

Why can they all just get along? Exploring influences on cross-party cooperation among backbench politicians in the Canadian and British Parliaments

Paul E.J. Thomas

PhD Candidate, University of Toronto

Paul.thomas@utoronto.ca

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Abstract

Why would backbench politicians, who compete on a partisan basis at election, cooperate across party lines to achieve policy goals? Despite receiving little study or media attention, the Canadian and British parliaments are home to a large and growing number of informal, cross-party organizations that facilitate cooperation amongst backbench politicians wishing to engage with particular policy issues. Such groups, which cover subjects as diverse as palliative care, climate change, and genocide prevention, facilitate information exchange, connect parliamentarians with external stakeholders, and even conduct independent research inquiries. Hammond (1998) argues that the growth of similar groups at the US Congress occurred because they served members' goals of re-election, policy change, and promotion. However, politicians in Westminster legislatures face very different incentives due to much stronger party discipline, the fusion of the legislative and executive branches, and government dominance over initiating legislation. This paper therefore examines whether the congressional findings can be extended to Westminster systems. Using a unique dataset tracking memberships in cross-party organizations, it explores the factors influencing the cross-party activities of Canadian and British legislators between 2001 and 2013. The study finds that while cross-party activity is not correlated with promotion to the executive, it increases with electoral vulnerability and years of service, suggesting it is used by politicians looking to signal to voters or develop an alternative career path.

1.0 Introduction

Why would Members of Parliament, who compete on a partisan basis for re-election, cooperate with politicians from other parties to achieve policy goals? Despite receiving little press coverage, the British parliament and Canadian Parliaments have long been home to a series of informal cross-party organizations that have been formed to facilitate joint activities by politicians who wish to engage with particular policy issues or relations with a given country. Even more surprisingly, the number of groups in operation continues to grow at a rapid pace, with the UK now being home to over 580.

The existence and growth of such organizations, which will be referred to here as “all-party groups” (APGs), would seem to violate several of the assumptions contained within the rational choice institutionalist literature regarding the behaviour of elected politicians. A landmark study on APGs at the US Congress conducted by Hammond (1998) found that they did help legislators to achieve goals such as re-election, with politicians becoming more likely to be involved as their margin of victory declined. APGs also provided junior members with opportunities for influence and the chance to demonstrate leadership potential in the hopes of later promotion. However, the dominance of disciplined political parties within Westminster-style political systems would appear to sharply curtail the benefits that can be derived from cross-party cooperation. For instance, it would seem counterintuitive for MPs to join APGs given that most of the prized positions within Westminster legislatures, such as cabinet posts, have traditionally been awarded based on party loyalty, not interparty cooperation (Norton 2000).

It is also unclear whether APGs in Westminster systems operate in the same way or serve the same function as those at the US Congress. In particular, Hammond (1998) spends virtually no time examining those APGs that focus on relations with other countries, such as the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues. Instead, she concentrates on the issue- or subject-focused groups, such as Congressional Steel Caucus or the Family Farm Caucus, which would likely have more direct links with voters and stakeholder groups. In contrast, country- or geographic-focused groups form the majority of Canadian APGs and a substantial portion of those in the UK. As such, assuming that Hammond’s findings can be extended equally to all types of APGs could lead to misleading results.

Finally, a further issue can be found in the fact that Hammond concentrates on the behaviour of group *members*, while APGs in Canada and the UK tend to be much more strongly driven by their *executives*. For example, the British Parliament created a system for registering APGs in the 1980s, but it was only in 2004 that groups were required to list any members beyond their officers. Similarly, several Canadian APGs, such as the All-Party Antipoverty Caucus and the All-Party Oceans Caucus, do not actually have general members as such. Instead, group events are organized by the executive members with invitations being circulated to all Parliamentarians. Given that serving on an executive implies a greater time commitment than membership, an effort must be made to explore whether the same factors contribute to both types of participation.

As part of a broader research project on APGs in Westminster systems, this paper evaluates whether Hammond’s explanations politicians’ involvement in APGs at the US Congress can successfully be transplanted to the British and Canadian parliaments. Specifically, it examines whether MPs’ participation in APGs is shaped either by electoral concerns, or by the efforts of new politicians to develop and demonstrate leadership skills. It also explores whether these factors apply equally to both subject- and country- focused groups, and to both regular

group members as well as those holding executive positions. To do so it utilizes a unique dataset that tracks MPs' participation in APGs over several electoral cycles (four in Canada, five in the UK), making it possible to see how MPs' behaviour alters as their electoral fortunes change and as they advance in their parliamentary careers.

Overall, the results indicate that the factors shaping MPs' involvement in APGs in Westminster system are different than those at the US Congress. In particular, in neither Canada nor the UK was there any evidence that APG involvement is greater among new politicians. Instead, the opposite is true, with MPs in both countries being more likely to be involved with APGs the longer they have served in parliament. However, there are some parallels with the US in that British MPs also show an inverse relationship between their margin of victory and their participation in APGs. That said, the relationship between marginality and APG activity is only present for subject-focused APGs, and is smaller for involvement in executive positions than general membership. As such, these results show the need to disaggregate investigations of MPs' involvement in APGs by group and position type.

Notably, an unexpected finding was that women MPs in both Canada and the UK had different patterns of involvement in APGs than their male colleagues. In the UK, they were more likely to be involved in subject APGs and less involved in geographic APGs – a trend that applied to both executive posts and general membership. In Canada women MPs were much more likely to be involved in subject groups as both members and chairs. While Hammond examined the activities of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues, she did not disaggregate participation in other groups by gender, making it impossible to know if this trend is consistent with the American experience.

The paper proceeds first with a brief overview of APGs followed by a review of Hammond's research on APGs at the US Congress. It then presents the structure and influence of the It then outlines the study of APGs followed by a brief overview of the methodology employed. Next the results are presented for the three major areas of re-election, institutional, and policy change, followed by an analysis and discussion of the findings.

2.0 Background on APGs

APGs are informal organizations that MPs from several parties form in order to pursue common interests on particular issues. As described by Norton, they involve "members coming together on a basis of shared interests or backgrounds, independent of party" (2008, 240). The number of APGs has grown sharply in recent years in the US, UK, and Canada. In the UK alone, the number of groups more than doubled from 243 in 1996 to 593 in 2010. The issues that can be addressed by groups are virtually limitless, with British APGs existing on topics as diverse as America, Beer, Cancer, Women in Enterprise, Yorkshire, and Zoos and Aquariums. However, APGs generally fall into two broad categories: those that focus on relations with other countries and those dealing with a given issue or industry. While they typically have written constitutions, APGs are informal in that they have no official role in parliamentary processes or decision making (Hammond, 1998). Although the areas they address may overlap, APGs operate independently from both parliamentary standing committees and party caucuses. They also typically exclude cabinet members, making them largely independent from the executive as well.

In the UK, virtually every APG is referred to as an "All Party Parliamentary Group," or APPG for short. The situation is more complicated in Canada, where country-focused APGs are

usually referred to as either “Parliamentary Friendship Groups” or “Interparliamentary Groups.” Issue-focused groups, on the other hand, are typically known as either “All Party Caucuses” or “Parliamentary Caucuses.” This lack of consistency reflects the fact that Canada has no system for registering APGs, allowing for a greater diversity of group structure. The use of the term “caucus” may also be a result of American influence given that APGs at the US Congress are almost universally known by that name.

APGs are active in each of the three core functions performed by the legislature (representation, legislation and scrutiny) and frequently function as an extension of the formal system of committees found at most legislatures. In the area of representation, APGs often meet with relevant stakeholders and then advance their concerns in parliamentary proceedings. Some APGs will also undertake studies of particular issues, scrutinizing the government policies to see if improvements can be made. For instance, the APG on Autism at the UK parliament has issued a series of reports that investigate the support offered to those with the condition (All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism, 2012). APGs also issue statements in response to new government policy initiatives and legislation. Some APGs also attempt to develop and introduce their own legislation via the private members’ system. For instance, in the 1990s the Canadian All-Party Sugar Caucus introduced the “United States Sugar Import Restrictions Retaliation Act” in response to proposed US legislation that would prevent the importation of sugar from any country doing business with Cuba (Zed, 1995). More recently, the members of the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care have been strong supporters of private members’ initiatives around end of life care and suicide prevention.

3.0 American literature on congressional caucuses

The APGs at the US Congress have been the subject of considerable investigation. Studies of APGs at the US Congress are largely based on the assumption that legislators primarily will engage in those activities that contribute to the achievement of their goals and particularly to the task of securing re-election. As such, they tend to provide largely rationalist or functionalist accounts for APG formation and activities. For instance, researchers have found that APGs provide legislators with the opportunity to exchange information (Ainsworth and Akins, 1997), shape the legislative agenda (Hammond et al., 1985) and serve as policy entrepreneurs (Burgin, 2003).

Hammond’s 1998 book on congressional caucuses is by far the most comprehensive work that has yet been written on APGs in any jurisdiction. At the most basic level, Hammond develops a useful typology of the APGs, dividing them into five categories: personal interest (e.g. foreign policy, environmental, anti-abortion), national constituency (e.g. hispanics, veterans), regional, state/district, and industry (e.g. mining). Each type has its own operating dynamics and different impacts on legislative outcomes. Hammond also found several factors affecting members’ participation in APGs, finding that the longer a legislator served in Congress, the less likely he or she was to take part. Ideological conservatism also reduced membership.

However, Hammond’s major contribution comes from her attempt to explain APG formation and why their numbers have increased so sharply in recent years. She begins by examining why existing theories for explaining congressional organization – and particularly those regarding the the role and influence of formal committees – cannot account for APG formation given their informal nature and lack of direct connection to the legislative outcomes.

When developing her own argument, Hammond contends that any explanation must examine not only (1) the objectives of congressional representatives, but also the (2) structure of Congress itself and the (3) external context.

With regard to the context, Hammond stresses that the demands placed on congressmen and women have increased in recent decades as they deal with the growing complexity of policy issues, more contacts from constituents, higher rates of interest group mobilization, and a greater array of research studies. This rising pressure though has not led to significant changes in the formal structure of Congress. However, Hammond contends that the inclusive and fluid structure of the institution has enabled informal adaptations. She describes Congress as “an organization of equals whose collegial decision making... is manifested in a general absence of hierarchy and integrative mechanisms” (1998: 16). What authority structure there is lacks strong inducements or sanctions to shape members’ behaviour. Furthermore, “Congressional norms favour inclusion in group processes” (1998: 16). All told, this collegiality and absence of hierarchy is seen to produce more “organizational fluidity” than is the norm in many other bodies. It also creates challenges for congressional leaders who must integrate actions within the legislature in order to produce coherent outcomes.

Turning lastly to representatives’ goals, Hammond sees involvement in caucuses as contributing to all three of the goals that Fenno identified for members of congress: re-election, policy change, and influence in the institution (1998: 15). As for re-election, Hammond reports that just joining a caucus without being actively involved can provide benefits for a representative since “it sends a message to constituents that the member shares their concerns” (1998: 79). She further found that those from more marginal electoral districts had a slightly higher level of involvement in APGs than members with a greater vote share. APGs are also seen to be helpful for pursuing policy goals, with Hammond noting that: “Members formed caucuses... when deficiencies in the formal committee and party systems made achievement of individual goals difficult” (Hammond, 1998: 16).

Finally, in terms of influence within the institution, Hammond stressed that involvement in APGs allowed members of congress to have an impact on policy at an earlier point in their careers than would be possible through the formal system, where positions are allocated by seniority. In addition, Hammond argued that involvement with APGs provided representatives with opportunities to improve their chances for future promotion by developing leadership skills and building relationships with their colleagues. As could be expected, Hammond found that APG involvement was higher among newer members who were excluded from formal leadership positions and who were hoping to build a base for future advancement.

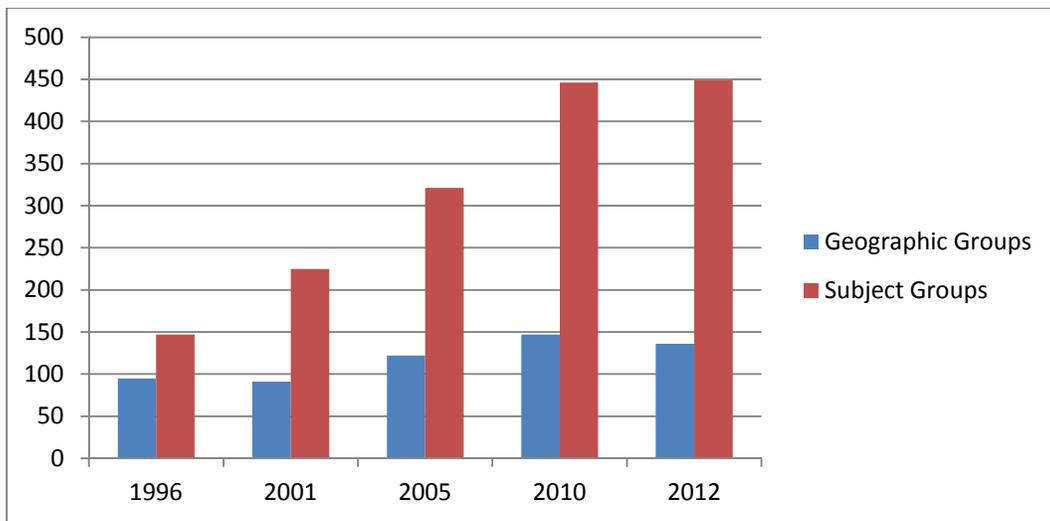
4.0 APGs at the British Parliament

4.1 *Group creation and operation*

APGs are a long-established feature of the British Parliament, with the oldest, the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, dating back 75 years to 1939. As the result of a series of lobbying scandals (see below), the UK possesses a fairly elaborate system for registering APGs. While registration is voluntary, it brings benefits such as the ability to identify themselves as “All-Party Parliamentary Groups,” to advertise group meetings on weekly notices, and also gives them priority when booking parliamentary meeting rooms (United Kingdom. House of Commons 2012).

The rules require APGs to designate themselves as either a country group or a subject group. While there are British APGs for countries from every continent, the coverage is more comprehensive for those parts of the world that are of greater strategic interest to the UK. For instance, there is a country group for nearly every state in Europe, but just 18 for all of Africa. Notably, there are also “country groups” that deal with the Overseas Territories that are technically part of the UK, such as Gibraltar. For their part, subject groups can address virtually any topic imaginable, and some, such as APPG on East Asian Business, may overlap with country groups by dealing with issues that pertain to a particular region of the world. Charts I plots the growth in the number of British APGs during the five time periods included in this analysis. Notably, the rate of growth among subject-focused groups has been much higher than their geographic-focused counterparts.

Chart I:
Number of registered all-party parliamentary groups in the UK, 1996 - 2012



The rules governing APGs require them to be open to all members of both houses of parliament. To be registered, groups require 20 “Qualifying Members,” whose names are listed on its entry in the APG registry. Of these 20, half must be from the governing party (or parties in the case of a coalition), while the remainder must be from the opposition parties or crossbench Peers. While there is no requirement for balance between the Lords and Commons, the contact for the group must be an MP since the registry of APGs is managed by the Commons. APGs can have more than the 20 members required for registration, and some groups claim to have memberships in the hundreds. However, being the member of a group does not guarantee that a parliamentarian is actively engaged with it. In fact, even the 20 qualifying members listed on the registry may not have any direct involvement. Many of the MPs interviewed for the broader research project said that they had agreed to be on the qualifying list for one APG or another as a favour to a friend who wanted to establish a group. One of the MPs interviewed also reported being signed up as a qualifying member for a group without her knowledge.

The rules require each group to have an executive consisting of at least two officers, but many groups have far more. By far the largest executive is that of the British-American

Parliamentary Group, which has 28 members, including 20 Vice-Presidents and designated positions for the Prime Minister and the Speakers of both houses. All told, there were 2192 executive positions listed for the 585 APGs registered in September 2012 had, yielding an average executive size of 5.4 members. The average was slightly higher for geographic groups at 6.5, versus 5.1 for subject groups.

There is no formal rule excluding front bench government members from serving on the executive of APGs. Instead, the rules on APGs state only that, “Mostly they [APGs] are run by backbenchers, though ministers may also be officers or members...” (United Kingdom. House of Commons 2012). However, most government ministers do not participate, with the 95 members of the UK coalition government holding just 11 executive positions between them in September 2012 – and of these, five were honorary positions for senior cabinet members within the British-American Parliamentary Group. This limited participation appears to result from the fact that such groups in part exist to scrutinize the government and suggest new policy initiatives, making it challenging for government ministers to be involved. Moreover, Ministers have limited free time. Those on the opposition front bench are somewhat more engaged with APGs. In 2012, the 23 members of the Labour Shadow Cabinet alone served on as many groups as the entire government front bench, while the average number of executive positions held by the broader Shadow government was virtually the same as the general population of all MPs.

While those interviewed reported that there is little competition for executive positions, there could be heated battles on some occasions, particularly for the post of group chair. Several respondents mentioned that there had been a “coup” within the APPG on China whereby a large number of Conservative MPs arrived in order to ensure the victory of the Conservative candidate for chair. The action was reported to have been caused by the belief that such a high profile group should be in the hands of the governing party. The Labour MP removed from the position was reported to be quite upset by the outcome and there were fears that Labour parliamentarians would attempt to retaliate by taking control of another group. These concerns led the Conservative whip to instruct the party’s MPs to attend the All-Party Group on Azerbaijan to ensure the victory of the Conservative incumbent.

4.2 Influence of APGs at Westminster

Within the UK, APGs are mentioned in a number of studies on Parliament or policy development (see below), but have very seldom been examined as a distinct topic of study. One of the only exceptions is a piece by Richardson and Kimber (1971) which conducted a systematic study of all APGs listed on the “All-Party Whip” (a weekly notice of upcoming APG meetings) over a seven month period. Some of the groups examined, such as the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee, had existed for some time, while others were created to campaign on current issues, and still others were formed on longer-term problems, but quickly died due to a lack of interest. While accepting that many APGs were largely inactive, Richardson and Kimber argued that they could be effective in mobilizing MPs to challenge government policy. They particularly highlighted the APG on the Third London Airport (TLA), which opposed the establishment of a new airport at Wing in Buckinghamshire. The TLA group held meetings with stakeholders, issued media releases, organized Parliamentary debates on the issue, and mobilized cross-party support for an Early Day Motion against the choice of location. Ultimately, the government backed away from the proposal.

More recently APGs have been examined as parts of larger studies on Parliament. Searing, who studies the roles that MPs adopt for themselves within parliament, suggests that British APGs are of greatest interest to “specialist” MPs, who typically “prefer working through party committees, all-party groups, Select Committees and personal contacts with ministers to generate steady pressure behind the scenes” (1994: 53). In contrast, those classified as “Older members” and “Cynical members” do not generally take part. Norton (2005) breaks down the subject category into two sub-types: those for legislators who share common hobbies, such as the Chess Group, and issue groups that conduct advocacy on a particular subject. This last type is notable since they are seen to “provide a means of contact between outside organizations and MPs, and serve also as a means of reaching ministers through parliamentarians” (Norton, 2005: 127). Ministers are also said to be more responsive to matters raised by APGs since they are perceived as non-partisan. Norton stresses that APGs are particularly valued by civil society or interest groups that wish to avoid becoming identified with a given party. He also reports that the value of APGs to interest groups is evident in the administrative support that many advocacy groups provide to the APGs working in the same policy field.

Several policy studies also verify that British APGs have made an impact on government decision making. Whitely and Winyard (1987) describe how the APG on Disability was influential in lobbying for improved financial support for the disabled. Similarly, in their research on female genital mutilation in the UK, Dustin and Phillips argue that “the catalyst for fresh legislation was the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population Development and Reproductive Health, which produced a report in 2000” (2008: 415). Reports by British APGs have also been cited in a range of academic studies (e.g. Burnell, 2009; Kurtz, 2003), indicating that they have made a significant contribution to policy debates.

However, this influence has also led to significant concerns that APGs can be used as a vehicle for inappropriate lobbying. In the UK such anxieties about the relationship between APGs and lobbying dates back to the late 1950s (Finer, 1958). Writing in the mid-1980s during a high point of concern regarding the links between lobbyists and APGs, Jordan observed that “In practice [APGs] are not always (or even usually) spontaneous signs of parliamentary interest and can be stimulated by lobbyists – and indeed financed and administered by groups... Indeed the essence of the All-Party system is the liaison between interested MPs and interested groups” (1985: 178).

These concerns regarding the links between British APGs and interest groups eventually led to a Select Committee report on the issue in 1985 (Doig, 1986). The report recommended the establishment of a register for APGs that would include a declaration of any outside support they receive. However, despite the register’s creation, a 2006 investigation by *The Times* found that 36 APGs had received direct financial or administrative support not from interest groups, but paid lobbyists, raising questions as to whether outside groups should be able to pay for such access (Parvin, 2007). The investigation prompted another Select Committee study into APGs, which found that three groups which had received financial or administrative assistance from public relations firms had breached the requirement to disclose the client on whose behalf the support had been provided (United Kingdom. House of Commons. Committee on Standards and Privileges, 2006). Since then, a *Guardian* of the APG registry found that over 300 APGs together received in excess of £1.8m in support from outside organizations (Ball and Beleaga, 2012). In November 2011, the Speakers of the Commons and Lords established a Joint Working Group to examine the funding and operation of APGs. (United Kingdom. Parliament, 2011b). The Working Group reported its findings in 2012, but as of yet no action has been taken.

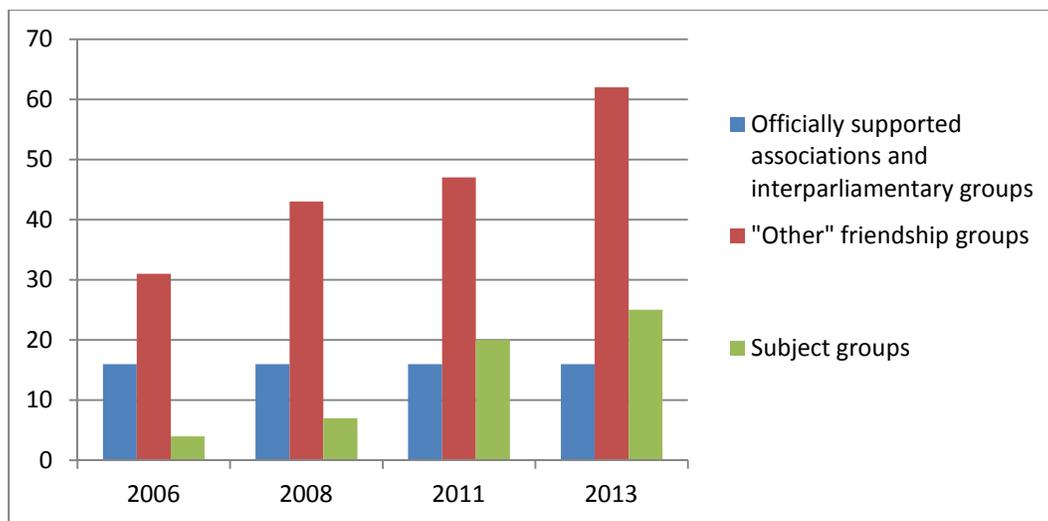
5.0 APGs at the Canadian Parliament

5.1 Group creation and operation

APGs comparable to those in the UK and US have been operating in Canada since at least 1959 when the Canada-United States Inter-parliamentary Group was established. However, in contrast to the US and the UK, geographic groups make up the vast majority of the Canada's APGs. In fact, it has only been in the last decade that the number of subject groups reached into double digits. A further difference can also be seen in the fact that the Canadian Parliament provides support and oversight to some APGs, creating a multi-tiered system.

The International and Interparliamentary Affairs Directorate (IIAD) of the Canadian Parliament provides full financial and administrative support to 12 APGs. These include the Canadian delegations to the seven inter-parliamentary bodies to which country belongs (e.g. the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association), as well as five bilateral associations that promote parliamentary exchanges with major world powers (China, France, Japan, the UK and the US) (Canada. Parliament 2011).¹ In addition, IIAD provides administrative support to parliamentary friendship groups with a further four countries: Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy. All other geographic APGs, including those for major countries like India and Mexico, operate completely independently from the Parliament and are not subject to any regulation. The IIAD does maintain a list of these "Other Interparliamentary Groups" (OIGs), although registration on the list is voluntary and the only detail recorded is the identity of the group's chair (Canada. Parliament 2013).

Chart II:
Number of all-party groups at the Canadian Parliament, 2006 – 2013



However, even this limited oversight of the OIGs is more thorough than the complete absence of any registry for Canada's subject-focused groups. While their numbers have been very low until recently, subject APGs are not a new phenomenon at the Canadian Parliament,

¹ The UK manages its inter-parliamentary delegations completely separately from its APGs, with the latter receiving no parliamentary support, except for the British-American All-Party Group.

with the All-Party Steel Caucus has been in operation since the late 1970s (Powell 2008). Nevertheless, there also are no rules explicitly governing group formation or their relationships with stakeholders. As such, the only somewhat complete list of groups in operation is maintained by government relations news website *Parliament Now*, which is only accessible by subscription (Parliament Now 2013). As will be elaborated further below, this absence of rules or a registry makes quite difficult to identify who is involved with such groups as either general or executive members, or even to say definitively how many groups are in operation at any given time. Despite these problems, Chart II outlines the growth of geographic and subject APGs at the Parliament of Canada over the four parliaments analyzed.

As in the UK, cabinet members are not formally prevented from participating in Canadian APGs, but they similarly tend to refrain from involvement as executive members. However, in a break with Britain, members of the shadow cabinet tend to be as active as a typical MP, if not more so. In particular, those serving in the current NDP Shadow cabinet have been highly active in subject-focused APGs. This trend may reflect the fact that many subject-focused groups do not typically have elections for their executives. Instead, most subject groups are structured with one co-chair from each party, with the posts going to an MP who puts themselves forward or who is nominated by their own party.

While several groups have experienced little leadership change in the period studied, instances were found of strong competition for executive positions. Following the change in government from Liberal to Conservative in the 2006 election, the Conservatives were accused of joining the officially recognized geographic APGs en masse in order to ensure that a Conservative Party member was selected as the Chair (Vongdouangchanh 2006). Moreover, in 2011, all of the executive positions on the Canada-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group were filled by MPs from the governing Conservative Party, casting doubt on the all-party nature of the group and further raising concerns from the opposition (Berthiaume, 2011).²

5.2 *Influence of APGs in Canada*

There has been remarkably little academic study of APGs at the Canadian Parliament. Instead, the only discussion appears to be Paul G. Thomas' brief mention that "all-party caucuses" were one of the "components of the parliamentary party structures that have not been carefully studied" (2001: 222). However, in keeping with the American and British literature a number of observers have recently suggested that several Canadian groups, including the Pro-Life (Delacourt, 2010), Canada-Israel (McDonald, 2010) and Canada-Taiwan APGs (Hulme, 2010), have each succeeded in shaping government policy in line with their preferences. On the other hand, a report from the Parliamentary Centre (2003) casts some doubt on the utility of country focused Canadian APGs by arguing that the turnover in group delegations is too rapid to allow legislators to develop any expertise in parliamentary diplomacy.

As in the UK, concerns regarding the links between Canadian APGs and industry have begun to grow as the number of groups increased. The All-Party Aerospace Caucus attracted some criticism in October 2010 when it held a breakfast meeting with the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, which had been lobbying for the purchase of F-35 fighter jets (Naumetz, 2010). There was similarly controversy in 2008 when the Parliamentary Caucus on Intellectual

² The Canada-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group is one of the few groups not to specify that certain executive positions must be reserved for opposition members.

Property, Anti-Counterfeiting and Anti-Piracy initially appeared to be meeting only with foreign governments and industry groups that were in favour of tougher copyright measures (Geist, 2008). However, there are few signs such concerns will diminish in future. Instead, fostering the creation of subject-focused APGs is increasingly being seen by Canadian lobbyists as a way to help them “leverage” the messages they are trying to deliver to government (Mazereeuw 2012).

6.0 Methodology

6.1 Dataset construction

To explore the factors shaping MPs’ participation in APGs, datasets were created that tracked both the general and executive memberships for British and Canadian APGs for several parliamentary sessions. The UK parliamentary authorities only maintain copies of the APG registry for the past five years. However, older registries were found on the Internet Archive and the UK Web Archive, making it possible to extend the study to each of the past five parliaments, starting with 1992-1997. Notably, an effort was made to find the last possible registry available for each parliament before the next general election. This is because the number of APGs in operation rises between elections as new groups are created. In addition, those groups continuing from the previous parliament may take some time to re-register. The webscraping software Helium Scraper was used to extract the data from the registries into a spreadsheet format.

Unfortunately, the UK registry only began to include membership data in 2004, and even then the list is limited to just the 20 “qualifying members” required for registration. As such, it is possible that the membership information obtained may be somehow distorted from the true population values. However, given that many of the British MPs interviewed indicated that most APGs struggled to find even the 20 qualifying members, the data obtained will be assumed to be representative of the broader population. All told, membership data was available for the years 2005, 2010 and 2012, while executive data executive data was obtained for those years as well as 1996 and 2001.

On the Canadian side, the International and Interparliamentary Affairs Directorate at the Canadian Parliament generously provided a nearly complete list membership and executive data for Canada’s recognized associations and friendship groups from for the past four parliaments, starting with 2004-2006. The small amount of missing information was located using the Internet Archive and the Government of Canada Web Archive, producing a full set of membership and executive data for each of the 16 recognized groups. The IIAD also provided copies of their lists of OIGs for the same period. However, these lists unfortunately provided only the names of group chairs, and efforts to construct a full list of membership and executive data was blocked by the fact that many OIGs consider such information to be confidential. As such, information for geographic APGs beyond the 16 receiving parliamentary support is limited to chairs only.

The lack of a registry for Canada’s subject-focused APGs meant that one needed to be constructed from scratch using searches of the internet, *Hansard*, and newspaper archives.³ While the existence of subject groups has been found for previous parliaments, it has only been possible to confirm the identity of group chairs in the current parliament. Efforts to construct a complete set of membership data were also hindered by the fact that several groups either do not have formal memberships, or they consider such lists to be confidential. However, complete

³ The list maintained by *Parliament Now* (2013) was found only after a dataset of Canadian subject-focused APGs had already been constructed. The dataset contained both the 12 groups identified by *Parliament Now* and 13 others.

membership information for the current parliament was located for four subject-focused APGs: the All-Party Entrepreneur Caucus, the Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care, the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians for Population and Development, and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity. Given that these groups together have over 130 members and deal with a diverse range of topics, the data is included in the analysis. However, given limited number of groups, findings based on this data should be treated with caution.

In addition to the information on APG participation, electoral data were acquired for the MPs from each session using the websites of the UK Electoral Commission and Elections Canada. Biographical details and career information were also gathered from the websites of the British and Canadian parliaments.

6.2 *Variable selection and data analysis*

As stated above, the paper examines whether APG participation in the UK and Canada is shaped either by MPs' electoral performance or by the desire of new members to develop and demonstrate leadership potential. Moreover, it investigates whether any relationships discovered are constant for both geographic- and subject-focused groups, and general and executive members. The combination of these research questions and the available data produces 11 dependent variables. The UK these are the number of membership and executive posts held in geographic, subject, and all APGs.

United Kingdom

- memberships held in geographic, subject, and all APGs
- executive posts held in geographic, subject, and all APGs

Canada

- memberships and executive posts held in officially recognized geographic APGs
- chair posts held in OIGs
- memberships and chair posts held in subject groups

Except for the data for the Canadian subject groups, all of the dependent variables are measured at multiple points in time. Since there were many MPs in both Parliaments who were serving when several, if not all, of the measurements were made, the data for both countries are structured longitudinally. While the primary research questions focus on factors that change over time (i.e. electoral performance and career development), it is also important to examine whether factors intrinsic to the MPs themselves, such as their gender or party affiliation, also play a role. As such, these variables are analyzed through random-effects models using generalized least squares regression. Ordinary least squares regression is then used to analyze the Canadian subject group data.

In each of the regressions electoral performance is operationalized using MPs' margin of victory in votes cast, while the seniority of MPs is operationalized through incumbency. Control variables are also included for gender, party affiliation, as well membership in the government front bench (UK), cabinet (Canada), or shadow cabinet (both). In addition to these demographic and career factors, further controls are also added for the number of MPs in each party, and,

where appropriate, the number of APGs in operation. The former is included to capture whether the need for APGs to have involvement from all political factions serves to inflate the level of involvement by MPs from smaller parties. The latter is included to ensure that apparent changes in membership patterns are not just the result of a growth in the number of groups over time.

7.0 British results

7.1 Data overview

Tables I and II present how the average number of APG memberships and executive posts held by MPs varies over time as well as with the demographic and career factors mentioned above. Looking across the columns in both tables, it becomes clear that the growth over time in the number of groups is being matched by increases in the average level of MP involvement at both the general membership and executive levels. The only exception is in 2012, although the moderate declines observed likely reflect the fact that the measurement was taken just two years into the current parliament, while the others were made at least four years after an election.

Table I:
Variations in the average number of APG *memberships* held by British MPs, by group type, demographic, party, and career factors

	Average memberships in geographic APGs			Average memberships in subject-focused APGs			Average memberships in all APGs		
	2005	2010	2012	2005	2010	2012	2005	2010	2012
All MPs	3.04	3.44	2.79	8.27	10.96	10.59	11.31	14.40	13.39
Incumbent	3.27	3.90	3.45	8.65	11.71	10.54	11.92	15.61	14.00
Non-incumbent	1.71	1.88	1.71	6.03	8.56	10.83	7.74	10.45	12.54
Male	3.24	3.72	3.16	8.25	11.07	10.25	11.50	14.78	13.41
Female	2.13	2.32	1.53	8.33	10.50	11.78	10.46	12.82	13.31
Conservative	4.52	4.44	2.78	11.09	12.43	8.94	15.61	16.88	11.72
Labour	2.51	3.23	3.11	6.86	10.26	11.63	9.37	13.49	14.73
Lib Dem	2.96	2.35	1.72	11.78	13.25	14.81	14.74	15.60	16.53
Cabinet member	0.11	0.24	0.20	0.42	1.43	0.80	0.53	1.67	1.00
Gov. member (incl. cabinet)	0.62	1.09	0.34	2.48	4.30	1.18	3.10	5.40	1.52
Shadow cabinet member	2.14	3.32	0.46	7.21	9.68	5.21	9.36	13.00	5.67
Shadow gov. member (incl. shadow cabinet)	4.07	3.69	1.91	10.58	10.77	10.58	14.65	14.46	12.48
<i>Total memberships</i>	1990	2200	1797	5407	7001	6810	7397	9201	8607
<i># MPs holding</i>	431	436	407	596	603	586	608	608	597

Table II:
Variations in the average number of APG *executive posts* held by British, by group type, demographic, party, and career factors

	Average executive posts in geographic APGs					Average executive posts in subject-focused APGs					Average executive posts in all APGs				
	1996	2001	2005	2010	2012	1996	2001	2005	2010	2012	1996	2001	2005	2010	2012
All MPs	0.64	0.59	0.76	0.89	0.84	0.84	1.42	1.99	2.68	2.57	1.47	2.00	2.74	3.57	3.41
Incumbent	0.76	0.76	0.78	0.97	1.03	0.86	1.17	2.06	2.78	2.30	1.62	1.93	2.84	3.75	3.33
Non-incumbent	0.25	0.35	0.51	0.66	0.51	0.80	1.83	1.67	2.31	3.11	1.05	2.17	2.18	2.97	3.62
Male	0.67	0.63	0.83	0.99	0.96	0.82	1.43	2.01	2.72	2.48	1.49	2.06	2.84	3.72	3.44
Female	0.29	0.38	0.41	0.47	0.41	1.02	1.36	1.88	2.48	2.90	1.31	1.74	2.29	2.95	3.30
Conservative	0.64	0.81	1.04	1.19	0.92	0.74	1.56	2.14	2.77	2.27	1.38	2.36	3.18	3.96	3.19
Labour	0.65	0.47	0.62	0.75	0.83	0.82	1.19	1.69	2.29	2.49	1.47	1.66	2.31	3.04	3.32
Lib Dem	0.76	0.81	1.04	0.81	0.51	2.28	3.11	3.87	5.00	4.40	3.04	3.91	4.91	5.81	4.91
Cabinet member	0.09	0.16	0.16	0.14	0.20	0.00	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.21	0.21	0.14	0.20
Gov. member (incl. cabinet)	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.08	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.20	0.04	0.08	0.13	0.14	0.28	0.12
Shadow cabinet member	0.15	0.24	0.39	0.40	0.13	0.23	0.29	1.00	1.52	0.63	0.38	0.52	1.39	1.92	0.75
Shadow gov. member (incl. shadow cabinet)	0.40	0.63	0.81	0.90	0.57	0.67	1.43	1.81	2.17	2.05	1.07	2.06	2.61	3.07	2.62
<i>Total posts</i>	413	386	495	569	538	544	930	1301	1710	1654	957	1316	1796	2279	2192
<i># MPs holding</i>	189	183	228	233	217	279	357	424	436	440	349	403	463	466	474

Turning to the rows, in the majority of cases incumbents are more active than new MPs as both general and executive members. The only exceptions are in those years that follow a change in government, namely 2001, the first measurement after the 1997 Labour victory, and 2012, the first measurement after the Conservative-Liberal Democrat victory. In these years, new members have a higher than average number of executive positions for subject groups and overall. Moreover, while records were not available for 2001, the same trend is evident in the member data for subject groups from 2012. This reversal following an election may reflect the fact that newly elected government members are being recruited to fill posts left vacant by defeated incumbents from the old governing party. It could also be that the winning party wishes to exert more control over these groups. However, it is notable that at no point are new members more active in geographic groups as general or executive members. More study is required to know why such groups remain immune to the upheaval witnessed in subject groups following a change in government.

In terms of gender, the tables show remarkably consistent patterns, with women MPs having a lower than average number of executive and membership positions in both geographic-focused groups and total groups in each of the five parliamentary sessions. However, they did have above average participation on the executive of subject groups in 1996 and 2012. Among parties, Liberal Democrats have uniformly below average participation as members of geographic groups, but are far above the average for both types of participation in subject-focused groups and overall. Notably, this higher level of subject group participation among Lib Dems continued even after the party moved into government in 2010. In contrast, Conservatives had higher than average memberships in both geographic and subject groups until the party entered the coalition, at which point they fell somewhat below. For their part, Labour MPs almost always had a lower than average number of executive posts relative to the other parties whether in government or opposition.

As could be predicted from the discussion above, the average number of memberships and executive positions held was much lower among those holding cabinet or other front bench positions. Those in the shadow cabinet were somewhat more active than their cabinet opposites no matter which party formed the opposition. However, their average level of participation was well below that of the average MP. On the other hand, the broader shadow government had participation levels that were on par with or exceeded the general average.

7.2 *Regression results*

Table III presents the results for the 6 UK regressions. They indicate that as with members of the US Congress, an MPs' margin of victory is inversely related to their participation in APGs. However, this relationship exists only for subject-focused groups, and is stronger for general membership than executive positions. While the coefficient appears very small, it is important to keep in mind that the variable contains the absolute number of votes by which an MP beat their next closest competitor. Therefore, we would expect that an MP with a margin of victory of 10,000 votes would hold 0.2 fewer executive posts and 2.2 fewer memberships in subject-focused groups than an MP with a one vote majority.

However, in contrast to the American findings, the results for incumbency show that newly elected British MPs are less likely to participate in APGs than those who have served at least one term. Moreover, with the exception subject group executives, the relationship between

incumbency and participation is equally robust at both the general member and executive levels (P=0.001). The relationships also appear to be unaffected by the surge in activity by new members following a change in government. These findings suggest that instead of providing new MPs with an opportunity to develop or display leadership skills in search of a promotion, APGs in the UK instead provide some benefit for those further along in their career paths. Interviews conducted for the broader research project indicate that MPs often turn to APGs to increase their influence only after their hopes of a front-bench post have been dashed.

Table III:
Regression results of factors shaping factors British MPs' participation in APGs

	Geographic exec. posts	Subject exec. posts	Total exec. posts	Geographic memberships	Subject memberships	Total memberships
	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)
Margin of victory	0.00000 (0.00001)	-0.00002** (0.00001)	-0.00002 (0.00001)	0.00000 (0.00002)	-0.00022**** (0.00005)	-0.00021**** (0.00006)
Incumbent	0.4241**** (0.0636)	0.2165** (0.0885)	0.6391**** (0.1200)	1.6107**** (0.2260)	2.8562**** (0.4651)	4.5154**** (0.6011)
Female	-0.3108**** (0.1131)	0.3190** (0.1462)	0.0067 (0.2023)	-1.0935**** (0.3447)	1.1605* (0.6886)	0.0746 (0.8851)
# of MPs in party	-0.0002 (0.0005)	0.0004 (0.0007)	0.0001 (0.0009)	-0.0034** (0.0016)	-0.0112**** (0.0034)	-0.0146**** (0.0043)
Cons.	0.3474 (0.2393)	0.3541 (0.3173)	0.7294* (0.4361)	2.3124**** (0.8013)	6.9757**** (1.6241)	9.3177**** (2.0898)
Labour	0.1822 (0.2560)	0.1983 (0.3439)	0.4067 (0.4711)	1.9891** (0.8757)	7.1938**** (1.7771)	9.2068**** (2.2905)
Lib Dem	0.1788 (0.2536)	2.3114**** (0.3284)	2.5056**** (0.4542)	0.4205 (0.8234)	7.1828**** (1.6446)	7.6052**** (2.1144)
Shadow cabinet	-0.6502**** (0.0816)	-1.8708**** (0.1160)	-2.5372**** (0.1568)	-1.9978**** (0.2523)	-5.9938**** (0.5217)	-8.0740**** (0.6753)
Government minister	-0.3871*** (0.1408)	-1.0783**** (0.2016)	-1.4823**** (0.2720)	-0.9413** (0.4326)	-2.8322*** (0.8975)	-3.8767**** (1.1619)
# of groups	0.0058**** (0.0013)	0.0052**** (0.0003)	0.0054**** (0.0004)	0.0241**** (0.0069)	0.0199**** (0.0026)	0.0203**** (0.0029)
Intercept	-0.2832 (0.2512)	0.0467 (0.2876)	-0.2893 (0.4045)	-1.8277 (1.1569)	-1.4837 (1.7207)	-2.9855 (2.3472)
# of obs.	3179	3179	3179	1901	1901	1901
# of MPs	1365	1365	1365	1010	1010	1010
R ² within	0.0580	0.1811	0.1888	0.0821	0.2436	0.2331
R ² between	0.0487	0.2259	0.1631	0.1031	0.1176	0.1243
R ² overall	0.0514	0.1923	0.1666	0.0958	0.1331	0.1385

* P = 0.1, ** P = 0.05, *** P = 0.01 **** P = 0.001

Among the control variables, as expected serving as a government minister or a member of the shadow cabinet greatly reduced an MP's level of participation in APGs. There was also an inverse relationship between the number of MPs in a party and the number of memberships those MPs hold. However, the effect of the control was not sufficient to prevent some of the control variables for the individual parties from having an impact as well. Importantly, all but one of the party controls were significant for the regressions on membership data. The only exception was that Liberal Democrat MPs were not significantly more likely to be members in geographic groups. In contrast, party affiliation appears to play a much smaller role in participation in executive posts. Most notably, Lib Dem MPs were more likely to hold executive positions both in subject groups and overall. Conservative MPs also were more likely to hold posts overall, although the significance of the relationship was just $P=0.1$.

The regression results showed that women MPs were significantly less likely to be involved in geographic groups as either an officer or a regular member. They were also more likely to be involved in subject groups in both capacities, although the significance for the relationship between gender and subject group membership was only $P=0.1$. Interview respondents suggested women's reduced participation in geographic groups likely resulted from their increased family responsibilities, which hindered their ability to travel. However, it was unclear why they should simultaneously also be more involved in subject groups. It is possible that the increased subject group involvement among both women and Lib Dems stems from the fact that both tend to have lower margins of victory, but more work is needed to explore the relationships.

Finally, the regression results also indicate that involvement in geographic- and subject-focused groups are influenced by different factors. In addition to the differences in how margin of victory, gender, and party affect participation in the two types of groups, the R-squared values also indicate that the models for participation in subject groups account for a greater proportion of variation than those for the geographic ones. Moreover, as could be predicted by the lesser commitment involved, the number of group memberships possessed by an MP appears to be more sensitive to factors such as margin of victory and the number of MPs in a party. As such, examining only an individual's memberships APGs as a whole could cause certain relationships to go unobserved.

8.0 Canadian results

8.1 Data overview

The lack of a uniform registry means that the Canadian data is much less comprehensive than that from the UK. For instance, while the UK registry from 2010 alone contains information on over 11,000 general member and executive positions held by British MPs, fewer than 5,500 pieces of membership and executive data are available for Canada across all of the sessions studied. In particular, very little information is available on subject-focused groups and those geographic groups that are not supported by the Parliament.

Nevertheless, the Canadian data presented in Table IV do indicate some changes in MP behaviour over time. Moving across the columns, the most interesting finding is that while the number of officially recognized groups has remained constant at 16, the number of memberships held in these groups has grown. Along the rows, there is less indication of the sharp divide between incumbents and new members that was observed in the UK. Instead, there is no clear

Table IV:
Variations in the average number of APG membership and executive posts held by Canadian MPs, by group type, demographic, party,
and career factors

	Average membership in official geographic APGs				Average exec. posts in official geographic APGs				Average chair posts in "Other" geographic APGs				Avg. subject memberships 2012	Avg. subject chair posts 2012
	2006	2008	2011	2012	2006	2008	2011	2012	2006	2008	2011	2012		
All	3.25	3.26	3.72	4.57	0.45	0.46	0.46	0.44	0.09	0.12	0.11	0.19	0.43	0.18
Incumbent	3.13	3.46	3.71	4.63	0.50	0.47	0.50	0.53	0.11	0.13	0.14	0.17	0.48	0.19
Non-incumbent	3.50	2.67	3.73	4.46	0.37	0.43	0.31	0.30	0.06	0.08	0.03	0.23	0.35	0.16
Male	3.06	3.24	3.70	4.71	0.42	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.09	0.12	0.12	0.21	0.38	0.14
Female	3.98	3.33	3.79	4.15	0.60	0.52	0.47	0.46	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.15	0.58	0.31
Bloc	4.06	3.31	3.45	3.75	0.44	0.54	0.49	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.04	0.25	0.00	0.75
Cons	2.90	3.70	3.72	4.82	0.44	0.47	0.44	0.52	0.07	0.11	0.11	0.25	0.31	0.13
Liberal	3.36	3.05	4.38	5.15	0.46	0.45	0.51	0.41	0.16	0.17	0.21	0.15	0.74	0.29
NDP	2.32	2.07	2.75	4.00	0.58	0.37	0.36	0.34	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.12	0.55	0.19
Cabinet	1.64	1.10	1.11	2.42	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.00
Shadow cabinet	2.70	3.48	4.64	4.87	0.40	0.48	0.40	0.52	0.09	0.14	0.21	0.13	0.65	0.28
<i>Total posts</i>	999	988	1134	1403	140	140	139	136	29	35	35	59	133	56
<i># MPs holding</i>	256	204	192	231	97	97	97	96	24	29	29	43	109	45

trend as to which of the two has more group memberships, although incumbents do have a higher average number of executive positions. In contrast to the UK, where men dominated the geographic groups, female MPs in Canada were actually more active in the recognized geographic groups as both members (except in 2012) and officers. Curiously though, this trend did not extend to chair positions in the OIGs. However, Canada's women MPs were similar to their US colleagues in having an above average number of memberships and chair positions in subject groups.

In terms of parties, NDP members had below average involvement as members in recognized geographic groups and chairs of OIGs until the current session of parliament. In contrast Liberal MPs have tended to be above average in both of these categories, and also had higher than average involvement as both chairs and members of subject groups. As with the UK, being a cabinet member greatly reduced an MP's average participation in all areas. Membership in the shadow cabinet did not have a clear impact on an MP's participation in geographic groups, but did appear to increase involvement in subject groups.

8.2 *Regression results*

The results of the five Canadian regressions are presented in Table V. In a break with both the US and the UK, there is no relationship between participation in APGs and an MP's margin of victory. Incumbency also had no impact in three of the regressions, but did significantly increase the number of executive positions in recognized geographic groups as well as membership in subject groups. As with Britain, Canadian women MPs' greater involvement in subject groups was also significant, yet in contrast to their UK counterparts, so too was their above average participation on the executives of the officially recognized geographic groups. However, the latter relationship was weaker, with a significance of just $P=0.1$.

As expected, cabinet members had significantly less involvement in any type of APG activity. However, no significant relationships were found for those serving in the shadow cabinet. Another divergence from the UK can be seen in the fact that the number of MPs in a party actually significantly increased the number of positions its members held in both types of geographic groups. More research is required to know whether those from the larger parties crowded out their smaller-party colleagues, or if the latter simply had less interest in such activities. The number of MPs in a party did, however, significantly reduce the likelihood of those MPs being members in the subject groups.

The link between the number of MPs in a party and their level of involvement in geographic groups may help to explain why none of the controls for the individual parties are significant for any of the three geographic group regressions. On the subject side, the regressions showed that both Liberal and NDP MPs were significantly more likely to be subject group members, but less likely to be subject group chairs. This outcome may reflect the fact that subject-focused APGs often prefer to have a chair from the governing in order to mute concerns about partisanship and to improve access to ministers.

Although the differences are not as stark as in the UK, the Canadian results would appear to suggest that there are different dynamics influencing MPs' participation in APGs as general versus executive members. Notably, these differences can be seen in the more comprehensive data from the officially recognized geographic groups, with incumbency playing a significant role in executive positions for those groups, but not for memberships. The results also appear to

indicate that there are different factors shaping MPs' involvement in geographic and subject groups. For instance, women are significantly more involved in the former than the latter. However, it is premature to draw any firm conclusions based only on subject group data from a single parliament.

Table V:
Regression results of factors shaping Canadian MPs' participation in APGs

	Mem. in official geog. Groups	Exec. in official geog. Groups	Chair in "Other" geog. groups	Memberships in subject groups	Chair posts in subject groups
	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)	Coef. (SE)
Margin of victory	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0000)
Incumbent	0.2721 (0.2393)	0.1616**** (0.0445)	0.0344 (0.0259)	0.3229**** (0.0919)	0.0604 (0.0704)
Female	0.2166 (0.3494)	0.1138* (0.0678)	0.0132 (0.0372)	0.2227*** (0.0837)	0.1848*** (0.0642)
# of MPs in party	0.0164**** (0.0039)	0.0012* (0.0007)	0.0008** (0.0004)	0.0027 (0.0019)	-0.0033** (0.0015)
Cons	-0.8673 (0.5853)	-0.0264 (0.1121)	0.0540 (0.0618)	-	-
Liberal	-0.7422 (0.5620)	-0.0589 (0.1083)	0.0708 (0.0601)	0.5837** (0.2664)	-0.3562* (0.2042)
NDP	-0.7065 (0.5554)	-0.1644 (0.1075)	0.0091 (0.0607)	0.3896** (0.1587)	-0.2875** (0.1217)
Cabinet	-2.3771**** (0.3976)	-0.5028**** (0.0750)	-0.1329**** (0.0416)	-0.4320**** (0.1151)	-0.2141** (0.0882)
Shadow Cabinet	0.1297 (0.2934)	0.0165 (0.0545)	-0.0054 (0.0304)	0.0588 (0.1240)	0.1316 (0.0951)
# of "Other" groups	-	-	0.0024*** (0.0011)	-	-
Intercept	2.7444 (0.4693)	0.2724** (0.0901)	-0.1075* (0.0597)	-0.2952 (0.3179)	0.6610*** (0.2437)
# of obs.	1222	1223	1223	307	307
# of MPs	566	567	567	-	-
R ² within	0.0204	0.0389	0.0100	-	-
R ² between	0.0598	0.0734	0.0523	-	-
R ² overall	0.0603	0.0633	0.0354	-	-
Adj R ²	-	-	-	0.1189	0.0522

* P = 0.1, ** P = 0.05, *** P = 0.01 **** P = 0.001

9.0 Discussion and conclusion

While the study is limited by the poorer quality of the Canadian data, it is still possible to conclude that Hammond's conclusions regarding the factors that shape participation in APGs at the US Congress can be only partially extrapolated to Westminster systems. In keeping with Hammond's findings, British MPs with a lower margin of victory were significantly more likely to participate in APGs. This finding is unexpected given that elections in the UK are traditionally seen to be determined based on the characteristics of the parties, not the candidates (Pattie and Johnston 2004). As such, it suggests that MPs may be willing to distance themselves from their own party by working with opposing MPs if they believe that doing so may increase their local popularity. Moreover, the fact that this relationship exists only for subject-focused APGs suggests that marginal British MPs concentrate on the activities with the most direct relevance to voters. This link between marginality and subject group participation in the UK may also explain why no relationship with marginality was found in Canada given that the Canadian subject group data had significant limitations.

However, despite the similar relationship between the US and UK in terms of marginality, in neither Britain nor Canada were new MPs more likely to participate in APGs. Instead, and in contrast to the US Congress, participation actually rose with incumbency, a result which suggests that MPs in systems with greater levels of party discipline may face a different set incentives. In particular, being seen to cooperate with those from other parties at an early stage in one's career may be detrimental to an MPs' chances for promotion to the front-bench.

Besides showing the limits on the portability of Hammond's findings, both the Canadian and British results also indicate that care must be taken to disaggregate MPs involvement in subject and geographic groups. Most importantly, looking at both types together could lead one to miss important differences, such as the greater tendency of women MPs to be more involved in subject-focused groups and (at least in the UK) less involved in geographic ones. There were also substantial variations by party, with the Lib Dems, for example, having a greater involvement with subject groups than Labour or Conservative MPs.

Finally, the data also suggest that those factors which influence whether an MP will become a member of a group may not be exactly same as those which shape whether he or she will also serve on its executive. In Canada, for instance, new MPs and incumbents are equally likely to be members of the officially recognized geographic groups, but the latter are much more likely to hold executive posts. The intensity of a relationship may also vary as well between the two types of positions, with British MPs' memberships in subject groups being much more sensitive to changes in their margin of victory than the number of executive positions they hold.

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