Partisanship and Personal Vote-Seeking in Parliamentary Behaviour

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Abstract

Incumbent politicians can use parliamentary behaviour to generate a 'personal vote': electoral support attracted to an individual candidate rather than their party label. This personal vote-seeking has consequences for accountability, representation, and policy-making, yet its prevalence varies extensively. Existing explanations of this variation focus on the consequences of electoral institutions and the characteristics of individual members of parliament (MPs). This thesis adds to a much smaller literature linking MPs' personal vote-seeking to characteristics of its intended audience: voters. Specifically, I argue that partisanship among voters reduces MPs' incentives for engaging in personal vote-seeking, by limiting its effectiveness. When voters have stronger ties to political parties, they are less likely to reward or punish MPs for their individual qualities and performance. As a consequence, lower partisanship among citizens should lead to more extensive personal vote-seeking by MPs. I test this argument in two stages. First, I test its voter-level implications. Using a quasi-experiment in New Zealand and a survey experiment in the United Kingdom (UK), I find evidence that partisanship does make voters less likely to reward MPs for their individual behaviour in parliament. Second, I test its MP-level implications. Analysing legislative behaviour in the UK House of Commons, I find evidence that MPs' personal vote-seeking efforts can be linked to variation in voters' partisanship over time, and (less consistently) between constituencies. Taken together, these findings offer new evidence that voters' relationships with political parties shape MPs' electoral strategies and parliamentary behaviour. This suggests an important link between how voters think about politics, and how their representatives conduct it.

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Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

"I would vote for a pig if the party put one up"

British voter during the 1951 general election (Butler 1952, 173)

1 Introduction

How do members of parliament achieve re-election? Scholars have identified two main strategies for doing so. Incumbent legislators can either rely solely on the electoral appeal of their party's 'brand', or they can also seek support based on their own individual reputation — a 'personal vote' (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987). The latter strategy can be pursued in various ways. One of the most prominent is for legislators to behave more individualistically in parliament, using it as a platform for signalling their personal qualities, positions, and achievements to voters (Mayhew 1974). This behaviour has important implications for the kinds of representation and policy outcomes that parliaments produce. Yet there is extensive variation in how far members of parliament (MPs) engage in this personal vote-seeking, both across and within countries. The central research question of this thesis is therefore: when do legislators prioritise personal vote-seeking behaviour in parliament?

Previous scholarship has devoted much attention to this question, and offers several answers. The most prominent highlights the role of formal electoral institutions. In this view, personal vote-seeking is more extensive when electoral rules let citizens cast votes for individual candidates, and when party rules let local activists select those candidates

(Carey and Shugart 1995). Other work traces personal vote-seeking to attributes of individual legislators, such as their electoral security (e.g. Kellermann 2013, 2016), gender (Lazarus and Steigerwalt 2018), or local ties to their constituency (e.g. Tavits 2009, 2010). By contrast, strikingly few explanations of personal vote-seeking consider its intended audience: voters. This oversight is surprising. It seems intuitive that legislators' electoral strategies should be shaped — at least in part — by the characteristics of those whose support they want to attract. In particular, the relative effectiveness of party-based and candidate-based electoral appeals should depend on voters' partisanship. The consequences of this could be considerable, as partisanship varies greatly across countries, and has substantially declined in many advanced democracies (see Dalton 2013; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). This thesis therefore examines the relationship between partisanship among voters and personal vote-seeking by their representatives.

The central argument of the thesis is simple. The strength of voters' ties to political parties shapes how MPs behave in parliament. This is because legislators can use their work in parliament to attract a personal vote.[1] But effective personal vote-seeking depends on voters being influenced by individual candidates' records, and this influence may vary across voters. In particular, voters with strong loyalties to a political party will almost always support its candidates, and oppose those of rival parties, regardless of those candidates' personal qualities. By contrast, voters with weaker party loyalties are more likely to be influenced by the qualities of individual candidates. As a consequence, MPs should engage in more extensive personal vote-seeking if voters are less partisan. Voters' partisanship is thus an important determinant of MPs' personal vote-seeking behaviour.

I also argue that voters' partisanship should shape the impact of other sources of MPs' personal vote-seeking incentives. In particular, one of the most widespread and consistent findings in legislative research is that electorally vulnerable MPs engage in more extensive personal vote-seeking in parliament. I argue that this relationship should depend on voters' partisanship. If voters are highly partisan, personal vote-seeking will be ineffective. As a result, even MPs from very marginal seats will have little incentive to engage in it.

My empirical analysis offers support for both these arguments. I first analyse the

[1]Throughout this thesis, I use the terms 'legislature' and 'legislator' interchangeably with 'parliament' and 'member of Parliament' (MP) respectively.

behaviour of voters. Using two experimental analyses, I show that partisanship does indeed make voters less responsive to the qualities of individual candidates. My results suggest that parliamentary behaviour can help incumbent legislators attract additional support, but largely from non-partisan voters. As voters grow more partisan, they are less likely to be influenced by their MP's individual record in parliament. As a result, MPs' incentives for personal vote-seeking should be higher when voters' partisanship is lower.

I then analyse the behaviour of MPs. Consistent with my voter-level analysis, I find evidence that legislators' behaviour in parliament is related to voters' partisanship. Analysis of legislative proposals in the UK House of Commons since the 1960s suggests that MPs make more use of this tool for personal vote-seeking when voters are less partisan. Moreover, I find evidence that the relationship between MPs' electoral security and their bill proposal activity is conditional on the partisanship of the electorate. MPs in marginal seats work harder than those in safe seats, but only when voters' partisanship is low. Finally, I move from longitudinal variation in partisanship to cross-constituency variation. I test how far various indicators of MPs' personal vote-seeking behaviour are related to the partisanship of their individual constituency. The results of this analysis are more mixed, but offer some further support for my expectations.

This thesis therefore advances and tests two main theoretical claims. First, partisanship matters in its own right as a largely overlooked influence on MPs' incentives for personal vote-seeking. Second, partisanship also plays a role in moderating the effect of another important source of personal vote-seeking incentives: electoral security.

The rest of this introductory chapter proceeds as follows. Section 1.1 defines personal vote-seeking, and explains my focus on *parliamentary* personal vote-seeking behaviour. Section 1.2 then sets out the importance of explaining variation in this behaviour. Section 1.3 places my thesis in the context of existing studies of personal vote-seeking. It highlights the surprising shortage, and the limitations, of work linking personal vote-seeking to voters' partisanship. Section 1.4 outlines my argument, offering a brief summary of a theory linking MPs' parliamentary behaviour to voters' partisanship. Section 1.5 explains how I test this theory, providing an overview of the case selection and research design. Finally, Section 1.6 concludes by setting out the plan for subsequent chapters.

1.1 What is Personal Vote-Seeking?

1.1.1 Personal vote-seeking

In this thesis, I define personal vote-seeking as any attempt by incumbent legislators to attract their own personal electoral support. This definition distinguishes it from two other kinds of behaviour. First, personal vote-seeking does not encompass legislators' attempts to improve the popularity of their party as a whole. Second, it does not encompass behaviour which attracts electoral support, but which was not intended to do so. Thus, personal vote-seeking is a *deliberate* strategy for increasing an MPs' *individual* popularity with voters.

Legislators have a range of tools for generating a personal vote. They might engage in constituency service, helping voters with specific problems (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987). They might also keep in touch with their voters through newsletters or social media (Auel and Umit 2018), emphasise electorally attractive characteristics (Campbell and Cowley 2014; Shugart, Valdini and Suominen 2005), or raise their profile by holding government office (Martin 2016). All of these strategies can be supplemented during elections by running personalised campaigns that highlight their individual qualities and achievements (Milazzo and Townsley 2020; Zittel 2015*a*).

1.1.2 Parliamentary personal vote-seeking

This thesis focuses on another of MPs' tools for personal vote-seeking: their behaviour in parliament. Parliament provides MPs with a highly visible platform for improving their reputation with voters. Moreover, it typically offers MPs a number of tools for working *as an individual*, including parliamentary questions (Sozzi 2016), committee work (Martin 2011*a*), speeches (Proksch and Slapin 2015), bill proposals (Williams and Indridason 2018), and roll-call votes (Campbell et al. 2019*a*).

All of these tools can be used to send electorally attractive signals to voters, who learn about parliamentary behaviour through news coverage, party publicity, and MPs' own campaigning. In particular, these tools can serve three specific personal vote-seeking strategies (Mayhew 1974). They can be used for 'advertising', by letting MPs show their integrity, effort, or attention to their constituency. They can also be used for 'position-taking', where MPs adopt electorally attractive positions or distance themselves from unpopular party policies. Finally, these tools can facilitate 'credit-claiming', where MPs

claim responsibility for past or future policy outcomes. All of these strategies help an MP build up an individual reputation with voters.

There are a number of reasons for why I focus on this parliamentary personal vote-seeking, rather than the other methods described above. First, it may be more widely accessible than some other personal vote-seeking tools. For example, not all MPs can hold government office, or have electorally attractive personal characteristics. Second, it may also be more widely received than other ways of personal vote-seeking. For example, constituency service might only attract support from voters it directly benefits. Third, focusing on parliamentary behaviour means studying how MPs' electoral strategies affect their primary role — working to represent their constituents in parliament. Fourth, this also means focusing on the personal vote-seeking that has the most significant implications for the kinds of accountability, representation, and policy outcomes that elected representatives provide. I now turn to discussing these implications in more detail.

1.2 Why Study Parliamentary Personal Vote-Seeking?

Why do political scientists seek to explain personal vote-seeking behaviour in parliaments? In short, because this behaviour has at least three important consequences for democratic politics. First, it exacerbates a tension between two contradictory visions of accountability. Second, this affects the extent to which representatives behave as their citizens expect. Third, it can also have a number of implications for policy outcomes. These consequences demonstrate the importance of understanding what actually drives legislators to engage in personal vote-seeking in parliament.

1.2.1 Two visions of accountability

The first major implication of personal vote-seeking is normative. Personal vote-seeking exacerbates a tension between two forms of accountability; between whether MPs are held accountable collectively or individually (Carey 2009). MPs are held accountable collectively when their electoral fate depends on their party's record and popularity. Individual accountability comes about when legislators are also judged on their personal record in office.

Most political scientists highlight the normative benefits of collective, rather than

individual accountability (Carey 2009, 23-24). A widely-accepted theory of 'responsible party government' emphasises the idea of elections as a choice between party platforms. In this view, party competition allows voters to express support for a clear set of policies, to expect them to be delivered, and to punish governments when they're not. By voting on the basis of party platforms and records, voters are able to exert control over the policies produced by government. This concern has motivated a wealth of scholarship examining, and sometimes advocating, party government (e.g. APSA 1950; Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999; Katz 1987; Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018).

By contrast, other writers have emphasised the importance of individual accountability, with legislators being judged on their own personal record. This kind of accountability should incentivise legislators to adopt priorities and positions that reflect the preferences of their own local electors, providing 'dyadic' representation in parliament (Weissberg 1978). This idea has motivated a long and increasingly sophisticated empirical tradition exploring the link between constituency opinion and legislators' behaviour (Converse and Pierce 1986; Hanretty, Lauderdale and Vivyan 2017; Kastellec, Lax and Phillips 2010; Miller and Stokes 1963). It is also frequently invoked in normative discussions of electoral reform, with defenders of single-member district electoral systems arguing that they ensure the accountability of MPs to their local constituents (Norris 2001; Shugart and Wattenberg 2001).

There is clearly a tension between these two forms of accountability. This tension is particularly acute in parliamentary democracies, where voters are asked to choose a local representative (or representatives) and a national government with the same vote(s). This presents voters with a dilemma — should they treat their vote as a judgement on their local legislator(s), or as a chance to choose between the rival teams competing to control the executive?

Personal vote-seeking can exacerbate this tension, by encouraging individual accountability at the expense of collective accountability. Personal vote-seeking deliberately encourages voters to see elections as judgements on their local candidates. It does so by heightening the distinctiveness of individual candidates, and by drawing attention to that distinctiveness. This greater individual accountability comes at the expense of collective accountability. As voters place more importance on individual legislators' records, they must necessarily place less on parties' reputations. As well as making citizens less willing to exercise collective accountability, personal vote-seeking can also make them

less able to do so. Where MPs behave more individualistically, devoting more resources and publicity to their own record rather than their party's, it becomes harder for voters to identify what parties have done (Fortunato and Stevenson 2020; Powell and Whitten 1993), and what they will do in the future (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). Personal vote-seeking by legislators thus has the potential to alter the way citizens hold their elected representatives accountable.

1.2.2 Public expectations of MPs

Personal vote-seeking also affects how far legislators provide the kind of parliamentary representation favoured by their voters. This is because the tension between individual and collective accountability is not an abstract issue of concern only to political scientists. It is also reflected in citizens' (often contradictory) attitudes to how their representatives should behave. Voters typically like MPs who stand out from their party, have attractive personal qualities, and prioritise the demands of local voters over those of party leaders. Yet they also dislike the aggregate consequences of this behaviour, punishing parties that appear unclear, incoherent, or divided. Personal vote-seeking encourages the former, but at the expense of the latter. It thus affects which of voters' expectations politicians are able to meet, and which they disappoint.

On the one hand, voters appear to reward the individualistic behaviour that MPs can use for personal vote-seeking. For example, a 2005 survey found that the quality British respondents most valued in an MP was being independent-minded (Johnson and Rosenblatt 2007, 166). Similarly, British voters clearly see MPs as agents of their constituency, rather than of their party. In a recent survey, 47% of all respondents wanted MPs to prioritise "representing the views of local people", while just 9% wanted them to prioritise "representing the views of their political party" (Fox and Blackwell 2017, 31). Recent survey experimental evidence from Canada showed very similar findings — respondents wanted legislators to be chiefly guided by the opinion of their constituents (Dassonneville et al. 2020). These attitudes are reflected in electoral behaviour. Legislators who are more rebellious or simply more active enjoy higher name recognition, higher approval ratings, and higher electoral support (Bouteca et al. 2019; Bowler 2010; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2003; Campbell et al. 2019*a*; Carson et al. 2010; Crisp et al. 2013; Däubler, Bräuninger and Brunner 2016; François and Navarro 2019, 2020; Kam 2009; Kellermann 2013; Loewen et al. 2014; Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019; Vivyan

and Wagner 2012; Wagner, Vivyan and Glinitzer 2020; Williams and Indridason 2018).[2]

On the other hand, voters also appear to punish the party-level consequences of this individualistic behaviour. Parties that fail to convey a coherent message suffer at the ballot box. Disunity undermines a party's electoral "brand", making it less clear what they stand for, and weakening their public support (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Kam 2009; Lupu 2016). It can also reduce support for particular party policies (Merkley 2020), and make parties appear less competent (Greene and Haber 2015). Attention has focused mostly on the costs to parties from rebellious voting, but the same argument can be applied to personal vote-seeking in parliament more generally, even when personal vote-seeking doesn't involve any direct conflict with the party's brand (see e.g. Proksch and Slapin 2015). Whenever legislators focus on developing and promoting their own individual record rather than that of their party, the party's message to voters will be less coherent, their brand weaker, and their electoral prospects more painful.

In sum, personal vote-seeking in parliaments provides citizens with more distinctive, locally-focused, and independent-minded politicians, but at the cost of producing less coherent parties. Voters generally value the former, but dislike the latter. Personal vote-seeking therefore has cross-cutting implications for how legislators' behaviour meets voters' expectations.

1.2.3 Consequences for policy-making

Finally, personal vote-seeking in parliaments has a number of consequences for policy outcomes. In particular, it can increase the provision of locally-targeted policy outcomes, at the cost of coherent national policy-making. This is because legislators can generate a personal vote through 'credit-claiming' (Mayhew 1974). This means claiming responsibility for some policy outcome favoured by their constituents; usually particularistic 'pork barrel' spending, targeted to that legislator's district. Personal vote-seeking can thus undermine the provision of public goods by directing legislators' effort, and public resources, away from national policy-making and towards narrower local interests.

Supporting this argument, the conventional wisdom in much literature is that electoral systems which encourage personal vote-seeking also produce greater incentives for pork barrel politics (see e.g. Lancaster 1986). The link between personal vote-seeking and

[2]However, some other recent evidence suggests the electoral benefits of dissent (for United States senators) may be so small as to be inconsequential for overall election results (Donnelly 2019).

particularistic policy-making is also supported by various other studies. Golden (2003) suggests that personal vote-seeking incentives explain the prevalence of geographically-specific legislation in post-war Italy. Hallerberg and Marier (2004) find that legislators' personal vote-seeking incentives can explain variation in budget deficits in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ames (1995) shows the importance of pork barrel spending in the Brazilian Congress, which is elected using a personalistic open-list proportional representation (PR) system. In all three cases, legislators' personal vote-seeking produced more particularistic policy outcomes. Hicken and Simmons (2008) show that this kind of pork barrel politics does come at the expense of public goods provision — their comparative study of developing democracies shows that education spending is less efficient where electoral rules incentivise personal vote-seeking.[3]

Of course, not all parliaments feature pork barrel politics — many countries limit legislators' opportunities for this 'fiscal particularism'.[4] Even so, there are a number of reasons why legislators' personal vote-seeking might still affect policy outcomes in these contexts. First, parliamentary rules are partly endogenous to MPs' preferred electoral strategies (Taylor 2006). Increased incentives for personal vote-seeking might therefore produce more decentralised parliaments, with greater policy influence for ordinary legislators (Fleming 2019; Katz and Sala 1996). Second, even where public spending remains controlled by the executive, legislators might publicly lobby the executive for policies favoured by their constituents. They can then claim credit for forcing those policies from the government. Third, personal vote-seeking might undermine governments' ability to pursue consistent, coherent national policies, by reducing parties' cohesion in parliamentary votes. Party leaders' ability to implement their policy platform will be undermined when they suffer legislative defeats, or have to make policy concessions to avoid them.

This section has shown that personal vote-seeking behaviour by legislators has a number of important consequences for the conduct and outcomes of democratic politics. It particularly exacerbates trade-offs in three areas. First, it may encourage voters to hold individual legislators accountable, while making them less willing, and

[3]Though not directly addressing the consequences of personal vote-seeking, other work suggests that strong parties can have positive consequences for economic growth (Bizzarro et al. 2018) and for welfare state development (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2019).

[4]For example, many countries have rules which allow the executive to monopolise budget-making (Martin 2011*a*, 2018).

less able, to hold governing parties accountable. Second, it may satisfy voters' demand for independent-minded politicians, but increase their dissatisfaction with disunited or incoherent parties. Third, it may have implications for the kinds of policy outcomes legislators deliver, increasing the supply of particularistic, locally-focused policy at the expense of nation-wide public goods provision. Given this, it is clearly important to understand why legislators engage in personal vote-seeking. In the following section, I discuss existing answers to this question.

1.3 Literature Review

A large body of literature has sought to explain variation in how far MPs use parliamentary behaviour for personal vote-seeking. Most of this work has focused on the influence of electoral institutions and MPs' individual characteristics, paying remarkably little attention to voters themselves. However, a small number of recent studies have begun to consider the role of voters' partisanship in shaping legislators' personal vote-seeking.

In this section, I summarise existing explanations of personal vote-seeking. I first set out the dominant institutional and MP-level explanations before turning to the much smaller body of work linking personal vote-seeking to voters' partisanship. I then outline four limitations of the latter, and describe how my thesis aims to address them.

1.3.1 Causes of personal vote-seeking behaviour

Existing work offers four main explanations of personal vote-seeking behaviour in parliaments. The first two trace personal vote-seeking to the rules governing how MPs are chosen — either national-level electoral rules or party-level candidate selection rules. The second two focus instead on features of individual MPs, linking their incentives for personal vote-seeking to their short-term electoral context and longer-term personal characteristics.

First, MPs' incentives for personal vote-seeking are widely seen as a product of their country's electoral system. In this view, how MPs are elected to a parliament shapes how they behave there. Electoral systems vary in how far voters can reward or punish individual candidates, rather than simply voting for political parties (André, Depauw and Martin 2016; Carey and Shugart 1995). As a result, they shape legislators' ability to attract votes on the basis of their individual record. As electoral systems

grow more candidate-centred and less party-centred, they provide greater incentives for personal vote-seeking.[5] As a result, plenty of empirical evidence links electoral systems to variation in MPs' legislative behaviour. For example, rebellious voting in parliament — which can help MPs generate a personal vote (Campbell et al. 2019*a*; Carey 2007; Kam 2009) — is more common under candidate-centred electoral systems (Carey 2007, 2009; Cox, Fiva and Smith 2019; Hix 2004; Olivella and Tavits 2014; Sieberer 2010). Beyond parliamentary voting, electoral systems also appear to shape legislators' patterns of speech-making (Høyland and Søyland 2019; Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015), bill initiation (Crisp et al. 2004), committee membership (Stratmann and Baur 2002), and questioning (Sozzi 2016).[6]

Second, in order to be re-elected, incumbent legislators also usually need to be re-selected as candidates by their party. Party rules governing candidate selection therefore also shape MPs' incentives for personal vote-seeking. In particular, candidate selection rules vary in how far they decentralise influence to actors other than party leaders, such as local party activists (Carey and Shugart 1995). This decentralisation can encourage personal vote-seeking, by making MPs more responsive to these local actors, and less willing to defer to party leaders. Accordingly, existing work suggests that when candidate selection rules are more decentralised, legislators are more rebellious (Hix 2004; Preece 2014; Shomer 2017; Sieberer 2006), and more locally-focused (Fernandes, Geese and Schwemmer 2019; Hazan 1999).

Third, other work turns from MPs' institutional context to their individual electoral context. Scholars frequently argue that personal vote-seeking is particularly attractive to electorally vulnerable legislators. Legislators elected by smaller margins are at greater risk of losing their seat in the future, so invest more time and effort into avoiding this fate. A wealth of evidence shows that more vulnerable legislators propose more legislation (Bowler 2010; Williams and Indridason 2018), ask more questions (Kellermann 2016), prioritise constituency-related issues (Blidook and Kerby 2011), give more speeches (Eggers and Spirling 2014*a*), communicate more extensively with constituents (Auel and Umit 2018; Umit 2017), and sit on more electorally useful committees (Riera and Cantú 2018). However, this relationship does not apply universally — even vulner-

[5] This effect also interacts with district magnitude: the number of legislators elected from a given district. Carey and Shugart (1995) argue that larger district magnitudes increase personal vote-seeking incentives under most electoral rules, but reduce them in closed-listed electoral systems.

[6] For a fuller summary of this literature, see André, Depauw and Shugart (2014).

able legislators should eschew personal vote-seeking if electoral institutions make it an unpromising route to re(s)-election. Perhaps as a result, recent work has suggested that legislators' personal vote-seeking activity depends on an interaction between their electoral security and the electoral institutions under which they compete (André, Depauw and Martin 2015; Fernandes, Geese and Schwemmer 2019; Shomer 2017; Sieberer and Ohmura 2019).

Finally, as well as their short-term electoral situation, legislators' personal vote-seeking behaviour can be influenced by longer-term personal characteristics. Recent work has highlighted two factors in particular — legislators' gender, and their local ties to the constituency they represent. Lazarus and Steigerwalt (2018) show that female legislators in the US Congress engage in more extensive personal vote-seeking than their male counterparts, across a wide range of indicators.[7] This is because they face greater obstacles to securing re-election, for various reasons. Tavits (2009, 2010) looks instead at candidates with local ties to their constituency, and argues that they are more likely to engage in personal vote-seeking behaviour. She suggests that legislators' local ties are an electoral asset, which makes locally-targeted personal vote-seeking a more viable re-election strategy. As a consequence, legislators with strong local ties are more likely to vote against their parties in parliament (Tavits 2009, 2010).

1.3.2 Personal vote-seeking and partisanship

Existing studies of personal vote-seeking focus overwhelmingly on the institutional and MP-level explanations described above. By contrast, they pay strikingly little attention to its intended audience: voters. However, a small number of recent studies have begun to consider the implications of voters' partisanship for personal vote-seeking (André, Depauw and Beyens 2015; Kam 2009; Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). Specifically, they have suggested that high partisanship can discourage personal vote-seeking in parliaments, by making voters less responsive to the qualities of individual candidates. Conversely, this work argues that lower partisanship among voters should be associated with more extensive personal vote-seeking by their representatives. I will summarise the voter-level and MP-level findings of this work in turn.

Does partisanship make voters less responsive to the legislative behaviour of in-

[7]Note, however, that this contrasts with evidence that female legislators have lower rates of debate participation in some European parliaments (Bäck and Debus 2019; Bäck, Debus and Müller 2014).

dividual MPs?[8] Existing evidence is mixed. Kam (2009, 128) does find that voting rebelliously helps MPs attract the support of non-partisan voters, while strongly partisan voters are "so overwhelmingly likely to vote for or against the MP that dissent has only a small marginal impact on their behaviour". Studies also find that partisanship makes voters less responsive to individual MPs' conduct, lowering the electoral costs of corruption (Eggers 2014) and the electoral benefits of incumbency (Eggers and Spirling 2017). However, other work is less supportive of this argument. Campbell et al. (2019*a*) find at best a weak role for partisanship as a moderating force between MPs' dissent and their popularity. Studying the United States Congress, Sulkin, Testa and Usry (2015) explore the effect of various kinds of legislative activity on legislators' approval ratings. Comparing three types of constituent — co-partisans, out-partisans, and independents — they find that independents are actually the least responsive to legislators' activity (Sulkin, Testa and Usry 2015, 696).[9]

Given these mixed findings regarding voters, is there any MP-level evidence that voters' partisanship influences legislative behaviour? Several studies suggest there may be. Kam (2009) finds that parties suffer more frequent and more extensive parliamentary rebellions when voters are less partisan. In a similar vein, André, Depauw and Beyens (2015) show that individual MPs are more willing to vote rebelliously when voters are more volatile. Both findings suggest that legislators do make greater efforts to distinguish themselves from their party, and to cultivate a personal vote, when voters are less partisan. Looking beyond voting behaviour, Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann (2019) find that German MPs from less partisan districts ask more constituency-focused questions in parliament. Though not directly studying legislative behaviour *per se*, Eggers (2014) finds a similar pattern in levels of corruption among MPs. He shows that politicians are more likely to engage in corruption when voter partisanship is greater, apparently because they (correctly) expect voters to take less account of their individual record (Eggers 2014). There is thus some limited evidence that partisanship among voters is negatively associated with personal vote-seeking in parliamentary behaviour.[10]

[8] This question of course presupposes that voters in general do actually respond to their representatives' parliamentary behaviour. As discussed in subsection 1.2.2, a large and growing body of evidence suggests that this is the case.

[9] Vivyan and Wagner (2012) also speculate that lower partisanship may make voters more attentive to individual MPs' behaviour, but do not empirically test this idea.

[10] Evidence from the nineteenth-century British parliament is also relevant to this question. Work has suggested that the increasing 'party orientation' of British voters in the nineteenth century led to more

However, some scholars have set out reasons why voters' partisanship should not affect legislative behaviour. The essence of such arguments is that legislators have strong incentives to defer to their parties, even when faced with electoral incentives to act individualistically. This is because political parties act as gatekeepers for influential executive and legislative positions. Party leaders can punish MPs for personal vote-seeking by denying them access to these posts, and thus to valuable policy and office benefits. As a result, cohesive legislative parties can form without electoral incentives for doing so (Koß 2018*a*), and can remain united even in the face of electoral incentives for personal vote-seeking (Martin 2014). Thies (2000) and Bowler (2000) thus argue that legislative behaviour should be unaffected by variation in voters' partisanship. Empirically, Bowler (2000) shows that parliamentary parties still have considerable procedural advantages over individual legislators, and vote relatively cohesively, even where voters' partisanship has substantially declined.

1.3.3 Limitations of existing literature

Existing explanations of personal vote-seeking in parliaments clearly devote insufficient attention to the role played by voters' partisanship. The few studies of partisanship's consequences for the effectiveness and extent of personal vote-seeking reach mixed conclusions. The chief contribution of this thesis is therefore to contribute new evidence to this nascent but important body of research. However, it aims to build on this work in a way that also addresses several of its limitations. I address four such limitations in particular. The first is theoretical; the other three are empirical.

First, existing literature neglects the possibility that partisanship may moderate the effects of other drivers of personal vote-seeking. If partisanship limits the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking, then high partisanship should deter MPs from attempting it, regardless of their other incentives for doing so. Conversely, the influence of other factors should be stronger when lower partisanship makes personal vote-seeking a more viable strategy. Neither Kam (2009), Eggers (2014), André, Depauw and Beyens (2015), nor

disciplined parliamentary voting (Cox 1987), made MPs more responsive to party leaders (Eggers and Spirling 2014*a*), and helped strengthen the institutional position of the Cabinet (Eggers and Spirling 2014*b*) and Shadow Cabinet (Eggers and Spirling 2018). However, voters' party orientation is distinct from their partisanship. A 'party-oriented electorate' is one where voters see elections as a choice between rival parties (Cox 1987, 91); this is separate from the question of whether they also feel strong attachments to any of those parties.

Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann (2019) test this idea.[11] Yet a small number of recent studies have shown that various determinants of personal vote-seeking interact with each other. This literature shows an interaction between electoral systems and MPs' electoral vulnerability (André, Depauw and Martin 2015; Fernandes, Geese and Schwemmer 2019; Sieberer and Ohmura 2019), as well as between electoral systems and candidate selection rules (Shomer 2017). Partisanship's consequences for personal vote-seeking may thus be more complicated than previously argued.

Second, this work has focused predominantly on partisanship's consequences for one kind of legislative behaviour — rebellious voting (André, Depauw and Beyens 2015; Kam 2009). This focus has a number of advantages — voting dissent can be a very high profile form of personal vote-seeking, with direct consequences for policy outcomes and government survival. It is also perhaps the most extensively studied form of legislative behaviour. However, dissent is relatively rare in most parliaments, as it is usually punished severely by party leaders. Moreover, voting is just one of many parliamentary activities carried out by MPs. Many other important kinds of behaviour have also been theorised as tools for personal vote-seeking, including proposing legislation (e.g. Bowler 2010), giving speeches (e.g. Proksch and Slapin 2012), and asking questions (e.g. Sozzi 2016). To date, however, Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann (2019) are the only scholars to link partisanship to legislative behaviour other than rebellious voting. Existing work may therefore have only captured a small portion of partisanship's consequences for legislative behaviour.

Third, very little existing work has actually tested partisanship's consequences for the legislative behaviour of individual MPs. Kam (2009) analyses legislative behaviour, but looks at party-level cohesion rather than the behaviour of individual MPs. André, Depauw and Beyens (2015) focus on individual MPs, but they analyse responses to an elite survey, rather than parliamentary behaviour itself. Eggers (2014) does directly examine individual MPs' behaviour, but his outcome of interest is corruption, rather than parliamentary behaviour. All three studies provide convincing evidence of a link between voters' partisanship and legislators' behaviour. But none empirically link voters' partisanship to the conduct of individual MPs in parliament. To my knowledge, only one

[11] Kam (2009, 36) does hint at this possibility, saying that "different levels of electoral dealignment may leave party unity intact or *amplify existing incentives* to dissent to the point that the party fractures [emphasis added]." However, the empirical predictions he posits and tests relate only to the direct effect of dealignment on party unity.

study has done so — Zittel, Nyhuis, and Baumann's (2019) analysis of parliamentary questions in the German Bundestag.

Finally, only one of these four studies — Kam (2009) — measures partisanship directly. André, Depauw and Beyens (2015) and Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann (2019) both use a proxy measure of low partisanship — electoral volatility. This approach has several strengths — electoral volatility is clearly associated with low partisanship (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2000; Fieldhouse et al. 2020), and is easy to calculate at the level of individual electoral districts. However, for reasons discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, electoral volatility may be at best an imperfect proxy for the underlying partisanship in a district. Eggers (2014) instead focuses on the strength of voters' preferences between the competitive parties in their constituency. This allows him to address inferential concerns about omitted variable bias, but captures something broader than partisanship as defined in this thesis. Voters' preferences between two parties, as Eggers himself highlights, can be driven by a range of considerations, of which a strong party loyalty may be just one (Eggers 2014, 445).

This thesis aims to address all four of the limitations described above. First, I argue that partisanship doesn't only affect MPs' parliamentary behaviour directly, but also interacts with other drivers of personal vote-seeking, particularly electoral vulnerability. Second, where existing work largely analyses rebellious voting, I focus instead on MPs' wider parliamentary activity, including bill proposals, questions, and speeches. Third, I focus on the individual legislative behaviour of MPs rather than party-level measures, survey responses, or non-legislative behaviour. Finally, I test how legislators' personal vote-seeking is related to direct measures and estimates of voters' partisanship, rather than indirect proxies. Taken together, this represents a valuable contribution to the wider study of partisanship, personal vote-seeking, and legislative behaviour. I now turn to briefly summarising my theoretical argument.

1.4 Partisanship and Personal Vote-Seeking

The theory set out fully in Chapter 2 and tested in this thesis begins with voters, and the idea that strong party loyalties have the potential to crowd out other influences on their voting behaviour. If voters have a strong pre-existing attachment to a particular party, they are overwhelmingly likely to vote for its candidates. Their vote choice is effectively pre-determined, rather than made afresh at each new election. By contrast,

non-partisan voters, or those with weaker party ties, are more open to the influence of other factors, including the qualities of individual candidates. Compared to partisan voters, this makes them more likely to reward 'good' candidates and to punish 'bad' ones (Eggers 2014; Kam 2009).

This influences MPs' behaviour, because their primary goal is achieving re-election, either for its own sake or — more often — as a necessary pre-condition for attaining their policy-seeking and office-seeking objectives (Mayhew 1974; Strøm 1997). The key strategic decision facing legislators is how far to cultivate a personal vote rather than relying solely on association with a party label (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987; Carey and Shugart 1995). Voters' partisanship affects this decision — if voters with weaker party ties take more account of individual candidates' qualities, they should be more receptive to personal vote-seeking. Lower levels of partisanship in the electorate thus make personal vote-seeking a more viable, and so a more attractive, re-election strategy for legislators. Partisanship thus influences MPs' parliamentary behaviour, as one of their most important tools for personal vote-seeking.

Partisanship's effects should also interact with those of other drivers of personal vote-seeking. Even MPs who would otherwise have strong incentives for personal vote-seeking will avoid it if widespread partisanship renders it ineffective. One prominent such source of personal vote-seeking incentives is MPs' electoral insecurity. MPs who win their seat comfortably at one election are less likely to fear losing it at the next, so invest less time and resources into securing re-election. As a result, a widespread finding in legislative studies is that more electorally vulnerable MPs engage more extensively in activities that can be used for personal vote-seeking (see e.g. Bowler 2010; Kellermann 2013, 2016). I argue that this relationship should be conditional on the extent of voters' partisanship. Electoral insecurity should only incentivise personal vote-seeking when partisanship is low enough to make it a viable strategy. Partisanship thus moderates other drivers of personal vote-seeking, as well as influencing it directly.

In sum, voters' partisanship shapes legislators' incentives for personal vote-seeking in parliament. Because partisanship makes voters less responsive to the qualities of individual candidates, legislators should engage in more parliamentary personal vote-seeking in contexts where voter partisanship is lower. Furthermore, partisanship's effects should interact with another important source of personal vote-seeking incentives: electoral insecurity. Altogether, this suggests that any attempt to understand personal vote-seeking

in parliaments needs to take account of partisanship among voters. The subsequent section outlines how I test this theory.

1.5 Case Selection and Research Design

The theory summarised above relies on a claim about how voters behave, and a separate claim about how legislators respond to this behaviour. The empirical component of my thesis thus comes in two parts. I first focus on voters, testing the idea that partisanship makes them less responsive to personal vote-seeking. I then turn to legislators, exploring whether partisanship is actually associated with lower levels of personal vote-seeking in parliamentary behaviour. This section first discusses my case selection, and then outlines how I test these two parts of my theory.

1.5.1 Case selection

My voter-level analyses use data from two parliamentary democracies — the United Kingdom and New Zealand. In each case, I focus on how voters evaluate MPs elected from single-member districts (SMDs) using a plurality rule (i.e. 'first-past-the-post'). In the United Kingdom, all MPs are elected this way. In New Zealand, there is a mixed electoral system, so I focus on the subset of MPs elected from the SMD tier.

These are appropriate cases for testing my theory, because the SMD plurality electoral formula meets the theory's key scope condition, explained in Chapter 2: it allows voters to cast ballots directly for candidates.[12] Moreover, focusing only on MPs elected under one set of rules increases the comparability of my findings between the two analyses. Of course, MPs from a wholly SMD system may not have exactly the same personal vote-seeking incentives as district MPs from a mixed system. Scholars have highlighted the potential for 'contamination', with mixed systems' district MPs being less individualistic than their counterparts from wholly SMD systems (Crisp 2007). However, there is growing evidence that district members in mixed systems do behave differently to their list colleagues (Olivella and Tavits 2014; Sieberer 2010; Sieberer and Ohmura 2019; Stratmann and Baur 2002), and evidence from New Zealand itself suggesting district MPs engage in personal vote-seeking (Williams and Indridason 2018). Even if any

[12] There is also evidence that MPs elected under these rules see them as providing personal vote-seeking opportunities (see André, Depauw and Martin 2016).

such contamination does reduce the comparability of my cases, it would likely encourage more party-based voting, making the New Zealand case a harder test of my theory.

Moreover, New Zealand has another important advantage as a case for testing the voter-level implications of my theory. This is due to its rules governing how backbench MPs may propose bills. As I explain below, my voter-level analyses use randomisation of legislative behaviour to estimate its causal effects on voters' attitudes. New Zealand is a particularly good case for such an approach because it uses a random ballot to decide which backbench MPs can propose legislation. Crucially, this ballot is the *only* way for backbench MPs to introduce bills. It is thus possible to isolate the effects of MPs' bill proposal efforts on their popularity. The UK House of Commons does also use a random ballot to allocate bill proposal rights. However, this is not the only method for British backbenchers to propose bills, meaning the same quasi-experimental approach cannot be applied. Using New Zealand as a case for my analyses therefore involves a trade-off. It may not provide a totally comparable electoral setting to the UK, but it allows me to exploit this unique opportunity for testing the effect of MPs' behaviour on their popularity.

Unlike my voter-level analyses, my parliament-level analyses focus solely on legislative behaviour in the UK. This has a number of benefits. First, the UK has seen a significant weakening in voters' partisan loyalties since the 1970s, in a process of partisan dealignment (Fieldhouse et al. 2020). It thus offers substantial variation in my key independent variable. Second, previous work has suggested that there is indeed an electoral component to British MPs' legislative behaviour (Bowler 2010; Kam 2009; Kellermann 2013, 2016). This makes it an appropriate testing ground for my arguments regarding the influence of voters' partisanship. Finally, the UK parliament is organised along similar lines to those of other countries influenced by the so-called 'Westminster model' of democracy (Patapan, Wanna and Weller 2005; Rhodes, Wanna and Weller 2009). This increases the potential generalisability of my findings, as they may also be relevant for parliamentary behaviour in other 'Westminster' parliaments.

1.5.2 Research design — voter-level analysis

My voter-level analysis tests the argument that partisanship makes voters less responsive to the legislative behaviour of their representatives. I test this through two experimental analyses — a quasi-experiment and a survey experiment. Each of these examines voters'

responses to random variation in legislators' activity, and asks whether they are conditional on the strength of their partisanship. The design of these analyses hinges on two key decisions which warrant further justification — adopting an experimental approach, and combining a quasi-experiment with a survey experiment.

I use an experimental approach for these analyses because it is very difficult to estimate the consequences of legislators' behaviour for voters' attitudes using purely observational data. Such data can be used to show the relationship between MPs' legislative behaviour and their support, and to see whether it interacts with the strength of voters' partisanship. Kam (2009, Chapter 5) utilises a research design of this kind to good effect. However, such an approach relies on having successfully controlled for all potentially confounding variables — everything correlated with both an MP's legislative behaviour and their electoral support (see Kellermann 2013, 268). This is a particularly acute problem for estimating the effects of MP behaviour, as a range of MP characteristics and activities tend to be correlated.[13] Estimating the effect of MPs' legislative behaviour on voters' attitudes thus presents an inferential challenge, with a high potential for omitted confounding variables. An experimental approach addresses this challenge by isolating the effect of MPs' legislative behaviour through randomisation.

This randomisation comes about in two distinct ways. In both cases, the randomisation of MPs' activity ensures I can draw valid inferences about its effects on voters' attitudes, so that I can then probe whether this effect is conditional on voters' partisanship. The quasi-experiment makes use of an instance of randomisation in the real world. Specifically, I exploit a procedure in the parliament of New Zealand, where MPs' right to introduce bills is allocated by a random ballot.[14] In the survey experiment, the randomisation is generated artificially, by the research design. Respondents were asked to report their approval of a hypothetical MP, but randomly assigned to receive different information about the MP's parliamentary activity.

I combine these two approaches because they have distinct advantages. The quasi-

[13] This can be true when MPs' parliamentary behaviour is strategic, shaped by their electoral situation (Mayhew 1974; Strøm 1997), or when it is non-strategic, but flows instead from some self-perceived 'role' orientation (Searing 1994). Both of these modes of behaviour should mean that MPs behave similarly across a range of legislative and non-legislative activities.

[14] Previous studies have already shown that this ballot can be used to causally identify various consequences of legislators' bill proposal activity (Morelli, Osnabrügge and Vannoni 2019; Williams and Indridason 2018).

experiment maximises external validity by exploring the consequences of legislators' behaviour for real voting decisions. However, it does so at the cost of internal validity — it is harder to guarantee that MPs' behaviour really does approximate a randomly-assigned treatment for voters. The survey experiment thus provides a further test with greater internal validity. In both analyses, while legislators' behaviour is randomised, voters' partisanship is not. This limits how far their interaction can be interpreted causally. I discuss this in more detail, as well as potential alternative explanations for my findings, in Chapters 3 and 4.

1.5.3 Research design — MP-level analysis

The second set of analyses presented in this thesis moves to focusing on the behaviour of legislators. Here I aim to test two main expectations. First, higher levels of partisanship among voters should produce lower levels of personal vote-seeking by legislators. Second, voters' partisanship should condition the effect of electoral insecurity, which should only encourage personal vote-seeking when partisanship is low. I test these expectations by analysing legislative behaviour in the UK House of Commons. I present two analyses, each examining a different kind of variation in voters' partisanship — first longitudinal, and then cross-sectional. The first of these uses national-level measures of partisanship, taken from British Election Study survey data. The second uses a new measure of partisanship, generated by using multilevel regression and poststratification (MRP) to produce constituency-level estimates from national-level survey data.

I analyse parliamentary behaviour at the level of individual MPs. This choice is justified on a number of grounds. Foremost among these is that personal vote-seeking is fundamentally an individual-level phenomenon — it is therefore best explored through the behaviour of individual MPs, rather than through its aggregate consequences like party cohesion. Second, my theory suggests that partisanship's consequences should interact with those of electoral security. This argument can only be tested at the individual level. Moreover, it suggests the relationship between voters' partisanship and party-level measures like voting cohesion might be complicated by variation in the distribution of safe and marginal seats. Thirdly, my thesis extends this area of research to behaviour other than parliamentary voting, such as bill proposals and speeches. Unlike rebellious voting, which can be aggregated into party-level measures of the extent, frequency, and depth of dissent (Kam 2009), these can only really be meaningfully measured at the level

of individual MPs.

My empirical analysis therefore tests the two core planks of my theory — that partisanship affects voters' responsiveness to personal vote-seeking, and that it consequently shapes legislative behaviour. I use a variety of quantitative techniques to test these empirical implications of my theory. The findings provide important new empirical evidence of the relationship between partisanship and personal vote-seeking.

1.6 Plan of the Thesis

The rest of this thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 outlines my theory, as summarised above. It sets out my assumptions about the three core sets of actors in my theory — voters, MPs, and party leaders. Based on this, it then sets out my argument in three steps. It explains why partisanship should affect voters' responsiveness, why this should in turn affect MPs' legislative behaviour, and finally how partisanship's effects should interact with those of other drivers of personal vote-seeking. Each of these steps yields a clear testable hypothesis.

Chapters 3 and 4 test the first of these hypotheses — the expectation that partisanship makes voters less responsive to the qualities of individual MPs. Chapter 3 presents a quasi-experimental analysis of voters' responses to MPs' bill proposal activity in the New Zealand parliament. Because opportunities to propose bills are allocated randomly, I can isolate the causal effect of MPs' bill proposals on their electoral support. I then test whether this effect depends on the strength of voters' partisanship. I find that proposing bills largely gains MPs greater support among non-partisan voters. As the strength of voters' partisanship increases, they grow less responsive to their legislators' parliamentary behaviour. This suggests partisanship does reduce the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking, so supports a key element of my theory.

Chapter 4 then presents the results of a survey experiment testing the same argument. Respondents were presented with vignettes describing a hypothetical Labour MP, and were asked how likely they were to support them. While the control group's vignette contained no information about the MP's behaviour in parliament, two treatment groups were told that the MP was either relatively inactive or relatively active. As expected, respondents looked more favourably on the active MP, and less favourably on the inactive MP. However, the key result is that this effect depends on the strength of voters'

partisanship. Strongly partisan respondents were just as likely (or unlikely) to vote for the MP regardless of the information about their activity. As respondents' partisanship grew weaker, they were more inclined to reward the 'good' candidate and to punish the 'bad' candidate. These results echo those of Chapter 3, and provide further confirmation of my theory's arguments.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn from voters to politicians, and ask whether legislators engage in higher levels of personal vote-seeking when facing less partisan voters. I focus on parliamentary behaviour in the UK House of Commons, for reasons discussed above. Chapter 5 probes the consequences of longitudinal variation in partisanship, testing whether variation in voter partisanship since the 1960s has affected British MPs' personal vote-seeking. Proposing legislation is widely seen as an important way for legislators to cultivate a personal vote. Given my theory, I thus expect that lower levels of partisanship should lead to MPs making greater numbers of legislative proposals. I further expect this to interact with MPs' electoral security, with safe and marginal MPs only differing in their legislative activity when voter partisanship is low. I test these expectations using a new dataset of all backbench legislative proposals made in the House of Commons between 1964 and 2017. The results of several analyses confirm both expectations, so offer evidence that legislators' personal vote-seeking behaviour is shaped by voters' partisanship.

In Chapter 6, I test the cross-sectional implications of my theory, and ask whether MPs representing less strongly partisan constituencies engage in more personal vote-seeking. Specifically, I analyse behaviour in two recent terms of the UK parliament (2010-2015 and 2015-2017), and test whether MPs representing less partisan constituencies were more active or constituency-focused. I use multilevel regression and post-stratification (MRP) to generate constituency-level estimates of partisan dealignment, rather than relying on proxy variables. The results are partially supportive of my expectations. I find that MPs from less partisan constituencies are more constituency-focused, but not more active. However, I do not find evidence that constituency-level dealignment moderates the impact of electoral security on MPs' behaviour.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes. It summarises the results presented in Chapters 3 to 6, evaluates how far they support the theory set out in Chapter 2, and considers their generalisability. It then discusses the implications of my findings for various debates in political science, as well as some normative and policy-making implications. Finally, it

outlines some possible directions for future research.

Legislative scholarship typically argues that the parliamentary behaviour of elected representatives can be traced to their personal characteristics, and to the institutional rules under which they compete for votes. This thesis adds to a much smaller body of literature suggesting legislative behaviour may also be shaped by voters' partisanship. It makes both a theoretical and an empirical contribution to existing literature in this field. Theoretically, it advances the argument that partisanship should not just affect personal vote-seeking directly, but should also moderate the influence of other drivers of personal vote-seeking. Empirically, it uses a wide variety of empirical methods to test my theory, providing considerable analytical purchase. It combines methods which are observational, quasi-experimental, and experimental, studies both the theory's voter-level and MP-level implications, and considers both cross-sectional and longitudinal variation in partisanship. My empirical results provide new evidence that partisanship among voters discourages personal vote-seeking by legislators, but also suggests this relationship may be more complicated than previously argued. The thesis thus adds to our understanding of the link between how voters think about politics, and how politicians conduct it.

2

Theory: Partisanship and Personal Vote-Seeking

Why should voters' partisanship affect MPs' parliamentary behaviour? This chapter sets out a theory linking the two. Section 2.1 begins by describing sequentially the basic motivations of the three key actors in my theory — voters, MPs, and party leaders. Section 2.2 then brings these elements together. It outlines the process by which partisanship should affect personal vote-seeking in parliamentary behaviour, in three steps.

First, I argue that partisanship lowers voters' responsiveness to the qualities of individual candidates, so limits the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking. Second, I argue that MPs are aware of this, so engage in more extensive personal vote-seeking when voters are less partisan. Third, I explain why partisanship should interact with other drivers of personal vote-seeking. Each of these steps yields a clear, testable hypothesis. Taken together, they suggest that voters' partisanship is an important driver of MPs' re-election strategies, and thus their parliamentary behaviour.

2.1 The Actors

This section outlines the key motivations of the three main actors in my theory: voters, legislators, and party leaders.[1] This theory depends on one key scope condition — it only applies in settings where the electoral system allows voters to indicate a preference among candidates. If this is not possible, individual MPs cannot be rewarded or punished by voters, limiting the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking as an electoral strategy.

2.1.1 Voters

In legislative elections, voters are required to make two different choices simultaneously. Their vote directly affects which candidate(s) will represent their local constituency. But it also influences the distribution of parliamentary seats among parties. This in turn helps shape which parties enter government (Bergman, Ersson and Hellström 2015; Martin and Stevenson 2001), even in presidential democracies (Amorim Neto 2006). Voters' electoral choices therefore reflect a judgement on local candidates *and* on national parties.

However, politics is characterised by complexity and uncertainty. Voters usually lack detailed information about the positions and records of candidates and parties. Even with this information, they may still struggle to understand the consequences of these positions and records, and to anticipate the problems politicians will face in the future (Downs 1957). Voters thus use a range of information shortcuts, or cues, to simplify the process of decision-making (Popkin 1991). These cues may relate to candidates, such as information about whether they have roots in the constituency (Campbell et al. 2019*b*). But candidates typically stand for parties, and this association with a party brand provides a range of other powerful cues. Voters can simplify the choices facing them at elections by considering parties' ideology (Downs 1957), perceived competence (Green and Jennings 2017), or leadership figures (Costa Lobo and Curtice 2015).

Voters may also have deeper ties to a political party, beyond their evaluation of its current ideology, performance, or leader. This partisanship provides voters with an affective or psychological attachment to their chosen party (Campbell et al. 1960; Butler

[1] My theory is silent on the role of elected presidents. Though these actors may affect legislative behaviour (Carey 2009; Coman 2015) and organisation (Sin 2015), my arguments should apply in presidential, semi-presidential, and parliamentary contexts.

and Stokes 1969), and forms part of their self-image and identity (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002).[2] Party identification of this kind is formed early in life, is highly stable, and generally grows stronger with time. Moreover, it provides a 'perceptual screen', biasing how partisans view and interpret political events (Campbell et al. 1960, 133). The implications of partisanship for how voters make electoral choices are clear. Partisans are highly likely to vote for candidates of their preferred party. Voting thus represents a habitual act of loyalty, rather than a decision made afresh at each election.

2.1.2 Legislators

Turning to MPs, I follow existing literature and assume that their primary goal is securing re-election. Of course, politicians have a range of objectives — they want to affect public policy, stand up for their constituents, and hold influential positions in the party, legislature, or government (Fenno 1973; Strøm 1997). But re-election is a necessary precondition for achieving any of these goals. This typically makes it legislators' principal, albeit instrumental, motivation (Mayhew 1974; Strøm 1997).

The key strategic decision facing MPs is therefore how best to pursue re-election. In particular, legislators must decide how far to cultivate an individual reputation — a personal vote — rather than relying solely on their party's collective reputation (Carey and Shugart 1995). A party's reputation is akin to a 'brand' — it represents voters' views of the party as a whole, and affects the electoral fortunes of all its candidates (Aldrich 1995; Cox and McCubbins 1993). By contrast, a personal vote represents electoral support attracted solely by a candidate's individual record and qualities (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987).

There are a number of ways for incumbent MPs to generate a personal vote. First, they can engage in constituency service, providing information and assistance to constituents dealing with specific problems (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987; Heitshusen, Young and Wood 2005; Norton and Wood 1993). Second, they might maintain a local profile by using newsletters or social media (Auel and Umit 2018; Umit 2017; Zittel

[2] An alternative approach to partisanship, rooted more in a rational choice perspective, conceptualises partisanship as a "running tally of retrospective evaluations" (Fiorina 1981, 84). In this view, partisanship is the accumulation of past assessments of a party's performance, rather than any deeper attachment or identity. This version of partisanship also strongly predisposes voters to support their preferred party. Its chief difference from the conceptualisation used here is that it is more likely to vary between elections.

2015*b*). Third, through these and other forms of publicity, they might emphasise personal characteristics that voters find attractive, such as their age, gender, or local roots (Campbell and Cowley 2014, 2018; Campbell et al. 2019*b*; Shugart, Valdini and Suominen 2005). Finally, evidence suggests that MPs may also receive an electoral advantage from serving as a government minister (Martin 2016).[3] All of these strategies can be further supplemented during elections through personalised constituency campaigns (Milazzo and Townsley 2020; Zittel 2015*a*; Zittel and Gschwend 2008).

However, as explained in Chapter 1, this thesis focuses on a further avenue for personal vote-seeking: parliamentary behaviour. For several reasons, this may provide more important opportunities for personal vote-seeking than those methods listed above. Some of the other personal vote-seeking tools are only available to a limited number of MPs. For instance, many countries have fiscal rules that prevent particularistic backbench spending by legislators (Martin 2011*a*, 2018), only a small subset of MPs can hold ministerial office, and not all MPs will have electorally attractive characteristics and backgrounds. Moreover, some other tools may be of limited effectiveness. For example, constituency service may only attract support from voters it directly benefits, or from their immediate network.

By contrast, parliament offers all MPs a highly visible public platform for personal vote-seeking. Moreover, it offers MPs many tools for carrying out legislative work *as an individual*, including questions (Kellermann 2016; Sozzi 2016), committee work (Martin 2011*a*; Shepsle and Weingast 1987), speeches (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015), bill proposals (Bowler 2010; Williams and Indridason 2018), and roll-call votes (Campbell et al. 2019*a*; Kam 2009; Wagner, Vivyan and Glinitzer 2020). These tools can be used for 'advertising', by showing MPs' integrity, effort, or attention to their constituency. They can also allow 'position-taking', where MPs adopt electorally attractive positions or distance themselves from unpopular party policies. Finally, they can also facilitate 'credit-claiming', allowing MPs to claim responsibility for past or future policy outcomes. All of these strategies help to build up an MP's personal legislative record (Mayhew 1974). This can then be communicated to large numbers of constituents through news coverage, party publicity, and MPs' own campaigning (see Grimmer, Messing and Westwood 2012).

[3]Though see Ladwig (2020) for results questioning the generalisability of this argument.

2.1.3 Party leaders

While MPs pursue their own electoral success, I assume that party leaders prioritise the success of their whole party. This is because the party's success is key to achieving their own office-seeking and policy-seeking goals (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). Electoral success for their party allows leaders to hold important executive or legislative offices and influence policy; electoral defeat condemns them to opposition and likely threatens their leadership position (Andrews and Jackman 2008). This ties leaders' personal goals to their parties' collective success. They should thus prioritise protecting and enhancing the party's reputation.

However, because individual legislators care more about their personal brand than they do about the party brand, party leaders have to manage a collective action problem (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). The party brand is a public good — when a party is more popular, all of its candidates benefit, even if they didn't contribute to that popularity. This gives legislators an incentive to free-ride, developing their individual reputation while neglecting the party's collective reputation. This personal vote-seeking can harm the whole party, by making it less clear what they stand for (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Kam 2009; Proksch and Slapin 2015), by undermining support for their policies (Merkley 2020), and by making them appear less competent (Greene and Haber 2015).[4]

Because of this, party leaders should generally discourage personal vote-seeking, and encourage MPs to focus instead on legislative activities that improve or maintain the party brand. They have a range of tools for deterring, blocking, and punishing attempts at personal vote-seeking. In particular, they can use their control over various executive and legislative offices to threaten legislators' future access to these sources of prestige, policy influence, and electoral success (Kam 2009; Martin 2014). They may also be able to block speeches from MPs who do not toe the party line (Bäck et al. 2019; Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015), and — if in government — prevent discussion of proposals that divide their party (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005).

However, party leaders do not entirely prevent personal vote-seeking, for three main reasons. First, leaders have an incentive to encourage a limited amount of personal vote-seeking. This is because their motivation for protecting the party brand is primarily

[4]See Fortunato and Monroe (2018), however, for evidence casting doubt on Cox and McCubbins' (1993; 2005) arguments linking parties' agenda control and their electoral success.

electoral — they want to maximise their party's seat share, and thus their own chances of holding government office. If personal vote-seeking helps particular MPs win re-election, it contributes to this goal. It only threatens it when the collective electoral costs of damaging the party's brand outweigh the electoral advantages for certain candidates. Given this, leaders of parties competing in candidate-based electoral systems should encourage personal vote-seeking up to the point where it ceases to provide a net electoral benefit to the party (Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015).

Second, not all kinds of personal vote-seeking are equally damaging to a party's brand. The trade-off is most acute when MPs vote rebelliously — this can directly prevent the party from achieving its policy goals, and in some cases can threaten its ability to hold or win office. But other kinds of personal vote-seeking affect the party brand in less severe ways. Personal vote-seeking can lead MPs to contradict a party's policy goals without directly endangering them. For example, MPs can give dissenting speeches that criticise their party's policies, while still voting loyally (see Campbell et al. 2019*a*, 124). This undermines the party's message, but not its actual legislative record. The trade-off is even less acute when MPs support positions that sit outside, but don't directly contradict, their party's core message. This only dilutes the party brand, by making it harder for voters to discern the party's positions and priorities.[5] Finally, the weakest kind of trade-off between personal vote-seeking and a party brand is simply an opportunity cost — time spent promoting an individual MP's reputation is time not spent promoting the party's collective message. This hierarchy suggests that party leaders who wish to allow a limited degree of personal vote-seeking can encourage their MPs to focus on those activities which have the fewest costs to the party as a whole (Aleman, Ramirez and Slapin 2017; Campbell et al. 2019*a*).

Third, there are limits to leaders' ability to prevent personal vote-seeking, even when they attempt to. This may be because they lack the necessary tools for deterring or preventing personal vote-seeking. For example, the leaders of opposition parties may not have the necessary agenda powers to block discussion of divisive issues (Döring 1995). Alternatively, party leaders' tools may prevent some MPs from personal vote-seeking, but not others. For example, they cannot credibly threaten the future careers of MPs whose careers have already clearly peaked (Benedetto and Hix 2007; Kam 2009).

[5]Recent work suggests that party leaders may deliberately tolerate this less focussed messaging on issues that are less salient to the party brand (Tromborg 2019).

Moreover, some MPs' incentives for personal vote-seeking will outweigh even the most stringent disciplinary measures that leaders can deploy against them. This is shown by the fact that in many parliaments, voting dissent is far from rare, and can be traced to MPs' personal vote-seeking incentives (Carey 2007; Kam 2009; Slapin and Kirkland 2020). Indeed, voters may reward MPs more for behaviour which is punished by party leaders, as it sends a stronger signal of their integrity (Wagner, Vivyan and Glinitzer 2020).

2.2 The Argument

Having set out the motivations of the key actors in my theory, I now explain how variation in the strength of voters' partisanship should affect the extent of MPs' personal vote-seeking in parliament. I do so in three steps, each of which produces a testable empirical implication. The aggregate strength of partisanship among voters can vary longitudinally and cross-sectionally. The following arguments apply to both kinds of variation.

2.2.1 Partisanship and voters

How does variation in partisanship affect citizens' voting behaviour? My central argument is that partisanship, especially when strong, makes voters less responsive to the qualities of individual parliamentary candidates. This is because partisanship dominates citizens' vote choice so strongly that they disregard other considerations (Kam 2009). This mechanism has been described as 'partisan crowding out' (Campbell et al. 2019*a*, 108).[6] The logic is straightforward. If a voter has a strong attachment to a party, they will be highly likely to vote for its candidates. This leaves little room for other considerations to affect their vote choice. Because non-partisan voters are free from this influence, they are more open to the influence of other factors. This alters what kinds of party-level cues they rely on when voting. For instance, voters with weaker partisanship

[6]Recent work linking partisanship and personal vote-seeking offers an alternative mechanism (Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). Rather than addressing how partisanship affects voters' attention to individual candidates, these scholars argue that partisanship affects the kinds of candidate messages to which voters are responsive. They argue that non-partisan voters are more attracted to non-ideological, 'lowest common denominator' messages, such as appeals to local constituency interests (Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019, 688). Though plausible, this mechanism seems secondary to the question of whether voters even consider the messages of individual candidates in the first place.

rely more on 'valence' judgements of parties' performance, rather than voting for a party habitually regardless of its performance (Kayser and Wlezien 2011; Lupu 2016).

As well as affecting which party-level cues are influential for voters, variation in the strength of partisanship may also affect the influence of non-party, candidate-based, cues. Strongly partisan voters will instinctively support their party, regardless of the merits of individual candidates. By contrast, non-partisan voters are more likely to base their voting choice on the qualities of candidates, as well as their views of the parties they represent. This makes them more likely to reward 'good' candidates and less likely to support 'bad' candidates (Eggers 2014; Eggers and Spirling 2017; Kam 2009). Voters who identify with a party, but not strongly, lie between these two poles. The stronger a voter's partisanship, the more likely they are to instinctively support their party's candidates, and the less likely they are to consider the individual merits of those candidates.

In particular, I argue that partisanship should affect the electoral importance of MPs' parliamentary behaviour. When voters are less partisan, they will be more receptive to MPs using parliament to signal their positions, effort, and achievements. Of course, voters will rarely have a detailed knowledge of their MP's parliamentary behaviour. However, MPs' voting records are often — though not always — matters of public record (Ainsley et al. 2020; Carey 2009; Hug, Wegmann and Wüest 2015). Moreover, voters do not need to seek out information about parliamentary behaviour themselves — it can be communicated indirectly, via media reports and the active self-promotion of MPs. The large literature showing that being active or rebellious brings electoral benefits to MPs (see Chapter 1) suggests that voters do indeed learn how their MPs behave in parliament. When partisanship is lower, therefore, voters should be more likely to reward MPs for the various parliamentary activities that contribute to their reputation as a hard-working constituency representative.

This argument has a clear aggregate-level implication. The effects of MPs' parliamentary behaviour on election outcomes should be larger when voters are less partisan. This should be true whether this aggregate-level variation stems from variation in the overall number of partisans, or from variation in the the strength of their partisanship. In this thesis, I test the individual-level implication of these arguments. Comparing among voters, the influence of incumbent candidates' legislative behaviour on their electoral support should be stronger among voters with weaker party loyalties.

HYPOTHESIS 1: Weaker partisanship among voters makes them more responsive to the records of individual incumbent MPs.

2.2.2 Partisanship and legislators

Variation in voters' partisanship affects legislators' parliamentary behaviour by affecting the potential effectiveness of personal vote-seeking. Personal vote-seeking can only attract voters' support if they actually take account of individual legislators' qualities. If strong partisanship stops voters doing so, personal vote-seeking will be ineffective. However, personal vote-seeking may be more effective when voters are less partisan, because they will be more willing to consider — and thus to reward or punish — MPs' individual records. Partisanship thus has a negative effect on the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking.

Because partisanship shapes the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking, it should also affect MPs' preferred strategy for seeking re-election. MPs use personal vote-seeking strategically, as it carries an opportunity cost: time spent pursuing re-election is time not spent pursuing the goals which led them to seek election in the first place. This means that when MPs decide how much personal vote-seeking to engage in, they weigh its costs against its benefits. It follows that when the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking is higher, so is MPs' preferred level of personal vote-seeking. MPs can detect the level of partisanship among voters because it has clear and important political consequences, influencing turnout, electoral volatility, and party system fragmentation (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2000; Fieldhouse et al. 2020; Heath 2007). They are thus able to infer the likely effectiveness of personal vote-seeking, and calibrate their re-election strategy accordingly.

By shaping MPs' preferred re-election strategy, partisanship also affects their parliamentary behaviour. This is because parliament is a key arena for personal vote-seeking, as set out above. When partisanship is lower, and personal vote-seeking therefore more effective, MPs should engage more extensively in any kind of parliamentary behaviour that allows them to enhance their individual reputation with voters. For example, they might speak more often, propose more bills, or vote more rebelliously, expecting greater electoral rewards for doing so.

Of course, the link between MPs' preferred and actual level of personal vote-seeking might be broken by party leaders, as they have both the incentive and the means to curtail personal vote-seeking. However, partisanship affects party leaders' preferred level of personal vote-seeking, just as it affects that of MPs. Leaders tolerate personal vote-seeking up to the point where its costs (harming the party brand) are outweighed by its benefits (winning additional seats). Partisanship thus affects this calculation, by shaping the electoral benefits of personal vote-seeking. Given this, leaders respond to the same electoral incentives as their MPs, and allow greater amounts of personal vote-seeking when partisanship is lower. Lower partisanship thus leads to more extensive personal vote-seeking in parliamentary behaviour. This can be summarised by the following hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS 2: Weaker partisanship among voters leads to MPs engaging in more personal vote-seeking activity in parliament.

2.2.3 Partisanship and other drivers of personal vote-seeking

How does this argument fit with other explanations of personal vote-seeking? Existing work offers two main kinds of explanation. Some factors influence personal vote-seeking by shaping its effectiveness. Other factors instead influence personal vote-seeking by shaping MPs' need to engage in it. The first kind of explanation is often made about electoral systems, and follows the same logic as my argument about partisanship. Candidate-centred electoral systems increase the likely electoral benefits of personal vote-seeking, so increase how much MPs engage in it, and how much party leaders allow it. The second kind of explanation, usually made about electoral vulnerability, highlights that not all MPs have an equal need to attract additional votes. Legislators only want to maximise their probability of being re-elected, rather than maximising their vote share. This deters them from spending time and other resources pursuing further votes if their chances of re-election are already very high. As a result, the more electorally secure an MP is, the lower their incentive to engage in personal vote-seeking.

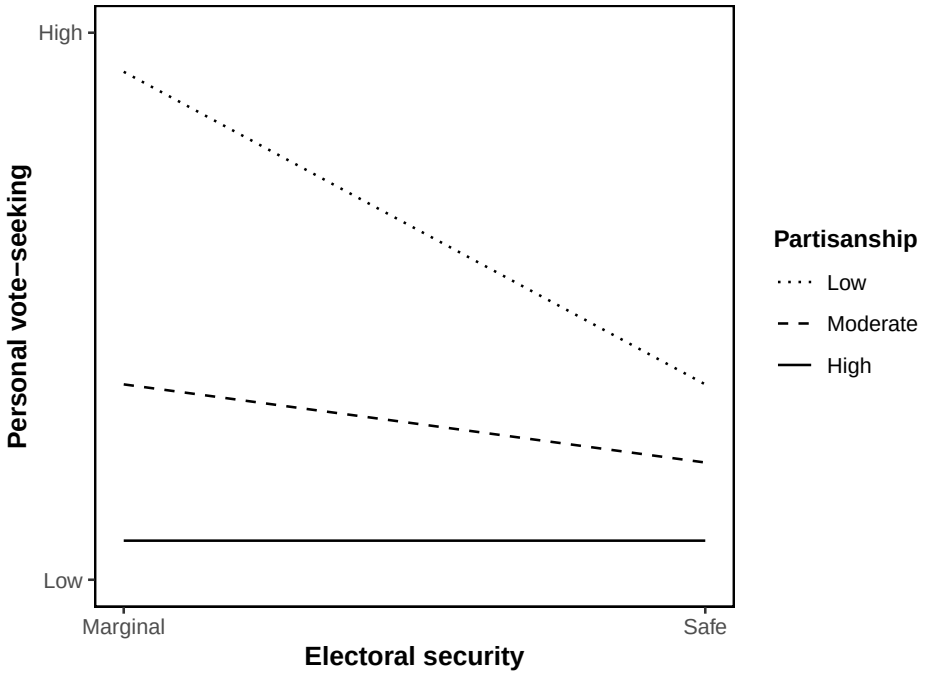
These two approaches are normally theorised and tested separately. The first is usually taken by scholars comparing personal vote-seeking across MPs elected under different electoral rules (e.g. Proksch and Slapin 2012, 2015). The second is typically

found in work comparing MPs elected under the same electoral rules (e.g. Kellermann 2016). However, a small number of recent studies have advanced a crucial theoretical point. Though not always phrased in these terms, this literature shows that the level of personal vote-seeking is driven by an interaction between its effectiveness and MPs' need to engage in it (André, Depauw and Martin 2015; Fernandes, Geese and Schwemmer 2019; Sieberer and Ohmura 2019). These studies focus on a range of cases and variables, but share a straightforward underlying argument. If personal vote-seeking is ineffective, even electorally insecure MPs will have no incentive to engage in it. Where personal vote-seeking is more effective, this will particularly influence those MPs who most need to attract additional votes. This implies that extensive personal vote-seeking occurs when two conditions are met: MPs must be electorally vulnerable *and* competing in a context where personal vote-seeking is effective. By contrast, lower levels of personal vote-seeking could be due to *either* low electoral vulnerability *or* low effectiveness of personal vote-seeking.

This suggests that partisanship should interact with other drivers of personal vote-seeking. The previous subsection suggested partisanship affects personal vote-seeking directly, by limiting its effectiveness. The key argument of this subsection is that partisanship should also affect personal vote-seeking indirectly, by dampening the effects of other variables. In particular, partisanship should moderate the effect of electoral insecurity on personal vote-seeking. At high levels of partisanship, personal vote-seeking will be ineffective, so unattractive to safe and marginal MPs alike. When partisanship is lower, personal vote-seeking will be more effective, but this will only influence the re-election strategy of marginal MPs. Electorally secure MPs will still have little or no incentive to engage in personal vote-seeking.

As in the previous step of my argument, MPs' incentives align with those of their party leaders. Leaders should be particularly tolerant of personal vote-seeking by MPs in marginal constituencies, where small amounts of personal vote-seeking can have nonetheless important benefits for the party's overall seat share. Low partisanship produces greater demand for personal vote-seeking among exactly these MPs. This suggests the following hypothesis.

Figure 2.1: Theoretical expectations about personal vote-seeking



HYPOTHESIS 3: Weaker partisanship among voters leads to a stronger (negative) relationship between MPs' electoral security and their personal vote-seeking activity in parliament.

Figure 2.1 illustrates this argument, showing the expected level of personal vote-seeking by an MP at differing levels of electoral security, and differing levels of partisanship. This highlights two implications of my theory. First, partisanship has a direct effect on MPs' personal vote-seeking, as described in Hypothesis 2. Comparing the three lines shows that MPs engage in more personal vote-seeking when partisanship is lower, regardless of their electoral security. Second, partisanship conditions the relationship between electoral security and personal vote-seeking, as described by Hypothesis 3. When partisanship is high, neither safe nor marginal MPs have much incentive for personal vote-seeking. Yet as partisanship falls, it particularly incentivises personal vote-seeking by marginal MPs, thereby heightening the difference between them and their more electorally secure colleagues.

In sum, voters' partisanship shapes legislators' incentives for personal vote-seeking in parliamentary behaviour. Because partisanship makes voters less responsive to the qualities of individual candidates, legislators and party leaders both prefer greater amounts of personal vote-seeking when votes are less partisan. Furthermore, partisanship moderates the influence of another important source of personal vote-seeking incentives: MPs' electoral security. Taken together, this theory suggests that any attempt to understand personal vote-seeking in parliaments needs to take account of partisanship among voters. The following four chapters turn to testing this theory empirically.

3

Partisanship and the Effectiveness of Personal Vote-Seeking: A Quasi-Experiment

A central premise of this thesis is that partisanship affects how voters respond to MPs' parliamentary behaviour. I argue that citizens with weaker party ties are more influenced by the merits of individual candidates when deciding how to vote. As a result, the effect of MPs' behaviour on their popularity depends on the strength of their constituents' partisanship. More specifically, Hypothesis 1 suggests that the effect of legislators' behaviour on their popularity should grow stronger as voters' partisanship grows weaker.

My first two empirical chapters provide two experimental tests of this expectation. Both chapters examine voters' responses to random variation in MPs' legislative activity, and explore whether it is conditional on the strength of their partisanship. Previous voter-level studies of this question have primarily focused on voters' responses to parliamentary rebellions (Campbell et al. 2019*a*; Kam 2009). I focus instead on the effect of legislators' general activity.[1] This is because doing so provides simpler expectations

[1] I define an MP's legislative activity as the overall volume of work they carry out in parliament. Other scholars have used similar terms to describe essentially the same phenomenon, such as 'productivity'

about voters' preferences. Voters should generally view harder-working MPs more positively, as their effort sends a signal that they are a more effective representative of their constituency. By contrast, public responses to rebellious parliamentary voting may be more complicated. While there is evidence that most voters value dissent as a signal of MPs' integrity and trustworthiness (Campbell et al. 2019*a*), other work suggests that voters' responses to dissent can depend on the policy position it implies (Vivyan and Wagner 2012). Focusing on legislative activity rather than voting dissent may therefore help to separate the consequences of partisanship more clearly from those of any policy positions associated with partisanship.

In this chapter, I make use of a real instance of randomisation in legislative activity. In the New Zealand parliament, opportunities for ordinary MPs to propose bills are allocated through a random ballot. This random variation facilitates a quasi-experimental approach; the randomisation makes it possible to isolate the effect of MPs' bill proposals on their popular support. The analysis thus proceeds in two stages. First, I test whether proposing legislation makes MPs more popular. Second, I then investigate whether this effect varies depending on the strength of voters' partisanship.

The results of this analysis support Hypothesis 1. New Zealand MPs who are randomly allocated opportunities to propose legislation are more popular with voters in their district. But this effect is not the same for all voters. As expected, the positive effect of proposing bills grows weaker as voters' partisanship grows stronger. Among voters with the strongest party loyalties, MPs' support is unrelated to their legislative activity. This provides confirmation of Hypothesis 1, and supports a key argument of my theory. Because partisanship makes voters less responsive to the conduct of individual MPs, it should reduce the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking.

However, it is important to be clear about what the randomisation in this chapter does and does not achieve. Randomising MPs' behaviour helps to isolate its causal effect on their support, by distinguishing it from the consequences of their other characteristics and activities. However, the main outcome of interest here is not the average effect of MPs' parliamentary behaviour, but how that effect is conditioned by voters' partisanship. Of course, partisanship is not distributed randomly across voters. Given this, the interaction between MPs' legislative activity and voters' partisanship is not causally identified, even where the former is random. It is therefore possible that there are other

(Akirav 2019*b*) or 'effort' (Kellermann 2016).

reasons for voters with different levels of partisanship to also have different responses to MPs' legislative behaviour. I respond to this possibility by discussing some potential alternative explanations in Section 3.4, and addressing them empirically in Chapter 4.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. Section 3.1 outlines the context, explaining how the members' bill ballot in New Zealand can be seen as approximating an experimental setting. Section 3.2 sets out the data used in my analysis, before Section 3.3 presents the results. Section 3.4 summarises the chapter's main findings, and discusses a number of possible alternative explanations.

3.1 Context

All busy parliaments adopt rules governing who can place legislative proposals on the agenda, often to the disadvantage of individual ordinary legislators (see Cox and McCubbins 2011). The parliament of New Zealand is no exception. In New Zealand's House of Representatives, the agenda is largely controlled by the executive. Backbench MPs are able to make legislative proposals, known as members' bills, but the time for considering such bills is very limited. As a result, a random ballot is used to determine access to this time. Any ordinary MPs can enter this ballot, but only those who are randomly selected can actually introduce their bill for debate in the House. This randomisation makes it possible to identify the causal effect of proposing legislation, by comparing MPs who are selected in the ballot to those who are not. It thus approximates an experiment, where a voter is 'treated' if their MP is drawn in the ballot.

This approach has been adopted in several existing studies. Most importantly for this study, Williams and Indridason (2018) have already used New Zealand's bill ballot to show that proposing legislation improves MPs' approval ratings. I build on that finding in two ways — by testing for effects on MPs' actual electoral support, and by probing whether they depend on voters' partisanship. Two other studies have also exploited parliamentary bill ballots in this way. Morelli, Osnabrügge and Vannoni (2019), also studying New Zealand, show that proposing (successful) legislation brings MPs private benefits. Loewen et al. (2014) examine a similar ballot in the Canadian parliament and, like Williams and Indridason (2018), find evidence that proposing legislation increases MPs' popularity.

The New Zealand parliament is elected using a mixed electoral system, with some MPs proportionally elected from party lists, and some elected for specific electorates

under a single-member plurality system. I focus exclusively on the latter, as voters cannot individually reward MPs elected from a closed party list.

There are two important qualifications to how far selection in the New Zealand members' bill ballot approximates an experimental treatment. First, not all MPs enter bills into the ballot. This raises the risk of my treatment being confounded, if there are theoretically relevant differences between MPs who enter the ballot and those who do not. This is a real possibility: evidence from New Zealand and elsewhere (including in Chapter 5 of this thesis) shows that MPs' electoral context shapes their interest in proposing bills (e.g. Bowler 2010; Williams and Indridason 2018). I address this by only including voters in my analysis if their electorate MP did enter the ballot. Second, because multiple ballots are held in each parliamentary term, even those MPs who enter the ballot vary in how often they do so. MPs who enter the ballot more often clearly have a higher probability of being successfully drawn. This means selection in the ballot is not entirely random. I address this by controlling for how often MPs actually entered the ballot in a given legislative period.

This analysis focuses on bill proposals due to the unique inferential opportunities provided by the New Zealand bill ballot. The primary interest here is not in bill proposals *per se*, but in using them as a proxy for MPs' general legislative activity. Even so, previous work has shown that bill initiation has a number of specific benefits as a tool for personal vote-seeking, helping to increase MPs' name recognition, approval ratings, and electoral support (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2003; Däubler, Bräuninger and Brunner 2016; Loewen et al. 2014; Williams and Indridason 2018). The New Zealand bill ballot thus presents a particularly good opportunity to test how partisanship conditions voters' responses to MPs' parliamentary behaviour.

3.2 Data

This study estimates the effect of being drawn in the members' bill ballot on the popularity of New Zealand MPs elected from single-member districts (electorates). The analysis covers four separate legislative periods (1996-1999, 1999-2002, 2002-2005, 2008-2011). The unit of analysis is individual respondents to the 1999, 2002, 2005, and 2011 New Zealand Election Studies (NZES). The dependent variable is a binary indicator of whether respondents report having cast their electorate vote for the incumbent MP. As discussed above, I exclude respondents whose electorate MP did not enter the ballot

at all in the preceding legislative period. The analysis also excludes respondents from electorates where the incumbent MP did not stand for re-election in the same electorate under the same party label.[2]

Table 3.1: OLS model of number of bills drawn in ballot

	Bills drawn in ballot		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Governing party	−0.098		−0.032
	(0.129)		(0.127)
National Party (vs. Labour)		−0.304**	−0.300**
		(0.123)	(0.125)
Other party (vs. Labour)		0.119	0.115
		(0.185)	(0.187)
Ballot attempts	0.017	0.018	0.017
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Constant	0.627***	0.652***	0.668***
	(0.150)	(0.133)	(0.147)
Parliament FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	102	102	102
R^2	0.091	0.161	0.162
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The first independent variable in the following analysis is the number of times respondents' MP had a bill drawn in the ballot during the previous legislative period. As very few MPs were drawn in the ballot more than once, I focus only on those who were never drawn or drawn just once, meaning this variable is binary.[3] This variable is based on data from Williams and Indridason (2018), subject to some checks and changes using

[2]These cases were identified using data from New Zealand's Electoral Commission, accessed at https://electionresults.govt.nz.

[3]Re-estimating the models but including respondents whose MPs who were drawn twice in the ballot has almost no impact on the results — see Table A1, which repeats the models from Table 3.3 but including these cases.

official election data from New Zealand's Electoral Commission. My research design relies on MPs being chosen randomly from the ballot. Even though the ballot process is random by design, there might still be imbalances in which kinds of MPs are successful. To check this, I model the number of times MPs are drawn in the ballot as a function of which party they are in, whether their party was in government during that period, and the number of times they entered the ballot (see Table 3.1).[4] This shows that government MPs were not systematically more or less successful in the ballot than opposition MPs. However, MPs from the National Party were less successful in the ballot than their Labour Party counterparts. The following analyses take account of this, to avoid conflating the effect of bill proposals with differences in party popularity.

The second independent variable, which is included both separately and as an interaction with the first, is voters' partisanship. This is measured using a NZES question asking respondents first whether they identified with a particular party, and then how strongly they did so.[5] I use this to create a four-point scale running from 0 (no party identification) to 3 (very strong party identification). The precise questions used to measure voters' partisanship are presented in Appendix B.[6]

All my analyses use binary logistic regression, and include election-year fixed effects. They also all control for how many times MPs entered the ballot in the relevant legislative period. This ensures I estimate the effect of MPs being drawn in the ballot, conditional on how often they entered.

[4]This is modelled using OLS regression. Using a regression model rather than simply comparing means allows me to include parliament fixed effects and to control for the number of times MPs actually entered the ballot. As in the main analyses, MPs who did not enter the ballot at all were excluded from the model.

[5]Respondents who didn't initially offer a party identification were then prompted to answer whether they felt "a little closer" to any particular party. I code these respondents as lacking a party identification, regardless of their answer to the second question.

[6]The questions were asked slightly differently in 2011, with respondents asked if they felt "close to" a particular party, where earlier surveys had asked if they "think of yourself as" a particular party. However, all the analyses use election-year fixed effects, meaning the results are driven by differences between respondents within specific surveys. Moreover, the results are robust to excluding 2011 from the analysis — see Table A2, which repeats the models from Table 3.3 but without data from this election.

Table 3.2: Logit model of probability of supporting incumbent

	Voting for incumbent MP			
	All parties	All parties	Labour	National
	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Bills drawn	0.098*	0.164***	0.201**	0.196**
	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.088)	(0.098)
Ballot attempts	−0.010*	0.011*	0.020**	−0.018*
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Constant	−0.130**	−0.593**	−0.122	−0.527***
	(0.064)	(0.241)	(0.112)	(0.103)
Election FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
MP Party FE		✓		
Observations	5474	5474	2470	2306
Pseudo R^2	0.001	0.024	0.017	0.013

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

3.3 Results

I begin by testing the basic idea that voters reward MPs who propose legislation. The models presented in Table 3.2 estimate the effect of an MP being drawn in the bill ballot on the probability of a constituent voting for them at the next general election. The first model simply estimates this for all MPs who entered the ballot and who stood again at the next election under the same party label. The three subsequent models account in various ways for the fact that National MPs were generally less successful in the ballot than Labour MPs. The second model covers the same MPs as the first, but includes fixed effects for MPs' party. The third and fourth models focus on only Labour and National MPs, respectively. All four models show the same basic result: the effect of proposing legislation is positive and statistically significant. This finding cannot simply be attributed to some parties being more successful in the ballot than others, as it is visible even when comparing among MPs of the same party. These analyses thus show

Table 3.3: Logit model of probability of supporting incumbent

	Voting for incumbent MP		
	(8)	(9)	(10)
Bills drawn	0.253***	0.239*	0.328**
	(0.081)	(0.137)	(0.142)
Bills drawn * Partisanship	−0.109**	−0.260***	−0.229**
	(0.053)	(0.091)	(0.093)
Partisanship	0.134***	0.220***	0.217***
	(0.038)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Ballot attempts	−0.009	−0.033***	−0.014
	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Constant	−0.293***	−3.884***	−4.200***
	(0.075)	(0.263)	(0.459)
MP Party FE			✓
Controls		✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	4995	2926	2926
Pseudo R^2	0.09	0.637	0.649
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

that being randomly assigned the opportunity to propose legislation had a significant positive effect on MPs' electoral support.

Does this effect depend on the strength of voters' partisanship, as Hypothesis 1 suggests? Table 3.3 reports further models testing this. The first model includes an interaction between the indicator of MPs being drawn in the ballot and a measure of the strength of voters' partisanship. The second adds a number of voter-level control variables — their perceived ideological distance from the MP's party, their approval of the MP's party, and their approval of the individual MP's conduct since the last election.[7] The third includes fixed effects for MPs' party affiliation. All three models

[7]These control variables are all calculated from the relevant NZES data.

show a similar picture to those in Table 3.2 — the direct effect of having bills drawn is still positive and significant. However, these models also all show a significant negative interaction between this and the strength of voters' partisanship. This suggests that the effect of MPs' legislative activity on their electoral support grows weaker as voters' partisanship grows stronger.

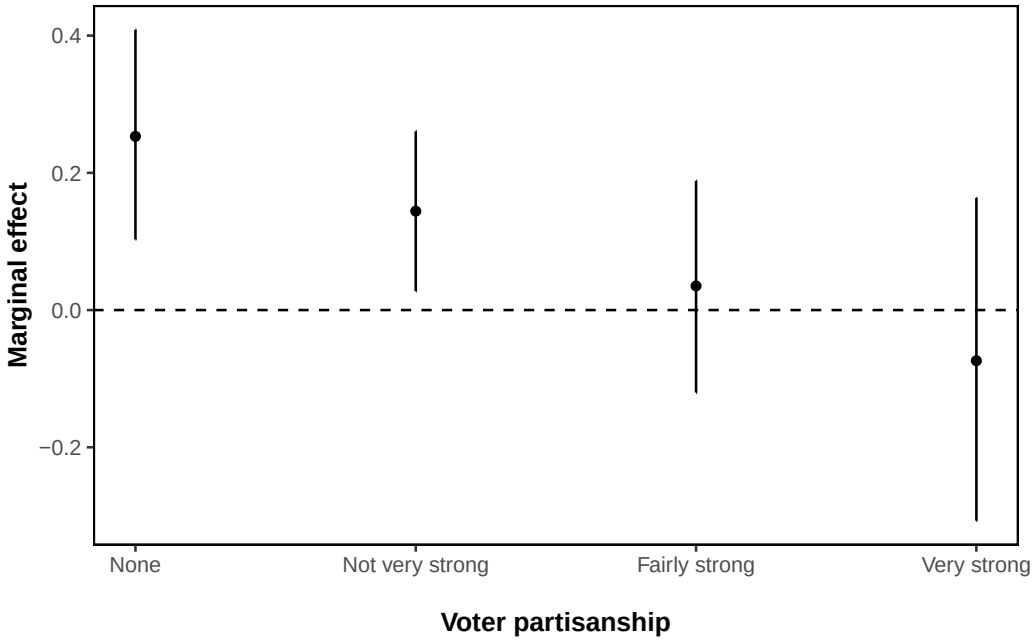
Figure 3.1 illustrates this finding. It shows the marginal effect of an MP having a bill drawn in the ballot on the probability of a constituent voting for them at the next election, at varying strengths of the constituent's partisanship. This shows the expected pattern. MPs' bill proposals have no effect on their popularity among very strongly partisan voters. However, voters become more responsive to MPs' legislative activity as their partisanship weakens. The marginal effect is only statistically significant and positive among voters with no partisanship or with a not very strong partisanship. Being randomly granted the right to propose bills increases MPs' popularity among voters with weaker partisanship, but has no effect on the attitudes of more partisan voters. This suggests, as expected, that partisanship makes voters less responsive to their MPs' parliamentary activity.

3.4 Summary

This chapter has probed whether partisanship makes voters less responsive to the legislative behaviour of their representatives. Using a quasi-experimental design, I have estimated the effect of MPs' activity on their electoral support, and have tested the hypothesis that this effect should be stronger when voters' partisan loyalties are weaker. My results provide support for this hypothesis. Being granted the chance to propose legislation has a clear, causally identified, positive effect on MPs' popularity with their constituents. However, this effect is not the same for all voters. In particular, it is entirely absent for voters with very strong party loyalities. The rewards of proposing legislation appear to come from constituents with weaker partisanship, or no partisanship at all. These findings therefore suggest that partisanship does make voters less responsive to the legislative activity of their MPs.

However, there are several grounds for caution about these findings. First, the quasi-experimental design leaves some uncertainty about the exogeneity of the treatment. Though exploiting a randomised process gives greater causal leverage to the research design, there is still the possibility of undetected threats to the study's internal validity.

Figure 3.1: Marginal effect of bill proposals on probability of incumbent support



Note: Marginal effect of an incumbent MP having a bill drawn in the ballot on the probability of a constituent voting for them, at different levels of voter partisanship. Calculated based on Model 8 in Table 3.3. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

Moreover, even if being drawn in the ballot is genuinely randomly distributed, voters' partisanship is not. This means the interaction between the two in the above analyses was not causally identified. As discussed above, partisan and non-partisan voters may differ in other relevant ways. The most obvious such explanation is that these groups have different levels of information about MPs' behaviour. Non-partisan voters might know more about MPs' individual behaviour if they are less dependent on parties for their political information, or if MPs take greater efforts to alert them to their personal vote-seeking efforts. Alternatively, if partisan voters are more politically aware, they will receive more information about their MPs, but also receive more messages from rival candidates, neutralising incumbents' personal vote-seeking efforts (Zaller 1992). These alternative explanations are difficult to rule out in this observational analyis. Given this, the following chapter turns to a survey experiment which rules them out by design.

4

Partisanship and the Effectiveness of Personal Vote-Seeking: A Survey Experiment

Are voters with weaker party loyalties more responsive to the parliamentary behaviour of MPs? The previous chapter presented evidence which suggested so, and offered initial support for Hypothesis 1. However, the quasi-experimental approach adopted in Chapter 3 could not rule out the possibility that differences between partisan and non-partisan voters were driven by some other confounding variable. Most importantly, it could not establish whether their differing responsiveness to MPs' legislative behaviour was due to differing levels of information about that behaviour.

This chapter thus provides a further test of Hypothesis 1, which is designed to rule out this possible alternative explanation. I do this through a survey experiment that generated artificial variation in legislative behaviour. Respondents were asked to report their likelihood of voting for a hypothetical MP, but were randomly assigned to receive different information about the MP's legislative activity. This random assignment of the treatment, and the fact that voters consider a purely hypothetical MP, ensures that their knowledge about the MP's behaviour is unrelated to their partisanship.

The results echo those of the previous chapter, so offer further empirical support for Hypothesis 1. I find that more active MPs are more popular, but that this effect depends on voters' partisanship. As the strength of voters' partisanship increases, they become less responsive to the parliamentary behaviour of their MP. Being active in parliament primarily earns MPs greater support from non-partisan voters. As in Chapter 3, while the main effect of MPs' behaviour is causally identified, its interaction with partisanship is not. However, this analysis does rule out one key alternative explanation — varying levels of information — and I consider the potential for others in Section 4.4.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Section 4.1 outlines the design of the survey experiment, explaining how I test the effect of MPs' legislative activity on their public support. Section 4.2 presents several checks designed to show that the experiment worked as expected. Section 4.3 then presents the empirical results, in three stages. First, I report the main effects from the experiment, to show that MPs' activity has the expected effect on respondents' attitudes. Second, I show that these effects depend on the strength of voters' partisanship. Third, I explore whether these effects depend on which party a voter identifies with. Section 4.4 summarises and discusses the chapter's findings.

4.1 Survey Design

This survey experiment was fielded online by YouGov to a panel of 1,659 UK respondents between 12 and 15 March 2018. Respondents were randomly assigned to either a control group or to one of two treatment groups. Each group was presented with a short vignette describing a hypothetical MP. For all three groups, the vignette began by reporting that the MP was from the Labour Party, followed by the same short description of the MP's parliamentary career to date.

The vignettes varied in one key regard — respondents in the two treatment groups were shown additional information about how active the MP was in parliament in the last year. Specifically, respondents were provided with information on how many debates the MP spoke in, how many written questions they asked, and how this compared to the average MP.[1] One treatment group was told that the MP was relatively inactive, while the other was told that the MP was relatively active. The treatments thus aimed to alter respondents' perception of how hard-working the MP is. Figure 4.1 lists all three

[1]Speech-giving and questioning have both been used in previous work as indicators of legislative activity (Eggers and Spirling 2014*a*; Kellermann 2016).

Figure 4.1: Vignettes by treatment group

Control:

"This MP is a Labour member of Parliament. They were first elected to Parliament in 1992, and have served as a minister, a shadow minister, and a backbench MP. They are now a member of the Treasury Select Committee. They have a majority of 4,000 votes, and plan to stand again for Parliament at the next General Election."

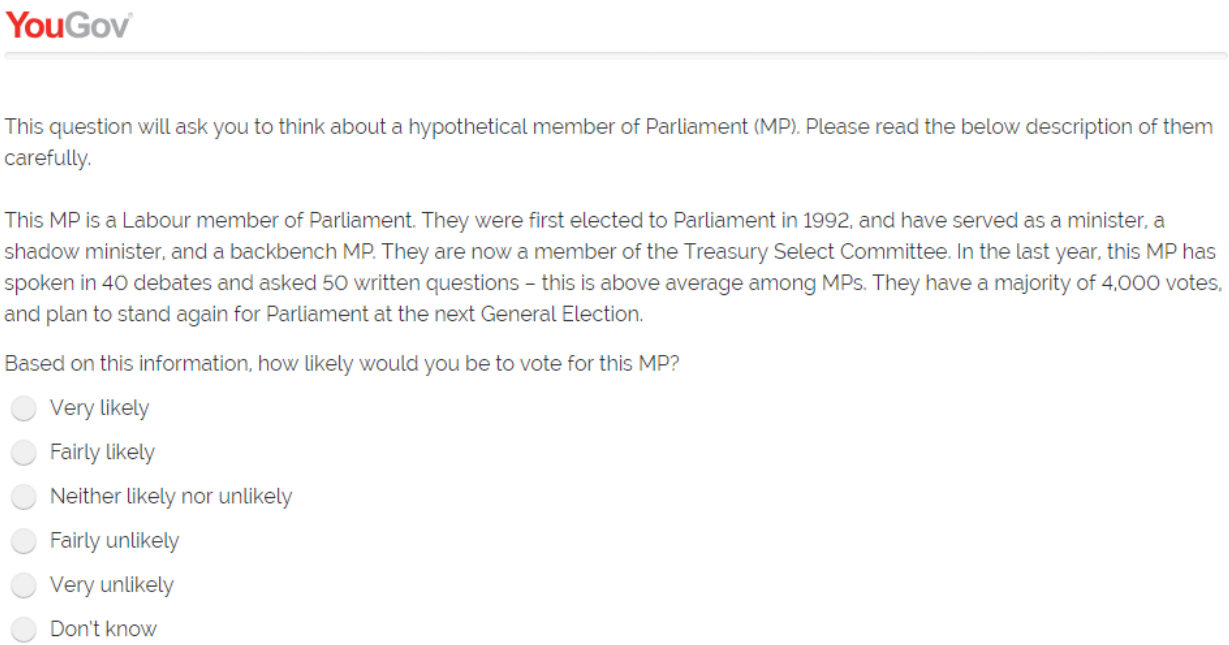
Inactive MP Treatment:

"This MP is a Labour member of Parliament. They were first elected to Parliament in 1992, and have served as a minister, a shadow minister, and a backbench MP. They are now a member of the Treasury Select Committee. In the last year, this MP has spoken in 20 debates and asked 25 written questions — this is below average among MPs. They have a majority of 4,000 votes, and plan to stand again for Parliament at the next General Election."

Active MP Treatment:

"This MP is a Labour member of Parliament. They were first elected to Parliament in 1992, and have served as a minister, a shadow minister, and a backbench MP. They are now a member of the Treasury Select Committee. In the last year, this MP has spoken in 40 debates and asked 50 written questions — this is above average among MPs. They have a majority of 4,000 votes, and plan to stand again for Parliament at the next General Election."

Figure 4.2: Example question from online survey



vignettes, with the treatments highlighted.

Respondents to the survey were asked three questions. First, respondents were asked whether they identified with a particular political party and, if so, how strongly.[2] This makes it possible to investigate whether the effect of the treatments depended on respondents' partisanship. This was asked before respondents were presented with the vignette, to avoid answers being influenced by the treatment.[3] Second, after reading the vignette, respondents were asked how likely they would be to vote for the MP, on a five-point scale from 'very unlikely' to 'very likely'. Figure 4.2 shows how this question would have appeared to respondents. Once coded as an interval variable running from 1 to 5, answers to this question provide my dependent variable.[4] Finally, after reporting

[2]Respondents were first asked "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat or what?". Those who chose a party were then asked "Would you call yourself very strong, fairly strong, or not very strong [party]?".

[3]Of course, a possible downside of this approach is that it may have some priming effect, heightening the influence of respondents' partisanship in their subsequent answers.

[4]311 respondents answered 'don't know' to this vote choice question, so were dropped from the analysis. They were spread fairly evenly across the three groups, with 110 from the control group, 89 from the

their likely support for the MP, respondents were asked how hard they thought the MP works in parliament.[5] This facilitates a manipulation check, to establish whether the treatments did successfully alter respondents' perception of the MP's behaviour (Mutz 2011, 84-85).

4.2 Survey Checks

These analyses depend on the successful randomisation of respondents into treatment and control groups. They also depend on the vignettes having succesfully conveyed two key pieces of information — the MP's activity, and their party affiliation. The first constitutes the treatment, while the second ensures that it is possible for respondents' partisanship to influence their evaluations. Checks suggest the experiment worked as intended on all three counts.

First, a randomisation check suggests the random allocation of respondents to treatment and control groups was successful — Table 4.1 shows that a number of covariates (age, gender, social grade, 2017 general election vote, 2016 referendum vote, party identification, strength of party identification, and self-reported political attention) were distributed very similarly across the three groups.

Second, a manipulation check shows that the treatments largely influenced respondents' perception of the MP's activity as intended. As shown in Table 4.2, 42% of respondents receiving the active MP treatment suggested the MP's activity was 'above average', compared to just 9% reporting it as 'below average'. The situation is reversed among respondents receiving the inactive MP treatment, of whom 31% reported the MP's activity as 'below average', compared to only 5% saying it was 'above average'.[6]

Third, respondents clearly understood that the hypothetical MP was affiliated to the Labour Party. This can be seen from Table 4.3, which reports OLS regression models of voters' support for the MP as a function of a categorical variable indicating voters' party identification (with non-partisans as the reference category), with and without a

active MP treatment group, and 112 from the inactive MP treatment group.

[5]Specifically, they were asked: "The previous question described a hypothetical member of Parliament (MP). Relative to other MPs, how hard do you think that MP works in Parliament?", and were asked to choose between 'above average', 'average', 'below average', and 'don't know'.

[6]However, these figures still show less than 50% of respondents giving the 'correct' answer. This likely reflects the relatively subtle treatment, and suggests I will obtain conservative estimates of the substantive size of any treatment effects.

control for voters' treatment/control status. Labour identifiers were significantly more supportive of the MP, while those identifying with other parties were significantly less supportive, relative to those with no party identification.

Table 4.1: Summary statistics by treatment group

	Active MP (N=530)	Control (N=586)	Inactive MP (N=543)
Age (mean)	51.347	50.341	50.834
Gender			
— Female	284 (53.6%)	319 (54.4%)	311 (57.3%)
— Male	246 (46.4%)	267 (45.6%)	232 (42.7%)
Social grade			
— A/B	154 (29.1%)	161 (27.5%)	142 (26.2%)
— C1/C2	250 (47.2%)	300 (51.2%)	268 (49.4%)
— D/E	126 (23.8%)	125 (21.3%)	133 (24.5%)
2017 GE vote			
— Conservative	190 (35.8%)	210 (35.8%)	182 (33.5%)
— Labour	171 (32.3%)	173 (29.5%)	183 (33.7%)
— Other (incl. DK)	85 (16.0%)	110 (18.8%)	92 (16.9%)
— Didn't vote	84 (15.8%)	93 (15.9%)	86 (15.8%)
2016 referendum vote			
— Leave	256 (48.9%)	269 (46.5%)	246 (45.6%)
— Remain	205 (39.1%)	237 (40.9%)	226 (41.9%)
— Didn't vote	63 (12.0%)	73 (12.6%)	68 (12.6%)
Party id			
— Conservative	156 (31.7%)	164 (30.4%)	143 (28.7%)
— Labour	135 (27.4%)	155 (28.8%)	164 (32.9%)
— Other	90 (18.3%)	104 (19.3%)	91 (18.2%)
— None	111 (22.6%)	116 (21.5%)	101 (20.2%)
Party id (strength)			
— Very strong	53 (10.0%)	64 (10.9%)	62 (11.4%)
— Fairly strong	189 (35.7%)	189 (32.3%)	188 (34.6%)
— Not very strong	138 (26.0%)	160 (27.3%)	140 (25.8%)
— None	150 (28.3%)	173 (29.5%)	153 (28.2%)
Political attention (mean)	7.019	6.747	6.862

Table 4.2: Proportion of responses to manipulation check by treatment group

	Above average	Average	Below average	Don't know
Active MP	0.42	0.31	0.09	0.18
Control	0.15	0.42	0.11	0.33
Inactive MP	0.05	0.38	0.31	0.26

Table 4.3: OLS model of partisanship's effect on support for MP

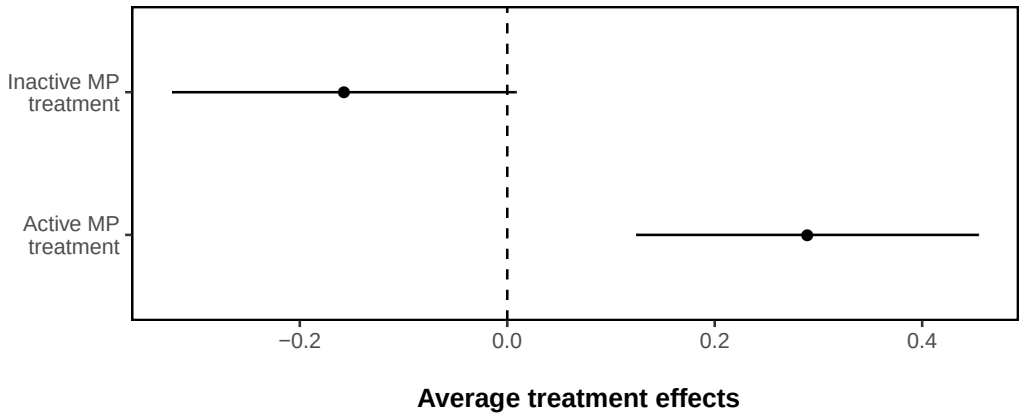
	Support for MP	
	(1)	(2)
Conservative id	−0.710***	−0.698***
	(0.082)	(0.080)
Labour id	1.088***	1.121***
	(0.083)	(0.082)
Other party id	−0.230**	−0.217**
	(0.092)	(0.090)
Active MP treatment		−0.306***
		(0.069)
Inactive MP treatment		−0.524***
		(0.071)
Constant	2.758***	3.018***
	(0.063)	(0.073)
Observations	1,348	1,348
R^2	0.305	0.332
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Main effect

I begin by presenting the overall effect of the treatments. Recall that the outcome is an interval variable capturing respondents' reported likelihood of supporting the MP,

Figure 4.3: Voter responses to MP's activity (full sample)



Note: ATEs calculated as OLS coefficients for a categorical variable, with the control group as the reference category. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Full model presented in Table C1.

running from 1 ('very unlikely') to 5 ('very likely'). Figure 4.3 shows the coefficients from a simple OLS regression, modelling this outcome as a function of a categorical variable comparing the two treatment groups to the control group. These coefficients can be interpreted as average treatment effects (ATEs).[7] The treatments clearly had the expected effect. Compared to the control group, respondents were significantly more likely to support the relatively active MP, and significantly less likely to support the relatively inactive MP. Though the latter effect fails to reach the 95% level of statistical significance, it is significant at the 90% level (see Table C1). This suggests that voters respond as expected to parliamentary activity — more active MPs are more popular.

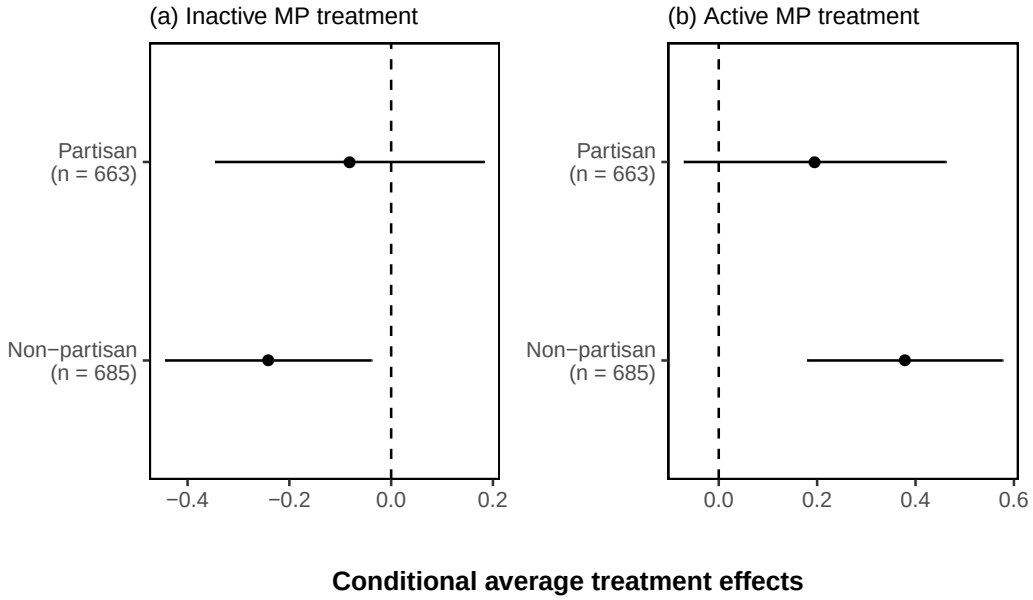
4.3.2 Disaggregating by strength of partisanship

Figure 4.4 probes whether this effect depends on voters' partisanship, by showing conditional average treatment effects (CATEs) for two subgroups of respondents. The first subgroup consists of those with either no party identification, or a 'not very strong' one.[8] The second consists of those with a 'very' or 'fairly' strong party identification. For simplicity, I refer to these subgroups as 'non-partisan' and 'partisan' voters. Fig-

[7]Because I do not use weights, this represents the *sample* ATE rather than any attempt to estimate a *population* ATE (see Miratrix et al. 2018).

[8]It also includes those who answered 'don't know' to either partisanship question, or 'other' to the initial party question, on the basis that these answers indicate the lack of a clear party identification.

Figure 4.4: Voter responses to MP's activity (by partisanship)



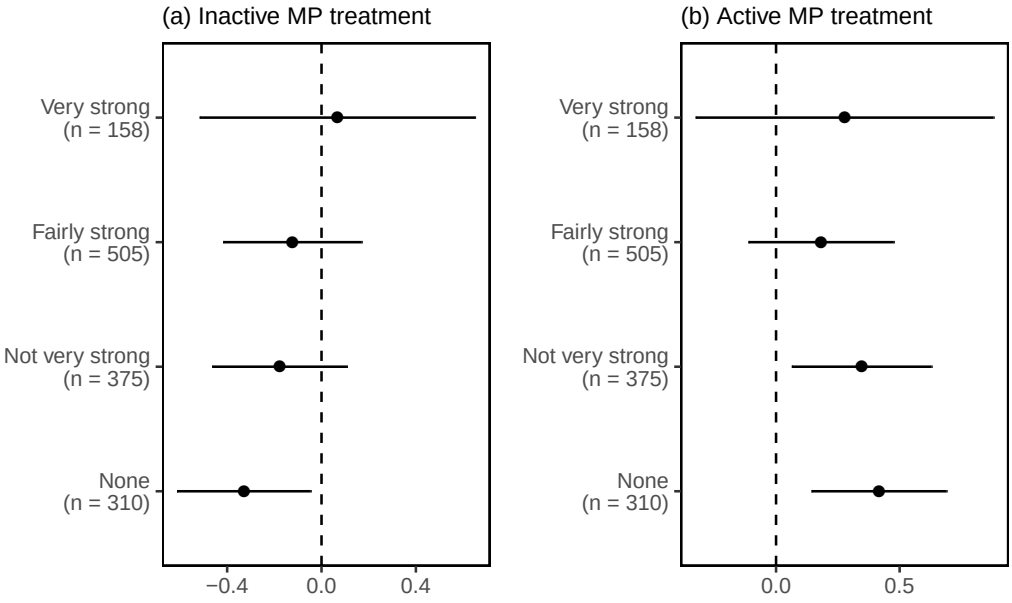
Note: CATEs calculated as OLS coefficients for a categorical variable, with the control group as the reference category. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Full model presented in Table C2.

ure 4.4 shows that the treatments affected these subgroups differently. In the partisan subgroup, neither treatment had a significant effect. Despite being told that a hypothetical MP is relatively (in)active in Parliament, partisan respondents in either treatment group are statistically indistinguishable from the control group in their likelihood of supporting that MP. However, for non-partisan voters, both coefficients are statistically significant. These voters were more likely to support a relatively active MP, and less likely to support a relatively inactive MP. This suggests that partisanship does indeed make voters less responsive to MPs' parliamentary activity.

Figure 4.5 disaggregates respondents further still, into four levels of partisanship.[9] This has the effect of considerably reducing the size of the subgroups, meaning small apparent differences between them should be interpreted cautiously. Even so, the same picture emerges as from Figure 4.4. The effect of information about an MP's activity generally gets substantively larger and more clearly statistically significant as voters'

[9]These are those with no party identification, a 'not very strong' identification, a 'fairly strong' identification, and a 'very strong' identification. 29 respondents reported a party identification but answered 'don't know' when asked its strength. I include these with the 'not very strong' identifiers.

Figure 4.5: Voter responses to MP's activity (by partisanship)



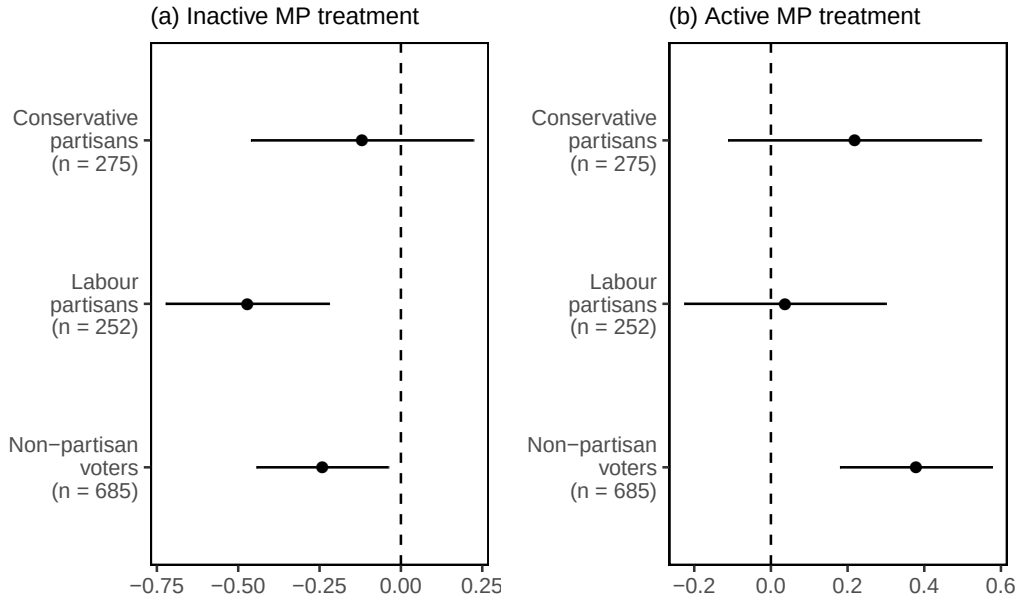
Note: CATEs calculated as OLS coefficients for a categorical variable, with the control group as the reference category. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Full model presented in Table C3.

partisanship grows weaker. Among voters with a 'very strong' or 'fairly strong' party identification, neither effect is significant (though the very large confidence intervals in the former subgroup likely reflect its smaller size). Among voters with a 'not very strong' party identification, both effects grow larger in magnitude, and the active MP effect becomes statistically significant. Finally, both effects are significant among voters who report no partisan identification at all, and they are substantively larger than those for the 'not very strong' subgroup. Again, these patterns support the expectation that partisanship makes voters less responsive to MPs' parliamentary activity.

4.3.3 Disaggregating by party

The preceding analyses distinguish among respondents according to the strength of their party identification, but not according to which party they actually identify with. This approach means that they show the net consequences of MPs' legislative behaviour for their approval. However, it obscures the possibility that partisanship's consequences

Figure 4.6: Voter responses to MP's activity (by party identification)



Note: CATEs calculated as OLS coefficients for a categorical variable, with the control group as the reference category. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals. Full model presented in Table C4.

may depend on the party a voter actually identifies with. According to the theory set out in Chapter 2, partisanship's effects should be symmetrical — regardless of which party a voter identifies with, their partisanship should make them unresponsive to the qualities of individual incumbent MPs. Figure 4.6 probes this argument. It replicates the split presented in Figure 4.4 but now dividing the 'partisan' category into Labour and Conservative partisans.[10] Three key points emerge from these results.

First, the results for non-partisan voters and Conservative partisans both provide further supportive evidence for Hypothesis 1. Non-partisan voters are clearly the most responsive to MPs' conduct. They are the only group for whom both treatments have a significant effect — their support can be won by active MPs, but can also be lost by inactive MPs. As expected, Conservative partisans were unaffected by either treatment.

[10] As in Figure 4.4, the non-partisan group consists of respondents with no party identification or a 'not very strong' one. The two partisan categories include those with a 'fairly strong' or 'very strong' identification with either the Labour or Conservative parties.

Though the effects are in the expected directions, they fail to reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

Second, the results for the active MP treatment are also supportive of my theory, across all three groups. The effect is significant for non-partisans, but not for either of the partisan categories. Though the effect is substantively larger for Conservative identifiers (presumably because there is simply less scope for already-supportive Labour identifiers to increase their approval of the MP), it is still statistically insignificant. As expected by Hypothesis 1, being an active parliamentarian helps legislators win the support of voters without strong party loyalties, but not those with them.

Finally, there is one result in Figure 4.6 which runs contrary to my expectations. Unlike the active MP treatment, the inactive MP treatment has a significant (negative) effect for Labour partisans. Indeed, this effect is substantively much larger than that for non-partisans. This suggests that Labour partisans become less supportive of a Labour MP when they discover that she is working less hard than other legislators. This is surprising from the perspective of my theory, which suggests the partisanship of Labour voters should lead them to ignore, and not punish, poor performance by Labour MPs. This might suggest my results can simply be explained in terms of ceiling effects, with Labour partisans unable to get any more supportive of the MP, even when exposed to the active MP treatment. However, this explanation sits at odds with the fact that Conservative partisans are also unresponsive to the active MP treatment. Moreover, personal vote-seeking is principally about promoting a positive reputation, rather than simply staving off a negative one. In this regard, Figure 4.6 still seems to support my main contention — partisan voters, whatever their party, do not seem to reward 'good' MPs. Furthermore, five of the six coefficients in Figure 4.6 are still as expected by my theory. Altogether, therefore, Figure 4.6 largely, but not entirely, provides supportive evidence for Hypothesis 1.

4.4 Summary

Does partisanship make voters less responsive to MPs' legislative activity? The evidence presented in this chapter suggests so. As with Chapter 3, I have used random variation in MPs' legislative activity to test how voters respond to that activity, and how partisanship conditions their response. Where Chapter 3 exploited a real instance of randomisation in legislative behaviour, this chapter generated that randomisation artificially. Using a

survey experiment, I have estimated the effects of MPs' behaviour on their popularity, and have tested the hypothesis that these effects should be stronger when voters' partisan loyalties are weaker.

My results provide further confirmation of Hypothesis 1. Compared to non-partisan voters, voters with partisan loyalties were less likely to punish MPs for being relatively inactive, and also less likely to reward them for being relatively active. Moreover, the effects of MPs' legislative behaviour grew weaker as voters' partisan loyalties grew stronger. These findings thus confirm my theoretical expectations. They also echo earlier findings from Kam (2009). Where he found the electoral benefits of rebellion mostly came from non-partisan voters, I find the same for the electoral benefits of being seen as an active parliamentarian.

Could partisan and non-partisan voters differ in other ways which instead explain these findings? Two alternative explanations discussed above centred on the possibility that partisan and non-partisan voters have different levels of information. Non-partisan voters could be more responsive to personal vote-seeking because MPs target them when publicising their parliamentary activity. Alternatively, they could be more responsive because they are *less* politically aware, so receive incumbents' messages but not those of their less high-profile rivals (Zaller 1992). However, the risk of differences in information producing the above findings seems minimal. Though it cannot be ruled out as a driver of the results in the previous chapter's quasi-experiment, this chapter showed very similar results in a survey experiment where respondents received the same information, irrespective of their partisanship.

It might instead be the case that partisan and non-partisan voters have different views of how MPs should behave. This could mean my results reflect these groups differing in their preferences over MPs' behaviour, rather than in their responsiveness to it. For example, non-partisan voters might in fact have *anti*-partisan views, so prefer individualistic rather than partisan behaviour. Though this might explain differential responses to MPs' rebellions, it seems a less plausible explanation of the above findings, which only examined voters' responses to MPs' activity. It seems likely that voters should always prefer their local MP to be harder-working, regardless of their partisanship. Even so, it remains a possibility that partisanship affects voters' views of which types of legislative behaviour should be rewarded.

In sum the results presented so far offer supportive evidence that partisanship reduces

voters' willingness to punish or reward legislators for their individual record. Partisanship thus undercuts the effectiveness of personal vote-seeking. If personal vote-seeking is less effective, it should also be less attractive to MPs. Given this, does partisanship shape how MPs seek re-election, and consequently how they behave in parliament? The following chapters test this, turning from electoral behaviour to legislative behaviour.

5

Partisan Dealignment and Personal Vote-Seeking in Britain, 1964-2017

In previous chapters, I showed that voters' partisanship shapes their willingness to reward personal vote-seeking. In this chapter, I ask whether it also shapes legislators' willingness to engage in personal vote-seeking. This thesis argues that partisanship among voters deters personal vote-seeking, by limiting its effectiveness. Hypothesis 2 thus suggests a negative relationship between partisanship among voters and personal vote-seeking by MPs. I also argue that partisanship conditions the relationship between legislators' electoral security and their personal vote-seeking. MPs elected by narrower margins invest more time and resources into securing re-election. However, this should only affect their propensity for personal vote-seeking if partisanship is low enough to make it viable. Hypothesis 3 thus suggests a negative relationship between electoral security and personal vote-seeking, which is stronger when voter partisanship is lower.

This chapter tests these hypotheses by analysing behaviour in the UK House of Commons since the 1960s. The partisanship of British voters substantially (though unevenly) declined during this period, in a process known as partisan dealignment (Crewe, Särlvik

and Alt 1977; Fieldhouse et al. 2020). This provides large variation in my main independent variable. I focus on one kind of parliamentary behaviour widely seen as providing electoral advantages to MPs: proposing legislation. Using this as my indicator of personal vote-seeking, I expect that MPs should propose more bills when partisanship is lower (Hypothesis 2). I also expect that more marginal MPs should propose more bills, but especially when partisanship is lower (Hypothesis 3).

I test these expectations in two stages. First, I analyse bill proposal activity in the House of Commons between 1964 and 2017, using a new dataset of all MPs and all backbench bill proposals in this period. This analysis tests the effect of partisanship, and its interaction with electoral security, on MPs' propensity to propose legislation. The results support both hypotheses. As expected by Hypothesis 2, legislators propose greater numbers of bills when voters are less partisan. As expected by Hypothesis 3, electoral insecurity also leads legislators to propose more bills, but only under conditions of low partisanship. Of course, this is purely observational evidence, and partisanship may be correlated with other variables that also affect MPs' personal vote-seeking. I address this possibility by controlling for several potentially confounding variables.

The second stage of the analysis is a further attempt to disentangle the effects of partisanship from those of other, confounding, variables. I do this by focusing on a particularly sudden and sizeable drop in partisanship in the 1970s, comparing MPs' behaviour before and after it occurred. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, I find that electoral security mattered for bill proposal activity after this fall in partisanship, but not before. Focusing on this narrow window makes it easier to evaluate whether this change could instead be due to changes in some other relevant variable. I present evidence suggesting that this is not the case, providing additional reassurance that this change can plausibly be attributed to changes in partisanship. This analyis thus offers further supportive evidence that voters' partisanship influences MPs' re-election strategies, and consequently their legislative behaviour.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 5.1 justifies my use of bill initiation as an indicator of personal vote-seeking, explaining how proposing legislation can help MPs develop their personal vote. Section 5.2 describes the data used for my analyses. Section 5.3 presents my empirical results, and proceeds in three parts. First, I present my analysis of the full 1964 to 2017 period. Second, I present my more focused analysis of the consequences of a sudden drop in partisanship in the 1970s. Third, I evaluate some

alternative explanations for these consequences. Section 5.4 concludes, summarising the chapter's findings.

5.1 Legislative Proposals as Personal Vote-Seeking

In this chapter, I use MPs' bill initiation behaviour as an indicator of their personal vote-seeking. Most legislatures provide opportunities for individual MPs to propose legislation, and a growing body of comparative literature suggests that using these opportunities brings electoral benefits.

The role of bill initiation differs across political systems. In some presidential democracies, individual legislators have a reasonable chance of seeing their proposals being passed into law. They can thus use them to deliver particularistic benefits to their districts, for which voters may reward them (Crisp et al. 2004). However, most parliamentary systems impose restrictions on how backbench legislative initiatives can be introduced and voted on, which means they rarely become law, and government bills dominate the agenda (Bräuninger and Debus 2009; Cox and McCubbins 2011; Mattson 1995). In these systems, therefore, making legislative proposals offers limited scope for particularistic 'credit-claiming'.

Even so, bill initiation in parliamentary systems can still serve other personal vote-seeking strategies — what Mayhew (1974) dubs 'advertising' and 'position-taking'. While very few people directly follow parliamentary proceedings themselves, many more learn about their MP's work through media coverage of politics, or through MPs' own attempts to publicise their endeavours. MPs can thus use bill initiation, even where their proposals do not pass into law, to send a signal about their effort and priorities. Initiating legislation can help a legislator to show voters that they are an active, hard-working representative. Irrespective of proposals' content or importance, the simple act of initiating them signals to constituents that the MP is making efforts on their behalf (Bowler 2010; Bräuninger, Brunner and Däubler 2012). The content of legislative proposals can also matter, by showing voters that their representative is supporting a view or cause they themselves support (Campbell 1982; Williams and Indridason 2018).[1]

[1]Though my interest here is in bill initiation's appeal to voters, personal vote-seeking can also involve courting the support of other relevant actors, particularly interest groups (Mayhew 1974, 2001). In this vein, legislative proposals might be used to signal positions to, and attract donations from, potential campaign funders (Rocca and Gordon 2010).

Recent empirical work supports this idea of an 'electoral connection' in bill initiation. Evidence from a range of parliamentary systems has suggested that legislators with the greatest incentive to cultivate a personal vote are also those who propose the most legislation (Bowler 2010; Bräuninger, Brunner and Däubler 2012; Campbell 1982; Williams and Indridason 2018).[2] This behaviour also appears to yield electoral returns, with higher bill proposal rates being variously linked to higher levels of name recognition, better approval ratings, and greater electoral support (Bowler 2010; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2003; Däubler, Bräuninger and Brunner 2016; Loewen et al. 2014; Williams and Indridason 2018). A growing body of evidence thus suggests that legislators can be motivated to propose bills because they (correctly) believe their voters will reward them for doing so.[3]

In the context of the UK, existing work has focused primarily on the policy motivations underlying bill proposals. Clearly, the stated aim of introducing legislative proposals is to effect a change in the law. However, control of the Commons' agenda is highly centralised with the cabinet, and backbench legislative proposals — known as private members' bills (PMBs) — face a host of procedural obstacles, particularly a shortage of time. As a result, very few such bills actually pass into law, though a small number do each year, sometimes with significant consequences.[4] However, they can be intended to affect policy indirectly, by pressuring the government to change the law, sparking a debate in parliament around new policy ideas, or generating publicity for a wider campaign (for examples, see Brazier and Fox 2010, 205-7).

By contrast, the idea of bill initiation as electorally-motivated advertising and position-taking has received little attention in the British context. Two post-war monographs have provided thorough discussions of the uses and significance of private members' bills. But neither of them probes the relationship between MPs' bill initiation and their electoral context (Bromhead 1956; Marsh and Read 1988). The only existing evidence of an 'electoral connection' in private members' bills comes from Bowler (2010). Using data

[2]Though see Kessler and Krehbiel (1996) for US findings that cast doubt on the idea of bill sponsorship as electorally-motivated.

[3]Of course, proposing legislation can also bring other personal advantages to MPs. For example, recent work suggests that proposing (successful) bills can help MPs attract private financial benefits (Morelli, Osnabrügge and Vannoni 2019).

[4]For instance, in the 1960s, private members' bills — albeit often with the tacit support of government — brought about a number of major liberalising social reforms (see Brazier and Fox 2010; Dorey 2016; Richards 1970).

on bill initiation in the 1997-2001 and 2001-2005 parliaments, he finds that MPs elected by larger margins propose fewer private members' bills (Bowler 2010).[5]

Overall then, existing comparative work suggests that proposing legislation can be a personal vote-seeking tool for backbench legislators. In a range of contexts, MPs with the greatest incentive for personal vote-seeking are the most active proposers of legislation, which appears to provide some electoral benefit to them. These findings have been echoed in a study of the British House of Commons. It thus seems reasonable to use bill initiation as an indicator of personal vote-seeking.

5.2 Data

5.2.1 Dependent variable: Bill proposals

My main dependent variable in this chapter is the total number of private members' bills proposed by each MP in a given parliament (the period between two general elections). I have calculated this for all MPs in each of the fourteen parliaments between 1964 and 2017, using data described in Appendix D.1. In total, this covers 5,198 bill proposals over a period of 53 years. To my knowledge, this scope makes mine the most extensive quantitative analysis of Commons bill proposal activity to date.[6]

There are three different procedures for introducing PMBs in the House of Commons — the ballot, presentation, and the Ten Minute Rule.[7] First, members may enter a random ballot for the right to introduce their bills on one of the Friday sittings set aside in each session for the discussion of PMBs. These bills receive priority over others proposed by backbenchers, so are more likely to actually pass into law (Marsh and Read

[5]However, there are grounds for treating Bowler's (2010) results with caution. His analysis is based on the behaviour of 629 and 564 MPs for the 1997-2001 and 2001-2005 parliaments respectively. This high number (out of 659 constituencies in total) suggests that his analysis doesn't exclude all MPs conventionally disqualified from proposing PMBs, such as ministers, shadow ministers, and party whips.

[6]Previous work on private members' bills in the House of Commons has covered shorter periods or specific bills (Bowler 2010; Bromhead 1956; Marsh and Read 1988; Richards 1970). A similar comparison can be drawn with studies of bill initiation in other legislatures, which have tended to focus on relatively short time periods (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2003; Bräuninger, Brunner and Däubler 2012; Campbell 1982; Crisp et al. 2004; Kessler and Krehbiel 1996; Rocca and Gordon 2010; Solvak 2013; Solvak and Pajala 2016; Williams and Indridason 2018).

[7]MPs may also take up PMBs which have successfully passed through the Lords (Blackburn et al. 2003, 547). I do not consider such bills here, as my focus is on proposals initiated by MPs.

1988, 23). Second, any MP can propose a bill simply by presenting it to the House. Such bills are automatically deemed to have had their 'first reading', and are scheduled for their 'second reading' at a later date. Third, two MPs a week can propose bills under the so-called Ten Minute Rule.[8] Unlike the presentation procedure, this allows a short speech to be given in favour of (and in opposition to) the bill, and if the bill is opposed there can be a vote on the first reading, rather than it being granted automatically.[9]

My main dependent variable combines bills proposed under all three procedures. This is because all three can serve personal vote-seeking strategies. Ballot bills do have a much higher chance than the other types of actually passing into law, because they are given higher priority for debate. They thus provide direct potential for credit-claiming. However, all three procedures can be used to attempt more indirect credit-claiming, by putting pressure on the government for certain policy outcomes. Bills introduced under any of the three procedures also allow MPs to engage in advertising (by showing they are hard-working) and position-taking (by signalling their attention and attitude to a particular topic). A further justification for combining them into one measure is that they are not all equally accessible. While there are no restrictions on the presentation procedure, not all MPs can win the ballot, and Ten Minute Rule speeches are limited to two a week. Analysing any single procedure on its own would ignore the possibility that MPs may draw more heavily on a particular procedure when they are unsuccessful in using others. In particular, they may draw more on the presentation procedure when they are less successful in the other two, more constrained, routes (and vice versa). Combining these counts therefore ensures that my measure captures MPs' actual preferences over how many bills to propose, so does indicate their interest in personal vote-seeking. Nonetheless, I do explore below whether analysing these procedures separately produces different results.

5.2.2 Independent variables

To test my hypotheses, I use two independent variables — partisanship and electoral security — and the interaction between them. Partisanship is measured as the percentage

[8] Party whips play an informal role in allocating these slots among interested MPs (Blackburn et al. 2003, 545).

[9] For a more detailed explanation of these procedures see Marsh and Read (1988) and Blackburn et al. (2003). Importantly, these procedures remained substantially unchanged throughout the period of study.

of respondents reporting a 'very strong' party identification in the British Election Study for the general election prior to each parliament.[10] Figure 5.1 shows how partisanship developed over the period covered by this paper.

Of course, this aggregate-level measure may obscure cross-constituency variation in partisanship. However, disaggregating this survey data would only produce very small, unrepresentative samples of voters in each constituency.[11] Some existing work addresses this problem by using electoral volatility as a proxy variable (André, Depauw and Beyens 2015; Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). Electoral volatility is theoretically (negatively) related to partisanship, and easy to calculate for individual constituencies. However, this approach has a number of downsides. First, net electoral volatility obscures the extent of individual-level vote-switching, so provides only a lower bound for the overall level of volatility. Second, electoral volatility can be driven not only by demand (exogenous changes in voters' preferences) but also by supply (the 'menu' of parties available at a given election). Third, even among 'demand-side' explanations, partisan dealignment may be only one of several causes of electoral volatility.[12] Given these issues, it seems preferable to measure partisanship directly, even if this means using national-level data.

Electoral security is measured as an MP's seat margin — the difference in vote share between the winning MP and the second-placed candidate in their constituency at the most recent general election. This was calculated using the *Constituency-Level Election Archive* (Kollman et al. 2017). Due to some errors in this data, I extensively checked and cleaned it using successive editions of the *Times Guide to the House of Commons* — an authoritative guide to British election results published after each general election.

5.2.3 Control variables

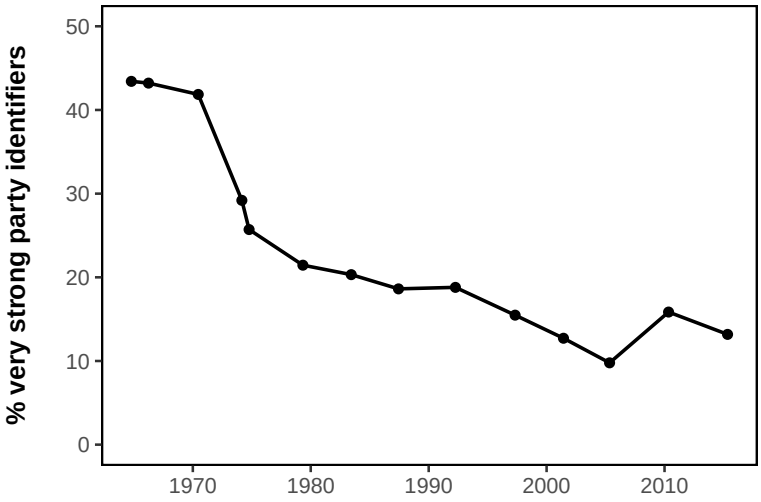
The following analyses also include a range of control variables. How these variables are included depends on the justification for their inclusion. One — polarization — is

[10] The precise questions used in each survey are set out in Appendix D.2. As discussed below, operationalising partisanship to also include 'fairly strong' partisans produces very similar results.

[11] The following chapter addresses this issue by using multilevel regression and poststratification to generate constituency-level estimates from national-level data. However, this method requires detailed constituency-level demographic data, not available for the period of analysis covered here.

[12] Perhaps for these reasons, calculating district-level electoral volatility for each election covered by this analysis shows that it is moderately, but far from perfectly, correlated with my chosen independent variable. Comparing across parliaments, my measure of partisanship correlates at —0.37 with mean district-level volatility, and —0.40 with median volatility.

Figure 5.1: Evolution of partisanship in Britain, 1964-2015



Source: British Election Study

included because it is a potential confounder, correlated with both partisanship and MPs' personal vote-seeking. Policy convergence by political parties can both follow and cause partisan dealignment (Green 2007; Lupu 2016). Moreover, if party convergence increases the importance of valence concerns (Green 2007), this could include the qualities of individual candidates, and thus incentivize greater personal vote-seeking. This control variable therefore ensures that any findings of a relationship between partisanship and my dependent variable are not simply driven by their shared link with polarization. Given this, I include polarization in my models in the same manner as I include partisanship — both on its own and as an interaction with electoral security. It is measured as the absolute difference between the Conservative and Labour parties' scores on the Right-Left measure provided by the Manifesto Project (Volkens et al. 2016).

A second control variable — a proxy for how far MPs are career politicians — is included for similar reasons. The decline in British voters' partisanship has coincided with an increase in the number of MPs for whom politics is first and foremost a career (King 1981).[13] Such politicians might propose greater numbers of private members' bills, as they are generally more active and assertive (Heuwieser 2018; King 1981; Norton 1994). They may also be more likely to tailor their behaviour to their electoral context,

[13]These two trends may be causally related, if the changing social profile of MPs has played a role in weakening voters' identification with parties (Evans and Tilley 2017).

given the importance of re-election for their career prospects (O'Grady 2019). This variable is thus included on its own and in interaction with electoral security. In the absence of data identifying career politicians across this whole period, I rely on a proxy used in earlier work: the age at which an MP first entered parliament. MPs who enter parliament at a younger age are more likely to view politics primarily as a career (Kam 2006; King 1981).

Other control variables are included not because they are correlated with partisanship, but because they should influence MPs' bill proposal activity. These variables are thus not interacted with electoral security. First, I control for the number of sitting days in a parliament, expecting more proposals in longer parliaments. Second I control for MPs being members of the governing party, which typically leads to lower bill proposal rates (Bowler 2010; Bräuninger, Brunner and Däubler 2012; Williams and Indridason 2018). Third, an indicator of whether MPs stood again at the next general election accounts for impending retirement altering legislators' behaviour by removing their need to appeal to voters (Willumsen and Goetz 2017; Zupan 1990). Finally, I include a binary indicator of whether MPs' second-placed challenger came from a 'third' party (i.e. not the Labour or Conservative parties). Eggers (2014) suggests that voters' preferences between these parties and the main two parties are weaker than their preferences between the main two parties themselves. This incentivises MPs facing third party challengers to care more about their individual reputation. Sources of data for all of these control variables are described in Appendix D.3.

5.3 Analysis and Results

5.3.1 Bill proposals, 1964-2017

Table 5.1 presents a series of OLS regression models of bill proposal activity in the House of Commons between 1964 and 2017. The unit of analysis is MP-parliament pairs. The analysis covers all backbench MPs who sat for one of the main two parties (Labour and Conservative) during this period.[14] The first two models include only the independent

[14]It excludes ministers, shadow ministers, party whips, and (Deputy) Speakers — by convention, such MPs do not propose private members' bills. It also excludes MPs from smaller parties (because their division into frontbenchers and backbenchers is less clear), as well as MPs who only served for a portion of a given parliament.

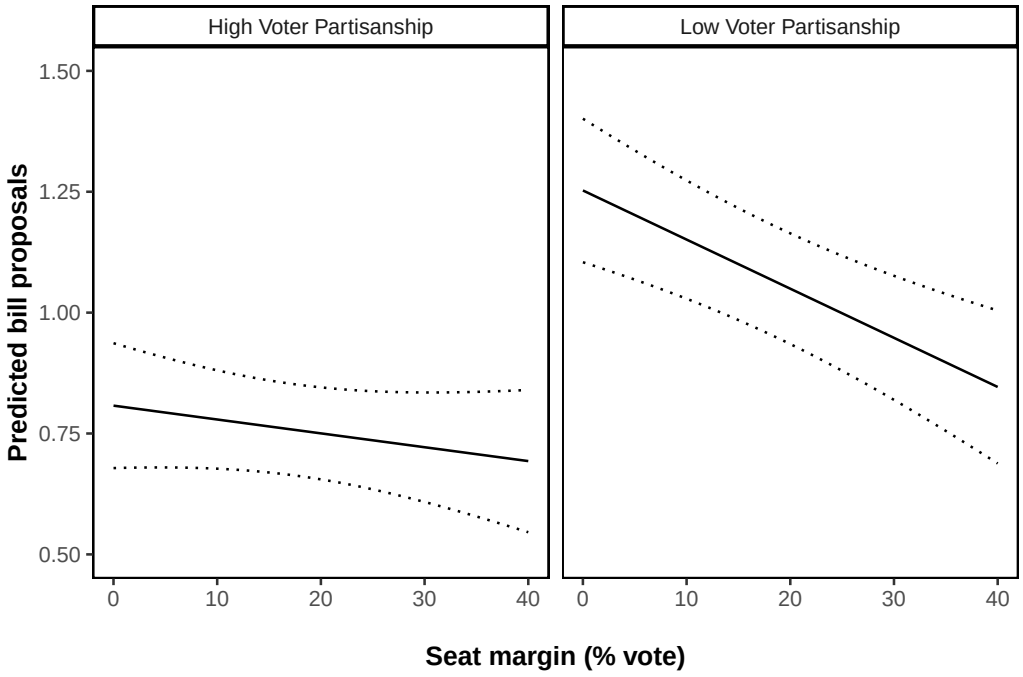
variables, their interaction, and a control for the number of sitting days in each parliament. The third model adds MP-level control variables — government/opposition status, standing for re-election, facing a third party challenger, the age at which they first entered parliament, and that variable's interaction with electoral security. The fourth model adds parliament-level control variables — polarization, and its interaction with electoral security.

Table 5.1: OLS model of MPs' bill proposals, 1964-2017

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Partisanship	-0.009^{***}	-0.017^{***}	-0.020^{***}	-0.019^{***}
	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Margin		-0.016^{***}	-0.019^{*}	-0.010
		(0.004)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Partisanship*Margin		0.0003^{**}	0.0003^{**}	0.0003^{**}
		(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Constant	0.237^{**}	0.595^{***}	0.418	0.295
	(0.104)	(0.140)	(0.299)	(0.325)
Sitting days	✓	✓	✓	✓
MP controls			✓	✓
Parliament controls				✓
Observations	5,015	5,015	5,015	5,015
R^2	0.030	0.035	0.046	0.048
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The results of all four models are similar, and offer support for both hypotheses. As per Hypothesis 2, there is a significant negative relationship between partisanship and bill proposal activity. Holding other variables constant, MPs propose fewer bills when voters are more partisan. As per Hypothesis 3, partisanship appears to condition the relationship between MPs' seat margin and their bill proposal activity. The main coefficient of MPs' seat margin is negative (though not consistently statistically significant) — 'safer' MPs propose fewer bills. But the interaction of partisanship and seat margin is positive, suggesting the negative effect of MPs' seat margin is weaker when partisanship

Figure 5.2: Conditional relationship between electoral security and bill proposals



Note: Predicted counts based on Model 4 in Table 5.1, for an opposition MP seeking re-election against a main party challenger, at the mean level of polarization. High and low voter partisanship are a standard deviation above and below the mean, respectively, and represent 36.59% and 13.57% of the electorate having a 'very strong' party identification. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals.

is higher. While the substantive magnitude of the coefficients is relatively small, they nonetheless suggest the expected patterns in MPs' interest in personal vote-seeking.

Given the interaction term in this model, Figure 5.2 shows an MP's predicted number of bill proposals as a function of their electoral security, at two different levels of partisanship. The left panel shows the relationship between electoral security and bill proposals at a standard deviation above the mean level of partisanship; the right panel shows it at a standard deviation below the mean. The comparison between the two panels shows further support for Hypothesis 3. At high levels of partisanship, an MP's electoral margin has only a weak relationship with their bill proposal activity — MPs from marginal seats are slightly more active than those from safe seats. When partisanship is low, however, electoral security matters more — there is a much clearer negative relationship between an MP's seat margin and their predicted bill proposals. This suggests that

the relationship between electoral security and my indicator of personal vote-seeking is conditional on the extent of partisanship, as expected.

The analysis so far combines bills proposed across three different procedures. This had several justifications, which were discussed above. Even so, these procedures do vary in potentially relevant ways. In particular, the higher passage rates of ballot bills, and the speaking opportunities associated with Ten Minute Rule bills, may make them better avenues for credit-claiming and advertising, respectively. They may therefore be driven by different dynamics. Table 5.2 explores this possibility, repeating the full model from Table 5.1, but separately for each bill type. The results clearly do differ across types of bill proposal. Partisanship has the expected relationship with presentation bills and Ten Minute Rule bills, but not with ballot bills. Seat margin only has the expected relationship with Ten Minute Rule bills, while its interaction with partisanship has the expected relationship with both ballot bills and Ten Minute Rule bills. Thus, while patterns of presentation and ballot bills partially support my expectations, the strongest evidence for my hypotheses comes from Ten Minute Rule bills.[15]

These analyses are robust in a number of ways. They were estimated using OLS regression, for simplicity of presentation. However, re-estimating them with a model more appropriate for count outcomes — poisson regression — yields similar results. The same is true when broadening the analysis to include backbench MPs from parties other than Labour and the Conservatives, when including 'fairly strong' partisans in my measure of partisanship, and when including a number of further control variables.[16] The results are also similar when using a simple logistic regression, estimating the probability of MPs proposing *at least* one bill. This reduces the likelihood that these findings are driven by a few outlying MPs proposing very high numbers of bills. Adopting a multi-level approach, with random intercepts for each parliament and random coefficients for

[15] Given that party whips play some role in allocating Ten Minute Rule bill slots, this offers suggestive evidence that party leaders do act strategically when accommodating their members' demands for personal vote-seeking opportunities.

[16] These additional controls are: (*a*) a binary indicator of male MPs, (*b*) a binary indicator of MPs holding a post as 'parliamentary private secretary' (a form of non-ministerial government aide), (*c*) a categorical variable comparing MPs from Scottish and Welsh constituencies to those from English constituencies, and (*d*) a binary indicator of MPs sitting for the Labour Party rather than the Conservatives. When including MPs from parties other than Labour and the Conservatives, I exclude MPs from Northern Ireland, where the nature of party competition is very different (see Tilley, Evans and Mitchell 2008; Tilley, Garry and Matthews 2019).

Table 5.2: OLS model of MPs' bill proposals, 1964-2017 (by type)

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals (by type)		
	Presentation	Ballot	Ten Minute
	(5)	(6)	(7)
Partisanship	-0.006^{**}	-0.001	-0.013^{***}
	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Margin	0.004	-0.002	-0.012^{*}
	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.006)
Partisanship*Margin	-0.00000	0.0001^{*}	0.0003^{***}
	(0.0001)	(0.00003)	(0.0001)
Constant	0.068	-0.011	0.238
	(0.239)	(0.068)	(0.169)
Sitting days	✓	✓	✓
MP controls	✓	✓	✓
Parliament controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5,015	5,015	5,015
R^2	0.010	0.023	0.057
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

electoral security, produces slightly more mixed results.[17] When modelling all bills, the coefficients of the independent variables are in the expected directions, but only those for partisanship and seat margin are significantly so. For ballot bills, however, marginality and its interaction with partisanship are both statistically significant. As before, Ten Minute Rule bills offer the most supportive evidence — both independent variables, and their interaction, remain significant and in the expected direction. Finally, I obtain almost identical results to my original analyses when clustering standard errors within each MP to account for the non-independence of observations.[18] The results of all these alternative model specifications are reported in Appendix E.

5.3.2 Focus on the 1970s

Are these findings really due to changes in partisanship? Including control variables in the above analyses reduces, but cannot entirely eliminate, the possibility that my findings are due instead to changes in some other correlated variable. A further way to address this concern is to explore the consequences of a sudden large change in partisanship. Doing so makes it easier to identify and probe alternative explanations for these consequences. The 1970s offers a change of this kind — as Figure 5.1 shows, the number of 'very strong' partisans almost halved between the 1970 general election and the two 1974 general elections.[19] Hypothesis 3 suggests that this drop in partisanship should have strengthened the negative relationship between MPs' electoral security and their bill proposal activity.

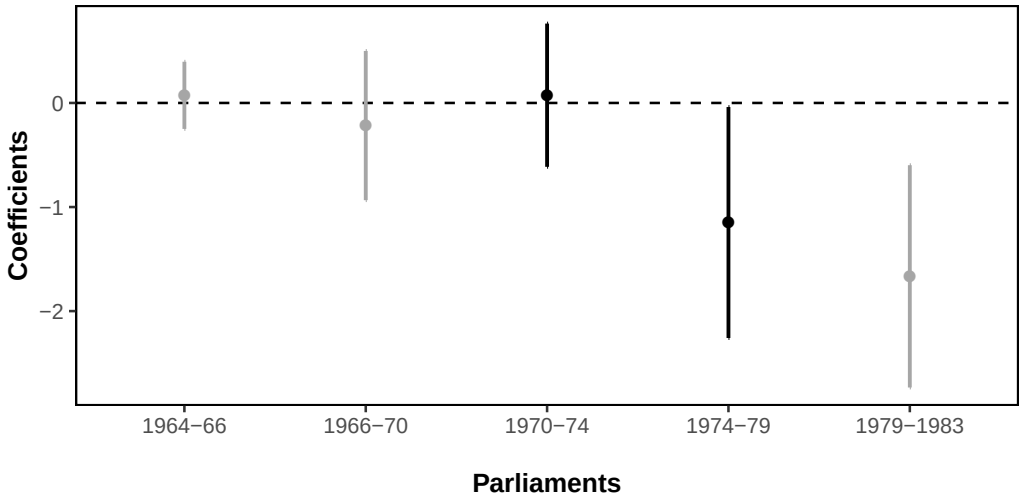
Figure 5.3 offers some support for this expectation, showing how the bivariate relationship between MPs' electoral security and their bill proposal activity evolved in the decade before and after 1974. It plots the coefficients from a series of OLS models estimated separately for each parliament between the 1964 and 1983 general elections (excluding the very short 1974 parliament). For the three parliaments prior to 1974, the coefficient is close to zero and statistically insignificant. However, a negative relationship

[17] In these models, interval predictor variables were rescaled, centred on their mean value.

[18] Specifically, the standard errors were estimated using pairs cluster bootstrapped t-statistics, with the `clusterSEs()` package in `R` (Esarey and Menger 2019).

[19] It should be noted that some portion of this drop, though not all of it, may be due to changes in question wording (Fieldhouse et al. 2020, 52-53). However, the following evidence should provide some reassurance that this period did see a drop in partisanship, given that it shows the expected change in MPs' behaviour.

Figure 5.3: Relationship between electoral security and bill proposals, 1964-1983



Note: Coefficients from bivariate OLS regression models estimated separately for each parliament between the 1964 and 1983 general elections, omitting the short 1974 parliament. Bars represent 90% confidence intervals.

emerged in the 1974-79 parliament, and became even clearer in the subsequent 1979-83 parliament. Immediately before 1974, MPs' electoral security was unrelated to their bill proposal activity. Immediately after 1974, MPs elected by larger margins proposed fewer bills.

Table 5.3 provides further evidence of this pattern. It reports the results of three models. The first two model bill proposals in the decade immediately before, and the decade immediately after, 1974.[20] The third combines both periods, but interacts marginality with a binary indicator for the post-1974 period. All three models control for government/opposition status and whether MPs sought re-election, and include parliament fixed effects. The results show that the relationship between MPs' seat margin and their bill proposal activity was statistically insignificant before 1974, but negative and highly significant after 1974. The significant interaction term in the third model suggests that this difference is statistically significant. Taken together, this provides further suggestive evidence to support Hypothesis 3. The apparently sudden and sizeable drop in voters' partisanship in the mid-1970s immediately preceded the emergence of a negative rela-

[20] Model 8 thus covers the 1964-66, 1966-70, and 1970-74 parliaments. Model 9 covers the 1974, 1974-79, and 1979-83 parliaments.

tionship between an MP's electoral security and my indicator of personal vote-seeking.

Table 5.3: Relationship between electoral security and bill proposals around 1974

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals		
	1964-74	1974-83	1964-83
	(8)	(9)	(10)
Margin	0.037	-0.838^{***}	0.050
	(0.210)	(0.311)	(0.233)
Margin*Post-1974			-0.912^{**}
			(0.361)
Post-1974			0.519^{***}
			(0.110)
Constant	-0.071	0.667^{***}	0.214^{**}
	(0.115)	(0.157)	(0.106)
Parliament FE	✓	✓	✓
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	1,284	1,170	2,454
R^2	0.037	0.088	0.068
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5.3.3 Alternative explanations

What else might explain this pattern? Several alternative explanations could account for the changing relationship between MPs' electoral security and their bill proposals. First, it could be a consequence of the growing success of the Liberal Party, who more than doubled their vote share and seat share at the 1974 elections (Butler and Kavanagh 1974). As discussed above, MPs facing Liberal challengers may have greater incentives for personal vote-seeking, due to voters' weaker partisan preferences regarding third parties (Eggers 2014). The changing relationship between electoral security and bill proposal activity in the 1970s could therefore be due to increasing numbers of MPs facing Liberal challengers. If this were the case, the post-1974 relationship between MPs' seat margin and their bill proposals should be particularly strong for those MPs with a Liberal challenger. I have tested this by repeating the post-1974 model from

Figure 5.4: Evolution of party positions, 1964-1983

Note: Based on the RILE score calculated by the Manifesto Project Database (Volkens et al. 2016). Lower numbers indicate more left-wing positions.

Table 5.3, with and without control variables, and adding an interaction between MPs' seat margin and an indicator of whether they faced a Liberal challenger. However, both the direct coefficient of facing a Liberal challenger, and its interaction with seat margin, are statistically insignificant (see Table F1).

A second potential alternative explanation looks to the role of polarization between parties. As discussed above, MPs may have greater incentives for personal vote-seeking when parties' positions are less polarized, if this leads voters to make more use of valence judgements (Green 2007). My findings might therefore be due to changes in polarization, rather than changes in partisanship, if the positions of the main parties were substantially closer together in the decade after 1974 than in the decade before it. However, historical accounts of British politics typically argue the opposite, with the 1960s seen as the high point of a post-war consensus between the main two parties (see Kavanagh 1992). A quantitative measure of parties' positions, shown in Figure 5.4, is similarly unsupportive. This measure suggests the parties were very close together between 1964 and 1970, and if anything the gap between their positions slightly widened in the decade after 1974. A similar picture emerges from alternative measures of polarization (Goet 2019; Peterson and Spirling 2018) (see Figure F.1).[21] It thus seems implausible to suggest that the

[21]Neither of these measures show a clear-cut picture of the 1970s marking a shift from high to low

negative relationship between seat margin and bill proposal activity emerged after 1974 due to lower levels of polarization.

A third potential alternative explanation relates to the increasing prevalence of career politicians in the House of Commons. King (1981, 280) highlighted an increase in such politicians during this period, and suggested that it could explain parties' declining cohesion in the voting lobbies. The patterns shown above might thus be explained by an influx of politicians who saw politics principally as a career, so were more sensitive to their electoral (in)security (O'Grady 2019). However, this alternative explanation doesn't seem plausible, for several reasons. First, existing research suggests that career politicians are typically promoted from the backbenchers very quickly, to become (shadow) ministers (Allen 2013). It thus seems unlikely that such politicians would drive these results, as proposing private members' bills is an exclusively *backbench* activity. Second, it is not obvious that there actually was any sharp increase in career politicians in the Commons between 1970 and 1974. Figure 5.5 shows the ages of newly-elected MPs — an established proxy for their likelihood of being career politicians (Kam 2006; King 1981) — between 1964 and 1983. The clear stability in the age of new MPs casts doubt on the idea that the Commons saw a sudden upsurge in career politicians in the 1970s.[22] Third, recent work covering a later period (1987-2007) has categorised 201 Labour MPs as to whether or not they were career politicians (O'Grady 2019). Combining my data with this coding provides no evidence that electoral margins matter more for the bill proposal activity of career politicians than other MPs (see Table F2).

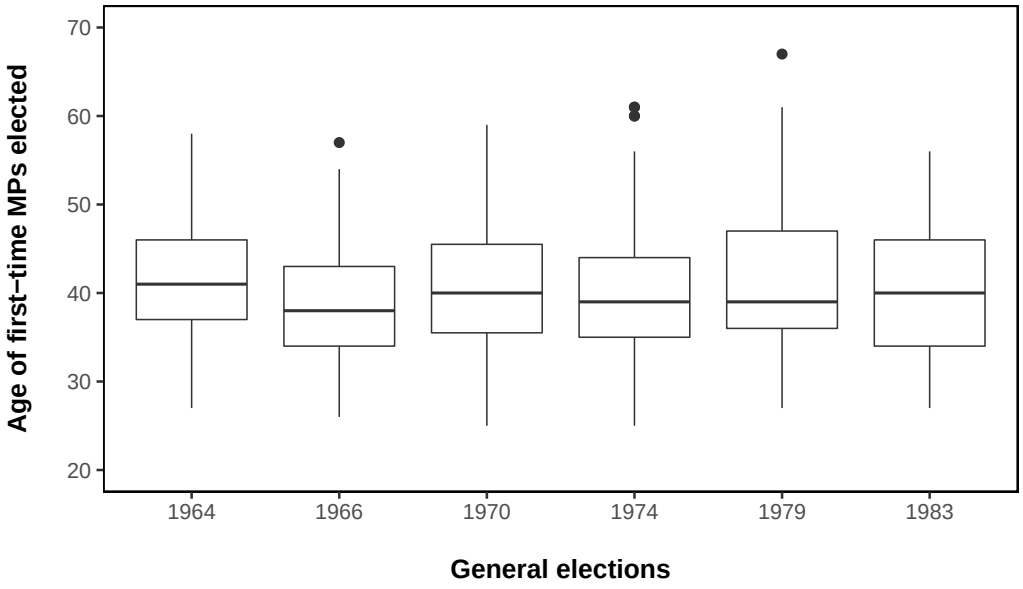
Finally, the absence of a significant relationship between MPs' electoral margin and bill proposal activity before 1974 could be simply a mechanical consequence of either variable varying too little for any relationship to be statistically significant. However, this concern can be easily assuaged. Neither MPs' bill proposal rates nor their seat margins varied substantially more in the post-1974 decade than the pre-1974 decade.[23] This lends further credibility to the argument that changing patterns of legislative behaviour in the 1970s can be traced to a decline in voters' partisanship, rather than the alternative

polarization. Instead, they show similar levels of polarization in the pre-1970 and 1974-1979 periods, with heightened polarization from 1970 to 1974 and after 1979.

[22] This accords with a contemporary account highlighting the continuity in candidates' backgrounds in 1974 (Butler and Kavanagh 1974, 209-210).

[23] The standard deviation of MPs' total bill proposals was 1.11 between 1964 and 1974, and 1.39 between 1974 and 1983. The standard deviation of MPs' seat margin was 14.6 percentage points between 1964 and 1974, and 12.9 percentage points between 1974 and 1983.

Figure 5.5: Age of newly-elected Members of Parliament, 1964-1983



Note: Calculated using the *Times Guide to the House of Commons*. The two 1974 elections (February and October) are shown together. Boxes indicate the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles. Whiskers indicate the highest (lowest) value no further than 1.5 times the inter-quartile range beyond the 75th (25th) percentile. Circles indicate outlying values.

explanations discussed here.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has tested whether partisanship among voters affects personal vote-seeking by legislators. Using bill proposals as an indicator of personal vote-seeking, and deploying a large new dataset of such proposals, I have tested two hypotheses. First, I expected partisanship to be negatively related to personal vote-seeking. MPs have fewer incentives for personal vote-seeking if voters' partisanship makes them unresponsive to the qualities of individual candidates. Second, I expected partisanship to condition the relationship between MPs' electoral security and their personal vote-seeking. Electoral security should have a negative relationship with personal vote-seeking, but this relationship should be stronger when partisanship is lower. If partisanship is high, even very vulnerable MPs have few incentives for personal vote-seeking.

My results provide supportive evidence for both hypotheses. Between 1964 and 2017, British MPs proposed more private members' bills when partisanship was lower. Partisanship's effects also interacted with those of electoral security. Electoral security had a negative relationship with MPs' bill proposal activity, but this was much stronger at lower levels of partisanship. This latter result was also borne out by changing patterns of bill initiation in the 1970s. In the decade before 1974, MPs' electoral security and their bill proposal activity were unrelated. After 1974, there was a statistically significant relationship between them. This development can plausibly be traced to a large drop in voters' partisanship between 1970 and 1974, rather than a number of alternative explanations.

Taken together, this chapter therefore offers new evidence that partisanship shapes legislators' personal vote-seeking. It is one of the first studies to show this at the level of individual legislators, and also to link voter partisanship to legislative behaviour other than rebellious voting. This chapter has focused on differences in partisanship over time. The following chapter turns to cross-sectional differences in partisanship, asking whether personal vote-seeking is also influenced by variation in partisanship across constituencies.

6

Constituency-Level Dealignment and Legislative Behaviour

Does the level of partisanship in an MP's constituency affect their personal vote-seeking in parliament? This chapter explores the consequences of cross-constituency variation in partisanship for MPs' legislative behaviour. My theory offers two clear empirical expectations. Hypothesis 2 suggests that MPs elected from less strongly partisan constituencies should engage in more extensive personal vote-seeking. Hypothesis 3 further suggests that the negative relationship between MPs' electoral margin and their personal vote-seeking activity should be stronger when they represent less strongly partisan constituencies.

I test these hypotheses by analysing legislative behaviour in the UK House of Commons between 2010 and 2017. I use multilevel regression and poststratification (MRP) to estimate partisan dealignment at the level of individual constituencies, and explore how this is related to MPs' behaviour in parliament. Where the previous chapter focused on bill proposals, this chapter uses two other indicators of MPs' personal vote-seeking — their wider legislative activity, and their constituency focus. First, I explore how ac-

tively MPs engage in three kinds of legislative behaviour — proposing private members' bills, initiating early day motions (a kind of non-binding parliamentary petition), and giving speeches. Second, I then explore how often MPs refer to their constituency when speaking in parliament. I expect MPs from less partisan consituencies to be more active, and more constituency-focused.

I find partial support for my theoretical expectations. My analysis of MPs' legislative activity does not show the relationships suggested by either Hypothesis 2 or Hypothesis 3. However, my analysis of MPs' constituency focus does support Hypothesis 2. I find that MPs representing more dealigned constituencies mention their constituency more often when speaking in parliament. However, constituency-level dealignment doesn't moderate the relationship between MPs' electoral security and their constituency focus in the way Hypothesis 3 suggests. So overall, these findings are thus mixed, but offer some support for Hypothesis 2.

This chapter proceeds as follows. Section 6.1 discusses why and how I use MRP to generate constituency-level estimates of partisan dealignment. It also presents a number of tests of the validity of these estimates. Section 6.2 analyses the relationship between these estimates and MPs' legislative activity. Section 6.3 then does the same for MPs' constituency focus, before Section 6.4 summarises and discusses my findings.

6.1 Measuring Constituency-Level Dealignment

6.1.1 Previous approaches

How should we measure constituency-level partisan dealignment? It is difficult to do so directly. Survey data makes it possible to directly measure partisanship at an aggregate level, as in Chapter 5 (see also Kam 2009). But disaggregating even large national-level surveys can usually only produce small, unrepresentative, samples of voters in each constituency. Given this difficulty, previous studies have relied instead on indirect proxy measures of dealignment.

In particular, existing work on the legislative effects of constituency-level dealignment has used electoral volatility as a proxy measure (André, Depauw and Beyens 2015; Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). This is generally calculated as the Pedersen Index — the net change in all parties' vote shares between two elections (Pedersen 1979). This approach has several strengths. There is a clear theoretical and empirical link between

the two phenomena — citizens with weaker ties are more likely to switch their vote choice between elections, and previous work sees partisan dealignment as a key source of rising electoral volatility (Dalton, McAllister and Wattenberg 2000; Fieldhouse et al. 2020). Moreover, constituency-level electoral volatility can be easily and reliably calculated.

Even so, volatility is at best an imperfect proxy for dealignment. As discussed in Chapter 5, this is for three main reasons. First, net electoral volatility obscures the extent of individual-level vote-switching, so provides only a lower bound for the gross level of volatility. Second, electoral volatility can be driven not only by demand (changes in voters' preferences) but also by supply (changes in the parties standing for election). Third, even among 'demand-side' explanations, dealignment may be only one of several causes of volatility.

Given these limitations, this chapter uses MRP to produce an alternative measure with two key strengths. First, it uses data directly measuring partisanship, rather than a proxy variable associated with it. Second, it does so in a way that aims to provide valid measures at the level of individual constituencies. The following subsection explains how MRP allows me to achieve this.

6.1.2 Method

MRP is a statistical method for developing sub-national estimates of public opinion from national survey data. Originally developed as a way of measuring state-level opinion in the United States (US) (Kastellec, Lax and Phillips 2010; Lax and Phillips 2009; Park, Gelman and Bafumi 2004, 2006), more recent work has applied it at the level of electoral districts in the US (Warshaw and Rodden 2012) and the UK (Hanretty, Lauderdale and Vivyan 2017, 2018). It has also recently been used as a tool for election forecasting in the UK.[1]

Using MRP to generate district-level measures of a particular facet of public opinion requires just three steps. First, the researcher fits a multilevel model of whichever outcome they wish to measure. That outcome is then predicted for a number of specific demographic 'types' of voters. The final step consists of poststratification: combining these type-level predictions with data on the prevalence of those types in each district

[1]It gained prominence in the 2017 British general election when YouGov used it to (correctly) predict a hung parliament in the face of much scepticism, when conventional polling was still suggesting the incumbent Conservatives would increase their majority (see Cowley and Kavanagh 2018, 267-68).

to produce a district-level estimate.

To capture constituency-level dealignment, I use MRP to estimate the number of non-partisan voters in each of Great Britain's 632 constituencies at the 2010 and 2015 general elections.[2] I use data from the British Election Study (BES), which asked respondents at each of these elections whether, and how strongly, they identified with a particular party. More specifically, I use the BES 2010 Campaign Internet Panel Survey (Sanders and Whiteley 2014), and Wave 4 of the 2014-2018 BES Internet Panel Survey (fielded in March 2015) (Fieldhouse et al. 2015). In each of these surveys, respondents were first asked whether they generally identify with a specific party. Those respondents who failed to offer a party were then also asked if they generally think of themselves as closer to a specific party.[3] I consider voters as 'non-partisan' if they did not offer a party in response to either of these questions, and estimate the number of such voters in each constituency as follows.

First, I use a multilevel logistic regression model to estimate the probability that an individual reports no party identification. I model this binary outcome as a function of several demographic variables: gender, renting vs. owning, private vs. public sector employment, age, and social class.[4] My choice of variables is guided largely by the availability of constituency-level data on their joint distribution, which is required for the subsequent poststratification. However, these variables are also plausibly linked to an individual's partisanship.[5] As well as these demographic variables, the models also include an indicator for each constituency, and three constituency-level predictors — logged population density, logged median earnings, and the proportion of the population that is non-white. I run separate models for the 2010 and 2015 elections. Data for the individual-level variables come from the relevant BES survey. Data for the constituency-level variables come from Hanretty, Lauderdale and Vivyan (2018).

In the second step, I use these models to generate predicted probabilities of being non-partisan for a series of distinct demographic types. Each type represents a possible

[2]This excludes constituencies in Northern Ireland, where the party system, and the nature of party loyalties, are very different from those in mainland Great Britain (see Tilley, Evans and Mitchell 2008; Tilley, Garry and Matthews 2019).

[3]For specific question wording see Appendix G.

[4]For detail on the operationalisation of these variables, see Appendix G. Following Kastellec, Lax and Phillips (2016), the coefficients of these categorical variables are all estimated as modelled effects for each level of the variable, drawn from a normal distribution with mean zero and an estimated variance.

[5]See, for example, Dalton and Wattenberg (2000) and Fieldhouse et al. (2020).

combination of the values of my independent variables. With three binary variables (gender, renting, and employment), eight age categories, and four social grades, for 632 constituencies, there are 2 x 2 x 2 x 8 x 4 x 632 combinations of my independent variables. I calculate the predicted probability of a voter being non-partisan for each of these combinations. Again, this is done separately for the 2010 and 2015 elections.

For the third and final stage, I carry out post-stratification — combining the predicted probabilities for each type with the frequency of those types in each constituency. The latter information, requiring the joint distribution of demographic variables in each constituency, is not provided by the UK census. However, I use a set of weights calculated for a recent article applying MRP to UK constituencies (Hanretty, Lauderdale and Vivyan 2018).[6] With this information, a constituency-level estimate is simple to calculate. Multiplying each type's predicted probability by its frequency yields a weighted prediction. Summing these weighted predictions for each constituency produces an estimate of the proportion of non-partisan voters in that constituency. I use this as my constituency-level measure of dealignment.

6.1.3 Validation

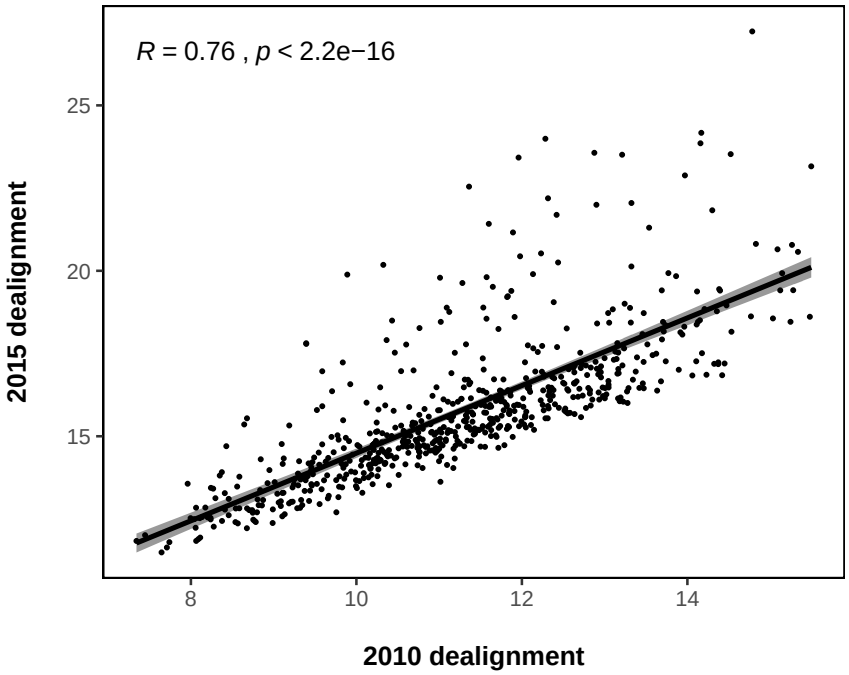
My analysis depends on these estimates validly measuring the extent of partisan dealignment in a constituency. Before turning to that analysis, therefore, I conduct a number of validation exercises.

First, and most simply, I check for over-time consistency in my estimates. If my estimates are valid, there should be a reasonable consistency between my estimates for the 2010 and 2015 elections. Though the *levels* of dealignment may have changed across this period, the *relative* dealignment of constituencies should be fairly consistent. Figure 6.1 thus plots the 2010 and 2015 estimates against each other. As expected, there is a close association between the two sets of values, with a correlation of nearly 0.8.

Second, I attempt 'convergent validation' — assessing whether my estimates have an association with an alternative indicator of the same underlying concept (Adcock and Collier 2001). As discussed above, the main alternative indicator of constituency-level dealignment is electoral volatility (André, Depauw and Beyens 2015; Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). Figure 6.2 therefore shows the relationship between my dealignment

[6]For details of how the authors calculate these weights, please see Hanretty, Lauderdale and Vivyan (2018, 579-80), and the Online Appendix to that article.

Figure 6.1: Relationship between 2010 and 2015 dealignment estimates



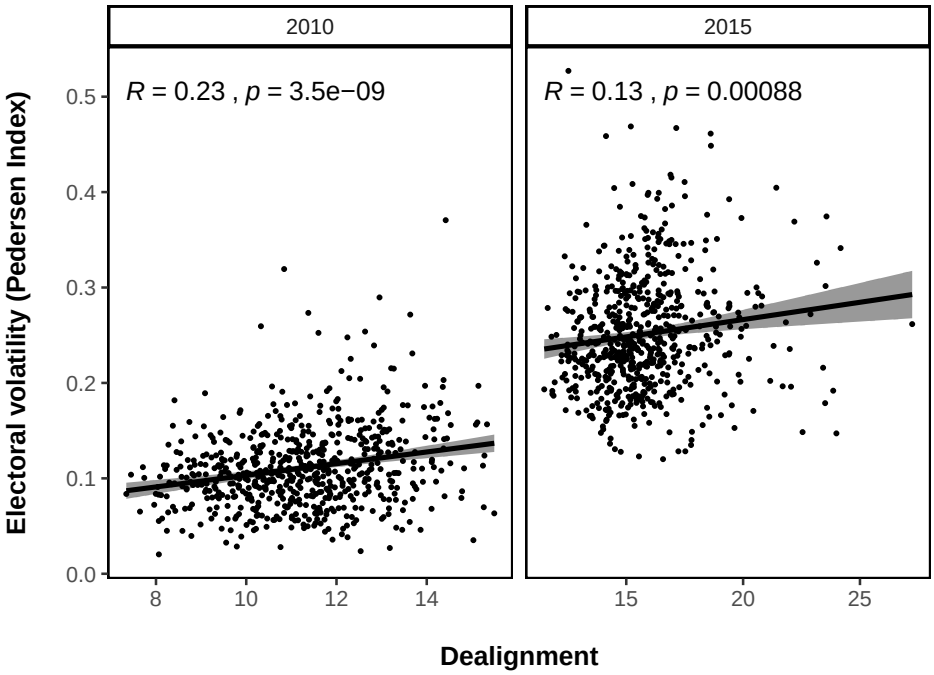
Note: Relationship between estimated constituency-level dealignment at 2010 and 2015 general elections. Dealignment measured as the proportion of voters in each constituency with no party identification. Excludes Northern Irish constituencies. R indicates Pearson correlation coefficient.

estimates and constituency-level electoral volatility, as measured by the Pedersen Index (Pedersen 1979).[7] Figure 6.2 shows a moderately positive relationship, with correlations of 0.23 and 0.13. At both the 2010 and 2015 general elections, electoral volatility was higher in constituencies I estimate to be less partisan. Though the relationship is not especially strong, I have developed this new constituency-level measure of dealignment precisely becuse electoral volatility is an imperfect proxy for dealignment. Figure 6.2 thus offers some, albeit limited, evidence of the validity of my dealignment estimates.

Thirdly, I turn to 'nomological' or 'construct' validation (Adcock and Collier 2001).

[7]Electoral volatility was calculated using the (extensively cleaned) data from the *Constituency-Level Election Archive* (Kollman et al. 2017) introduced in Chapter 5. Due to a boundary review before the 2010 general election, changes in parties' vote shares were calculated from *notional* results for the previous election (Rallings and Thrasher 2007). The 2010 panel excludes two constituencies — Buckingham and Glasgow North East — which are extreme outliers due to their MP becoming (or ceasing to be) the Speaker of the House of Commons, who is conventionally re-elected unopposed.

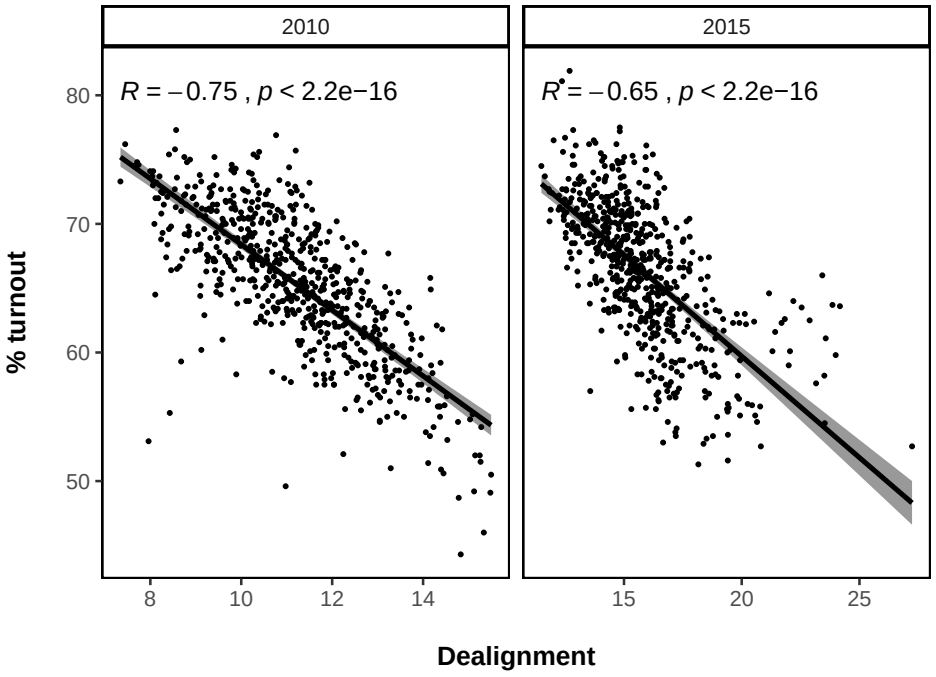
Figure 6.2: Relationship between dealignment estimates and electoral volatility



Note: Relationship between estimated constituency-level dealignment and electoral volatility in the 2010 and 2015 general elections. Dealignment measured as the proportion of voters in each constituency with no party identification. Volatility measured as the Pedersen (1979) index. Both panels exclude Northern Irish constituencies. R indicates Pearson correlation coefficient.

This means using my measure to test a well-established hypothesis regarding the relationship between the concept I am trying to measure and some other outcome. In this case, a large body of work links partisanship and dealignment to variation in electoral turnout. Strong attachment to one of the participants in an electoral contest gives voters greater incentives to vote in order to influence the outcome. Partisanship also turns voting into more of a habitual act of loyalty. Existing work thus finds that more partisan voters are more likely to vote (Clarke et al. 2009; Whiteley et al. 2001), and links aggregate-level dealignment to a long-term decline in turnout (Heath 2007; Wattenberg 2000). Given this, there should be a negative relationship between my measure of constituency-level dealignment and constituency-level turnout. Figure 6.3 tests this by plotting my estimates of dealignment against constituency-level turnout for both

Figure 6.3: Relationship between dealignment estimates and turnout



Note: Relationship between estimated constituency-level dealignment and turnout in the 2010 and 2015 general elections. Dealignment measured as the proportion of voters in each constituency with no party identification. Both panels exclude Northern Irish constituencies. R indicates Pearson correlation coefficient.

elections.[8] This shows exactly the expected pattern — a strong negative relationship, with correlations of around -0.7. At both elections, turnout was substantially lower in constituencies I estimate to be less partisan.

To probe my measure's construct validity further, I test whether this relationship still holds after controlling for other relevant variables. Table 6.1 presents the results of two OLS models modelling constituency-level turnout in 2015 as a function of my dealignment measure.[9] The first model includes just my independent variable — dealignment. The second adds two important controls — constituency marginality (at the previous general election), and country. Marginality is included because existing work finds that turnout is higher when electoral margins are narrower (Denver and Hands 1985; Franklin

[8]Data on turnout comes from Kavanagh and Cowley (2010) and Cowley and Kavanagh (2016).

[9]I focus on the 2015 election because a redrawing of constituency boundaries prior to the 2010 election complicates the inclusion of one of my control variables — marginality at the last election.

2004; Vowles, Katz and Stevens 2017; Whiteley et al. 2001). A country indicator is included because the 2015 election showed variation in turnout across the UK's constituent nations, in large part due to Scotland's 2014 independence referendum (Curtice, Fisher and Ford 2016, 416). The picture that emerges from these models is consistent with that in Figure 6.3 — more dealigned constituencies see significantly lower levels of turnout, even after accounting for the influence of other variables.

Table 6.1: OLS model of turnout at 2015 general election

	Dependent Variable: Turnout	
	(1)	(2)
Dealignment	-0.016^{***}	-0.016^{***}
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	0.912^{***}	0.921^{***}
	(0.012)	(0.011)
Controls		✓
Observations	632	632
R^2	0.418	0.511
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Taken together, therefore, these validation exercises are encouraging. They suggest that my estimates do validly measure the extent of constituency-level partisan dealignment. They should thus allow me to test whether there is a relationship between legislators' personal vote-seeking and the partisanship of voters in their constituency. The following section does this, first using legislative activity as an indicator of personal vote-seeking.

6.2 Dealignment and Legislative Activity

6.2.1 Legislative activity as personal vote-seeking

Why use MPs' legislative activity as an indicator of their personal vote-seeking? This approach can be justified theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, being a more active parliamentarian has a number of advantages for MPs attempting to cultivate a personal vote. First, being more active may increase the likelihood that voters learn about MPs' parliamentary work, particularly by increasing their prominence in press coverage of politics. Second, it sends a positive message about that work, showing them to be a hard-working constituency representative. Third, voters may also draw conclusions about MPs' views and priorities from their observed behaviour, so treat MPs' legislative activity as a signal of their underlying concern for their constituency. Fourth, being more active in parliament may increase the credibility of MPs' other personal vote-seeking efforts. For example, incumbent MPs during elections often make claims about how hard they have worked for their local constituency. Voters may be more inclined to believe such claims if they already have a positive view of their MP's level of activity in parliament.

Given this, there is also substantial empirical evidence that legislative activity serves MPs' personal vote-seeking strategies. This can be seen from the behaviour of both voters and legislators. Across several types of legislative behaviour, as already noted, MPs with more need to attract a personal vote are more active in parliament (e.g. Bowler 2010; Kellermann 2013, 2016; Sozzi 2016; Williams and Indridason 2018). This appears to be an astute strategic decision, as there is also widespread evidence that voters reward MPs who are more active (Bowler 2010; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2003; Däubler, Bräuninger and Brunner 2016; François and Navarro 2019, 2020; Loewen et al. 2014; Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019; Williams and Indridason 2018). Clearly, both MPs and voters see legislative activity as a form of personal vote-seeking. Given this, I now explain how I operationalise legislative activity, as well as my independent and control variables.

6.2.2 Data

Dependent variables

I test my theory using four different indicators of legislative activity as dependent variables. The first three simply measure MPs' engagement in three specific kinds of activity that have been linked to personal vote-seeking. First, I count the total number of private members' bills proposed by each MP in a given parliament. As discussed in the previous chapter, proposing legislation allows MPs to engage in credit-claiming, advertising, and position-taking strategies (see Bowler 2010; Williams and Indridason 2018). Second, I count MPs' sponsorship of a kind of non-binding petition known as 'early day motions' (EDMs).[10] Like private members' bills, these allow MPs to signal their effort and constituency concern, and have been linked to MPs' incentives for personal vote-seeking (Kellermann 2013). Third, I count the number of speeches MPs make in the chamber during a given parliament (including oral questions). Giving speeches and asking questions are key tools for personal vote-seeking, and allow MPs to show that they are active constituency representatives (see Kellermann 2016; Marcinkiewicz and Stegmaier 2019; Proksch and Slapin 2015; Sozzi 2016).

Opportunities to engage in these three kinds of behaviour are relatively unconstrained. How far PMBs can be seen as unconstrained was discussed in the previous chapter (see subsection 5.2.1), and there are almost no formal restrictions on MPs' sponsorship of EDMs. Opportunities to make speeches or ask questions are partially constrained, meaning that MPs' ability to participate in a given debate, or to ask an oral question on a given day, may be constrained.[11] But across a full parliamentary term, MPs who wish to speak more often or ask more questions can do so. This suggests that MPs who wish to be more active are able to do so. MPs' activity levels should thus reflect their incentives for engaging in personal vote-seeking.

However, MPs may still vary in which of these tools they use for personal vote-seeking. Focusing on any one indicator of legislative activity may not capture this. I

[10] I count the number of EDMs of which MPs are the primary sponsor, rather than how many they have signed in total.

[11] The (non-partisan) Speaker selects which MPs are able to speak in debates (see Blackburn et al. 2003, 307-308). The order in which oral questions are asked (and thus which questions are likely to be reached within the allocated time) is determined randomly, with some further role for the Speaker (see Blackburn et al. 2003, 519-525).

thus use a fourth dependent variable which combines the previous three into a composite measure of legislative activity, allowing MPs' inactivity in one area to be offset by activity in another (see Akirav 2016, 2019*a*). I calculate this measure by rescaling my other three dependent variables to run from 0 to 1, and then summing them, producing a scale of MPs' activity that runs from 0 to a theoretical maximum of 3.[12]

The data on private members' bill proposals is the same as that used and described in Chapter 5. Data on MPs' EDM sponsorship was calculated using the `hansard()` package in `R` (Odell 2017*a*).[13] Data on speeches was calculated from Odell's (2017*b*) Hansard dataset.[14]

Independent variables

To test my theory, I use two independent variables and their interaction. The first is the measure of constituency-level dealignment introduced and validated in Section 6.1. As explained in Section 6.1, this provides constituency-level estimates of the percentage of the electorate with no party identification. These are estimated separately for the 2010-15 and 2015-17 parliaments, based on surveys from the 2010 and 2015 general elections.

It should be noted that this differs from the key independent variable used in Chapter 5 in two ways. First, it is a constituency-level, rather than national, measure, for the reasons set out above. Secondly, where Chapter 5 measured partisanship (as the percentage of very strong partisans), this chapter instead measures dealignment (as the percentage of non-partisans). This is for two reasons. First, it provides consistency with existing work on the relationship between constituency-level partisanship and legislative behaviour, which focuses on dealignment (André, Depauw and Beyens 2015; Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). Second, and relatedly, using dealignment as my independent variable facilitated the validation exercises set out in subsection 6.1.3.

My second independent variable, which is included separately and in interaction

[12] Principal components analysis offers an alternative approach to generating this composite measure. I have done so, extracting the first dimension from a principal components analysis of all three kinds of legislative activity. All three variables load positively onto this dimension, suggesting that it does represent some latent measure of MPs' legislative activity. However, it has a very high correlation with my simpler measure (at over 0.97), and therefore produces very similar results if used in my analyses.

[13] For a small number of MPs, division attendance was calculated manually from the Parliament website.

[14] The data was pre-processed to remove short spoken contributions of ten words or fewer.

with dealignment, is MPs' electoral security. As in Chapter 5, this is measured as the difference in vote share between the winning MP and the second-placed candidate in their constituency at the most recent general election. It is calculated using a cleaned version of the *Constituency-Level Election Archive* (Kollman et al. 2017).

Control variables

All of my models include a number of control variables. The first four are included because they are known to influence MPs' activity. They were also included in the analysis of PMB proposal activity in Chapter 5. First, I include a dummy variable for whether MPs belong to a government or opposition party. Previous work has shown systematic differences in the legislative behaviour of government and opposition MPs (Akirav 2019*a*; Bowler 2010; Willumsen and Goetz 2017). Second, I control for whether MPs stood for re-election. Such MPs have a stronger incentive to still appeal to voters, relative to their colleagues who intend to retire, so should be more active (Willumsen and Goetz 2017; Zupan 1990). Third, I control for whether MPs faced a challenger from a 'third party'. As explained in earlier chapters, voters' weaker preferences in relation to these parties may heighten MPs' incentives for personal vote-seeking (Eggers 2014; Eggers and Spirling 2017). Fourth, I control for the age at which MPs were first elected to parliament. This acts as a proxy for how far MPs are 'career' politicians (Kam 2006; King 1981). Such MPs are typically more active and assertive (Heuwieser 2018; King 1981; Norton 1994). All of these variables are taken from the data used in Chapter 5 and explained in Appendix D.3.

I also include two other control variables. First, my models include a measure of constituency-level turnout. This accounts for the fact that turnout is closely correlated with my dealignment measure, as shown in the validation exercises above. Second, I include parliament-level fixed effects. This captures parliament-level differences that might affect MPs' activity (of which the most obvious is the differing lengths of the two parliaments covered).

6.2.3 Analysis

Results

Table 6.2 presents the results of three negative binomial regressions, modelling three kinds of legislative activity as a function of dealignment, marginality, their interaction, and the control variables described above.[15] The unit of analysis is MP-parliament pairs. The analysis covers the 2010-15 and 2015-17 parliaments, and includes all backbench MPs who sat for one of the main two parties (Labour and Conservative) during this period.[16]

The results in Table 6.2 are at best only partially supportive of my expectations. Neither provides evidence to support Hypothesis 2. While the coefficient of dealignment is in the expected (positive) direction in two of the three models, it is statistically insignificant in all three. The models of bill proposals and speeches offer some support for Hypothesis 3, as they show a negative and significant interaction between dealignment and MPs' seat margin. This initially appears to support my expectation that dealignment should strengthen the negative impact of electoral security on legislative activity. However, the coefficient of seat margin itself is actually positive in both of these models. Of course, the interaction means that the net impact of seat margin might become negative at sufficiently high levels of dealignment. But the relative magnitude of the coefficients shows that this is unlikely. For example, in the model of speech-giving the positive coefficient of seat margin is more than twenty times larger than its interaction with dealignment. Overall therefore, these analyses offer no clear evidence to support my expectations.

Does the picture change when considering these different kinds of legislative activity jointly? I test this by modelling my composite 'activity' measure as a function of the same variables used in Table 6.2. Recall that the dependent variable is a 0 to 3 scale, calculated by standardising and summing the previous three dependent variables. The coefficients from this model, with and without control variables, are reported in Table 6.3.

[15] I use negative binomial regression models because all three dependent variables are overdispersed counts, with variances larger than their mean (Hilbe 2014, 133).

[16] It excludes ministers, shadow ministers, party whips, and (Deputy) Speakers, whose parliamentary behaviour should be influenced by holding these roles. It also excludes MPs from smaller parties (because their division into frontbenchers and backbenchers is less clear), as well as MPs who only served for a portion of a given parliament.

Table 6.2: Negative binomial model of MPs' legislative activity, 2010-2017

	Dependent Variable:		
	PMBs	EDMs	Speeches
	(3)	(4)	(5)
Dealignment	0.095	−0.070	0.038
	(0.097)	(0.093)	(0.033)
Margin	0.062*	−0.029	0.022**
	(0.032)	(0.029)	(0.010)
Dealignment*Margin	−0.004*	0.002	−0.001*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Constant	−3.285	5.914**	4.423***
	(2.482)	(2.377)	(0.848)
Parliament FE	✓	✓	✓
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	578	578	578
Pseudo R^2	0.047	0.094	0.039
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

This shows a similar pattern to the models of bill proposals and speeches presented above. As before, the coefficient for dealignment is positive but statistically insignificant. The full model also echoes the earlier results by showing a statistically significant and negative interaction between dealignment and MPs' seat margin. However, this still only partially supports my expectations, because the coefficient of seat margin is positive, statistically significant, and much larger than the coefficient of the interaction term. My theory suggested that dealignment should strengthen a negative effect of electoral security on legislative activity. These models instead show a positive relationship between electoral security and legislative activity, which grows smaller when dealignment is higher. As a result, this analysis again provides no clear evidence of the expected relationship between constituency-level dealignment and MPs' personal vote-seeking.

If constituency-level dealignment didn't clearly shape British MPs' legislative activity between 2010 and 2017, what did? Table 6.3 shows statistically significant coefficients for several of my control variables. It suggests that MPs were less active when they came from governing parties rather than opposition parties. However, the variable that stands out most clearly is the dummy for MPs seeking re-election. The coefficient is positive, large, and statistically significant — MPs who subsequently stand again in the next general election are substantially more active than those who retire. This result is intuitive, and echoes other recent findings (Willumsen and Goetz 2017).[17]

Robustness

The generally unsupportive findings presented above are not simply the result of my chosen model specifications. Repeating the combined analysis reported in Table 6.3, but with a range of alternative model specifications, yields similarly scant evidence to support my theoretical expectations.

First, I have repeated the model including a number of additional control variables. These are: (*a*) a binary indicator of male MPs, (*b*) a binary indicator of MPs holding a post as 'parliamentary private secretary' (a form of non-ministerial government aide), (*c*)

[17] Though Table 6.2 does not report the coefficients of control variables, the full results show a similar picture. The dummy for seeking re-election was consistently positive and significant across all three models, while the sign and/or significance of the other control variables differed across models. This was also true of the analysis of private members' bills reported in Table 5.1 in Chapter 5. Again, though I did not report coefficients for control variables, between 1964 and 2017 MPs who sought re-election proposed significantly more PMBs.

Table 6.3: OLS model of MPs' effort, 2010-2017

	DV: Effort Index	
	(6)	(7)
Dealignment	0.007	0.011
	(0.007)	(0.009)
Margin	0.003	0.006**
	(0.003)	(0.003)
Dealignment*Margin	−0.0002	−0.0003*
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Opposition party		0.039*
		(0.023)
Stood for re-election		0.103***
		(0.026)
Third-party challenge		−0.040**
		(0.017)
Age at first election		−0.0004
		(0.001)
Turnout		0.003
		(0.002)
Constant	0.163*	−0.188
	(0.089)	(0.229)
Parliament FE	✓	✓
Observations	578	578
R^2	0.164	0.200
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

a categorical variable comparing MPs from Scottish and Welsh constituencies to those from English constituencies, and (d) MPs' seniority (measured as the years between their first and most recent election to parliament).[18] Second, I repeated my analyses without observations for MPs who retired at the subsequent general election.[19] This allows me to focus on the subset of MPs who should be most sensitive to their electoral context. Finally, I have re-estimated the model but only for those MPs who sat in both parliaments, and including MP fixed effects. This probes whether *within-constituency* changes in partisanship across the two parliaments influenced MPs' personal vote-seeking. All three of these alternative specifications are reported in Table H1.

All three alternative specifications show similar patterns to the main analysis reported above. As in the main analysis, dealignment has a consistently positive but statistically insignificant coefficient. Its interaction with seat margin is consistently significant and negative, as expected. But the main coefficient of seat margin is positive, and around fifteen times larger than the interaction term. These alternative specifications therefore offer no more supportive evidence that dealignment affects MPs' legislative activity as expected.

6.3 Dealignment and Constituency Focus

6.3.1 Constituency focus as personal vote-seeking

If dealignment didn't clearly shape the *quantity* of MPs' parliament behaviour, did it shape its *content*? I test this by examining whether constituency-level dealignment is related to how far MPs are constituency-focused. Though this can be operationalised in many ways, I here define it as the extent to which MPs mention their constituency when speaking in parliament. As with legislative activity, using this as an indicator of personal vote-seeking can be justified theoretically and empirically.

There are several theoretical reasons why constituency-focused parliamentary speech can be advantageous for MPs' personal vote-seeking. It should be attractive to voters, for both 'valence' and positional reasons. Firstly, it signals to voters that an MP cares about their constituency, and is working to represent it in parliament. Speeches of this

[18] I do not control for MPs' party affiliation, as it entirely overlaps with their government/opposition status in this period.

[19] This model does not include the binary indicator of whether MPs stood for re-election, as it does not vary within this subset of observations.

kind are a direct signal of this constituency-focused work. They also indirectly suggest a broader underlying concern for their constituency. This can be seen as a kind of valence appeal to voters, who value constituency focus as a positive attribute in MPs (e.g. Vivyan and Wagner 2016). Secondly, as well as signalling general concern for their constituency, constituency-focused speech might suggest to voters that an MP shares the constituency's issue priorities or positions. This should be electorally attractive to voters, who typically expect MPs to reflect public opinion in their constituency (Dassonneville et al. 2020).

This is supported by empirical evidence from the behaviour of both legislators and voters. Several studies show a link between MPs' incentives for personal vote-seeking and their constituency focus (Aleman, Micozzi and Ramírez 2018; Heitshusen, Young and Wood 2005; Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019), although some studies also point to other factors being more important (Borghetto, Santana-Pereira and Freire 2020; Kellermann 2016; Martin 2011*b*; Russo 2011).[20] Similarly, there is evidence that voters respond positively to constituency-oriented behaviour (Chiru 2018; McKay 2020), and that they favour MPs whose local connections make them more likely to be constituency-oriented (e.g. Campbell et al. 2019*b*; Evans et al. 2017; Tavits 2010). Constituency orientation is thus a common and sensible proxy for personal vote-seeking, which is particularly worth exploring given the unsupportive findings above.

6.3.2 Data

Dependent variables

To measure MPs' constituency focus, I measure how far MPs' spoken contributions in parliament (i.e. speeches and oral questions) refer to their constituency. I have classified spoken contributions as constituency-focused if they mention the name of the relevant MP's constituency. I also classify speeches as constituency-focused if they refer to a (non-generic) part of the constituency name, rather than the full name. For example, if the MP for South West Norfolk were to give a speech or ask a question referring just to Norfolk, it would be classified as constituency-focused.[21]

[20] Most relevant for this study is Kellermann's (2016) finding that electoral vulnerability leads British MPs to ask more, but not necessarily more constituency-focused, written questions.

[21] These non-generic elements were selected manually in advance, as there are nuances that would be missed by an automated coding. For example, it makes sense to classify speeches referring to 'Stoke'

This is a relatively underinclusive measurement approach, compared to studies which draw on a dictionary of smaller territorial units within a constituency (towns, villages, specific suburbs, etc.) (e.g. Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). However, it should still capture all direct references to the constituency or the broader county or city within which it falls. Excluding references to lower-level territorial units also avoids cross-MP differences being driven by constituencies having differing numbers of such units.

My dependent variable is the number of each MP's spoken contributions in a given parliament which I classify as constituency-focused. As in Section 6.2, data for these calculations comes from Odell (2017*b*), and I exclude short contributions of ten words or fewer.

Independent variables

This analysis uses the same two independent variables as my analysis of MPs' legislative activity in Section 6.2. The first is the measure of constituency-level dealignment. Recall that this represents an estimate of the number of non-partisan voters in each constituency. The second is MPs' electoral security, measured as the difference in vote share between the winning MP and the second-placed candidate in their constituency at the most recent general election. I also include an interaction between these two variables.

Control variables

The following models also include a number of control variables. As in Section 6.2, I control for three variables which have been linked to MPs' personal vote-seeking — their government/opposition status, whether they subsequently stood for re-election, and whether they previously faced a third-party challenger. I also control for constituency-level turnout, as it is highly correlated with my dealignment estimates, and include parliament-level fixed effects. I also control for the distance between an MP's constituency and the Westminster parliament.[22] Existing work suggests that MPs are more constituency-focused when they represent districts further from the national capital (Aleman, Micozzi and Ramírez 2018; Martin 2011*b*). Finally, I control for the total number of spoken contributions made by each MP. This is to ensure that I can disentangle the

as constituency-related if they come from MPs for Stoke-on-Trent (which is often shortened to Stoke), but not if they come from the MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (which is not).

[22] Data for this variable comes from Willumsen (2019), and was provided privately by that author.

drivers of constituency-focused legislative speech from those of speech in general.

6.3.3 Analysis

Results

Table 6.4 reports the results of four negative binomial regression models of MPs' constituency focus. The first includes only my measure of constituency-level dealignment, together with parliament-level fixed effects and the other control variables described above. The second includes the variable capturing the size of MPs' seat margin. The third model then includes both of my independent variables, and their interaction. My theory suggests that dealignment should be positively related to MPs' constituency focus (Hypothesis 2), and electoral margin negatively so, with the interaction between them also being negative (Hypothesis 3).

Table 6.4: Negative binomial model of constituency mentions, 2010-2017

	DV: Constituency Mentions		
	(8)	(9)	(10)
Dealignment	0.127***	0.118***	0.095*
	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.050)
Margin		−0.020***	−0.029*
		(0.004)	(0.016)
Dealignment*Margin			0.001
			(0.001)
Constant	0.827	1.747	2.182*
	(1.084)	(1.064)	(1.261)
Parliament FE	✓	✓	✓
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	577	577	577
Pseudo R^2	0.045	0.054	0.054
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Unlike my earlier analysis of legislative activity, the results presented in Table 6.4 do offer support for Hypothesis 2. The coefficient of dealignment is positive and statistically significant in all three models. This suggests, as expected, that MPs from less

partisan constituencies mention their constituency more often when speaking in parliament. Figure 6.4 shows this relationship visually. It plots the predicted number of times an MP will mention their constituency during a given parliament, as a function of the dealignment of their constituency. This is based on the coefficients from Model 10 in Table 6.4, holding other variables at their mean or — if categorical — modal values. The very clear gradient shows that the substantive impact of constituency-level dealigment on MPs' constituency focus is potentially quite considerable.

However, Table 6.4 does not offer support for Hypothesis 3, which posited a negative interaction between dealignment and MPs' seat margin. The interaction term in Model 10 is substantively very small, and statistically indistinguishable from zero. Moreover, comparing Models 9 and 10 shows that adding the interaction term doesn't improve the model fit (measured as the pseudo R^2). This suggests that while constituency-level dealignment may increase MPs' constituency focus, this impact doesn't depend on MPs' electoral security. These analyses thus support Hypothesis 2, but not Hypothesis 3.

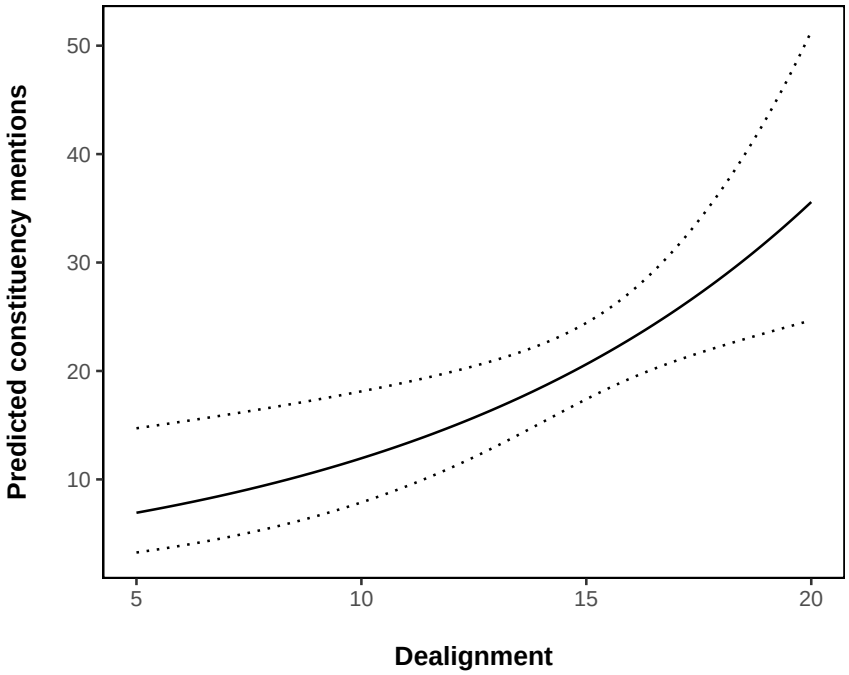
Robustness

Alternative model specifications produce similar results. As with my analysis of legislative activity, I have repeated Models 9 and 10 from Table 6.4 with additional control variables (gender, PPS status, nation, and seniority), without MPs who went on to retire at the next election, and with MP fixed effects. The alternative specifications for Model 9 are reported in Table H2, and those for Model 10 are reported in Table H3.

Table H2 shows that the coefficient of dealignment remains positive and significant when repeating Model 9 with additional controls, or without MPs who subsequently retired. The coefficient is no longer significant in the model that includes MP fixed effects. This suggests that the positive finding for dealignment is driven by variation across MPs, rather than within MPs over time. Table H3 shows the equivalent alternative specifications for Model 10, so also includes the interaction between dealignment and MPs' seat margin. As before, these models don't offer any improvement in model fit relative to the non-interactive model. The interaction term is substantively very small, and statistically insignificant. It should also be noted that the coefficient for dealignment itself now fails to reach statistical significance.

These robustness checks, therefore, generally show a very similar story to the main results. They offer some evidence that constituency-level dealignment is positively as-

Figure 6.4: Predicted constituency mentions at varying levels of dealignment



Note: Predicted counts at varying levels of dealignment, based on Model 3 in Table 6.4. Dealignment measured as the proportion of voters in an MP's constituency with no party identification. Predictions calculated with all other variables at their mean or — where categorical — modal values. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals.

sociated with MPs' tendency to mention their constituency when talking in parliament. But they do not support the expectation, set out in Hypothesis 3, that dealignment should strengthen the negative impact of electoral security on MPs' constituency focus.

6.4 Discussion

Is legislators' personal vote-seeking influenced by voters' partisanship? In Chapter 5, I provided evidence suggesting that personal vote-seeking is influenced by variation in partisanship over time. This chapter has probed whether it is also driven by variation across constituencies. It found mixed, but partially supportive, evidence.

Focusing on legislative behaviour in Britain between 2010 and 2017, I have tested the relationship between the partisan dealignment of British MPs' constituencies, and how active and constituency-focused they are in parliament. Given that being an active and

constituency-focused representative can help MPs attract a personal vote, my theory suggests that MPs from more dealigned constituencies should be more active, and more constituency-focused (Hypothesis 2). This should be particularly true for MPs elected by narrower margins (Hypothesis 3).

I first tested my expectations about legislative activity by modelling three kinds of legislative behaviour— proposing PMBs, sponsoring EDMs, and giving speeches — as a function of constituency-level dealignment, seat margin, their interaction, and various control variables. I also combined these activities into a fourth dependent variable, capturing MPs' overall activity. However, I found very little evidence of the expected relationships. Neither my measure of dealignment, nor its interaction with MPs' seat margin, were consistently related to any of the dependent variables in the expected manner.

However, I then found more supportive results from my analysis of MPs' constituency focus. I calculated the number of MPs' spoken contributions in parliament (speeches and oral questions) which referred to their constituency. As with legislative activity, I then modelled this outcome as a function of constituency-level dealignment, seat margin, the interaction of these two variables, and a range of relevant controls. As expected by Hypothesis 2, I found evidence that MPs from more dealigned constituencies do talk about their constituency more often in parliament. Contrary to Hypothesis 3, I found no evidence of an interaction between constituency-level dealignment and MPs' electoral security.

This chapter thus offers partial support for my expectations. While I have not found evidence that constituency-level dealignment shapes MPs' legislative activity, my results suggest that it may influence MPs' constituency focus. This latter result echoes other recent findings (Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). However, this is — to my knowledge — the first evidence linking MPs' legislative behaviour to direct estimates of constituency-level dealignment, rather than indirect (and questionable) proxies. In my final chapter, I will draw together all the findings of this thesis and discuss their implications.

7

Conclusion

This thesis began with a voter claiming they would vote for a pig if their preferred party ran it as a candidate (Butler 1952, 173). The subsequent chapters suggested that many voters would not be so forgiving. Instead, I have argued that voters with weaker party loyalties do take account of individual candidates' merits when voting. Voters' partisanship thus shapes how far MPs can attract support *as an individual* — a personal vote — rather than relying on the popularity of their party. MPs can attract this personal vote by using their work in parliament to generate a positive reputation among constituents. Voters' partisanship thus affects how MPs seek re-election, and how they behave in parliament.

The thesis set out to test whether personal vote-seeking in parliament is driven by voters' partisanship. More specifically, it tested three hypotheses derived from the theory set out in Chapter 2. First, Hypothesis 1 suggested that voters with weaker partisanship should be more responsive to the records of individual legislators when voting. As a result, Hypothesis 2 suggested that partisanship should deter personal vote-seeking by MPs. Finally, Hypothesis 3 claimed that voters' partisanship should also weaken the influence of another driver of MPs' personal vote-seeking activity: their

electoral (in)security.

This concluding chapter draws together the evidence presented across four empirical chapters. Section 7.1 summarises the results of my voter-level and MP-level analyses, assesses how far they support my theoretical expectations, and discusses their generalisability. Section 7.2 then summarises how these findings contribute to existing debates in political science, as well as their normative and policy implications. Finally, Section 7.3 outlines a number of potential extensions to this work, to be explored in future research.

7.1 Findings

7.1.1 Voters

My voter-level analyses suggest that partisanship does indeed affect the electoral importance of MPs' legislative behaviour. Chapter 3 showed this using a natural experiment. Exploiting the random allocation of bill initiation rights in the New Zealand Parliament allowed me to estimate the causal effect of proposing legislation on MPs' subsequent electoral support. I then compared this effect across voters with different strengths of partisanship. In line with previous work (especially Williams and Indridason 2018), I found that proposing bills makes MPs more popular with voters in their district. More importantly, in line with Hypothesis 1, I found that this effect depends on voters' partisanship. As expected, the effect was strongest among voters with the weakest partisanship.

Chapter 4 then provided a further test of Hypothesis 1. By using a survey experiment, this analysis offered potentially greater internal validity than the natural experiment in Chapter 3. It also ruled out the possibility that differences between partisan and non-partisan voters were due to them having different levels of information about MPs' behaviour. The survey experiment randomly assigned respondents to receive different information about how hard a hypothetical MP worked in parliament, and tested the effect of this information on their likely support for the MP. The results paint a very similar picture to those in Chapter 3. Knowing an MP was relatively active in parliament increased voters' approval of them. Knowing they were relatively inactive decreased their approval. But again, this effect grew stronger as voters' partisan attachments grew weaker.

Taken together, these results support Hypothesis 1. They suggest that partisanship

makes voters less responsive to the merits, and specifically the legislative behaviour, of individual MPs. Partisanship, especially when strong, thus makes voters less likely to reward personal vote-seeking.

7.1.2 MPs

The MP-level analysis in Chapter 5 provided evidence that MPs engage in more extensive personal vote-seeking when partisanship is low. It focused on a widely used indicator of personal vote-seeking — MPs' legislative proposals — in the UK House of Commons since the 1960s. As expected by Hypothesis 2, MPs made more legislative proposals when voters' partisanship was lower. As expected by Hypothesis 3, this was particularly true for MPs who were elected by narrower margins, so had the most incentive for personal vote-seeking. This finding was borne out by analysis of the whole period from 1964 to 2017, and by a more focused analysis of a sudden drop in partisanship in the 1970s.

Chapter 5 therefore supports Hypotheses 2 and 3. It suggests that MPs are aware of how partisanship shapes the potential effectiveness of personal vote-seeking, and calibrate their re-election strategies and legislative behaviour accordingly. When partisanship is lower, MPs will engage more extensively in personal vote-seeking. Moreover, partisanship moderates the influence of other important drivers of personal vote-seeking. In particular, when partisanship is lower, MPs' electoral security is more strongly related to their personal vote-seeking.

Chapter 6 tested the effects of cross-sectional, rather than longitudinal, variation in partisanship, and provided evidence that this too can influence MPs' legislative behaviour. Analysing the behaviour of British MPs between 2010 and 2017, I tested whether constituency-level dealignment was related to MPs' overall legislative activity, or their constituency focus. My analysis of MPs' legislative activity offered little support for my expectations. But analysing MPs' constituency focus did show support for Hypothesis 2. The estimated share of non-partisan voters in an MP's constituency is positively related to how often they talk about their constituency in parliament. This suggests that constituency-level dealignment leads MPs to be more constituency-focused, in order to attract a personal vote. However, I found no evidence of the interaction between constituency-level dealignment and MPs' electoral security suggested by Hypothesis 3.

How can the supportive results presented in Chapter 5 be reconciled with the more mixed results of Chapter 6? In particular, how can we explain the lack of a cross-

constituency relationship between dealignment and MPs' legislative activity? There are two main potential interpretations. First, we might interpret this as evidence that longitudinal variation in partisanship shapes personal vote-seeking, while cross-constituency variation does not. This could be true if MPs form their perceptions of voters' attitudes on the basis of system-level conditions, rather than those in their own specific constituency. If this is the case, changes in the general level of partisanship would affect MPs' personal vote-seeking, while variation across constituencies would not. However, this explanation is inconsistent with the fact that I did find support for my expectations when analysing MPs' constituency focus.

It seems more sensible, therefore, to leave open the possibility that constituency-level variation in partisanship can shape legislative activity, and explain the null result in Chapter 6 regarding legislative activity as a consequence of specific features of my chosen period and country of study. It may simply be that the empirical variation in partisanship across constituencies at recent British elections has been too small to influence MPs' legislative activity. In this view, the difference between the effect of longitudinal and cross-sectional variation in partisanship may simply be that the former is much larger, rather than because MPs always base their strategies on one rather than the other. Alternatively, it could be the case that even small cross-constituency variation in partisanship matters for British MPs' personal vote-seeking, but that MPs' activity levels in this period were driven by factors other than their concern for re-election. Given that 2010 to 2015 saw a highly unusual peacetime coalition government, and 2015-17 saw the UK's 'Brexit' referendum and subsequent political fallout, this may indeed not be a 'normal' period in British politics.[1] Finally, it may be that even in this unusual period there was a relationship between constituency-level dealignment and MPs' legislative activity, but that it is too small for my analysis to detect. After all, my analysis only includes roughly 270 observations for each of the two periods I studied.

Given this discussion, my MP-level analysis offers partial support for my theory. Chapter 5 showed evidence of a longitudinal relationship between partisanship and personal vote-seeking in parliamentary behaviour. Chapter 6 showed some — though more mixed — evidence of a similar cross-sectional relationship.

[1]However, extending this analysis to other periods would be difficult. As explained above, my MRP measure of dealignment requires data on the joint distribution of demographic variables in each constituency. This data is not presently available for earlier periods.

7.1.3 Generalisability

How generalisable are these results, beyond the cases analysed here? While my results are based solely on the behaviour of voters in New Zealand and the UK, and legislators in the UK, there may be good reasons to expect similar findings in a fairly wide set of cases.

Most importantly, a large number of countries meet the key scope condition of my theory — using electoral systems that allow voters to indicate a preference among candidates. Such electoral systems are widespread — 53 out of 77 democracies in 1992 allowed some kind of candidate-based voting in elections to their legislature's lower house (Cox 1997, 45-47). More recent evidence also suggests that electoral systems — at least in Europe — are becoming increasingly personalised (Renwick and Pilet 2016). Many democracies therefore have the institutional preconditions for voters' partisanship to influence MPs' legislative behaviour.

Beyond this important scope condition, the application of my theory might also depend on other factors that shape either voters' ability to reward personal vote-seeking, or legislators' incentive to engage in it. First, voters can only reward parliamentary personal vote-seeking if they receive information about it. A growing body of evidence, from a range of countries, suggests that voters do generally have the necessary information to reward personal vote-seeking (e.g. Däubler, Bräuninger and Brunner 2016; Williams and Indridason 2018). Second, we should not expect similar findings in countries where constitutional term limits undercut the influence of electoral incentives on legislators' behaviour. But existing research suggests such term limits are extremely rare in national legislatures (Carey 1996). Finally, beyond merely being motivated by re-election, my theory depends on MPs seeking re-election *to the same body*. In some multilevel political settings, MPs may instead hope to move from one level of politics to another — from subnational to national politics, or vice versa. Politicians with this 'progressive' ambition may shape their appeal to their potential future constituency, rather than their current one (Høyland, Hobolt and Hix 2019). This could break the link between partisanship and legislative behaviour, if an MP's present and future constituencies have different levels of partisanship, or if their future constituency uses a party-based electoral system. Given this, we should only expect to find similar results in settings where the national tier of politics is generally seen as the apex of politicians' careers.

7.2 Implications

7.2.1 Political science

The arguments and evidence presented in this thesis have implications for four main topics in political science.

Most directly, the thesis has aimed to contribute to a gap in the study of personal vote-seeking. As explained in Chapter 1, studies linking personal vote-seeking and partisanship are few in number (André, Depauw and Beyens 2015; Kam 2009; Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019). Partly as a consequence, they have a number of empirical and theoretical limitations. The contribution of this thesis to the study of personal vote-seeking, therefore, is twofold. Firstly, it expands this literature by providing new evidence that partisanship shapes the effectiveness, and the extent, of personal vote-seeking. Second, it does so in a way that attempts to address limitations of existing work. Empirically, it is one of the first studies to test these arguments using data on individual MPs' parliamentary behaviour, and on behaviour other than rebellious voting. Moreover, it uses direct measures or estimates of voters' partisanship, rather than proxy measures. Theoretically, the thesis advanced the idea that partisanship should not only have a direct influence, but should also shape the importance of other drivers of personal vote-seeking. It thus adds to the broader recent literature highlighting interactions between different drivers of personal vote-seeking (André, Depauw and Beyens 2015; Fernandes, Geese and Schwemmer 2019; Shomer 2017; Sieberer and Ohmura 2019).

Secondly, this thesis contributes to the literature on candidate-based voting (e.g. Campbell and Cowley 2014; Marsh 2007; Stevens et al. 2019). It does so by providing evidence that partisanship can shape voters' willingness to cast their votes for candidates rather than parties. This may help to explain variation in the electoral importance of individual candidates, both between and within countries. Moreover, this suggests that partisanship may also have consequences for the effectiveness of local constituency campaigns (see Fieldhouse and Cutts 2009; Fisher et al. 2019), if they deploy candidate-based rather than party-based messages (Milazzo and Townsley 2020; Zittel 2015*a*). Voters' partisanship may influence which contexts, and which voters, offer the most fertile ground for such campaigns. Given the voter-level results presented in this thesis, these seem plausible avenues for further research.

Third, this thesis contributes to the study of politics in the main case analysed here:

the United Kingdom. The voter-level findings add to recent literature suggesting that the behaviour of individual MPs may matter more to British voters than has historically been the case (Campbell et al. 2019*a*; Eggers 2014; Vivyan and Wagner 2012). By linking this to the weakening of voters' party loyalties, the thesis adds to work charting the consequences of partisan dealignment for British electoral politics (e.g. Fieldhouse et al. 2020). The MP-level findings also suggest that dealignment may be affecting British legislative politics. They echoe Kam (2009) in suggesting that dealignment may be leading MPs to place more importance on their individual reputation with their constituents, and less on their party's overall reputation. This development might be a key element of context when trying to explain why the 'Brexit' process has so badly undermined the unity of Britain's main political parties.

Finally, the arguments and evidence presented in this thesis have several implications for legislative studies more generally. First, they emphasise the importance of considering voters' behaviour when explaining the behaviour of legislators. An influential body of work downplays this link, instead highlighting strategic incentives for legislators that arise from within the legislature (see Bowler 2000; Thies 2000). This thesis adds to a contrasting literature which suggests that legislators' behaviour is at least partly shaped by the attitudes and preferences of those they represent (e.g. Hanretty, Lauderdale and Vivyan 2017; Miller and Stokes 1963). Second, this thesis highlights the importance of adopting a broad empirical scope, in order to test the conditions in which different factors do and don't affect legislative behaviour. For example, many studies — usually focusing on a small number of parliamentary terms — show a relationship between electoral marginality and MPs' legislative activity (e.g. Bowler 2010; Kellermann 2016). This thesis adds to a smaller body of work that instead asks how that relationship varies across different contexts (André, Depauw and Martin 2015; Fernandes, Geese and Schwemmer 2019; Sieberer and Ohmura 2019). This approach reinforces the importance of the current trend in legislative studies towards producing large data sets that facilitate greater comparison across time or between countries (Eggers and Spirling 2014*a*; Goet, Fleming and Zubek 2020; Sieberer et al. 2016, 2018; Whitaker, Hix and Zapryanova 2017). Such data-gathering efforts are crucial if we are to understand how and why the drivers of legislative behaviour and organisation may vary.

7.2.2 Normative implications

My findings also have a number of broader normative implications. First, they suggest that dealignment may lead to elections meaning different things to different voters. While partisan voters continue to see elections as a choice between parties, non-partisan voters are more willing to also consider a second factor: the quality of parties' local candidates. Of course, people's choice of party has always been guided by a mixture of motivations. Moreover, in contexts like the UK, voters face a different menu of parties depending on where they live (Awan-Scully 2018). However, the rise of candidate-based voting suggests that where some voters use elections to choose their preferred party, others use them to choose their preferred local representative. It seems worthwhile to consider whether this situation is normatively desirable. Regardless, it certainly complicates the already difficult question of what kind of mandate the electoral process confers on successful candidates and parties.

A second normative implication of my findings may be a more optimistic one. They suggest there is some link between the way voters think about politics and the way politicians conduct it. The results in Chapter 5 suggested that when voters are less partisan, MPs are also less party-focused. This might be seen as encouraging evidence that the 'electoral connection' works to ensure at least some link between the styles of representation desired by voters and provided by politicians. That said, my findings also suggest that this link is not equally strong for all legislators. Those elected from safe seats can afford to avoid personal vote-seeking, regardless of the electorate's partisanship.

However, this link may partly mask a third, potentially problematic, implication of my findings — a growing gap between how citizens vote and how governmental decisions are actually made. I have found some evidence that dealignment leads politicians to engage in more personal vote-seeking in parliament. However it remains true that most modern democratic legislatures are overwhelmingly organised along party lines. The centralisation of pariamentary rules may vary (Keh 2015; Taylor 2006; Proksch and Slapin 2015), and may even decrease in response to partisan dealignment (Fleming 2019). But even so, individual legislators generally have very few prerogatives, with key agenda-setting institutions, and thus policy-making, instead controlled by parties (Bowler 2000; Cox and McCubbins 2011; Koß 2018*a*,*b*; Mattson 1995). Dealignment may thus have increased the electoral importance of individual legislators without substantially increasing their policy-making importance. This disjuncture may weaken the accountability of

the political actors that control most major political decisions — governing parties.

7.2.3 Policy implications

The findings of this thesis also have a practical implication for policy-makers choosing or changing political institutions, especially electoral systems. In recent decades, many European democracies have responded to citizens' increasing political detachment by passing electoral reforms which give voters more ability to deliver judgements on individual candidates (Renwick and Pilet 2016). Given the well-evidenced link between electoral systems and legislative behaviour (e.g. Carey 2009; Sieberer 2010), we might expect such changes to produce more personalised, and less partisan, parliamentary politics.[2] However, the evidence presented here suggested that legislative behaviour under a candidate-centred electoral system is not necessarily, nor uniformly, personalistic. Instead, it may depend on voters' willingness to actually reward personal vote-seeking. This suggests that adopting a candidate-centred electoral system may have different effects for legislative politics, depending on the setting. In particular, such a change might have large consequences where voters' partisanship is low, but make little difference where it is higher. This point is relevant not only for existing democracies considering electoral reform, but also for new democracies choosing electoral systems for the first time.

7.3 Future Research

Finally, this thesis suggests a number of possible directions for future research. First, the thesis focused mostly on the *quantity* of MPs' legislative activity, with only brief consideration of its *content*. Given this, we might ask whether partisanship affects what kinds of local candidate message are rewarded by voters. If so, this might in turn shape what kinds of messages MPs deliver through their parliamentary behaviour. These possibilities have received very little attention (though see Zittel, Nyhuis and Baumann 2019), and are an obvious extention of the theory and empirical tests set out in this thesis.

[2]Indeed, recent studies show this relationship — though in the opposite direction — when Norway's move to closed-list PR in the early twentieth century made parliamentary parties more cohesive in votes (Cox, Fiva and Smith 2019) and debates (Høyland and Søyland 2019).

Second, the arguments tested here might be extended beyond parliamentary behaviour, to parliamentary institutions. Legislative rules determine the scope for MPs to engage in the various parliamentary activities that can serve personal vote-seeking strategies. They are also endogenous, set by MPs themselves, and particularly by party leaders. If lower partisanship leads MPs to seek more opportunities for personal vote-seeking, this may lead to parliamentary rules becoming more decentralised, shifting power from party leaders to individual backbenchers. Elsewhere, I have applied this argument to explaining the power of committee systems (Fleming 2019). But the arguments and evidence presented in this thesis suggest it may also apply more widely, to rules governing speech-making, bill proposals, and questioning.

Third, a scope condition of my theory was that it should only apply under electoral systems that allow votes to be cast for individual candidates. However, there is variation even among such systems in how far they encourage personal vote-seeking (André, Depauw and Martin 2016; Carey and Shugart 1995; Wallack et al. 2003). It's plausible that this variation moderates my arguments, with partisanship having the strongest influence on legislative behaviour under electoral systems with the strongest personal vote-seeking incentives. This is a further implication of my argument that different drivers of personal vote-seeking should interact, magnifying or suppressing each other's effects. Future research should thus test whether the effects of partisanship on parliamentary behaviour vary depending on the electoral system.

Personal vote-seeking in parliamentary behaviour has important consequences for accountability, representation, and policy-making. Unsurprisingly, this has led many scholars to develop and test explanations for why it varies, both across and within countries. These explanations typically trace MPs' parliamentary personal vote-seeking to their personal characteristics, or to the institutional settings in which they compete for votes. The arguments and evidence set out in this thesis suggest that these explanations overlook the role of partisanship. By shaping voters' willingness to reward personal vote-seeking, partisanship also shapes MPs' incentive to engage in it. The way voters think about politics thus affects how their elected representatives conduct it.

Appendix A

Robustness Checks for Chapter 3

Table A1: Logit model of probability of supporting incumbent (all drawn MPs)

	Voting for incumbent MP		
	(A1)	(A2)	(A3)
Bills drawn	0.309^{***}	0.334^{***}	0.374^{***}
	(0.063)	(0.105)	(0.114)
Bills drawn * Partisanship	-0.081^{**}	-0.150^{**}	-0.130^{*}
	(0.041)	(0.071)	(0.072)
Partisanship	0.124^{***}	0.181^{***}	0.184^{***}
	(0.036)	(0.063)	(0.064)
Ballot attempts	-0.011^{*}	-0.035^{***}	-0.016
	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Constant	-0.298^{***}	-3.832^{***}	-4.044^{***}
	(0.072)	(0.253)	(0.451)
MP Party FE			✓
Controls		✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5398	3187	3187
Pseudo R^2	0.088	0.636	0.648

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A2: Logit model of probability of supporting incumbent (without 2011)

	Voting for incumbent MP		
	(A4)	(A5)	(A6)
Bills drawn	0.370***	0.310**	0.395**
	(0.088)	(0.151)	(0.157)
Bills drawn * Partisanship	−0.185***	−0.356***	−0.339***
	(0.057)	(0.101)	(0.103)
Partisanship	0.167***	0.274***	0.275***
	(0.041)	(0.073)	(0.074)
Ballot attempts	−0.010*	−0.032***	−0.016
	(0.006)	(0.010)	(0.012)
Constant	−0.342***	−4.211***	−4.532***
	(0.079)	(0.296)	(0.490)
MP Party FE			✓
Controls		✓	✓
Election FE	✓	✓	✓
Observations	4266	2497	2497
Pseudo R^2	0.061	0.634	0.648

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix B

Partisanship Questions for Chapter 3

Partisanship questions in the 1999, 2002, 2005, and 2011 New Zealand Election Study.

1999, 2002, 2005

- Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as [list of parties], or some other, or don't you usually think of yourself in this way?
- (If you ticked a party box:) How strongly do you think of yourself as that party?

2011

- Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as CLOSE to any particular party?
- If NO: Do you feel yourself a little CLOSER to one of the parties than the others? If so, which one?
- If 'CLOSE' or 'CLOSER TO A PARTY' ... Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?

Appendix C

Regression Tables for Chapter 4

Table C1: OLS model of support for MP (full sample)

	Support for MP
	(C1)
Active MP treatment	0.289^{***}
	(0.084)
Inactive MP treatment	-0.157^{*}
	(0.085)
Constant	2.758^{***}
	(0.058)
Observations	1,348
R^2	0.020
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C2: OLS model of support for MP (two-way split)

	Support for MP	
	Partisan	Non-partisan
	(C2)	(C3)
Active MP treatment	0.195	0.378***
	(0.136)	(0.101)
Inactive MP treatment	−0.082	−0.241**
	(0.135)	(0.103)
Constant	2.772***	2.746***
	(0.095)	(0.070)
Observations	663	685
R^2	0.007	0.049
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table C3: OLS model of support for MP (four-way split)

	Support for MP			
	Very strong id	Fairly strong id	Not very strong id	No id
	(C4)	(C5)	(C6)	(C7)
Active MP treatment	0.278	0.182	0.347**	0.417***
	(0.308)	(0.150)	(0.144)	(0.139)
Inactive MP treatment	0.067	−0.123	−0.178	−0.329**
	(0.298)	(0.150)	(0.146)	(0.145)
Constant	2.914***	2.723***	2.810***	2.670***
	(0.206)	(0.107)	(0.099)	(0.096)
Observations	158	505	375	310
R^2	0.006	0.008	0.033	0.077

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table C4: OLS model of support for MP (party split)

	Support for MP		
	Conservative partisan	Labour partisan	Non-partisan
	(C8)	(C9)	(C10)
Active MP treatment	0.218	0.037	0.378***
	(0.168)	(0.134)	(0.101)
Inactive MP treatment	−0.119	−0.472***	−0.241**
	(0.174)	(0.128)	(0.103)
Constant	1.866***	4.171***	2.746***
	(0.118)	(0.093)	(0.070)
Observations	275	252	685
R^2	0.014	0.074	0.049

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix D

Data Collection for Chapter 5

D.1 Bill data

Data on private members' bills came from various sources, differing across three periods.

1964 to 1983

- The principal source was the House of Commons' *Sessional Index*.
- Unsuccessful attempts to introduce Ten Minute Rule bills were identified by consulting *Hansard* (1964-1968) and a series of research notes published in *Parliamentary Affairs* (1968-1983) (Burton and Drewry 1970*a*,*b*, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1985).

1983 to 2012

- The principal source was the House of Commons' *Sessional Information Digest*.
- The proposers of unsuccessful attempts to introduce Ten Minute Rule bills were identified by consulting *Hansard*.

2012 to 2017

- The principal source was the Parliament website (https://services.parliament.uk/bills/).
- Unsuccessful attempts to introduce Ten Minute Rule bills were identified using information provided privately by the House of Commons Library.

D.2 Partisanship questions

Questions used to gauge 'very strong' partisanship in British Election Study, 1964-2015.

1964, 1966, 1970

How strongly [party] do you generally feel — very strongly, fairly strongly, or not very strongly?

February 1974, October 1974

Would you call yourself a very strong [party], fairly strong, or not very strong?

1979, 1983, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2015

Would you call yourself very strong [party], fairly strong, or not very strong?

D.3 Control variables

Table D1: Sources of data for control variables

Variable	Source
Polarization	Volkens et al. (2016)
Age at first election	*Times Guide to the House of Commons*
Sitting days	Mortimore and Blick (2018) & Commons' *Sessional Returns*
Governing party	Kollman et al. (2017) & *Times Guide to the House of Commons*
Retirement	*Times Guide to the House of Commons*
Challenger	Kollman et al. (2017) & *Times Guide to the House of Commons*

Appendix E

Alternative Specifications for Chapter 5 Analysis

This appendix reports the results of re-estimating my main analyses from Chapter 5 with alternative model specifications. Unless otherwise stated, all models control for the sitting days in a given parliament, whether an MP came from the governing party, whether the MP retired at the next general election, whether the MP faced a 'third party' challenger at the previous general election, the age at which the MP was first elected (and its interaction with seat margin), and polarization (and its interaction with seat margin). The alternative model specifications are as follows:

- Table E1 uses poisson regression models.
- Table E2 widens the sample of MPs analysed, to include backbench MPs from parties other than Labour and the Conservatives (though not MPs sitting for Northern Irish constituencies).
- Table E3 uses a broader measure of partisanship, that includes 'fairly strong', as well as 'very strong', partisans.
- Table E4 adds further control variables — (a) a binary indicator of male MPs, (b) a binary indicator of MPs holding a post as 'parliamentary private secretary' (a form of non-ministerial government aide), (c) a categorical variable comparing MPs from Scottish and Welsh constituencies to those from English constituencies, and (d) a binary indicator of MPs sitting for the Labour Party rather than the Conservatives.
- Table E5 reports the results of logistic regression models estimating the probability of MPs proposing at least one private members' bill.
- Table E6 presents the results of multilevel OLS models including random intercepts

for each parliament and random coefficients for electoral security. Interval predictor variables were rescaled, centred on their mean value.

- Table E7 uses OLS with standard errors clustered within each MP.

Table E1: Poisson model of MPs' bill proposals, 1964-2017

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals (by type)			
	All Bills	Presentation	Ballot	Ten Minute
	(E1)	(E2)	(E3)	(E4)
Partisanship	-0.027^{***}	-0.032^{***}	-0.006	-0.035^{***}
	(0.003)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Margin	-0.004	0.034^{**}	-0.020	-0.024^{*}
	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.019)	(0.012)
Partisanship*Margin	0.0003^{***}	-0.0002	0.0004	0.001^{***}
	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Constant	-1.841^{***}	-3.402^{***}	-3.426^{***}	-2.411^{***}
	(0.226)	(0.430)	(0.500)	(0.317)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5015	5015	5015	5015
Pseudo R^2	0.092	0.072	0.032	0.093

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E2: OLS model of MPs' bill proposals (all parties), 1964-2017

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals (by type)			
	All Bills	Presentation	Ballot	Ten Minute
	(E5)	(E6)	(E7)	(E8)
Partisanship	-0.019^{***}	-0.006^{**}	-0.001	-0.012^{***}
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Margin	-0.007	0.006	-0.003	-0.011^{*}
	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.002)	(0.006)
Partisanship*Margin	0.0003^{**}	0.00001	0.0001^{*}	0.0002^{***}
	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.00003)	(0.0001)
Constant	0.213	0.029	-0.011	0.195
	(0.316)	(0.232)	(0.067)	(0.164)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5,163	5,163	5,163	5,163
R^2	0.049	0.010	0.025	0.058

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E3: OLS model of MPs' bill proposals ('fairly strong' partisans), 1964-2017

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals (by type)			
	All Bills	Presentation	Ballot	Ten Minute
	(E9)	(E10)	(E11)	(E12)
Partisanship	-0.021^{***}	-0.007^{**}	-0.001	-0.014^{***}
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Margin	-0.025	0.004	-0.005	-0.024^{***}
	(0.016)	(0.012)	(0.003)	(0.008)
Partisanship*Margin	0.0004^{**}	0.00001	0.0001	0.0003^{***}
	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.00004)	(0.0001)
Constant	1.159^{***}	0.348	0.036	0.774^{***}
	(0.443)	(0.325)	(0.093)	(0.230)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5,015	5,015	5,015	5,015
R^2	0.047	0.010	0.023	0.056

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E4: OLS model of MPs' bill proposals (additional controls), 1964-2017

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals (by type)			
	All Bills	Presentation	Ballot	Ten Minute
	(E13)	(E14)	(E15)	(E16)
Partisanship	-0.020^{***}	-0.007^{**}	-0.001	-0.012^{***}
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Margin	-0.011	0.002	-0.002	-0.012^{*}
	(0.012)	(0.009)	(0.002)	(0.006)
Partisanship*Margin	0.0003^{**}	0.00002	0.0001^{*}	0.0003^{***}
	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.00003)	(0.0001)
Constant	0.160	0.006	-0.026	0.179
	(0.335)	(0.246)	(0.071)	(0.174)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5,015	5,015	5,015	5,015
R^2	0.049	0.012	0.026	0.062

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E5: Logistic model of MPs' bill proposals, 1964-2017

	Dependent Variable: Proposing at least one bill			
	All Bills	Presentation	Ballot	Ten Minute
	(E17)	(E18)	(E19)	(E20)
Partisanship	-0.027^{***}	-0.009	-0.005	-0.042^{***}
	(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Margin	-0.001	0.035	-0.022	-0.011
	(0.015)	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.018)
Partisanship*Margin	0.0003^{*}	-0.0004	0.0004	0.0005^{*}
	(0.0002)	(0.0004)	(0.0003)	(0.0002)
Constant	-2.033^{***}	-4.895^{***}	-3.368^{***}	-2.238^{***}
	(0.410)	(0.691)	(0.559)	(0.481)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5015	5015	5015	5015
Pseudo R^2	0.073	0.051	0.034	0.088

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E6: Multilevel OLS model of MPs' bill proposals, 1964-2017

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals (by type)			
	All Bills	Presentation	Ballot	Ten Minute
	(E21)	(E22)	(E23)	(E24)
Partisanship	-0.149^{***}	-0.069^{*}	0.002	-0.086^{***}
	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.007)	(0.015)
Margin	-0.079^{**}	-0.006	-0.011^{**}	-0.062^{***}
	(0.034)	(0.022)	(0.006)	(0.016)
Partisanship*Margin	0.042	-0.010	0.009^{*}	0.042^{***}
	(0.033)	(0.021)	(0.005)	(0.015)
Constant	0.260^{***}	0.091	0.099^{***}	0.074^{*}
	(0.079)	(0.064)	(0.016)	(0.038)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Random intercepts (Parliament)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Random slopes (Margin)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5,015	5,015	5,015	5,015
Akaike Inf. Crit.	20,076.630	16,986.500	4,501.261	13,542.200

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table E7: OLS model of MPs' bill proposals (clustered SEs), 1964-2017

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals (by type)			
	All Bills	Presentation	Ballot	Ten Minute
	(E25)	(E26)	(E27)	(E28)
Partisanship	-0.019^{***}	-0.006^{**}	-0.001	-0.013^{***}
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Margin	-0.010	0.004	-0.002	-0.012^{*}
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.002)	(0.006)
Partisanship*Margin	0.0003^{**}	-0.00000	0.0001^{*}	0.0003^{***}
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.00003)	(0.0001)
Constant	0.295	0.068	-0.011	0.238
	(0.327)	(0.204)	(0.061)	(0.207)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	5,015	5,015	5,015	5,015
R^2	0.048	0.01	0.023	0.057

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix F

Alternative Explanations for Chapter 5 Analysis

This appendix includes tables and figures referred to in Subsection 5.3.3.

- Table F1 tests whether the relationship between MPs' electoral security and their bill proposal activity was stronger for MPs facing Liberal challengers after 1974. It reports an OLS model of MPs' total bill proposals between 1974 and 1983, and includes an interaction between MPs' seat margin and whether they faced a Liberal Party challenger at the last general election. Both models include parliament fixed effects. The second model also controls for MPs representing the governing party and whether they retired at the next general election.

- Figure F.1 probes whether polarization between the main two parties was substantially smaller in the decade after 1974 than the decade before it. It presents measures of polarization from Goet (2019) and Peterson and Spirling (2018), based on legislative speech, for each session between 1964 and 1983.

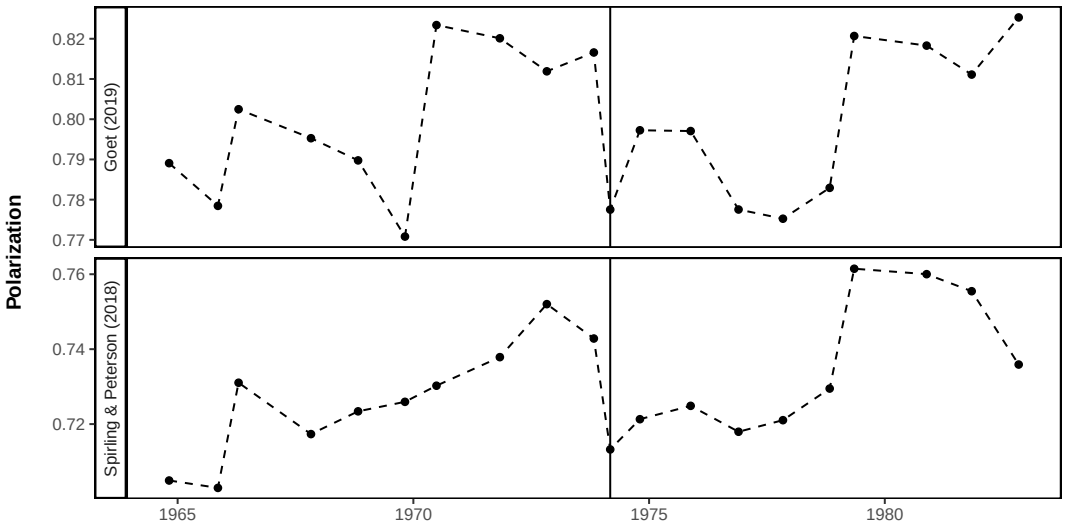
- Table F2 tests whether career politicians propose more private members' bills than other MPs, and whether there is a stronger relationship between their electoral security and bill proposal activity. It focuses on a subset of Labour MPs coded by O'Grady (2019) as to whether they were career politicians, and includes every MP-parliament pair including one of these MPs. It shows the results of an OLS regression of these MPs' total bill proposals during each parliament in which they sat. The first model includes a binary indicator of whether MPs were careerist. The second adds an interaction between this and their electoral security. Both models include parliament fixed effects and both control for whether MPs faced a Liberal challenger and whether they retired at the next general election.

Table F1: OLS model of MPs' bill proposals, 1974-1983

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals	
	(F1)	(F2)
Margin	-1.027^{***}	-0.872^{**}
	(0.333)	(0.338)
Liberal challenger	-0.173	-0.199
	(0.199)	(0.205)
Margin*Liberal challenger	0.567	0.547
	(0.842)	(0.849)
Constant	1.084^{***}	0.690^{***}
	(0.095)	(0.160)
Parliament FE	✓	✓
Controls		✓
Observations	1,170	1,170
R^2	0.082	0.089

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure F.1: Polarization measures based on legislative speech, 1964-1983



Note: Values of polarization represent the accuracy of machine classifiers in identifying MPs' party affiliations from their parliamentary speeches. Higher values indicate a greater degree of polarization.

Table F2: OLS model of MPs' bill proposals

	Dependent Variable: Bill proposals	
	(F3)	(F4)
Careerist	−0.579	−1.109
	(0.361)	(0.676)
Margin	−1.556**	−1.791**
	(0.783)	(0.823)
Careerist*Margin		2.273
		(2.451)
Constant	1.830**	1.862**
	(0.874)	(0.874)
Parliament FE	✓	✓
Controls	✓	✓
Observations	505	505
R^2	0.105	0.107

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix G

Data Collection for Chapter 6

Partisanship questions in the 2010 and 2014-2018 British Election Studies (Fieldhouse et al. 2015; Sanders and Whiteley 2014):

- Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as [list of parties] or what?
- (If didn't choose a party:) Do you generally think of yourself as a little closer to one of the parties than the others? If yes, [please tell me] which party?

Table G1: Operationalisation of individual-level variables for MRP model

Variable	Operationalisation
Gender	1 = female; 0 = male.
Renting	1 = renter; 0 = homeowner.
Employment	1 = private sector; 0 = public sector, voluntary sector, and other.
Age	8 levels: 20-24, 25-29, 30-44, 45-59, 60-64, 65-74, and 75+.
Social class	4 levels: AB, C1, C2, and DE.

Appendix H

Alternative Specifications for Chapter 6 Analysis

This section reports the results of re-estimating the analyses from Chapter 6 with alternative model specifications. It reports the following tables:

- Table H1 reports the results of re-estimating Model 7 in Table 6.3 first with additional control variables (gender, PPS status, nation, and seniority), then without MPs who retired at the following election, and finally including MP fixed-effects.
- Table H2 reports the results of repeating these three robustness checks for Model 9 from Table 6.4.
- Table H3 reports the results of doing the same for Model 10 from Table 6.4.

Table H1: Alternative OLS models of MPs' effort, 2010-2017

	DV: Effort Index		
	(H1)	(H2)	(H3)
Dealignment	0.012	0.015	0.013
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.018)
Margin	0.005*	0.007**	0.011*
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.006)
Dealignment*Margin	−0.0003	−0.0004*	−0.001*
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0003)
Constant	−0.263	−0.297	−0.680
	(0.231)	(0.258)	(7.062)
Parliament FE	✓	✓	✓
MP FE			✓
Including retirees	✓		✓
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	578	512	286
R^2	0.214	0.206	0.796
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table H2: Alternative negative binomial models of constituency mentions, 2010-2017

	DV: Constituency Mentions		
	(H4)	(H5)	(H6)
Dealignment	0.078**	0.084**	−0.007
	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.027)
Margin	−0.015***	−0.018***	−0.019***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Constant	2.748***	2.445**	8.177***
	(1.051)	(1.154)	(1.293)
Parliament FE	✓	✓	✓
MP FE			✓
Including retirees	✓		✓
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	577	511	286
Pseudo R^2	0.063	0.051	0.787
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table H3: Alternative negative binomial models of constituency mentions, 2010-2017

	DV: Constituency Mentions		
	(H7)	(H8)	(H9)
Dealignment	0.065	0.065	−0.008
	(0.049)	(0.053)	(0.035)
Margin	−0.021	−0.026	−0.019
	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.012)
Dealignment*Margin	0.0004	0.001	0.00003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Constant	2.998**	2.794**	8.207***
	(1.243)	(1.360)	(1.463)
Parliament FE	✓	✓	✓
MP FE			✓
Including retirees	✓		✓
Controls	✓	✓	✓
Observations	577	511	286
Pseudo R^2	0.063	0.051	0.787
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

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