentary Reform Through Political Parties. In *The Canadian House of Commons: Essays in Honour of Norman Ward*, edited by J. Courtney. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Wahlke, John C., et al. 1962. *The legislative system: explorations in legislative behavior*. New York: Wiley.

Wawro, Gregory J. 2000. *Legislative entrepreneurship in the U.S. House of Representatives, Michigan studies in political analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.