Introduction

Democracy thrives through debate. Democratic parliaments are open forums where elected representatives engage in arguments over policy. Parliamentary debate is, therefore, a fundamental part of democratic lawmaking – in all parliaments, members debate bills before they vote on them. Because debates are public, they provide members of parliament (MPs) an opportunity to represent the views of constituents on the floor and give voice to voters' concerns. But floor time is a scarce resource, and MPs are not always able to participate in debate when they would like. 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. This book takes a comparative institutional approach to explain participation in parliamentary debates and to explore its relevance for party politics and political representation. We uncover strategic interaction between parties and their members and provide insights into the relationship between party leaders and backbenchers, particularly party rebels who often disagree with official party policy.

We consider parliamentary debates as a forum for public communication that parties and their MPs exploit for electoral purposes. Rather than using floor speeches in an attempt to win political arguments, persuade opponents, or credibly signal voting intentions, we argue that MPs use floor speeches primarily to communicate policy positions to other members within their own party, to members of other parties, and, most important, to their voters. Political institutions, however, affect how parties and their MPs use parliamentary debate. We show that parties vary in the degree to which they monitor and control their MPs' speeches. When electoral institutions provide parties with incentives to present the voting public with a unified front, parties actively monitor their MPs to ensure that they communicate the party message. When electoral politics mean MPs must seek personal votes by

creating a name for themselves, parties make fewer efforts to control their MPs' floor speeches. Thus, the incentives that electoral institutions create for partisan control have a fundamental impact on the nature of parliamentary speech and on how parties and MPs use it as a tool of representative democracy.

Our general argument that political institutions, and electoral institutions in particular, provide parties with an incentive to control what their members do is certainly not new. Rather, it has been developed by a long line of scholars (e.g. Downs, 1957; Cox and McCubbins, 1993; Aldrich, 1995). What is new is our attempt to apply this logic systematically to our understanding of parliamentary debate. This topic has been largely overlooked by political scientists interested in legislative institutions. But it has the potential to offer many new insights into party politics and representation. The book explores political institutions, intraparty politics, electoral politics, and legislative behavior by developing and testing a comparative institutional theory of parliamentary debate. We aim to give parliamentary debate the attention it deserves and, in doing so, contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how democratic institutions and political parties work.

Dimensions of parliamentary debate

Before moving to the core theoretical argument of the book, presented in detail in the next chapter, we briefly explore the various ways in which parliamentary debate matters for democratic politics and what we can learn about politics by studying debate. Broadly speaking, parliamentary debate is important for political representation because it creates a link between voters and their representatives and because its organization affects the lawmaking process. Our theory links these two aspects of speech in a single, coherent argument about how parliamentary debate matters for representative democracy.

Political representation and satisfaction with democracy

First and foremost, the actions of elected politicians in a representative democracy should be "responsive to the wishes of the people" (Powell, 2004, p. 273). Modern democracy can be thought of as a chain of delegation, with the transfer of power from citizens to elected representatives as the first link (Strøm, Müller, and Bergman, 2003). Regular

elections ensure that citizens are able to hold politicians accountable for their actions. Political parties provide the crucial "democratic linkage" as they recruit candidates, organize election campaigns, mobilize voters, offer distinct policy alternatives, and participate in government policy-making (Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister, 2011, p. 7). But parliamentary parties are not unitary actors. Elected members of parliament make up parliamentary parties, and, for the most part, these MPs – not parties – engage in parliamentary activities. MPs handle constituency casework, work in parliamentary committees, prepare legislative initiatives, vote on bills, and – importantly for this book – participate in parliamentary debates. Unlike other aspects of the policy-making process, parliamentary speeches require an audience to be an effective tool for representation. Voting can take place behind closed doors and still fulfill its primary representative function – the aggregation of preferences to produce policy. If speeches, on the other hand, had no audience, MPs could not make known to their constituents that they stood up for their concerns in parliament. Only when media follow and report on debates, or when politicians themselves point to their own parliamentary speech record, do parliamentary speeches fulfill a representative function. The transparency of parliamentary debate is the necessary condition for rhetorical political representation. Citizens expect representatives to hear their concerns and give them voice, and MPs demonstrate that they listen and are responsive by participating in debates.

The extent to which citizens are aware that lawmakers espouse their views during the lawmaking process may affect their overall satisfaction with democracy. Imagine an elected parliament that decided to hold all of its plenary sessions behind closed doors. This decision would significantly weaken the link between voters and their representatives because the former could no longer hold the latter accountable. Although voters would view the outcome of the policy process, they would not be able to determine where specific parties or representatives stood on the issues. Democratic constitutions, therefore, have explicit provisions to ensure parliamentary sessions are public.[1] Even when individual votes are not recorded, speeches always are. Thus, when

[1] For example, both the German and French constitutions state that sittings of parliament shall be public (see article 42 of the German Basic Law and article 33 of the French constitution).

debates lead to effective representation of citizens' views, citizens may develop a more favorable attitude toward democracy. It is sometimes hypothesized, for example, that proportional representation (PR) electoral systems lead to better ideological congruence between citizens and elected representatives (e.g. Huber and Powell, 1994) and consequently to higher levels of citizen satisfaction (Lijphart, 1999, p. 286). In such systems, political parties receive a share of parliamentary seats that is proportional to the vote share received in the election. A proportional system may better represent a range of citizens' views by offering voters greater choice at the polls than a majoritarian system that favors fewer and larger parties. Thus, because proportional representation tends to produce multiparty systems, we might expect parliamentary speeches to accurately reflect the diverse views of the electorate, in turn leading to higher levels of citizens' satisfaction with democracy. Even if a voter's preferred party is not in government or directly affecting policy, at least that voter has representatives in parliament giving voice to his or her concerns.

The theory and evidence for the relationship between proportional representation, representation, and democratic satisfaction are mixed at best, however (Blais and Bodet, 2006). Early tests of this argument examined satisfaction with democracy by distinguishing between consensus and majoritarian systems (Anderson and Guillory, 1997). Using Eurobarometer survey data for 11 countries, Anderson and Guillory find that "losers," that is, voters who supported an opposition party in the previous election, have higher levels of satisfaction with democracy in consensual than in majoritarian systems. In contrast, "winners" are less satisfied with democracy as the system becomes more consensual. Along the same lines, using data from the *World Values Survey* (Klingemann, 1999), Lijphart (1999) finds that citizens in consensus democracies are, on average, more satisfied with democracy than citizens in majoritarian democracies.

But several scholars, paying closer attention to electoral institutions, have challenged these results. Relying on the *World Values Survey* data, Norris (1999) finds that – contrary to her expectation – confidence in democracy is greater in countries with majoritarian systems than in those with proportional representation. Overall, she states that the "findings indicate that institutional confidence is most likely to be highest in parliamentary democracies characterized by plurality electoral systems, two-party or moderate multi-party systems, and

unitary states" (Norris, 1999, p. 234). Reassessing her earlier results with updated data, Norris (2011) shows that the average level of democratic satisfaction is highest in majoritarian systems, followed by proportional systems, and lowest in mixed electoral systems. These results echo those of Aarts and Thomassen (2008) who use data from the *Comparative Study of Electoral Systems* (CSES) covering 36 elections in 35 countries. Their study concludes that proportional systems do *not* enhance the perceived representativeness of the political system compared with majoritarian systems. Moreover, proportional representation systems are associated with *lower* levels of satisfaction with democracy than majoritarian systems.

These mixed findings present a puzzle to scholars of democracy. How do different models of representative democracy affect citizens' attitudes, and what role do parliamentary institutions and parties play? We address these questions by examining how electoral incentives shape intraparty politics, and specifically the allocation of speaking time in parliament. The diversity of viewpoints represented in parliamentary speech in proportional systems may not be as great as one might expect due to tight partisan control. Compared with parties in proportional systems, parties in majoritarian systems tend to exercise less control over parliamentary speeches, allowing their members to speak their mind. Thus, although PR may lead to more parties in parliament, it does not necessarily lead to greater diversity in the viewpoints actually expressed on the floor.

Institutions and the policy process

Members of parliament do not use parliamentary speeches solely to voice constituency concerns. Parliamentary speech can play a more direct role in the policy-making process as well. Because speechmaking takes up precious plenary time, MPs may use speeches to slow down the political process. Gary Cox has identified unregulated plenary time as the core problem in a so-called legislative state of nature (Cox, 2006, p. 141). When there are no rules to structure or limit debate, any MP may obstruct the legislative process simply by speaking ad nauseam. According to Cox, this makes the de facto decision rule "closer to unanimity than to majority," because any member can effectively block any bill by speaking. In reality, a legislative state of nature does not exist – all parliaments have adopted rules that

structure and limit debate. Nevertheless, these rules vary significantly. Even when a member cannot block a bill through endless debate, extensive debate can slow down the legislative process and reduce the number of items the parliament may include on its agenda.

Perhaps the best known rule governing debate is the filibuster (and corresponding cloture rule) in the US Senate. Senators may speak indefinitely on a bill unless a three-fifths majority cuts off debate. Effectively, the supermajority requirement to limit debate leads to delays and obstruction of the political process (Tsebelis, 2002; Koger, 2010). Similarly, in New Zealand, the standing orders of the House of Representatives did not contain limits on debate until the 1930s. As a consequence, obstruction of parliamentary business could occur due to unlimited debate, so-called stonewalling (J. E. Martin, 2006, p. 126). In comparative context, scholars have shown that the extent to, and speed by, which governments can cut off debate have important implications for government control over the legislative agenda (Döring, 1995; Tsebelis, 2002; Rasch and Tsebelis, 2011).

The degree of government control over plenary time affects how opposition parties have an impact on policy and express policy positions. Opposition parties in parliamentary systems are largely excluded from policy-making, which is primarily the responsibility of the government. Instead, they use their representatives in parliament to scrutinize the actions of the cabinet and the parties in government and offer policy alternatives to voters. Plenary sessions provide opposition politicians an ideal forum in which to perform these functions. Members of the opposition can use speeches to highlight perceived flaws in government policy and to offer suggestions to improve a bill. Parliamentary debate also provides opportunities to members of coalition governments. Martin and Vanberg (2008) argue that coalition partners may use speeches to emphasize party policy over the coalition compromise, in particular for policy issues on which the coalition is divided. In such instances, they show that governing parties engage in lengthier debates on government bills. Moreover, they expect that this behavior is more pronounced as elections approach. Speech becomes an important tool for coalition partners to monitor each other and to signal to voters a distinct party platform. In short, both opposition and government parties can use parliamentary speech as a tool in the policy process.

The significance of parliamentary speech becomes even more evident when considering parties as collective, rather than unitary, actors.

Typically, scholars have examined intraparty politics by studying defections on roll-call votes (Cox and McCubbins, 1993; Hix, 2002; Carey, 2007; Kam, 2009). There are several reasons for this focus. Substantively, voting is the way that policy gets made – if a bill does not receive a sufficient number of votes, it does not become law. In parliamentary systems, the fusion of the executive and the legislature means that lost votes can lead to the termination of governments and early elections. From a practical point of view, voting data are readily available for a large number of parliaments. We argue, however, that if our goal is to understand how MPs stake out positions different from their party leadership, or other aspects of intraparty politics, then roll-call votes may not be the best place to look.

First, precisely because votes decide the fate of policy – not to mention the fate of governments – they are subject to a high degree of partisan control. Many MPs may cast a vote with their party leadership even though they do not want to, either because the consequences of dissent would often be too drastic (e.g. leading to the termination of a government) or the individual punishment for doing otherwise would be too great (e.g. loss of support from the party). Voting against one's party on a whipped vote is the ultimate act of defiance. There are many other acts of defiance that an MP who disagrees with his or her leadership can take that are less severe. Indeed, party discipline on voting is so high in many parliamentary systems that roll-call votes are actually taken rather infrequently, and voting is often done in party blocs or by unrecorded voice vote. Although defections occasionally occur, most often such votes simply reflect the division between government and opposition parties.

Second, even in the absence of strong partisan control, votes offer an unrefined instrument for expressing opinions. There are only three options: to support a bill, to reject it, or to abstain from voting. Members cannot explain what they wish they could have voted for simply by casting a vote. Moreover, the variety of "opinions" MPs can express in votes is severely hampered by the voting agenda, usually set by the government in parliamentary systems. Parliamentary debates, in contrast, offer MPs a forum for expressing a wide range of more nuanced viewpoints. Oftentimes, excerpts of these debates are broadcast on television or reprinted in the press. Even though the general public may pay little attention to specific parliamentary debates, MPs can point to transcripts of their floor speeches when discussing their positions with their constituents.

Deliberative democracy

Finally, parliamentary speech may have normative implications for politics. The philosopher John Stuart Mill has written that ideally a parliament is a "Congress of Opinions . . . where those whose opinion is over-ruled feel satisfied that it is heard, and set aside not by a mere act of will, but for what are thought superior reasons" (Mill, 1991, p. 116). Speeches, in this view, ought to lead to better policy and politics – after argumentation, the superior policy prevails and everyone is more satisfied as a result. Thus, scholars of deliberative politics often argue that convincing speeches lead to better democracy. These studies focus on how representatives engage in deliberation to justify legislation "by giving reasons for their political claims and responding to others' reasons in return" (Thompson, 2008, p. 498). As a consequence, some scholars put an explicit emphasis on the role of argumentation and respect during parliamentary deliberations and ask whether political dialogue is constructive or not (Steiner et al., 2004). The motivation of such approaches is inherently normative as deliberative theorists view the resulting policy decisions to be "more legitimate because they respect the moral agency of participants" (Thompson, 2008, p. 498). There are attempts to operationalize the concepts empirically. For instance, Steiner, Bächtiger, Spörndli, and Steenbergen (2004) construct a "discourse quality index" for parliaments in four countries. This index considers the context of the speech (free or interrupted), the level and the content of justification, the level of respect, and the presence of constructive politics. Theoretically, the authors are interested in examining the effect of consociational institutions on the quality of parliamentary discourse, but they find that "at least in legislative settings, it appears that it is very difficult to move actors away from positional politics in their speech acts and in the direction of consensus solutions" (Steiner et al., 2004, p. 136). It appears, then, that deliberative ideals are not well reflected in parliamentary discourse. Politicians put greater emphasis on position-taking than on deliberating and arguing. This is precisely the phenomenon our book explores.

Our take: representation and intraparty politics

The primary aim of this book is to explain how parties and their members of parliament structure legislative debate and, in doing so,

to provide new insights into intraparty politics and democratic representation. Our theory, which we elaborate in Chapter 1, starts with the premise that floor speeches contain information about MPs' policy positions, which, directly or indirectly through the media, are transmitted to voters. To the extent that the party leadership wishes the party to send a unified message to the public – a function of political institutions – leaders will attempt to control what party members say on the floor. In short, in countries where the electoral system creates strong incentives for parties to cultivate and protect a single party image to present to voters, party leaders monitor and control their MPs' access to the floor. In systems where there are greater incentives for MPs to cultivate a personal vote (and for parties to allow them to do so), party leaders exercise less control over speaking time. The model has rich implications for how parties design rules regarding the allocation of speaking time to MPs and the amount of pressure they put on their membership to toe the party line during speechmaking. These strategic considerations affect what we, as observers of parliamentary debate, get to see and hear on the floor of parliament and, therefore, the inferences we can draw about party politics from debates.

Our study moves beyond current, largely normative, scholarship on parliamentary debate, as well as literature on parliamentary behavior that focuses primarily on roll-call voting. Rather than viewing legislative speech as a tool for altering policy outcomes, we see it as a tool for communication between MPs, parties, and the electorate. Our approach is decidedly positive. Political institutions affect parliamentary speech, but in unexpected ways. The theoretical model explains the design of procedural rules in parliament, how the party leadership interacts with backbenchers, and how MPs represent voters. It also highlights how using legislative speech as data can provide insights into intraparty politics within parliaments that other forms of data, such as roll-call analyses, cannot.

Plan for the book

This book is organized in two parts: the first part, consisting of Chapters 1, 2, and 3, presents the main theoretical argument, empirical implications, and the research design; the second, consisting of Chapters 4 through 8, provides evidence using cross-national data;

offers system-level tests of the theory in the United Kingdom, Germany, and the European Union; and discusses the effects of electoral system change on parliamentary debate in the case of New Zealand. Finally, we offer some conclusions.

Chapter 1 lays out our *delegation theory of parliamentary debate*, which builds on models of intraparty politics, political institutions, and the electoral incentives these institutions create. We argue that scholars' laments about the inconsequential nature of speech for policymaking, or about the insufficiently "deliberative" nature of parliamentary debate, are largely inconsistent with the fact that legislators tend to spend a great deal of time preparing, delivering, and listening to speeches, and the fact that these speeches receive a fair amount of coverage in the press. Clearly, politicians *think* they matter, although not necessarily for the reasons a canonical textbook account of parliamentary debate might assume. We present a formal model of intraparty politics in which speaking time allocation is the result of a delegation game between party leaders and their backbenchers. Backbenchers wish to speak, and party leaders want to delegate the task of speechmaking to them, but party leaders worry that backbenchers may stray from the party message during floor debates. Electoral institutions determine the degree to which party leaders are willing to allow rebel views to come to the floor and thus determine how much time leaders are willing to delegate to backbenchers.

Chapter 2 explores the implications of the theory for different democratic institutions. On the basis of our formal model, we present our theoretical expectations with regard to the control of speaking time for various electoral systems and candidate selection mechanisms. In addition to examining the implications for the canonical closed-list proportional representation and plurality systems, we also examine our expectations for mixed-member systems, open-list systems, and other electoral systems. All of these systems create slightly different incentives for MP personal vote seeking and therefore influence the interaction of individual MPs with their parties. Notably, we also discuss the model's implications for debate in hybrid regimes with variation in candidate selection mechanisms by exploring the European Parliament (EP), the directly elected parliament of the European Union, in more detail.

Chapter 3 lays out the research design and empirical strategy for the remainder of the book. It discusses the type of data we use to test