

Constituency and Personal Determinants of MP Positions on Moral Issues

The Case of Abortion and Same-Sex Marriage in the 38th Parliament

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Abstract

This paper examines the strength of the relationship between constituency characteristics and the positions taken by elected legislators on abortion and same-sex marriage in the 38th parliament of the Canadian House of Commons. We demonstrate that, contrary to conventional wisdom, there is more to the representational process on these moral issues than party and personal conviction. After controlling for these factors, our results show that the value orientations of MPs on these issues tracks a number of constituency characteristics, most notably the presence of immigrants (which we are treating here as a proxy for rural/urban divisions), the age, educational attainments, and religious composition of riding electorates. Interestingly, the sensitivity of MPs to these riding characteristics does not appear to be conditioned by their electoral vulnerability.

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Introduction

André Siegfried once observed that Canada's distinctiveness stems from it being a North American society governed through European institutions. As a result, many Canadian political practices appear to be blends of elements of both European and American origin. One specific manifestation of this can be seen in the behavior of Members of Parliament, who despite being subject to the party discipline characteristic of parliamentary systems, are nonetheless strongly committed to their constituencies and to advancing the interests of their constituents. The constituency focus of MPs is stronger in Canada than it is in Britain, and in this respect Canadian MPs may appear to be closer to American Members of Congress than to their British parliamentary counterparts. Reconciling the tensions arising from the operation of responsible party government and the perceived need to be a good constituency representative is a central challenge facing Canadian MPs.

There are a number of ways in which tensions between the realities of party discipline and the imperatives for constituency representation can be reconciled. This paper explores one of these options – namely, MPs taking positions on controversial public issues that are reflective of aspects of their constituencies. Specifically, we look at whether the public positions taken by Canadian MPs in the 38th parliament (in the post-2004 period) on two controversial issues – abortion and same-sex marriage – are influenced by the nature of their constituencies. These topics are among a suite of controversial issues that, as David Smith (2007: 77) noted, set up “... a tension, deeply felt because the issues touch on moral values, between centre and constituency...” Smith continues by arguing that because of the wide disparity in opinions on these moral issues the “hand of the whip is heavier” on these matters. While this may be true, moral issues are frequently also highly salient to at least an intensely mobilized minority of the general public, for many of whom they are closely related to an intensely held belief or value system. Compared to most issues involving legislative action, these issues are also essentially uncomplicated and therefore easily comprehended by most voters. As a result, any debate of these issues results in tremendous pressure being brought on elected members. Therefore, on moral issues such as these there is relatively little opportunity for a politician to hide behind technical complexity or other potential sources of obfuscation. Moreover, such issues tend to embody a rural-urban cleavage, such that rural Canadians are more likely than city dwellers to hold traditional views about morality (Thomas, 2001). This geographic structure renders it easier for many MPs to discern a majority preference among their constituents. For many MPs, it also likely produces less cross-pressuring of MPs from opposing sides of these issues. As a result of these various factors, on morality policy there is an expectation of a close correspondence between constituency opinion and legislator position (Mooney, 2001: 10).

This paper examines the extent to which this expectation is met in Canada by examining the strength of the relationship between selected constituency characteristics and the positions taken by elected legislators on abortion and same-sex marriage (SSM). While the former issue was not the subject of parliamentary action during the 38th parliament, it was nonetheless a high profile issue throughout the short life of the parliament. By contrast, legislation legalizing same-sex marriage was introduced by Paul Martin's minority Liberal government in February 2005,

and was passed by the House of Commons (with NDP and BQ support) in a whipped vote in June of that year. Before turning to an empirical examination of the relative contribution of personal, partisan, and constituency characteristics to an explanation of MP positions on these issues, we begin in the second section by briefly reviewing the growing literature that seeks to identify the role and significance of constituencies in the system of parliamentary representation in Canada. In the third section of the paper we introduce our empirical test for the existence of a constituency connection influencing MP positions on these two issues, and identify our measures and general expectations. Our results are presented in the paper's fourth section, which is followed by a brief concluding section.

Constituencies, Party Discipline, and Representation

Following the work of Heinz Eulau and Warren Miller and Donald Stokes, conventional approaches to representational behavior identify three ideal-typical models – the delegate, the trustee, and the “politico” (the latter representing a hybrid version of the preceding two role types). Delegates are, as Edmund Burke famously put it, “local ambassadors” whose role it is to act on the basis of the preferences of their constituents. David Smith (2007: 51-71) generalizes this view under the heading “electoral democracy” as one of the contending theoretical perspectives for Canada’s parliamentary system. Stephen Harper’s Conservative government, like other recent governments before it, came to power in 2006 promising more ‘free votes’ in parliament, ostensibly to give greater scope for the representation of constituency-based interests in the policy process. Trustees, on the other hand, are less closely tied to the preferences of their electors. Rather, they are free to use their best judgment to act on behalf of the interests of their country or district. Politicos are those who “...agree that constituents should have their views represented in Parliament but appreciate that this goal is easier done in principle than in practice” (Docherty, 1997: 143-44).

In the happiest of circumstances, pressures on MPs from constituency, party, and conscience will be in close alignment. Obviously, however, that need not always be the case (eg., see Kam, 2001). The crux of the question of representational behavior is what happens when they are not. There is considerable evidence that majorities of Canadian voters believe that MPs should be bound to follow constituency opinion in their voting behavior (see the discussions in Carty et al., 2000: 112-117; and Price and Mancuso, 1991: 202). Surveys of MPs suggest that many elected representatives agree with this popular opinion. For example, in a mail survey of English-Canadian MPs conducted in 1996, almost half of respondents agreed that consideration of constituents wishes should be “very important” for MPs as they made their voting decisions in Parliament. Fully 57 percent mentioned that their greatest responsibility was to their constituents (mentioned almost three times as frequently as “Canadians as a whole” – the second most popular response) (see Eagles, 1998). Similarly research by David Docherty also shows substantial support among MPs for the delegate model of representation. The numbers from the 1990s do not appear to have changed radically from those reported in Kornberg’s survey of MPs in Canada’s 25th parliament elected in 1962. He found that almost half (49%) of MPs identified as “delegates” – surprisingly, a higher proportion than comparable studies of the time suggest was true for American members of the House of Representatives or state legislators at that time (Kornberg, 1967: 108). It should be noted, however, that Docherty’s surveys show that experience in the job of MP enhances appreciation of the virtues of party discipline, and it

sharpens an awareness of the very real challenges of determining and cleaving to constituency preferences (Docherty, 1997: 143-44).

These findings, suggestive of the importance of the constituency connection in parliamentary representation, sit somewhat uncomfortably within what we know about the realities of life in Canada's House of Commons. Simply put, whatever the disposition of the MP, there is precious little opportunity for them to express constituency views when they deviate from the positions staked out by the party leadership. Not only are their votes dictated by party leaders, but open dissent or criticism of other party members is met with sanctions (e.g., see Docherty, 1997: 164-70). The vast majority of votes in the Canadian House of Commons occasion no dissent (Malloy, 2003: 117). As a result, empirical studies of parliamentary voting behavior in Canada are typically not done (this is in significant contrast to the situation in the UK, where the generally lower level of discipline in House voting has prompted a number of empirical studies of the correlates and consequences of parliamentary dissent.¹ Certainly no studies of House voting in Canada attempt to gauge the impact of constituency preferences on the votes of Members (with the exception of a study of 'free votes' to be discussed below). Even studies that explicitly focus on the constituency role of Canadian MPs, such as Franks' (2007) article, do not explore for links between constituency opinion and House votes. The scholarly consensus seems to regard the question as closed. Moreover, studies of Canadian voters suggest that they do not seek to reward or punish good and faithful constituency representatives (Cross, 2000: 9-10). Blais et al. (2003) estimate that only about 5% of all voters in the 2000 election based their vote decision on the local candidate.

Thus it appears that neither the opportunity nor the incentive exists in Canada for MPs to base their parliamentary votes on the preferences or interests of their constituents. This does not mean that constituencies are completely neglected in the representational process. Moral issues may be exceptional in this regard, for reasons outlined above. But that aside, scholars have understandably tended to look elsewhere for evidence of constituency representation in the Canadian parliamentary system. In most cases, this involves a study of the constituency service behavior of MPs (Heitschusen, et al., 2005). Constituency service, conceptualized as representing general constituency concerns and interests in Parliament and with the government, meeting with constituents, and service to individual constituents with particular problems, is consistently rated the most important activity by MPs (Franks, 2007). However, other scholars have identified interesting outlets for constituency pressures within the House itself. Though open to the public and media, Standing Committees do not attract the attention of more high profile debates on the House floor, and partisan posturing can therefore be relaxed somewhat. Grace Skogstad's study (1985) of the House committees on Transport and Agriculture in the 32nd parliament (1980-84) revealed that Members were willing to push for changes in legislation that would benefit their constituents. Longley's (2003) analysis of House of Commons voting on the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement suggests that cross-pressured MPs are more likely than others to abstain from voting. More recently, in an ambitious study spanning several decades, Stuart Soroka and his colleagues at McGill (2009) have produced compelling evidence of constituency influence in Question Period, that most visible of proceedings in the House of Commons.

¹ See for examples, Hibbings and Marsh, 1987; Pattie et al., 1994; Read et al., 1994; Hoare, 1996; Mughan and Scully, 1997; Cowley and Stuart, 2005; Cowley and Stuart, 2009.

Similarly, Kelly Blidook's (2007) doctoral thesis uncovers strong evidence of constituency influence on the voting behavior of MPs on Private Members' Bills (PMBs).

Another opportunity for MPs to express constituency preferences in the legislative process arises when "free votes" are called. These are instances where party discipline is relaxed because of the morally or politically charged nature of the issue at hand. In free votes, MPs are able to vote either their conscience or their constituency. Yet even on these ostensibly unwhipped votes party leaders feel free to lean on their front and backbenchers. This may have convinced scholars that free votes also will largely be party affairs and this is largely the conclusion of one empirical study of free votes in the Canadian House of Commons (Overby et al., 1998). This study focuses on 15 recorded votes from all stages of parliamentary consideration of Bill C-43, a bill aiming to recriminalize abortion, between May 23rd and 29th, 1990. The authors factor analyzed the 15 votes and identified three underlying components. To explain variation in MP voting along these three dimensions they developed a 17 variable model consisting of MP's personal characteristics (gender; marital status; number of children; religion; university experience; occupation; and age), constituency characteristics (ethnicity, as a proxy for religion; educational attainment; median income; rural/urban; and three regional measures); and political (partisanship; cabinet membership, and electoral security/margin of victory). They found that party was by far the strongest predictor of MP behavior on these "free" votes, and that the influence of party was strongest on the key votes that really mattered (where party unity averaged 90%) (Overby et al., 1998: 389). Evidence of constituency influences on MP voting was negligible in the early stages of Bill C-43's consideration, but emerged more strongly accounting for variation in the second and third factors, which correspond to later votes on amendments and the final votes of record on the Bill. In addition to the MP's partisanship, religious background, and cabinet membership, their results suggested that the presence of large numbers of Catholics actually disposed MPs to resist the various pro-life amendments that were considered during the legislative process. Yet, more in line with expectations, the presence of Catholics was also associated with an MPs supporting the Bill in the recorded votes after second and third reading.

Personal and Constituency Determinants of MPs' Public Profiles on "Moral Issues"

An alternative to using the actual roll-call vote records for each MP is to turn to published sources that characterize an MP's overall position on an issue. Often these are intended to inform voters about candidates' positions or inclinations on particular topics. In the case of the American Congress, a wide variety of characterizations and ratings of Representative dispositions are available for this purpose (eg.s Americans for Democratic Action, or ADA scores; Poole and Rosenthal's DW-Nominate scores; the American Conservative Union's ratings, etc.), and they are frequently employed in academic analyses. With the opportunity for MPs to express their personal or district interests so heavily constrained by party discipline, it is hardly surprising that Canadian voters and academics are not afforded a comparable variety of similar measures profiling their Members of Parliament. However, in the case of highly contentious issues, particularly those involving moral values, the desire on the part of organized groups to mobilize and bring political pressure to bear on particular MPs, coupled with the possibility of free votes, makes it desirable to have some publicly available indication of MP disposition.

One such issue, that of the legal status of same-sex marriage (SSM) arose in the 38th parliament). Canadians as a whole were deeply divided on this question. A CBC poll taken in April 2005 suggested that 52% of Canadians opposed the legalization of SSM while fully 44% supported it (CBC News, 2005). This controversial measure has been seen by some observers to have overshadowed the entire (short) tenure of Paul Martin's Liberal minority government. Introduced by Martin's government in February 2005, Bill C-38 promised to legalize SSM. The issue provoked widespread discontent within the Liberal caucus. The bill passed second reading on May 4th by a 164-137 margin, with 35 Liberal MPs voting "nay" (Deveau, 2005). After the second reading vote, Liberal MP, Pat O'Brien (MP for London-Fanshawe) left the Liberal caucus to sit as an independent over the issue. Shortly after junior cabinet minister Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay – Superior North) resigned his cabinet post in order to be able to oppose the bill at third reading. Other cabinet members rumored to be ready to resign over the issue proved not to be true. In the end, C-38 was passed by the House of Commons in June of 2005 (by a margin of 158-133), with support from the BQ and NDP caucuses.

Another potentially explosive issue that has haunted successive Canadian governments is that of abortion. Ever since the Supreme Court ruling struck down Canada's existing abortion legislation in its landmark 1988 decision in *Morgenthaler v. The Queen* that struck down Canada's existing abortion legislation, social conservatives have sought to introduce new regulatory legislation. While the BQ and the NDP are officially pro-choice, neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have adopted an official policy on the issue. Both major party caucuses are divided on the issue, but the Conservatives are generally more pro-life and Liberals more pro-choice. Abortion became an issue during the 2004 leadership convention for the newly formed Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) with the candidacy of pro-choice MP Belinda Stronach alienating the more socially conservative former members of the Canadian Alliance. Stephen Harper, the eventual winner of the CPC leadership, attempted to defuse the issue during the 2004 election campaign by saying if elected his government would not introduce anti-abortion legislation (though he didn't rule this move out for future Conservative governments). So while no legislation dealing with abortion was considered by the 38th parliament, the issue was very much part of the political milieu.

To measure the disposition of MPs to the issue of abortion, we use a measure derived from a simple list of "anti-choice" MPs returned in the 2004 federal election, compiled by the Pro-Choice Action Network of Canada (Arthur, 2004). This list included the names of 89 pro-life MPs elected in 2004 who were anti-abortion, and this was used as the basis for a dichotomous dummy variable (1= pro-choice).² Our second measure of MP dispositions concerns their general position on the issue of same-sex marriage (SSM). Instead of relying on the actual roll-call votes, we use the characterization of the MPs stand on SSM as it appeared in a grid published by the *Globe and Mail* (Toronto) on its website in the lead-up (and aftermath) of the period during which the Bill was considered by the House of Commons. The grid, based on the seating chart of

² In fact, the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada has updated and extended this list of 'anti-choice' MPs to account for subsequent elections. See <http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/action/list-antichoice-mps-nov08.html>. In addition to actual votes on relevant bills, this group sends questionnaires to candidates for elected federal office and makes responses available on-line.

the House of Commons, showed the vote intentions of all MPs in 2005, coded as supporting (N = 140) or opposing (N=118) SSM, or as being undecided (N=48). The inclusion of the “undecided” category makes this a particularly useful measure for our purposes. We assume that MPs who are “undecided” about the issue are being subject to significant cross-pressures, stemming possibly from differences among positions staked out by party, their district, or their conscience. In any event, it is plausible to argue that these waverers feel less strongly about the issue (for whatever reason) than either unabashed proponents or detractors. Having a third category between the extreme positions adds some welcome refinement to our SSM measure. Recognizing that both measures are associated with an underlying sense of moral conservatism or liberalism, in addition to exploring the determinants of MP positions on these two measures, we also combine them to form a simple four-category additive index of Moral Liberalism (MLI) (0 = moral conservative; 3 = moral liberal). We present analyses for all three measures in the next section.

Before turning to our results, a brief discussion of the independent variables is in order. Loosely following Overby et al. we distinguish three sets of explanatory variables that we expect to be related to MP moral orientations: the personal and political characteristics of the MP her/himself, the characteristics of their constituencies, and the electoral vulnerability or security of the MP. Regarding the personal characteristics of MPs, we include measures of party, cabinet membership, age, gender, and educational attainment. We expect moral liberalism to be positively associated with Liberal/BQ/NDP (where the NDP, and the BQ are included with the Liberals to serve as a reference category against which the Conservative and Independent MPs can be compared), membership, cabinet status, higher educational attainment, lower age, and being female.

To capture the most relevant features of the riding context, we include measures of the religious composition, specifically focusin on the concentration of Catholics, and Protestant fundamentalists (combining Pentacostals, Christian Reform, Evangelical Missionary, Christian Missionary Alliance, and Jehovah’s Witnesses). These groups are expected to be hostile to moral liberalism. As Didi Herman has noted:

For Christian moral activists, ‘gay rights’ came to be synonymous with several things: anti-Christianity, dangerous morality, and government out of control. Foremost in fighting against such rights extension were the same type of activists as those leading the anti-abortion struggle – anti-secular conservative Christians for whom official recognition of lesbians and gay men was tantamount to the destruction of God-given family structure.

(Herman, 1994: 273)

In addition, the proportion of young people (under 35 years); university graduates; and immigrants in riding electorates were also included in the model. With 94% of Canada’s immigrants in the 2001-2006 period settling in one of Canada’s major cities (<http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.lt.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=38>), this measure serves as a reasonable proxy in our model for the rural/urban cleavage. Our expectation is that moral liberalism will be positively associated with constituency-level concentrations of immigrants, university graduates,

and young people. We expect MPs from heavily Catholic and fundamentalist Protestant districts to be less morally liberal.

Our estimation strategy begins with an evaluation of personal MP characteristics as determinants of MPs' moral liberalism. A second model adds a battery of constituency measures to see if they add explanatory value after the personal qualities of MPs are statistically controlled. Finally, it is plausible to argue that MPs elected by slim vote margins would be more closely attuned to the views of their constituents, if only to attract additional support at the next election. Kelly Blidook's 2007 doctoral dissertation shows that MP dyadic representational behavior regarding PMBs varies according to the electoral context. To explore this possibility in the context of MP positions on abortion and SSM we constructed interaction terms by multiplying the victory margin in 2004 by each of the riding measures and including these interaction terms to the personal and riding measures. If MPs from marginal ridings are most sensitive than others to the riding electorate, the coefficients from the composite models for these variables should reach an acceptable level of statistical significance, though the expected direction of impact will vary according to the riding measure itself. The interactions for Catholicism/fundamentalism and victory margin are expected to be negative, whereas the other interactions should be positively related to the three dependent variables.

Results

Table One presents the results of three parallel sets of progressively more fully-specified models of MP positions first on the issue of abortion (pro-choice MP orientations), then on the issue of SSM (with support representing the most positive category), and finally on the composite index of moral liberalism. Since the abortion measure is a dummy variable, binary logistic estimation is employed for the first group of three models. However, since the SSM and "moral liberalism index" (MLI) measures are comprised of ordered sequences of categories, we take advantage of this additional information by employing ordinal logistic regression to estimate these relationships.

Table One about here

There are some clear patterns identifiable in the results. Reading across the columns, it is obvious that party is the most consistent and important determinant of MP orientations to abortion, same-sex marriage, and MLI measure that combines both. Conservative MPs are significantly and consistently less likely to adopt morally liberal positions, net of other influences. The coefficients for Independents are less stable, reflecting the small number (2) of MPs in this category. Interestingly, the coefficients for (Liberal) cabinet membership are only significant in affecting MP orientations to the SSM issue when personal and district characteristics are modeled (the coefficients for the personal qualities and margin interaction models narrowly miss the .05 p-value of statistical significance). Since party discipline was invoked for the SSM bill, and since discipline is highest for members of the cabinet than it is for back-benchers, it is perhaps surprising that the coefficients for this measure were not even more robust.

Looking at the other characteristics of MPs, only age and gender are associated with relatively consistent impacts on moral liberalism. As hypothesized, *ceteris paribus*, older MPs are less likely to be moral liberals than younger ones, though the effect is not statistically significant in any of the three models of SSM vote intentions. Similarly, male MPs are less morally liberal than their female counterparts. The level of MP education fails to register as a determinant of moral liberalism in any of the ways we measure it here. Overall, the models of MP characteristics and moral liberalism perform quite well, with relatively robust effects that reflect our initial expectations respectable pseudo-R-squared measures.

Adding considerations of the diverse constituency contexts represented by these MPs adds some interesting refinement to the explanation of their dispositions on moral liberalism. Here there are some important consistencies that suggest that MPs are responsive to at least some aspects of their local political environments. The strongest and most consistent feature of district environments is the presence of immigrants, which in our analysis serves essentially as a surrogate for urban Canada. As expected, MPs representing urban/heavily immigrant ridings are significantly more likely to score highly on moral liberalism than other MPs. This effect is consistent across all three dependent variables, and it stands up after the interaction terms involving marginality are included. On issues involving aspects of moral traditionalism/liberalism, there appears to be clear evidence of a rural/urban divide that is associated with impacts on MP orientations.

Three other characteristics of constituency environments that had a significant impact on one or another of the measures moral liberalism of MPs were age, education, and Protestant fundamentalism. Districts with higher proportions of young (< 35 years) people were more likely to support the SSM measure and to score more highly on the MLI, though the impact on the abortion issue was not statistically significant. On balance, and in line with our expectations, MPs representing more youthful electorates were more likely to be themselves morally liberal than elected representatives from older electorates. Similarly, as hypothesized, more highly educated electorates were associated with more liberal attitudes to the SSM issue and to higher scores on the MLI (though again, not on the issue of abortion itself).

Given the resurgence of religion in Canadian political life, we expected that the religious composition of riding electorates would be one of the stronger determinants of MP orientations to moral issues. Somewhat surprising, then, is our finding that the concentration of Catholics is not related to any measure of the moral liberalism of MPs. Despite never approaching statistical significance, it is interesting to note that all the coefficients for the percentage of Catholics are positive, offering some weak suggestion that MPs from heavily Catholic areas are more, rather than less, morally liberal. As expected, however, the concentration of Protestant fundamentalists in riding electorates is associated with lower MP scores on all three measures, but only in the case of the composite MLI was this effect statistically significant (though it narrowly misses the .05 level in the case of the SSM index). Taken together, these findings suggest that MPs moral liberalism is more strongly influenced by the presence of a minority of Protestant fundamentalists as opposed to the density of Catholics. Given that the fundamentalist community is not large in Canada (the mean for all ridings is 2.5%, and the largest concentration is only

about 15%)³, this group clearly punches above its demographic weight in the representational process.

As noted above, one possible explanation for the sensitivity of MPs to the characteristics of their riding populations is electoral insecurity. Even a small group of intensely mobilized voters has the potential to make a difference in many ridings. Turnover is high in Canadian federal elections and there are relatively few safe seats to be had in the country. Risk-averse MPs, and those who were elected by narrow margins, can be expected to work hard to cultivate a ‘personal vote’ both through distinguished constituency service but perhaps also by taking heed of district preferences on moral issues. The results from the third set of models incorporating interaction terms for electoral marginality and district characteristics do not lend much support to the latter hypothesis, however. Only one of the coefficients approaches a minimal level of statistical significance, so the conclusion has to be that electoral insecurity – at least as measured by the size of the victory margin at the preceding election – is not a strong motivator for MPs to adopt moral orientations consistent with their constituents. It is interesting, however, that the one interaction term that does approach statistical significance (% margin * % fundamentalists, where the p value is .06) has a negative sign, indicating that in ridings where MPs in heavily fundamentalist ridings who were elected by larger margins were *less* likely to score highly on moral liberalism. This runs counter to the electoral vulnerability thesis for the motivation of MP behavior, which would suggest that larger victory margins would free up an MP from the need to pander to constituency preferences. Instead, MPs with safer victory margins seem to be more embracing of the moral traditionalism of their riding electorates. On balance, then, the influence of constituency characteristics on MP moral liberalism must stem from other representational imperatives.

Conclusion

This paper has explored for – and found – relatively strong evidence of a constituency connection in MP orientations to moral issues, net of their party affiliation and personal characteristics. Using measures of the general moral attitude of MPs to abortion and same-sex marriage in the 38th parliament, we demonstrate that there is more to the representational process on these issues than party and personal conviction. After controlling for these factors, our results show that the value orientations of MPs on these issues tracks a number of constituency characteristics, most notably the presence of immigrants (which we are treating here as a proxy for rural/urban divisions), the age, educational attainments, and religious composition of riding electorates. Interestingly, the sensitivity of MPs to these riding characteristics does not appear to be conditioned by their electoral vulnerability. One possible explanation for this may lie in the well-known high turnover of rates of MPs in federal elections. With upwards of 30-50% of MPs failing to be re-elected at any given election, it is possible that no victory margin would be sufficient to generate a sense of electoral security in the minds of most MPs.

³ There is some debate about the size of the evangelical Protestant community in Canada. Jonathan Malloy (2009: 354) points to a 2004 *Maclean's* magazine survey that found that 31 percent of Canadians declared themselves “born-again Christians” but he also points to sociologist Kurt Bowen who uses Statistics Canada studies to suggest that the number of “conservative Protestants” in 2001 was only 5.5 percent of Canada’s total population. Either way, our measure here likely understates the size of the fundamentalist population.

We think this is an important finding for our understanding of how parliamentary representation works in Canada. Contrary to the scholarly consensus, it is not all about party discipline and responsible party government (though admittedly these are the dominant forces at work in most policy domains). Our findings complement other recent work suggesting that there is more grounding of these processes in the constituency trenches than has heretofore been appreciated. There remain important questions to be answered, however. In noting the relationship between MP orientations and riding characteristics, we cannot claim that this correspondence results from a process whereby MPs subordinate their own personal values on these issues to those of their constituents (i.e., a true exercise in “constituency control”). It is entirely possible that voters elect Members because of the congruity of their personal beliefs with their own, and therefore no bending of MP preferences to constituency pressures is necessary to achieve effective constituency representation. This interesting question we leave to future research. For the moment, we are content that our findings suggest that answering this question should be an important priority if we are to advance our appreciation of how constituency interests and preferences are reflected in the formal parliamentary policy process.

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Table 1 – Personal, Constituency, and Electoral Determinants of MP's Moral Liberalism

		Pro-Choice?*	Pro-Choice?*	Pro-Choice?*	Same-Sex Marriage**	Same-Sex Marriage**	Same Sex Marriage**	MLI***	MLI***	MLI***
Personal	Conservative	-3.04 (.000)	-2.99 (.000)	-3.04 (.00)	-3.65 (.000)	-3.48 (.000)	-3.50 (.000)	-3.88 (.000)	-3.78 (.000)	-3.76 (.000)
	Independent	-2.19 (.14)	-1.68 (.27)	-1.61 (.29)	-21.89	-21.51	-21.48	-3.74 (.009)	-3.32 (.03)	-3.20 (.03)
	Cabinet Member	-27 (.75)	-33 (.70)	-21 (.81)	2.01 (.06)	2.12 (.06)	2.29 (.04)	1.32 (.09)	1.35 (.10)	1.54 (.06)
	Age	-.04 (.02)	-.04 (.05)	-.04 (.04)	-.02 (.16)	-.03 (.12)	-.02 (.16)	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.03 (.02)
	Male	-.97 (.05)	-.94 (.06)	-.94 (.06)	-.77 (.03)	-.77 (.05)	-.88 (.03)	-1.49 (.18)	-.85 (.02)	-.86 (.02)
	Education	.22 (.37)	3.0 (.25)	.31 (.25)	-.09 (.68)	-.10 (.67)	-.15 (.53)	-.31 (.42)	.08 (.68)	.03 (.88)
	Riding	% Immigration		-.03 (.05)	-.03 (.03)		-.03 (.009)	-.04 (.006)		-.04 (.002)
% University Degrees			.04 (.20)	.03 (.35)		.05 (.06)	.06 (.02)		.04 (.04)	.05 (.03)
% < 35 years			.06 (.32)	.08 (.24)		.11 (.04)	.07 (.20)		.09 (.05)	.08 (.13)
% Catholics			.002 (.88)	.002 (.89)		.01 (.58)	.01 (.41)		.002 (.87)	.004 (.67)
% Fundamentalists****			-.05 (.70)	-.07 (.63)		-.21 (.07)	-.15 (.19)		-.22 (.03)	-.18 (.08)
Marginality		Margin * Immigration			.04 (.44)			.03 (.48)		
	Margin * Degrees			.09 (.31)			-.12 (.17)			-.20 (.78)
	Margin * < 35 yrs.			-.12 (.36)			.18 (.16)			.02 (.84)
	Margin*Catholic			.001 (.98)			-.12 (.17)			.002 (.92)
	Margin*Fundamentalists			.24 (.49)			-.84 (.06)			-2.2 (.49)
Constant		4.74 (.000)	3.06 (.12)	3.09 (.13)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
-2 Log-Likelihood		226.99	219.52	217.28	303.9	342.51	333.71	412.44	470.42	466.05
Pseudo R-sq*****		.339	.357	.362	.469	.525	.541	.516	.571	.578

(Binary/Ordinal Logistic Coefficients/p value)

* Pro-Choice dummy (1= pro-choice); ** Position on Same Sex Marriage, Globe & Mail, 0=against; 1 = undecided; 2=for; ***. Moral Liberalism Index (MLI) = 0-3 additive index