Axelrod's analysis. Also, I have never been struck by the prevalence of happy cooperators in businesses I have known (nor in academic circles, for that matter). Perhaps invasion of the meannies by cooperators is more difficult than Axelrod would have it.

The point of this comment, other than to have some fun, is to suggest that we should conduct analyses of the sensitivity of our results to the values of each of our parameters. Axelrod analyzes the sensitivity of his clustering result to changes in the value of his interaction duration parameter, \( w \), and shows that invasion by cooperators remains relatively easy (p. 316). Had he conducted a similar sensitivity analysis on the effects of changing the sucker payoff, \( S \), he might have concluded that cooperative invasion is not so easy after all.

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Comment on Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina
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A distinctive feature of the British political system is that members of Parliament deal personally with the individual and collective problems of their constituents. The most assiduous MPs spend endless hours listening to complaints, making phone calls, visiting local institutions, writing letters and acting as facilitators with local civil servants and local authorities. Why do they do it? Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina believe that they do it largely for the votes, that electoral incentives are an important motivation in performing constituency service. I shall argue that: a) electoral incentives are present but not as important as the authors imply, and, b) the standard explanation, "sense of duty," is much more plausible than the authors admit.

In a valuable comparative analysis, Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina have shown that the electoral effects of constituency service are larger than anticipated, and, in another article, they have shown that the greater the need for votes (i.e., marginality), the greater the casework effort (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1983). But the results are weak, and the results of a similar analysis, reported in Table 1, are weaker still and statistically insignificant. These data are based on interviews conducted in 1972-1973 with 338 backbenchers (Searing, 1982). The dependent variable, "time in constituency," was estimated by respondents in terms of hours for an average week. "Marginality" is the difference between the winner's percentage of the total vote and that of the candidate who came second. "Tenure" measures length of service in the House of Commons. "Role" partitions respondents into those for whom constituency service is the principal career interest ("Constituency Members") and those for whom it is not. "Party" denotes Conservative or Labour affiliations. "Distance" measures the constituency's distance from the House of Commons. And "Security" enters the political value with closest ties to constituency service (Searing, 1978). The standardized regression coefficients listed in Table 1 show the impact of each independent variable upon time spent in constituency when the remaining independent variables are statistically controlled. It can readily be seen that "Marginality" faces in the proper direction, but that it has no significant impact upon the time that backbenchers spend in their constituencies.1

Why are these results weaker than those of Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina? One possibility is that if their data included frontbenchers as well as backbenchers, this might have artificially boosted the relationship, because, compared to backbenchers, frontbenchers tend to have less marginal constituencies and much less time to spend there. On the other hand, Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina may be on target, and had we both used better measures (MPs' own estimates of their electoral insecurity) my data might have shown the weak but significant relationship and their data a better one. The third possibility is that both analyses are correct, but that constituency work

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1 Because this result could be affected by extreme cases on the dependent variable, the regression was re-run with these cases re-coded. There was no change in the outcome. Similarly, because the distance variable plays an important part in role choice, the regression was re-run introducing "Role X Distance" as an interaction term. Again, there was no change.
has become increasingly linked to electoral incentives between 1972-1973, when I collected my data, and 1978-1979 when they collected theirs. Speculation aside, however, the results we have at hand are mixed and weak, as they have usually been on this topic even in the United States where one would expect to see the strongest correlations (Johannes, 1983). Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina have shown that electoral incentives motivate some MPs, that British commentators underestimate their role, and that such motives may be becoming more common as party ties weaken. But there is no convincing evidence whatsoever to support the view that electoral incentives are anything like primary motivations behind constituency service. Because electorates still vote for parties rather than for individual candidates, the "personal vote," the vote that can be affected by constituency service, is very small—too small to make enough of a difference for enough MPs to make its pursuit a generally important motive underlying constituency service.

There are other incentives involved. MPs themselves say they do it because it is "part of the job," part of "my unwritten contract of unemployment." They say they do it largely out of a "sense of duty," the standard explanation for constituency service. Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina tend to dismiss these claims, not with evidence but rather with a "they-would-say-that-wouldn't-they? attitude which suggests that such statements are rationalizations for other motivations. Perhaps so. Nevertheless, the claims deserve serious investigation, because in Britain constituency service has a special status which makes "duty" a very plausible incentive indeed.

Thus, constituency service is interwoven with British concepts of representative and responsible government. It is interpreted as redress of grievances, a mode of representation that helps to promote legitimacy and to check an executive that is subject to very few formal restrictions on its powers. Redress of grievances is the essence of constituency representation in Britain, for the representation of the public's political opinions takes place at the national level and is not regarded as the proper function of the constituency MP. Instead, representing constituencies by making representations on their behalf to central government and other authorities has always been a central aspect of the MP's duties. Redress was, in fact, parliament's original function and was for centuries the only function performed by representatives. Medieval theory cast the role by characterizing members of parliament as attorneys for their constituencies, as agents whose job was to protect and advance the interests of the represented (Jolliffe, 1937). This function has been revitalized in response to the growth of central government and the complexities of the welfare state. Hence, when MPs explain that "you don't do things to put people to support you; you do it because it's your job and your duty to help everybody," their claim should not be rejected prematurely, particularly because it is not inconsistent with available evidence. It should be regarded as a plausible hypothesis, particularly because this duty is embedded in ancient institutional and normative features of the British political system. Perhaps the overall weakness of models used to explain constituency service arises from our tendency to overlook incentives such as "sense of duty" which may be more difficult to measure than electoral insecurity but which are certainly no less rational.

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References


Reply

Donald Searing's thoughtful letter warrants a response, although we believe there is less disagreement between us than he implies. Searing generally objects to any claim that the primary motivation for constituency service among British MPs is electoral, or more broadly as political, contending instead that service is part of the job description, something MPs do because they see it as their duty. To the best of our recollection we have never argued that electoral considerations were the primary motivation for constituency service. We did state that members believe that service activities have an impact (1984, p. 115). We did find that constituency reputation and activities actually have a marginal, although significant electoral impact. And in the CPS article referenced by Searing we did find that MPs who were least electorally secure took the most interest.