Parliamentary debate is a fundamental aspect of democratic lawmaking. Although lawmakers everywhere seek to express their views in parliament, there are large discrepancies in who has access to the floor across political systems. This book explains how parties and their members of parliament (MPs) structure parliamentary debate. Parties may actively seek to prevent some members from taking the floor while promoting opportunities for others. In doing so, they attempt to control the message that their partisans convey in parliament. The authors provide a theoretical model to explain the design of procedural rules in parliament, how the party leadership interacts with rebel backbenchers, and how MPs represent voters. The book explores political institutions, intraparty politics, electoral politics, and legislative behavior. It develops and tests a new theory of parliamentary debate, using data from the United Kingdom, Germany, New Zealand, and the European Parliament.

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The Politics of Parliamentary Debate

Parties, Rebels, and Representation

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To Rebecca and Liam
SOP

To Jann and Harold
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## Contents

List of figures ........................................... ix
List of tables ........................................... xi
Preface ..................................................... xiii

Introduction ............................................ 1

**Part I  Modeling parliamentary debate** ........................................... 15

1  A theory of parliamentary debate ........................................... 17
   1.1  Democracy and debate ........................................... 18
   1.2  The nature of parliamentary speech ........................................... 20
   1.3  Parties, rebels, and speech – a theory ........................................... 24
   1.4  Two illustrations ........................................... 28
   1.5  A delegation model of parliamentary speech ........................................... 34
   1.6  Summary ........................................... 41

2  Empirical implications ........................................... 43
   2.1  Country-level variables – electoral systems ........................................... 44
   2.2  Within-country variables – electoral tiers and candidate selection ........................................... 49
   2.3  Effects of electoral incentives on debate participation ........................................... 52
   2.4  Summary ........................................... 55

3  Research design ........................................... 56
   3.1  Empirical strategy: an overview ........................................... 56
   3.2  Cross-national comparison and party survey ........................................... 58
   3.3  Case selection: Germany, the United Kingdom, the European Union, and New Zealand ........................................... 61
   3.4  Measurement of latent concepts ........................................... 70
   3.5  Summary ........................................... 72

**Part II  Empirical studies of parliamentary debate** ........................................... 75

4  Debates and institutions ........................................... 77
   4.1  Parliamentary rules ........................................... 78
## Contents

4.2 Party rules 83  
4.3 Summary 99  

5 Debate participation: Germany and the United Kingdom 100  
5.1 Hypotheses 100  
5.2 MP status: when party leaders get involved 101  
5.3 Ideological disagreement 115  
5.4 Summary 123  

6 Dissent in parliament and the media: Germany and the United Kingdom 124  
6.1 Political reaction to the financial crisis, 2008–2009 125  
6.2 Fiscal stimulus debates in the United Kingdom 129  
6.3 Fiscal stimulus debates in Germany 136  
6.4 Summary 147  

7 Candidate selection and debate participation: a European perspective 148  
7.1 Party debate rules in the European Parliament 149  
7.2 Votes, rebels, and speaking time 152  
7.3 Summary 161  

8 Changing institutions: New Zealand 163  
8.1 Electoral system change 163  
8.2 Rules change in parliament 164  
8.3 Behavioral change: budget debate participation 166  
8.4 Summary 173  

Conclusion 174  

Appendix 181  
Bibliography 186  
Index 199
List of figures

1.1 Parliamentary debates in German news .......................................................... page 23
1.2 Expected relationship between latent intraparty disagreement and observed intraparty dissent .......................................................... 26
1.3 Overview of the strategic delegation game of parliamentary speech .................. 36
2.1 Comparison of institutional scenarios .............................................................. 53
4.1 Institutions of parliamentary debate and personal vote seeking ....................... 80
4.2 Party survey: MPs’ level of demand for speaking time in parliamentary party groups .......................................................... 84
4.3 Party survey: final say over the party’s speaker list ........................................ 86
4.4 Party survey: leadership monitoring of MPs’ speeches .................................... 87
4.5 Party survey: monitoring MPs’ statements in the media .................................. 88
4.6 Speech monitoring scale (N = 36) ................................................................. 90
4.7 Distribution of perceived intraparty cohesion (N = 36) .................................... 92
4.8 Distribution of party seat shares and government status (N = 36) ..................... 94
4.9 Relationship among intraparty cohesion, personal vote incentives, and party leader monitoring .......................................................... 96
4.10 Government parties’ expectation regarding their MPs’ speeches (N = 18) .......... 98
5.1 Debate participation: leader involvement in the United Kingdom, 1979–2005 ...... 105
5.2 Debate participation: leader involvement in Germany, 1976–1998 ................... 106
5.3 Debate participation: district versus list MPs in Germany, 1976–1998 ............... 108
5.4 Effects of ideological distance between MP and party leadership on legislative speech counts in Germany and the United Kingdom ......................... 121
List of figures

6.2 Parliamentary speeches in Germany tagged with keyword “economic stimulus,” 2008–2010 128
8.1 Importance of representational activities in New Zealand (responses from candidate surveys) 167
8.2 Predicted probability of budget debate participation in New Zealand 171
8.3 Comparison of debate participation of rebel backbenchers and party leaders in New Zealand 172
List of tables

1.1 Parliamentary activities of British MPs ............................................ page 22
3.1 Empirical strategy of the book ....................................................... 57
3.2 Party survey: list of participating parliamentary parties (N = 45) ........ 60
4.1 Personal vote-seeking incentives and electoral systems ................... 82
4.2 Parliamentary rules and electoral incentives ................................ 83
4.3 Missing values in the seven monitoring questions .......................... 89
4.4 Measuring personal vote incentives .............................................. 93
4.5 Linear regression models of party leadership monitoring ................. 95
5.1 Overview of parliamentary speeches in the United Kingdom and Germany ................................................................. page 102
5.2 Models of parliamentary speech in the United Kingdom, 1979–2004 (all MPs) ......................................................... 111
5.3 Models of parliamentary speech in the United Kingdom, 1979–2004 (only MPs switching between backbencher and leader status) ............ 112
5.4 Models of parliamentary speech in Germany, 1976–1998 (all MPs) .......... 113
5.5 Models of parliamentary speech in Germany, 1976–1998 (only MPs switching between backbencher and leader status) ..................... 114
5.6 Models of parliamentary speech in Germany, 1976–1998 (only MPs switching between electoral tiers) ........................................ 115
5.7 Modeling the effect of ideological disagreement in the United Kingdom (2001–2005) ................................................................. 118
5.8 Modeling the effect of ideological disagreement in Germany (2005–2009) ................................................................. 119
5.9 Probit model of budget speeches in the United Kingdom (2011) and Germany (2010) ................................................................. 122
6.1 Overview of UK data on legislative action on stimulus package ............ 129
### List of tables

| 6.2 | United Kingdom: legislative behavior of Labour MPs in budget debates, 2008–2009 | 134 |
| 6.3 | Ordered probit model of UK MPs’ level of dissent | 135 |
| 6.4 | Marginal effects of party leadership status and margin of victory on the level of intraparty dissent in the United Kingdom | 136 |
| 6.5 | Overview of Germany data on legislative action on stimulus package | 137 |
| 6.6 | Germany: party behavior of government MPs (CDU/CSU and SPD) in fiscal stimulus debates, 2008–2009 | 140 |
| 6.7 | Probit models of German MPs’ level of floor activity and dissent | 142 |
| 6.8 | Germany: coalition behavior of government MPs (CDU/CSU and SPD) in fiscal stimulus debates, 2008–2009 | 144 |
| 6.9 | Germany: relationship between intraparty and coalition dissent on activities of government MPs (CDU/CSU and SPD) in fiscal stimulus debates, 2008–2009 | 145 |
| 6.10 | Germany: legislative behavior of government MPs (CDU/CSU and SPD) in fiscal stimulus debates, 2008–2009 (ministers and junior ministers excluded) | 145 |
| 6.11 | Probit models of German MPs’ coalition dissent | 146 |
| 7.1 | European Parliament: process of allocating speaking time | 150 |
| 7.2 | European Parliament: political group priorities in allocating speaking time | 151 |
| 7.3 | Proportion of MEPs giving a speech as a function of voting and candidate selection mechanisms (vote-speech sample from Sixth European Parliament, 2004–2005) | 156 |
| 7.5 | Predicted speech counts in the Fifth European Parliament (1999–2004): substantive effects of national rebel defection and candidate selection | 161 |
| 8.1 | Budget debate participation in New Zealand (logit) | 170 |
| A.1 | Chapter 5 simulated predicted speech counts (with 95 percent confidence intervals) for different types of German MPs | 185 |
While sitting together as students in a graduate seminar at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) about 10 years ago, we began to wonder how political scientists might improve on existing measures of party ideology in European politics. Political texts, such as election manifestos and parliamentary speeches, provide a tremendous source of information on the position-taking strategies of politicians. Parliaments meanwhile store their records in easily searchable online databases, making content accessible to researchers for analysis. Over the past decade, our musings on how to use these data have led us down a variety of paths. Initially, we were most interested in using political texts, such as party manifestos, to estimate ideology. This interest resulted in the development of *Wordfish*, a text-scaling approach we initially applied to party manifestos. As we turned our attention to parliamentary speeches, however, we quickly realized that our theoretical understanding of the language politicians use in speech was far inferior to our theoretical understanding of other sources of information regarding ideology, such as election manifestos and roll-call vote records. Without stronger theoretical guidance as to what speeches can tell us about ideology, we felt we could not make any further headway in the field of ideal point estimation. Parliamentary speech provides a wealth of information on policy stances, but to use it effectively, we need to know more about the politics driving speech itself. While digging deeper into the issue, we discovered that political debate, as a subject of research, had received little attention from legislative scholars. There has been little comparative theorizing to link parliamentary debate to the role that parties play in political representation, or how other institutions, such as electoral rules, may affect these relationships. This book represents the culmination of our efforts to provide such a theory and to explore these relationships.

Writing this book has been a multiyear project and we have benefited from the feedback of many colleagues and friends along the
way. Several people have read complete versions of the manuscript, including Thomas Bräuninger, Thomas Gschwend, Chris Kam, Orit Kedar, Kira Killermann, Thomas König, James Lo, Will Lowe, and Mike Thies. Others have read previous versions of individual chapters. This list includes Eduardo Aleman, Tanya Bagashka, Ken Benoit, Serra Boranbay, Simon Hix, Justin Kirkland, Ken Kollman, Michael Shackleton, Elisabeth Schulte, Georg Vanberg, and Jonathan Woon. We have presented results from this project at many institutions and conferences over the years. We are grateful to seminar participants at Texas A&M, Rice University, the University of Houston, Penn State, Trinity College Dublin, Washington University in St. Louis, Essex University, Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models Europe, Deutsche Vereinigung für Politische Wissenschaft Working Group on Behavioral Decision Making, University of Mannheim, McGill University, and Nuffield College at Oxford University. Kira Killermann, Linh Nguyen, and Sander Ensink assisted with data collection, and Jann Slapin, who has selflessly served as Jonathan’s editor since elementary school, assiduously proofread the final version. We also thank John Haslam and Sarah Green, editors at Cambridge University Press, whose encouragement facilitated the revision and ultimate completion of the manuscript. Lastly, we owe a debt of gratitude to George Tsebelis, who served as our mentor and advisor while at UCLA. His intellectual impact can be found throughout our work, and this book is no exception.

We also thank several scholars for providing us with data and additional information about the cases under investigation. Jeff Karp, Jack Vowles, and Chris Kam have provided us with candidate surveys, and data on parliamentary voting and leadership positions in New Zealand. The research librarians Ruth Graham and Tony Reed from the New Zealand parliamentary information office graciously sent us additional information about parliamentary practice in New Zealand, as did David Bagnall (Senior Parliamentary Officer, Parliamentary Relations and Policy Group Office, Clerk of the House of Representatives). We thank Thomas Gschwend, Hermann Schmitt, Andreas Wüst, and Thomas Zittel for sharing the German candidate survey data. We also thank the many parliamentary party group representatives and administrators who participated in our survey.

Sven-Oliver Proksch acknowledges funding from the European Community’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013)
under grant agreement number 239268 (Marie Curie International Reintegration Grant). We are also grateful to the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research and the Research Center SFB 884 on the Political Economy of Reforms for hosting a book manuscript workshop in June 2011. The University of Mannheim, McGill University, Trinity College Dublin, and the University of Houston have supported our research as we have undertaken this project. Portions of Chapters 1 and 5 were previously published as “Institutional Foundations of Legislative Speech,” *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3): 520–537 (2012), and Chapter 7 is based on results previously published as “Look Who’s Talking: Parliamentary Debate in the European Union,” *European Union Politics* 11(3): 333–357 (2010).

Lastly, we offer our gratitude to our very supportive families. Our deepest thanks go to our wives, Rebecca and Aurelija, who tolerated our many Skype conversations and graciously hosted us whenever we visited each other in Mannheim, Dublin, Houston, or Montreal. Our project and our lives would have been much less rich without their intellectual support, love, and constant encouragement. And our wonderful children, Liam, Benjamin, and Olivia, allowed us to sleep and work most of the time, and kept us smiling when not engaged in either of the previous activities.