C. Kam, “Demotion and Dissent in the Canadian Liberal Party,” *BJPS* 36 (2006)

**Overview**

Paper argues that party unity is built upon a *quid pro quo* with party leaders and MPs exchanging career advancement and loyalty. When party leaders do not/can not provide their members with advancement, they expose their party to potentially divisive electoral and ideological forces. Uses case of 1993 Liberal transition, in which Chretien withheld government appointments from a large number of incumbent MPs who opposed his leadership bid or lacked independent influence in the party. Demoted incumbents went on to cast more dissenting votes in subsequent parliament then their colleagues. Little evidence to suggest this MP dissent was due to ideological differences, poor socialization, or hx of dissent.

**Theoretical model**

Decision-theory model of parliamentary behaviour in which MPs dissent when the blandishments of career advancement fail to offset the electoral costs of unpopular party policies

**Background**

* Rule of the game is simple – if the MP wishes to climb the parliamentary career ladder, he or she must toe the party line
* PM’s power is not absolute – some MPs must be brought into cabinet b/c they are too powerful to leave on the backbench where they can openly criticize the PM
* Model of career advancement and parliamentary behaviour:
  + MPs desire not just reelection, but also career advancement and policy influence – *policy, office, and votes*. Institutional structures influence how MPs pursue these goals – key among them being 2 features of Cdn Westminster system: (1) SMP, and (2) distribution of power in parliament
    - SMP favours a 2-paty system and manufacture 1-party majorities – and party leaders have overarching incentive to move party policies towards the median voter in national electorate. MPs have similar incentives at constituency level
    - Westminster system (1) concentrates office perks and policy influence in single body, and then (2) provides one set of party leaders with exclusive control of cabinet and recruitment channels that lead to cabinet – thus policy influence is a single indivisible good controlled by party leadership

**Conclusions**

* Merit (measured by experience in HOC and electoral performance) disregarded at promotion time
* Influence (in form of financial assets) far more important, and is rivaled only by support for PM
* Results here challenge the views that parliamentary behaviour is primarily ideological or sociological in nature.
  + Rather it suggests that instrumental behaviour is readily visible and is propelled by progressive ambition and the politics of leadership selection.
  + Is characterized by the consolidation of power, punishment of opponents and rewarding of supporters
* By creating a ‘double monopoly of power’ – the constitutional conventions of Westminster system heavily constrain how MPs make choices over policy, office, and votes.
* The rules provide PMs with a monopoly over the distribution of perks and influence, forcing MPs to choose btw career advancement and policy influence, *or* electoral survival