

## GOVERNMENT DECISION-MAKING AND MINISTERIAL RESIGNATIONS

DEBUNKING DECISION-MAKING:  
HOW DO GOVERNMENTS DECIDE WHEN MINSTERS MUST RESIGN?

By:

ROBERTO P. LEONE, B.A., M.A.

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AUTHOR:

Roberto P. Leone, B.A. (McMaster University)  
M.A. (University of Guelph)

SUPERVISOR:

Barbara Wake Carroll

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## ABSTRACT

Commentators of parliamentary democracy in Britain and Canada tend to agree that parliament is an old institution that is in desperate need of renewal. Contrary to this perspective, there are those who believe that parliament is an evolving institution which has been susceptible to change over time. Given the disagreement posed above, there is a need to develop a method to measure which side has it right.

This dissertation seeks to establish such a method. By using organization theory to explain organizational change, this research will establish both the rationale for why institutions change and the decisions that led to that change. Change is defined as the difference between present organizational configuration from the original. If there is a difference, then change is present. To understand the original configuration of parliamentary institutions, the dissertation looks at “foundational principles” to parliamentary democracy. Of these foundational principles, the doctrine of ministerial responsibility is the one analyzed here.

In analyzing government decisions that lead to ministerial resignations, this dissertation builds a decision-making matrix that will compare organizational theories of decision-making and analyze the level of rationality applied when governments decide to require a resignation from one of its members. While the governments of Canada and the UK have both been built around the concept of ministerial responsibility, there are differences in how the government in each country is scrutinized. Contrary to these differences, the results show that both countries have nearly identical levels of rationality

when it comes to decisions that lead to ministerial resignations. . This leads to the conclusion that ministerial responsibility is not a dead concept in either country, and the differences in levels of scrutiny by officers of parliament, size of legislature, and parliamentary committees are not significant.

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and it will be even more interesting to revisit the conversation after he finishes his career in government.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It is somewhat of an understatement to say that we take our liberty and democracy for granted. We might think about how our governing institutions promote liberty and democracy when we vote. We might think about these values on patriotic days like Canada Day or Remembrance Day. We might even think about them when we take a stroll in our neighbourhoods in relative security. But beyond these brief moments in time, we really do not think about our liberty and democracy very much at all. The obvious question is, if we are not thinking about it, how can we really understand it?

Some might say that politics is boring, that studying government is even more unexciting, and that taking part in the processes that try to engage us is a waste of time. We need not look far for the evidence here. Commentators on electoral reform have been grumbling for some time about the lower voter turnout during elections and the increased cynicism towards politics and politicians (e.g. Milner 2005). This is further evidence of how society is overlooking liberty and democracy. However, when we take a step back and really understand how our government functions, we learn that it is neither boring nor dull; it is actually vibrant and dynamic.

If lay people are not interested in understanding the way our government works, then maybe academics should fill the void. Yet when it comes to exploring parliament particularly in Canada, Jonathan Malloy (2002) suggests that there are not many scholars who are devoting their research to understanding it. This is unlike the United States, for example, where students of congressional studies produce a diverse body of research

(Malloy 2002). That influence, however, has not crossed the border to Canada. We have yet to understand whether and how some of the advanced congressional studies in the United States apply to Westminster parliamentary systems.

The principal purpose of this dissertation is to apply some of these congressional studies to the Westminster parliamentary system. In particular, studies of government decision-making in the United States have been important to the development of the literature in organizational theory. Because decision-making is understood to occur in all organizations, the study of organizational decision-making should apply to other organizations despite some of the inherent differences among them. It is in terms of applying organizational decision-making that this dissertation makes its most important contribution to political science. More specifically, this dissertation will compare a wide range of decision theories based on characteristics of decisions. The outcome of this comparison is a matrix of decision-making.

At the same time, this study is also interested in providing further evidence regarding the state of ministerial responsibility in Canada and the United Kingdom. Ministerial responsibility is one of the foundational principles of parliamentary government. The others include responsible government (Durham 1839), parliamentary sovereignty (Blackstone 1830), parliamentary supremacy (Dicey 1939), and parliamentary deliberation (Burke 1854). These principles, along with the corresponding institutional structures and processes that are found in parliament, combine to define parliamentary democracy. These definitions are how the leading democratic thinkers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century envisioned democracy. Defining democracy at its origin is

necessary to understand democratic change, which is a theme that will be discussed later in this chapter.

One of the reasons for focusing on ministerial responsibility is related to the conduct of a comparative study between the parliamentary systems in Canada and Britain. Reducing the number of foundational principles examined to one will allow for a more thorough investigation of the decision-making processes in government, and the similarities and differences that exist between both countries. First, an in depth analysis of one principle is preferable to a superficial treatment of all of them because the only way to gauge change over time is to examine parliament longitudinally. Therefore, this study will look at each decision a government has made that resulted in a ministerial resignation over a period of approximately forty years in two countries.

Another reason why we are focusing on ministerial responsibility is because it is how Westminster parliamentary systems deal with democratic administration. This relates to the principle of citizen control of the public service in a parliamentary system. The bureaucracy must do what the political executive asks of it, and the political executive, in turn, is responsible to the legislature, and ultimately to the people, for the administration of public services. This is the link between permanent bureaucracies and democratic institutions according to Walter Bagehot (1872). This aspect also demonstrates how this dissertation falls within an area of public policy.

Howlett and Ramesh (2003) suggest that there are five stages of the policy process. They are policy formulation, agenda setting, decision-making, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. This dissertation examines government decision-

making, and therefore satisfies the public policy requirements of this dissertation. However, decision-making is also important to ministerial responsibility itself. Cabinet ministers are judged on the quality of public policy decisions they make. They are evaluated both on their actions and their inactions. Analyzing when ministers make good decisions or are forced to resign because of bad ones is of particular interest to this study. Ministerial responsibility is our focus because, of the five foundational principles of parliamentary government, it is most concerned with public policy and public administration.

A third reason why ministerial responsibility is emphasized relates to the confusion – some might say distortion – of its meaning over time. It is no secret that the opposition seeks to dispose of cabinet ministers even during the most trivial and unusual of incidents. A recent example of this comes with the opposition's demand for the Harper government's first cabinet resignation. In essence, former Canadian Environment Minister Rona Ambrose made a policy decision to stay within the Kyoto protocol but not meet Canada's emissions targets, and the opposition parties in the minority parliament were strongly opposed to it (See 22 June 2006 edition of the *National Post*). They also suggested that the minister's administration of the file showed incompetence. However, this was a policy decision that corresponded with the government's position. It had nothing to do with the administration of the department. It has been correctly argued that the former environment minister had not been in disagreement with the government's position, which would normally result in a resignation due to a conflict with cabinet solidarity. Governments are collectively judged on the policies they create while in

office. Because the government speaks with one voice due to cabinet solidarity, and no minister can speak against the government once it makes a decision, the people are able to judge the policy decisions made by the government since the previous election. It is then up to the electorate to decipher whether the government has made poor policy choices, and this can happen when the opposition shows a lack of confidence in the government which can trigger an election. This, therefore, is a question of responsible government.

Not only are parliamentarians confused as to when to apply ministerial responsibility, but there are also other complications that have influenced the meaning of this foundational principle. The first of these relates to the welfare state expansion that emerged in the post-World War II period. The exponential rate at which government was growing posed significant problems for ministers to keep track of everything in their department. This is captured by the following passage from Shelia Copps, who served in various capacities in the Chrétien cabinet in Canada, which appears in news article about the Gomery Commission in the 24 February 2005 edition of the *National Post*: “When I managed Canadian Heritage and crown agencies associated with it, I gave direction for an operation totalling over 25,000 employees. I certainly could not know what was going on in every area under my jurisdiction... I had to answer in the House of Commons for everything from a Don Cherry rant (courtesy of the CBC) to a salacious Canada Council-funded work called *Bubbles Galore*.” The frustration that is shown by the former cabinet minister is interesting. How can a cabinet minister be responsible for slanders against French Canadians by a hockey broadcaster on the one hand, and the funding by civil servants of what some would deem pornographic on the other? This has created a



significant challenge to our understanding of ministerial responsibility and how it applies to modern government.

The other complication to our understanding of ministerial responsibility is the prominence of what is termed “new public management.” New public management (NPM) does not have a concise standard definition, however, it is believed that its three main components are derived from the ideas of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (Aucoin 1995). The first of these is related to the need to make the state apparatus more responsive to political direction by diminishing the power of the civil service. Second, private sector management practices need to be introduced to promote greater efficiency. Finally, individuals are to be empowered to control the design and delivery of public services that were previously controlled by the state.

New public management has added to our understanding of accountability and responsibility in government. The push for greater efficiency, a key principle of new public management, does not always produce improved accountability (Leone 2005). More importantly, NPM has moved away from ministerial responsibility to a market-based form of accountability (Ferlie 1996). Some of the characteristics of this type of accountability include the empowering of users and consumers as customers, marginalizing political accountability, setting performance targets, creating audit systems that establish new levels of accountability, and management through contract.

Mark Sproule-Jones (2000) offers other ideas about the changing relationship in accountability created by NPM. He states that one solution is to manage the performance of individual units and report the results to their hierarchies. Alternatively, some public

service units should evaluate performance and publicly report their findings so that consumers can judge the service provider. Finally, there is the option of obtaining an independent organization to monitor the program. This demonstrates how political accountability has moved away from political masters, and depends increasingly on the respective contracts that form the new framework for public service provision.

The shift from political accountability to other forms emanating from new public management has created some significant problems for democracy. As Ronald Moe (1987, 464) writes:

In a constitutional democracy, a major societal value is the idea that public officials should be held accountable for their actions to elected officials and through these officials to the public. When a public function is assigned to a private entity, usually through a contract, there is an inevitable weakening in the lines of political accountability. While a government agency is directly accountable to elected officials, a private entity under contract has only an indirect and tenuous relationship to elected officials.

This demonstrates how the relationship between accountability under the new public management system and classical views of democratic administration combine. New public management has posed a significant threat to the very doctrine that ensures a democratic voice in the provision of public services through ministerial responsibility. The question therefore becomes one of figuring out how the doctrine of ministerial responsibility has been modified to cope with this challenge. It is a major reason why this dissertation focuses on this one foundational principle.

Finally, while we are discussing the principle of ministerial responsibility, it should be understood that we are discussing ministerial resignations as they relate to cabinet rotation. There are essentially three ways in which the practice of cabinet rotation

occurs. The most obvious form of cabinet rotation is through the election of a new government. The other two ways are through ministerial resignation and cabinet shuffles. Each of these areas can be studied on its own. The major preoccupation of this dissertation is to understand ministerial resignations. This follows the lead of people like Sharon Sutherland (1991) and Ken Kernaghan (1979) who exclusively explore ministerial resignations, while people like Christopher Kam and Indri Indridason (2005) explore cabinet shuffles more exclusively.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to tracing the changing meaning of ministerial responsibility from its conceptualization by Bagehot to contemporary research in Canada and the UK. The principal argument that will be advanced through this review of the literature is that ministerial responsibility has more or less faced the same challenges in both countries. Both countries rely on the same precedent cases. Commentators in Canada and the UK have said at varying points in time that the principle is either alive and well or dead. Also, the changes brought about by NPM, as noted above, have changed the relationship between accountability and responsibility in government. All of these points will demonstrate how similar the practice of ministerial responsibility has been viewed in Canada and the UK. Following this discussion, the chapter will outline how the rest of this dissertation will unfold.

### **Understanding ministerial responsibility**

The doctrine of ministerial responsibility dates back to the nineteenth century. Walter Bagehot (1872) discusses the need for such a doctrine and why it is an important

part of the Westminster parliamentary system. Bagehot was looking at the peculiarities of the British form of democracy compared to America's experiment. He was interested in comparing Westminster's fusion of executive powers with America's separation of powers. Upon a change in government in the United States, there would be a complete turnover in the public service, with the previous administration's public servants being pushed out, and the new administration's bureaucrats being installed. The system was not one that promoted permanence.

On the other hand, the British established a permanent bureaucracy. Bagehot (1872) argues that this has the advantage of continuity. However, the disadvantage that it brings is one of self-absorption. Permanent bureaucracies have a tendency to focus on internal needs, while the provision of a public service becomes secondary. This self-absorption was exactly what the Americans wanted to avoid, and it was part of their rationale for system wide change with new administrations. Yet, the problem with the American version was that improvements would only be introduced with the election of a new administration.

The ideal situation, according to Bagehot, is to have a permanent bureaucracy with rotating heads of ministries, as the Westminster parliamentary system encourages. This system has a propensity to place ministers, who may not have an interest in the policies of a department, in charge of running it. The idea is that frequent change of bosses acts as a check against the practice of self-absorption. New ministers are supposed to bring new perspectives to their jobs, and that is how this problem was to be addressed. Bagehot (1872) argues that only people of great capability become ministers, and they are

forced to keep abreast of their department's activities because adversarial politics requires the minister to answer questions of his or her department.

Bagehot (1872) goes on to claim that there is no better system than the parliamentary one with respect to finding capable people to run departments. If a minister does not know what is happening in his or her department, that person will be quickly exposed. Once exposed, it is the expectation of parliament that the government find a replacement. At this moment, the government often engages in the practice of shuffling capable people around. Thus, the doctrine of ministerial responsibility is integral to the function of parliament because it weeds out the incapable people, and it ensures that the heads of ministries get shuffled around to guard against self-absorption.

The doctrine of ministerial responsibility contained two main assumptions; first, that a minister had to be able to explain what was going on in his or her department. This does not mean that the minister is responsible for the actions of his or her subordinates. It simply means that they have to know what is happening inside their department if somebody asks. Second, ministers are required to be responsible for their own direct actions. If they knew of a problem, but did nothing to rectify it, the minister was responsible for his or her own inaction. Ministerial responsibility, according to Bagehot, was never about taking the blame for somebody else's actions. It has always been about explaining a minister's work, or his or her explanation for the work done by his or her subordinates.

Since writers such as Bagehot (1872) explained the essence of cabinet government, others have sought to analyze the existence of ministerial responsibility as a

foundational principle (Finer 1956). Nicholas d’Ombraïn (2008, 1) goes so far as to say that “the practical day-to-day functioning of a parliamentary democracy depends on ministerial responsibility as the bedrock principle for the organization and operation of the machinery of government.” As a bedrock principle, the rules surrounding it should be well known. However, as a parliamentary convention, there are no well defined written rules that clearly outline when a minister should resign. The lack of concrete guidelines has made it difficult to understand precisely whether and when a minister should ultimately be responsible for the work that he or she has done in government. It therefore becomes necessary to explore some of the precedent cases of ministerial responsibility to highlight the conditions that might lead to actions such as ministerial resignations.

#### *Crichel Down and Sir Thomas Dugdale*

The first case is the most famous related to ministerial responsibility and the one that is referenced not only in discussions of ministerial responsibility (Wheare 1975), but also on questions of administrative law (Wade 1967). It is commonly referred to as the Crichel Down case, in which the Minister of Agriculture, Sir Thomas Dugdale, was asked to resign because of a botched land deal (Nicholson 1986). The government purchased land from farmers during World War II so that they could use the land for the Royal Air Force to practice bombing targets. The government had promised to return the land to the people, but they had increased the value of the land beyond that which was originally paid for it, and out of the price range for farmers to repurchase. It was argued that the officials working for the government were acting in bad faith and that the responsibility for this

rested on the minister of agriculture whose ministry was put in charge of the lands to be leased to farmers (Nicholson 1986). There was nothing illegal about the process, but there was certainly the feeling of poor public administration within the department (Wade 1967).

Because of the nature of the problem, there was growing mistrust among the public and backbenchers for what occurred in this policy area. The minister was left with little choice but to appoint a public inquiry into the matter. According to Wade (1967), one of the outcomes of the inquiry was to suggest that a public servant's job is sacrosanct. There is a belief that the civil servant must almost always be protected and must never lose his or her job. The rationale for this view comes from Dugdale in his speech during a debate in the House of Commons on 15 June 1954. Speaking on ministerial responsibility, Dugdale says:

I am quite clear that it would be deplorable if there were to be any departure from the recognised constitutional position. I, as Minister, must accept full responsibility to Parliament for any mistakes and inefficiency of officials in my Department, just as, when my officials bring off any successes on my behalf, I take full credit for them. Any departure from this long-established rule is bound to bring the Civil Service right into the political arena, and that we should all, on both sides of the House, deprecate most vigorously... I would only add, at this stage, that it should not be thought that this means that I am bound to endorse the actions of officials, whatever they may be, or that I or any other Minister must shield those who make errors against proper consequences.

We infer from this passage that the concept of ministerial responsibility must ensure that the public service should never be exposed to direct and personal attacks from the political arena and be exploited for political gain. The public service must remain neutral

and it must be protected. A minister assumes responsibility for any major public service error and resigns because only the minister should remain political.

However, there are clear problems with this view, not the least of which is the proclivity for servants to abdicate their responsibility for wrongdoing. Wade (1967) argues that this is the difference between how the law would treat the case and how employees of the Crown are treated. The law would punish those who are specifically at fault, whereas in the administrative arena, it is the minister who takes responsibility. There remained a need, therefore, to delineate the responsibilities of Crown employees.

*Table 1.1: Administrative – Political Relationships*

<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Action</b>
<i>Minister gives civil servant a task</i>	Minister must protect civil servant and is personally responsible for delegating authority
<i>Civil servant complies with government policy</i>	Minister must protect civil servant and is responsible for any problems associated with the policy
<i>Civil servant makes a minor bureaucratic mistake</i>	Minister accepts responsibility but does not need to resign. The minister only needs to take corrective action
<i>Civil servant makes a serious mistake in which the minister disapproves</i>	Minister does not need to be personally responsible for the misdeeds, but has a duty to provide an honest account of the situation

This delineation came from the speech by Home Secretary Sir David Maxwell Fyfe who set out his view of the convention of ministerial responsibility. Fyfe discussed a list of scenarios that outlined how responsibility should be assigned. The first category relates to a minister who orders a civil servant to do a task; in such a circumstance the



minister must protect the civil servant who is carrying out the minister's order. If something should go wrong, the minister should take the responsibility for giving the order, not the civil servant. The second category relates to a civil servant complying with a policy established by the minister. In this case, the minister must protect and defend the civil servant for any wrongdoing. The third category relates to problems within the ministry that are not significant or important, but are merely bureaucratic mistakes that cause delay. Under this scenario, the minister accepts the responsibility on behalf of the ministry, but he or she is not personally involved so he does not need to resign. The minister only needs to state that corrective action will be taken, and not expose the official to public criticism. Nobody loses their position in this scenario. Improvements in the policy are all that is needed.

The fourth category moves the onus of responsibility onto the civil servant. In essence, when the civil servant does something seriously wrong, of which the minister disapproves, and when the minister has no prior knowledge of the act, then he or she does not need to defend the conduct of the official or the errors committed by the official. There is no obligation on the part of the minister to be bound by these misdeeds. However, the minister, under the convention of ministerial responsibility, must in these cases explain what has happened and provide an accurate account of how the situation was dealt with. The civil servant, in this sense, must bear the responsibility for his or her action. Fyfe argues that it is up to the minister to decide what to do, because it is only the minister who can evaluate the situation and hear all sides of the problem, including the defence.

The final category relates to the growth and size of government and the difficulties of keeping track of all that governments do, especially for ministers who are charged with ministries that are too big to control. The argument is that ministries are so big that ministers cannot possibly know all that is going on in them. Regarding this problem, Fyfe offers a number of suggestions to get beyond this impasse. First, the minister should provide instructions as to how a policy is to be carried out. Second, the minister can provide instructions to civil servants of what constitutes important matters, and when such matters should be brought to the minister's attention. Finally, the House has oversight on the minister's business. In essence, this problem can be circumvented by holding the minister responsible for the delegation of authority. If the minister's management style is flawed, the minister is responsible for that flaw.

In any case, the minister is under no obligation to resign for something a civil servant alone has done. This was never what ministerial responsibility meant, and is not how it should be understood. This position is supported by Geoffrey Marshall (1986) who suggests that there is no precedent whereby a minister resigns for the act conducted by the civil servant. He suggests that "no post-war case has involved such an assumption and it can be said with confidence that the convention of ministerial responsibility contains no requirement of any such vicarious liability" (Marshall 1986, 65). The doctrine of ministerial responsibility, therefore, cannot always mean that a minister must resign for everything that goes wrong in his department. There are varying degrees of ministerial involvement, and Fyfe suggests the need to distinguish between these.

*John Profumo Case*

There is yet a different matter that was not covered by Fyfe but is also part of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, and this matter is typified by the John Profumo Affair. The controversy with this case surrounded the extramarital relationship of Profumo who was the Secretary of State for War. He had started a relationship with a showgirl, Christine Keeler, and she was also involved with a well known spy at the Soviet Embassy. This aroused national security concerns due to the nature of the Cold War.

When asked about the allegation in the House, Profumo immediately denied the extent of their relationship and vowed to sue for slander and libel for any statements that were made outside the House where MPs were no longer immune from prosecution for making such allegations. The embattled minister finally resigned from office in June of 1963 when the allegations first came to the surface in March of that year. His reasons were particularly related to how he misled parliament and the government. In his resignation letter published in the 6 June 1963 edition of *The Times*, he stated:

You will recollect that on March 22, following certain allegations made in Parliament, I made a personal statement. At that time rumour had charged me with assisting in the disappearance of a witness and with being involved in some possible breach of security.

So serious were these charges that I allowed myself to think that my personal association with that witness, which had also been the subject of rumour, was, by comparison, of minor importance only. In my statement I said that there had been no impropriety in this association. To my very deep regret I have to admit that this was not true, and that I misled you, and my colleagues, and the House.

Profumo's letter went on to suggest that there was truth to the other charges, but because he had misled parliament and the government, he had to resign.

Diana Woodhouse (1997) suggests that there is one obligation that all ministers must uphold. That is the duty to give information when requested, and also to provide an explanation for that information. As Woodhouse (1997, 264) suggests "the duty of Ministers [is] to give information about their areas of responsibility to the House and its Committees and not knowingly to mislead it." This is something that Profumo failed to do, as he repeatedly misled the House of Commons and members of his own government as to the severity of the situation despite being asked several times to account for it. Norman Lewis and Diane Longley (1996) argue that ministerial integrity is a fundamental component of ministerial responsibility. Without the integrity of ministers, there is no way to ascertain whether mistakes have been made, or whom to blame when they are discovered.

### *Devaluation and James Callaghan*

Lying to or misleading parliament is a grave mistake and cabinet cannot have a member who cannot be trusted. This relates to the concept of cabinet solidarity. Ministers comprise the government, and they must collectively have consensus on what constitutes government policy. This is evident during times of policy change. When a government introduces a policy, all cabinet ministers must be behind that policy. The question that comes from the Callaghan case is who is ultimately responsible for an unpopular policy reversal by the government.

A reference to context is necessary at this point. The British Labour government in 1967 had been opposed to a policy that would devalue the currency. They even campaigned against it. However, they soon reversed that policy based on the advice and evidence presented to cabinet by James Callaghan, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Cabinet debated the proposal and accepted it. The government policy had shifted. The opposition called on Callaghan to resign, but upon his explanation that cabinet accepted the decision, the opposition turned its sights on the government. Opposition member Sir Keith Joseph stated that “the responsibility must be pinned firmly on the Chancellor but, above all, on the Prime Minister.” Because the Prime Minister is the head of cabinet and government, he or she must take responsibility for the policies of his or her government. Therefore, while the advice for devaluation came from one cabinet member, who in this case should take responsibility for the advice, at the end of the day the whole government is responsible for allowing the policy to change directions. The phrase ‘cabinet sinks or swims together’ is typically associated with such a circumstance. In the end, Callaghan did not have to resign, and the government was left to deal with the consequences.

*Table 1.2: Reasons for ministerial resignation*

<i>Cabinet rotation and bringing new ministers into the government ranks</i>
<i>Minister gives civil servant a task and carries out the order that does not appear to be appropriate</i>
<i>Civil servant complies with government policy, which is questioned</i>
<i>Minister misleads parliament</i>

The above discussion provides us with a list of reasons for when ministers should and should not resign, which is summarized in Table 1.2. There are two other reasons that did not emerge in the discussion above, but they are also reasons to resign, and this includes instances when ministers break the law or when ministers break cabinet solidarity by not being able to support the government or its policy. These are based on convention, and they are not mentioned in the cases above because they have historically been acknowledged as resignation reasons. Understanding these reasons for resignation is very important for this study. As we will highlight in the next chapter, resignations that occur due to these reasons will have a greater likelihood of being categorized as rational decisions.

### **British and Canadian Literature on Ministerial Responsibility**

Upon examining the contemporary literature on ministerial responsibility in Canada and the UK, the neat and tidy portrayal of ministerial responsibility becomes more confused. The most immediate problem is that the list is widely open to interpretation. Ronald Brazier (1997) argues that the reason for the discrepancies on when a minister should resign is related to the political dimension of being a minister. Scoring points against the government is the goal of the opposition parties. Similarly, a resignation is one way to calm the opposition attacks on the government due to a political storm created by a minister's questionable conduct. Furthering this idea of the political nature of ministerial resignations, Flinders (2000) suggests that the party system is one of the main culprits. He suggests that the party system changed the task of cabinet making

and ministerial responsibility. Because the prime minister now picked cabinet ministers by drawing competent people from the governing party, the decision to resign had more than an administrative dimension. The impact a resignation would have to the party brand must also be taken into account.

Gay and Powell (2004) also offer some reasons why ministers may be forced to resign. These include contrived support of the parliamentary party, voters in a constituency, the media, or a prime minister trying to set a higher standard for ministerial responsibility. It will be argued in subsequent chapters that the types of reasons offered by Gay and Powell (2004), and the political dimension offered by Brazier (1997), have produced a change in the foundational principle of ministerial responsibility, which is of primary interest to this study.

Another contemporary issue that is part of ministerial responsibility is how to distinguish between the terms “responsibility” and “accountability.” According to Gay and Powell (2004), there are four different ways of demonstrating ministerial responsibility to parliament. The first is a duty to inform and explain wrongdoing. A second type of response is for a minister to offer an apology. Third method is for the government to take corrective action. The final method of demonstrating ministerial responsibility, and the one that is of most interest to this dissertation, is the resignation or dismissal of the minister. This is the most commonly understood action, and the one that is most often sought. A resignation is the ultimate responsible action. It suggests to voters that the minister had done something so wrong that he or she no longer deserves to have the opportunity to discharge ministerial duties. Gay and Powell (2004) suggest that

resignation cases can develop into political battles that are usually partisan in nature. Embarrassing the government to diminish its reputation or to enhance the standing of the opposition party is part of the strategy because it can help sway public opinion. As Adam Tompkins (1996) suggests, the opposition will always claim to be misled by the government, while the government will always claim that it is being as open as possible. These are political dimensions of the electoral game.

The Canadian literature on ministerial responsibility has also been interested in distinguishing between responsibility and accountability. Part of the confusion relates to the interchangeable use of accountability and responsibility when they are in fact distinct. Robert Gagne (1996, 213) borrows the definition of the three aspects of accountability, which are responsibility, accountability, and liability, from American Gerald Caiden:

To be *responsible* is to have the authority to act, power to control, freedom to decide, the ability to distinguish (as between right and wrong) and to behave rationally and reliably and with consistency and trustworthiness in exercising internal judgement. To be *accountable* is to answer for one's responsibilities, to report, to explain, to give reasons, to respond, to assume obligations, to render a reckoning and submit to an outside or external judgement. To be *liable* is to assume the duty of making good, to restore, to compensate, to recompense for wrongdoing or poor judgement.

Despite the fact that these are all lumped together into the broader definition of accountability, the definitions do give a more precise understanding of the difference between being responsible, accountable, and liable. Liability is rarely part of how we view ministerial responsibility, but there is a role for it in the system, since corrective action is usually taken at some level. A simpler and more effective way of distinguishing between responsibility and accountability is that responsibility suggests that somebody is



blameworthy for doing something wrong, while accountability is “defined as the condition of having to answer to someone for one’s actions” (Gagne 1996, 213).

A good synopsis of the difference between responsibility and accountability is offered by Arthur Schafer (1999). Responsibility is based on the action of an individual. It is also related to the delegation of authority to a subordinate. In such a case, if a person of authority asks a subordinate to do something, it is not the person who did the act who is necessarily to blame, but rather the person who delegated that authority that is largely at fault. The former is an example of personal responsibility, while the latter is considered role responsibility (Schafer 1999). Role responsibility suggests that the person in authority has ensured that proper measures for accountability are in place, and that those measures are complied with. Accountability, on the other hand, occurs when a subordinate does something questionable and the person in authority gives an account of what happened without invoking blame or wrongdoing. Being responsible, according to Schafer (1999), is nothing more than admitting that the person in question had a role in the act. Accountability means that a person of authority tells the story of what went wrong. This line of reasoning is the same as in Britain.

Other Canadian literature is preoccupied with the changing nature of responsibility and accountability with the emergence of new public management. Ewan Ferlie (1996) suggests that because the public sector is so complex, ministerial responsibility becomes a less realistic form of political accountability. It was therefore replaced with what is called ministerial answerability. Peter Aucoin (1995) explains the problem with moving from responsibility, to accountability, to answerability. He

suggests that there is a difference in expectations between the ministers and the public servants. Because government is now so large, a minister must delegate authority to the public servant. When he or she does so, that person no longer assumes to be accountable for it. However, this is not true, as the minister still has to be accountable for asking the civil servant to perform a task on his or her behalf.

The situation seems to confuse the distinction between accountability and answerability in parliament. Peter Aucoin and Mark Jarvis (2005, 91) define accountability as “the process whereby those to whom authority has been conferred or delegated and/or responsibilities assigned must justify, explain or defend their actions (or those of one’s subordinates) to a superior authority who has the obligation to hold to account all those on whom it has bestowed authority and responsibilities.” On the other hand, answerability “implies a duty to provide information or factual explanation, but not to defend or justify government policy, programs or administration” (Aucoin and Jarvis 2005, 91). The difference between the two relates to one’s position in the apparatus of government. Accountability is the explanation of an authority’s behaviour or the behaviour of one of his or her subordinates. Answerability refers to the norm that civil servants of a lower rank can be called upon to answer questions about what has happened.

Part of the reason for this is the sheer growth in the size of government. As noted above, a minister cannot know and oversee everybody within a department. Complicating matters is the presence of horizontal management in which policy development or public service provision is shared across government departments. When this occurs, it becomes much more difficult to understand which department has the final

authority. Due to these reasons, deputy ministers appear to be increasingly charged with the affairs of the department and have been answerable to parliament as a result. The problem is that parliament cannot distinguish between public sector accountability and ministerial accountability because it lacks an understanding of what a minister has asked of the civil servants serving in his or her department (Aucoin 1995). There is little or no knowledge of the relationship between the minister and his or her deputy minister, and between the deputy minister and others of a lower rank in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Because we do not know precisely what each of these relationships entail, it has become difficult to ascertain ministerial responsibility. Ultimately, this could end up in a situation whereby the people at the top are blameless and subordinates are always blamed. If this holds true, then it will come to a point where ministers never resign.

Timothy Denton (1980) tries to sort out this confusion over the relationship between ministers and bureaucracy. He suggests that it is important to understand the origins of the concept of ministerial responsibility by recalling the two prerequisites that are associated with it. The first is that parliament ought to be strong enough to demand the responsibility of its ministers to it. The second prerequisite is that civil servants need to be able to follow ministerial direction. These may seem like simplistic propositions, but without them, the doctrine of ministerial responsibility could not exist.

Denton's main contention is that parliament is too weak. He does not suggest that its weakness is solely due to the increasing size of government. He goes further by suggesting that parliament neither has the tools nor the interest to properly demand accountability. Some aspects of weak accountability in the House of Commons include

the lack of strength of committees in the 1970s, and the need to extract more accountability from ministers (i.e. having ministers account for the inner-workings of their departments). Furthermore, other historical developments have occurred, such as the advent of television, opinion polls, and advertising, which have all contributed to making parliament less relevant. These place a heavier onus on citizens to pass judgement on government than expecting their representatives in parliament to do that for them. If the government could communicate directly with the people, and if it could collect a sample of their view on a particular issue through its public opinion polling, then the opposition would not need to be effective, and parliament would not matter much.

Denton's contention that parliament is too weak is reinforced by the reports that emerged from the Lambert and McGrath commissions. According to Sharon Sutherland (1991), these reports have reinforced the idea that ministerial responsibility is a myth. These commissions declared that parliament, through its committees and extra parliamentary arenas, must have a stronger ability to hold public servants accountable, rather than ministers (Sutherland 1991; Denton 1980). Sharon Sutherland (1991, 92) suggests that this is occurring "on a haphazard basis." Her study of British resignations provides similar conclusions.

The thrust of Sutherland's argument should concern many. She states that "there is more than a worn out myth at stake: partial and flawed reforms may well make government less accessible to the influence of elected ministers, thus less to the electorate" (Sutherland 1991, 92). This statement reminds us that the foundational principles define our democracy, and if citizens want control over the services that the

state provides, it must ensure that ministers remain in charge of government departments and accept the blame when matters run counter to the wishes of voters.

The final point that ought to be raised here is that there are many commentators in both Canada and the UK who believe that ministerial responsibility is essentially an obsolete concept. For example, scholars in Canada have pronounced ministerial responsibility as dead (Ferlie 1996; Kernaghan 1979) at about the same time as scholars in Britain. (Chapman 1963; Polidano 2000; 1999) have done so. This tends to reinforce the point that the evolution and operation of ministerial responsibility in both countries has led to similar sentiments.

The preceding clarifications together with Bagehot's original 19<sup>th</sup> century description of ministerial responsibility provide the insight on how the doctrine ought to be used. Commentators in both countries have suggested that the founding concept has or is being amplified by new aspects of accountability. In addition, there are analysts who go so far as to argue that the principle no longer has any relevance today, and is effectively dead. Therefore, we see a great deal of disagreement in terms of the contemporary state of ministerial responsibility, but the two countries are more or less in agreement on the confused understanding of its current meaning.

### **Comparing Canada and Britain**

A main reason Canada and Britain were chosen as a comparison is because they exhibit similarities with respect to the foundational principle of ministerial responsibility. In addition to this, both are Westminster parliamentary democracies with similar design

features. They have elected lower chambers and appointed upper chambers with a monarchy that serves as the symbolic head of state. Thus, Canada's parliamentary system is arguably the most similar to the original Westminster model.

However, there are a number of important differences that need to be underlined. David Docherty (2005, 182) suggests, for example, that British parliament has some major differences from its Canadian counterpart because of its larger membership and its much looser party discipline. Because the British House of Commons has more than twice the number of members as the Canadian lower chamber, its members are more likely to regard themselves as constituency politicians who are not tied to the House leadership. This is because most will never occupy a cabinet post, given the limited number of available cabinet positions relative to the large number of government MPs.

Other factors to be explored relate to the changing nature of accountability in parliament. Whereas oral questions during Question Period have traditionally been viewed as the primary vehicle for the opposition to ask for a resignation, other methods are beginning to replace or supplement this scrutiny function. The changing role of parliamentary committees is one way in which to demand ministerial responsibility. Furthermore, the increased prominence of extra-parliamentary arenas has also contributed to the changing dynamics of ministerial responsibility. Officers of parliament, such as the auditor-general, and their annual reports have changed the nature of how ministers and public servants behave. We now have a public auditing culture in our bureaucracy that has equated transparency with the need to lay blame and to pass judgement on public policy, a function which has historically been performed by the opposition (Sutherland

1980; Leone 2006). Even parliamentary committees have become outlets for scrutiny within the parliamentary system. The extent to which these have altered ministerial responsibility will be explored in this dissertation. In fact, this study will argue that these newer forms of scrutiny are less effective than the traditional method.

### **Emphasizing government decision-making**

While ministerial responsibility is the foundational principle being examined in this dissertation, the focus of this study is to advance our understanding of government decision-making. The perspective from which this research engages decision-making is different from how most other analysts approach government decision-making. The typical approach to understanding government decision-making process leads one to discuss the structure of decision-making. Structure in this sense means the legislative process for tabling and amending laws, as well as bureaucratic and cabinet processes of how legislation is derived and formulated (Canada 1998). Structural approaches also include the exploration of the changes of these structures, for example, changes in cabinet committee structure from departmental to institutionalized cabinets (Dupré 1985). Other studies have chronicled the rise of central agencies and the effect of decision-making power moving away from elected officials to unelected bureaucrats and political staff (Savoie 1999). These studies focus on the structural features of decision-making.

Analyzing government decision-making from a structural perspective only provides part of an understanding on how governments make decisions. Another way of describing government decision-making is by focusing on style. By exploring decision-

making style, what is of interest is the level of rationality involved with the decisions that are made. In this regard, this study is going to rely on organizational theory to explain how parliamentary reforms have actually happened. Applying organizational theory to the study of parliamentary change makes sense. Parliament is an organization and behaves like an organization. It follows that the actors within the organization make decisions that will change the organization. Using organizational theory is thus one contribution this dissertation makes to the study of Canadian and British political science in general and parliamentary studies in particular.

Not many studies have applied these organizational concepts to parliament. One of the few studies that does this was conducted by Peter Aucoin (1986) and pertained to organizational change in the machinery of government. In that study, Aucoin examined the effects of changing leadership and management styles as he documented some of the structural changes in government. He found that organizational change is best understood by the leadership paradigms of the prime ministers (Trudeau working within the rational paradigm and Mulroney working within brokerage politics). It is in analyzing the style of decision-making by leading decision-makers that this dissertation also expects to make a contribution to this under-analyzed area of parliamentary studies.

Looking at the literature that has emerged from American congressional studies is particularly useful. Many of the key decision theories that this dissertation will use are derived from studies conducted in the United States. Because of the advanced nature of congressional studies in the United States, it seems natural, then, to explore whether some of those decision-making styles that have been discussed in the United States can be



exported to the study of Westminster parliamentary systems. Therefore, the following decision-making models will be considered: rational decision-making (Weber 1947), incrementalism (Lindblom 1959), “mixed-scanning” (Etzioni 1967), management by “groping along” (Behn 1988), the “garbage can” model (Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972), and “program drift” (Carroll 1995). The following chapter on decision-making will elaborate on these concepts and provide a framework for its study.

### *Analyzing institutional change*

It should be mentioned that one of the overarching reasons for using organizational theory to explain decisions that lead to government resignations is to understand how our parliamentary institutions have changed over time. According to Aaron Wildavsky (1972), institutional change is inevitable in self-evaluating organizations. In such organizations, evaluators and organizations are somewhat contradictory because organizations strive for stability and commitment, while evaluation leads to change and scepticism. The evaluation and identification of problems with parliamentary government can partially explain why actors within governing institutions seek change.

It is not hard to visualize this scenario with parliamentary reform. Parliamentary institutions are stable and resistant to change. Members of parliament are constantly evaluating whether some things could be done differently with the parliamentary system (e.g. Laycock 1994). It is that self-evaluation that plants the seed for reform movements. Yet, it is not just the politicians who are evaluators. Because democratic institutions

affect all citizens, people seek better ways of doing things, and they will support those who seek similar change. Finally, analysts and commentators of parliament are also susceptible to evaluation in this regard. Academics, in particular, are trained to define problems and pose solutions to those problems. Jennifer Smith (2003), for example, suggests that one way to make parliament more responsive to citizens is to incorporate more citizen engagement and direct democracy. This is a response to an apathetic citizenry, and one idea for making them more engaged in their democracy.

The trouble with this approach is that when we are excessively focused on the problem and its solution, the study of institutional change is incomplete. The literature on Senate reform in Canada illustrates this point. Many studies and proposed reforms have identified the Senate in Canada as being ineffective, unelected, and illegitimate (Stillborn 2003). This is how the problem of the Senate has been defined. The solutions to this problem are varied and wide ranging. They either call for its abolishment, just as Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has suggested in Canada, or they pick from some comparative examples abroad and apply them to Canada (Watts 2003). When we survey these ideas, one can sense that the reasons for having an appointed upper chamber in Canada are lost. We appear all too willing to forget the debates that emerged on this topic at Confederation, and overlook the concerns of those Fathers who were weary of elected senators. To produce a more complete understanding of institutional change, one would need to understand the institution's origins, mission, goals, and organizational objectives in addition to problem definition and solution generation. It is thus argued that we very

much need to understand where we came from before we can provide the answers to where we need to go.

### **The results**

Students of parliament should find this approach to studying government interesting. Rather than making a judgement on the potential benefits of proposed parliamentary reforms, this dissertation advances the proposition that we have never really discussed whether the foundational principles of parliamentary government are still alive and well in our parliamentary system, or, in the event that they are still evident in parliamentary democracy, whether they are worth keeping. If we have not yet fully debated these two points, then it will be argued that we should not be discussing parliamentary reform. The reasons for this are as follows: If we agree that institution building must start with missions, goals, and objectives, then it logically follows that reformed parliamentary institutions require new foundational principles (or newer meanings of the principles we already have). In the absence of a renewed or different understanding of foundational principles, parliamentary reform can lead to dysfunction. They would be dysfunctional in the sense that they no longer reflect the original foundational principles while, at the same time, they are not discussing what should replace them.

With the above in mind, this dissertation will show that the foundational principle of ministerial responsibility is adhered to in about two thirds of the cases in both Canada and the UK over the last forty years. For the first time, this dissertation has attempted to

numerically estimate how well the governing institutions in Canada and Britain adhere to a foundational principle. Some governments do a better job respecting the foundational principle of ministerial responsibility as it relates to cabinet resignations than others. The overall numbers for adhering to foundational principles in both Canada and the UK were reduced by one government in each country that did a poor job of adhering to the foundational principle. Jean Chrétien's government in Canada and John Major's government in Britain were the exceptions.

This finding is important to the overall discussion on parliamentary reform. While many commentators have suggested that the concept of ministerial responsibility is dead, it is surprising to see that the principle still has life. If the principle still has life, the question becomes whether it is worth keeping and capable of being strengthened, or whether we should abandon or replace it with a different principle. While the question is of interest to this author, this dissertation is not preoccupied with answering democratic reform questions. The principal focus of this study is on using organizational theory to measure and explain whether and how foundational principles, and parliamentary institutions by extension, have changed. The goal of this research is to ultimately use the findings to frame the debate on parliamentary reform.

In addition, this dissertation seeks to advance the study of parliamentary reform as an area of public policy. Governments in both countries have ministers devoted to democratic reform, yet there has never been a comprehensive public policy study examining institutional change of parliament. One way we can study parliamentary reform as an area of public policy is by studying government decision-making, since

decision-making is one of the steps in the policy process (Howlett and Ramesh 2003). The development of a new method to understanding government decision-making is the major theoretical advance of this dissertation.

In terms of this theoretical advance, chapter two will explain this new approach to understanding government decision-making as well as the hypotheses to be tested. Chapters three and four will effectively test the model. This dissertation will examine all ministerial resignations from the Trudeau government in Canada and the Wilson government in the UK until the end of 2007. The list of ministerial resignations in Canada comes from the one provided by the Library of Parliament. The British list of resignations is predominantly drawn from Gay and Powell (2004); however, this list is only complete until 1998. Various searches were conducted into the remaining British resignation cases. These post-1998 British resignations were cross-referenced with data compiled by a research team led by Keith Dowding at the London School of Economics.

Of interest to this study are the government positions on ministerial resignations. This dissertation will be basing most of its claims on the exchange of letters from the prime minister and departing ministers and statements made by government officials or the departing minister to the House of Commons and the media. As a result, the data for this study is predominantly drawn from newspaper reprints of resignation letters and of articles detailing the resignations. In Canada, the databases of the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* newspapers were both searched for all the resignation cases. In the UK, the database of *The Times* was searched for all the British cases, and other major daily newspapers including *The Independent*, *The Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and

*The Guardian* were searched for resignations after 1980. Some other newspapers and state-owned media (the CBC in Canada and BBC in the UK) were also consulted in a limited number of cases. For all resignation cases, the databases for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* were searched mainly for other research purposes, and were only used in a limited number of cases in this dissertation. What ought to be emphasised is that the main interest of this dissertation is in the government explanation of the resignations, not the opinions of the newspapers that cover them.

Finally, students of parliament will find some interest in the comparative analysis between Canada and the UK. As mentioned above, Canada and the UK experienced similar rationality in the decision for ministerial resignations. This finding suggests that neither parliamentary size, the nature of political parties, differences in committee structures, and the differences in relative importance of various extra-parliamentary arenas affect the adherence to the doctrine of ministerial responsibility as applied to resignations. This contrasts with the position that more MPs necessarily produce better scrutiny (and more rational resignations), even though they still may encourage different forms of parliamentary behaviour such as a weaker party discipline (Docherty 2005; Franks 1987). This dissertation also finds that increasing the independence of parliamentary committees and parliamentary officers rarely produces a ministerial resignation, which raises questions, at the very least, about their effectiveness in their scrutiny function. We have had auditor-general reports for many years that have outlined and condemned poor public administration, but there has not been a ministerial

resignation during the study period because of them, and this is what the doctrine of ministerial responsibility is supposed to elicit. Students of parliament will surely be interested in this finding. These will be further explained in Chapter 5.

With respect to the resignations that did occur, students of parliament will be interested in three observations from the analysis. The first of these is that sex scandals in the United Kingdom are now treated as rational reasons for ministerial resignations. Ministers in the UK since John Major's administration now resign at the first whiff of an allegation levelled against them of extramarital relationships. Second, Liberal Party succession planning in Canada has also become a rational reason for ministerial resignations. The cases of Donald MacDonald, John Turner, and Paul Martin promote the idea that it is an acceptable practice to leave government office in order to prepare for the leadership of the party. Finally, the effects of federalism in Canada and devolution in the UK have also led to ministerial resignations for ministers who seek to lead a sub-national government. It seems that governments are willing to tolerate or even promote the idea of having a member of their own government leave to lead another sub-national government. All three observations, one affecting the UK, one affecting Canada, and the other affecting both countries, lead to the conclusion that the foundational principle as envisioned by Bagehot has changed to include these new reasons for acceptable ministerial resignations. These themes will be further elaborated throughout the dissertation, and the significance will be discussed in the final chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2: ORGANIZATION THEORY AND METHODOLOGY**

Institutions have influences that cause them to change. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Aaron Wildavsky (1972) suggests that self-evaluating organizations are prone to change even though they are designed to withstand the pressure to do so. This sentiment falls in line with what the Canadian Standing Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons Report had to say:

One of the strengths of the parliamentary system lies in its traditions and the rules that have evolved over the years. At the same time, Parliament is an adaptable institution, with a capacity to respond to changed circumstances and new demands... Change is an ongoing characteristic of a parliamentary process – not for its own sake, but change that is positive and considered (Canada 2001, paragraph 5).

The above quotation conveys an interesting message. On the one hand, parliament is an old institution, with old traditions, with an old theory of parliamentary democracy. On the other hand, society continues to evolve with new ideas of democracy and government. The quote seems to convey that it is possible to keep old traditions and concepts in a reformed system of government. But is this so? This is an example of a classic tension regarding institutional change.

The Westminster parliamentary model is one of the oldest democratic templates in the world. It is also a form of government that is full of distinctive characteristics, as was discussed in the first chapter. However, like most organizations, parliaments have had to adapt to the pressures of change over time. The pressures are both internal and external (Scott 2001). Internal pressures come from actors within the organization, namely



legislators, who want to change it for their own benefit. External pressure comes from analysts of the organization who think that there is a better way of doing things. In both cases, a problem is highlighted and its solution is posed. The result is increased pressure for change. This is precisely how Aaron Wildavsky (1972) saw change in self-evaluating organizations, and it applies to parliamentary reform.

Parliamentary reform is a term often associated with change and renewal of those democratic institutions. However, there needs to be a clear definition of what parliamentary reform means in this dissertation. Traditional literature on institutional and organizational change gives us a method to analyze parliamentary reform. One way to compare institutional change is by finding a starting point on which the analysis can be based. This typically is done by examining the aims, principles norms, and beliefs of an organization. One then measures the extent to which the organization still reflects those aims and principles (Scott 2001). In essence, comparing institutional change can be done by comparing the existing organizational configuration with the original. If there is any deviation in the existing organization from the original, then institutional change has occurred. This is the formula used to study parliamentary reform in this dissertation.

One might well ask the question ‘what is parliament?’ Such a question is necessary to address before institutional change can be examined. Parliament consists not only of the physical structures that are visible, but also includes the rules and conventions that govern how it functions. These rules and conventions were outlined in the foundational principles that were discussed in the first chapter. The parliamentary structures exist to complement the rules and conventions. Conventions like responsible

government are not merely abstract. The idea exists, but there is also structural agreement with that idea. In this case, to have cabinet sit in the legislature, and be responsible to it, means that responsible government goes beyond the mere idea of making the executive responsible to the legislature. This is evident by the structural requirement of having the majority of members in the House of Commons actively demonstrating their confidence in the government. Similarly, ministerial responsibility is a concept that exists to guard against self-absorption in permanent bureaucracies. Ministerial responsibility is the concept, rotating cabinet ministers is the structural feature. The same can be said about all the foundational principles. This is why an exclusive examination of parliamentary structure only tells part of the story. For each structural feature, there may be a corresponding foundational principle. If we lose sight of how structural changes to parliament affect the foundational principles that go along with them, then we essentially are not fully evaluating institutional change in our parliamentary institutions. Therefore, it is important to examine how foundational principles are affected by the changes that have taken place over time.

Of particular interest to this study is the concept of deinstitutionalization. This refers to the process that explains how institutions weaken and disappear (Zucker 1988). This is not to suggest that parliament itself is disappearing. However, when we deviate from the foundational principles, parliament will change. Each deviation has in turn weakened parliament as originally envisioned. Some of the foundational principles, such as ministerial responsibility as we discussed in the previous chapter, have been contested

so much that new ideas about responsibility and accountability appear ready to replace the original conception of the foundational principle.

The above discussion of institutional change establishes one of the main perspectives from which this dissertation explores ministerial responsibility. The remainder of this chapter will focus on decision-making processes and the development of the study's methodology. How governments make decisions appears to be an understudied area in political science, and this dissertation addresses this deficiency. Decision-making is defined as "a set of actions related to and including the choice of one alternative rather than another" (Dahl 1960, 26). With every change to the parliamentary system (meaning any deviation from foundational principles), a corresponding decision must be present, whether or not the result of that decision was intended. This is at the heart of what this study seeks to achieve.

Understanding what these decisions are would be interesting enough, however, it is necessary to give them theoretical meaning. This is why this chapter will examine decision theories that are part of organizational theory. In order to decipher which decision theory is most applicable to ministerial resignations, the decision theories will be compared to each other based on four characteristics of decisions in the methodological section of this chapter. These include the level of consensus, the degree of knowledge regarding cause and effect, the changeability of the decision, and whether the decision is linked to other decisions. A matrix of decision-making will be produced that shows this relationship. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the hypotheses and the method of

data analysis. Together these form the theoretical and methodological foundation of this dissertation.

### **Using organization theory to explain parliamentary reform**

This study proposes to treat parliamentary reform as an area of public policy by examining the decision-making processes that produce institutional change. Understanding decision-making in organizations is important. As Richard Cyert and James March (1959, 76) suggest, “efforts to develop a behavioural theory of organizational decision-making represent attempts to overcome the disparity between the importance of decision-making in organizations and our understanding of how, in fact, such decisions are made.” Decision-making processes are poorly understood, and this is particularly the case with parliaments.

According to Cyert and March (1959), organizations behave like coalitions. A few examples of coalition members in government organizations include administrators, appointive officials, and legislators. This is one of the reasons why we can say that parliaments are organizations and behave like organizations. As organizations, parliaments display characteristics similar to those of other organizations. These include, first, the tendency for organizations to begin with their own individuals holding varying preferences. Then, organizations bargain to arrive at an agreement over the organization’s preference. Once this is known, the organization can be understood as a single entity. It is at this final juncture that the analysis needs to take place. Parliaments, like other organizations, have members who have varying preferences and there is

bargaining between these preferences. However, it is only the point at which decisions are made, and where courses of action are taken, that parliament chooses a course of action.

Organizational theory and studies of decision-making have their origins in behavioural theory. Herbert Simon (1957) began his research into organizations by rejecting some of the claims made by rational economics. Two terms are derived from this work. One is the concept of “bounded rationality.” This means that people will act with the intent of being rational based on what they know about the environment in which they are to make a decision. The second term is “satisficing.” This rejects the notion that humans make decisions that maximize their preferences. Simon suggests that people make a decision based on what is good enough for the individual. He demonstrates satisficing and bounded rationality with the following paradox (Simon 1957, 199):

It is only because individual human beings are limited in knowledge, foresight, skill, and time that organizations are useful instruments for the achievement of human purpose; and it is only because organized groups of human beings are limited in ability to agree on goals, to communicate, and to cooperate that organizing becomes for them a ‘problem.’

The argument here is that organizations are unnatural human structures because humans cannot agree on organizational objectives. At the same time, humans participate in organizations because they lack information, which forces them to pool their resources.

The implications of the individual’s bounded rationality for the organization are further pursued by March and Simon (1958). In this classic work, basic features of organizational structure and function are derived from the characteristics of human problem-solving processes and rational human choice. Because of the limits on human

intelligence and bounded rationality, decision-making in organizations requires five “simplifications” (March and Simon 1958, 169):

- (1) Optimizing is replaced by satisficing – the requirement that satisfactory levels of the criterion variables be attained.
- (2) Alternatives of action and consequences of action are discovered sequentially through search processes.
- (3) Repertories of action programs are developed by organizations and individuals, and these serve as the alternatives of choice in recurrent situations.
- (4) Each specific action program deals with a restricted range of situations and a restricted range of consequences.
- (5) Each action program is capable of being executed in semi- independence of the others - they are only loosely coupled together.

The key point here is that action programs guide the decision behaviours of individuals. While some action programs deal with repetitive situations that can then be put into a routine, others that deal with situations that have not occurred before will have to be developed through problem-solving activities that first involve the formulation of a definition of the situation, and then include the development of appropriate new action programs.

Cyert and March (1963) build on March and Simon’s work and their own previous work to devise a behavioural theory of the firm. In this theory, they suggest that the decision-making process is categorized by four stages. The first is quasi-resolution of conflict. Because, as Cyert and March (1959) previously claimed, organizations are coalitions of conflicting interests, the organization has to first mediate the conflict before a decision can be made. Mediating the conflict does not achieve consensus, but it may satisfy participants enough to allow the organization to make a decision.

The second stage is uncertainty avoidance. All organizations face uncertainty in its external environment. Cyert and March (1963) argue that organizations act to avoid uncertainty by either emphasizing short-run reaction to short-run feedback, as opposed to anticipating uncertain long term events, or they arrange to standardize the environment through the implementation of plans, standard procedures, norms, or any other method that can stabilize the external environment.

The third stage is problemistic search. This is where organizations determine their decision options. Cyert and March (1963) suggest that there are three characteristics of problemistic search. This first is that it is motivated by a problem and the need to search for ways to solve it. Once the problem can be solved, the search ends. The second characteristic is that the search is simple-minded, meaning that a new solution is usually based on an old one. Finally, the search is biased because it reflects upon the decision-maker's training, experience, and goals.

The final stage is where organizational learning takes place. Organizational learning takes place when participants within the organization assess their goals through past experience and by comparing their experience with the experiences of other organizations. When the goals are updated through organizational learning, the organization is then forced to adapt to these changes by considering new events or problems that would have to be addressed. These four stages are how Cyert and March (1963) view decision-making in all organizations through their theory of the firm.

**The decision theories: Rational, non-rational, and hybrid**

The above discussion was intended to emphasize the important contributions of behavioural theorists to the study of decision-making in organizations. These select authors offered the precursors of more specific theories on decision-making processes. The following discussion will highlight six of the main methods of decision-making processes that are the focus of this study. They are divided into three different categories: rational, non-rational, and hybrid decision-making styles (Leone and Flynn 2006). Dividing these theories as such will provide a deeper understanding of what the decision theories actually mean.

*Rational decision-making*

Rational decision-making models suggest that most decision makers would agree on the problems and the solutions to those problems if given the same information and understanding of the situation. This suggests a certain degree of consistency among the kinds of decisions that are made. Decision makers are also interested in making the best possible decision and are therefore interested in extracting the maximum value for their decisions given their constraints (Robbins, Coulter, and Langton 2005).

James March (1997) suggests that there are four assumptions on which rational decisions are based. The first is that there is knowledge of alternatives. This means that decision-makers not only understand that there is more than one choice, which is a requirement for any decision, but that the decision-maker is aware of all the possible alternatives to the course of action. Furthermore, rational decision-makers will have an



understanding of the possible consequences of each potential course of action. This is to ensure that the course of action chosen is the best given the environment in which the decision is being made. Third, decision makers must have a consistent order of preference when it comes to the choices before them. This suggests that decision makers have consistent values that impact the choices that they would prefer. Finally, decision makers have rules that guide them to their final decision. These rules consider the preferences and the most likely outcome possible is usually the one to be selected. Taken together, rational decision-making suggests that organizations can consistently achieve optimal solutions for whatever problems they encounter. This is a decision-making style that is particularly used in the private sector, but the public sector is increasingly viewing it with more favour as public and private sector management styles converge.

Arguably the most famous theorist in rational decision-making is Max Weber (1947). Weber thought that bureaucracies must be rational organizations. Part of what made bureaucracies so rational was their decision-making function. According to Weber, bureaucracies make decisions based on rules that are developed to guarantee organizational objectives. Because the decisions ought to be based on rules and practices that are well known and revisited to produce consistency, future decision-makers have an understanding of what decision to make when encountered with a particular problem.

Strategic planning is a form of rational decision-making. Robert Anthony (1965) defines strategic planning as the policy formulation and goal setting of the entire organization. It means that a decision maker must decide on the organization's objectives, choosing the resources that will achieve those objectives, and the framework

that will organize those resources. In essence, strategic planners work backwards from where they want to be in the future to where they are now. The objective is to develop an optimal path to achieve their desired ends through planned change. Enid Munford and Andrew Pettigrew (1975) suggest that the assumption behind strategic planning is that it can be a tidy sequential process that can be carried out logically and lead to clear final choices.

However, Munford and Pettigrew (1975) suggest that it is also necessary to account for uncertainty when planning. They suggest that a purely strategic plan can be developed which avoids areas of uncertainty. Examples of such areas of uncertainty include political or social arenas. These are uncertain areas because they are hard to predict. But, avoiding these areas can lead to planning failure. This is why they suggest that there is a need for adaptive planning. Adaptive planning states that no goal can remain unaltered over the long run. Goals will have to be reformulated to meet the changes within the organization and its external environment (Munford and Pettigrew 1975). The point here is to emphasize the planning process more than the actual plan itself. The process must be flexible and able to adapt to changing conditions of uncertainty. This occurs through the creation of institutional mechanisms that are capable of this adaptation and are different for every organization. Munford and Pettigrew (1975) argue that planning only works when organizations adequately take care of the potential for uncertainty.

Although strategic planning was a concept that was originally developed in the private sector, some advocated that it would be useful for government to use the model to

help it get out of its financial difficulties in the 1980s (Eadie 1983). This is hardly surprising with the development of new public management around the same time. Despite some of the variations<sup>1</sup> with strategic planning, there are a few common elements (Streib 1992). One of these elements is the presence of a mission statement. Mission statements establish the goals and objectives of an organization. The second common element is an analysis of the organization's internal environment. The purpose of conducting such an analysis relates to the need to understand what is important to the future of the organization. Thirdly, a strengths and weaknesses analysis, sometimes referred to as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), gives the organization an idea of what works well and what needs to improve. Fourth, once the above is complete, the organization identifies the key features that it wishes to strategically pursue, and then implements them. Finally, the organization will embark on a series of updates and monitor its progress in meeting its strategic objectives.

### *Non-rational models*

Rational decision-making is the ideal-type model of decision-making. It is the way all organizations *should* make their decisions. However, it is not the way many organizations actually make their decisions and is therefore utopian (Etzioni 1986). This is where non-rational decision-making models can be used to explain how decisions are

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic plans vary in length, complexity, and focus. Smaller, less complex organizations do not need to apply as much time or resources into creating a strategic plan. Many of the models of strategic planning vary on focus such as goals-based planning, organizational consistency planning, scenario planning, and organic/values based planning.

made. Rather than suggesting that rational decision-making is the way decisions should be made, non-rational models seek to describe how decisions *are* made.

In the non-rational decision-making models, decision makers do not have complete knowledge of the external environment in shaping their decision. The decisions have no clearly defined pattern or logic to them. The decisions made are often random, and they may also involve the use of non-rational characteristics such as intuition and instinct (Miller 1999). Non-rational decision-making strategies often involve an element of judgement when problem-solving, and the assumption is that personal preferences and values are part of the decision calculus (Robbins, Coulter, and Langton 2005). Therefore, the decision made is not likely to be optimal in terms of the analysis of the rational decision maker, because there is significant bias within the decision-making process that alters the attainment of the “best” solution. In some cases, the behaviour might be irrational if the key tenets being followed are based exclusively on intuition, faith, tradition, or self-interest. There might be a much better decision available, but it will not be taken because these forces combine to prohibit the decision-maker from making a wiser choice (Cohen and March 1996).

There are three non-rational models that are considered in this dissertation. The first of these is incrementalism. Lindblom (1959) was among the first to study the incremental approach to decision-making in public policy. He describes this incremental approach as the science of “muddling through.” Incrementalism, according to Lindblom, involves a political change by small steps. While the term suggests that change is slow and gradual, Lindblom (1979) argues that there are times when inertia provides for a

rapid sequence of small changes that can more drastically alter a policy area than an infrequent major policy change. According to this view, incrementalism can explain dramatic policy reversals in addition to slow and gradual change.

Incrementalism as a management strategy has been advanced by other decision-making theorists. Karl Weick (1984), for example, advocates a strategy of “small wins.” This strategy suggests that managers break down their tasks into smaller sub-tasks. On their own, small wins seem unimportant. Yet, a series of wins at small tasks creates inertia and momentum that will make other small wins easier to obtain. Small wins are controllable opportunities that produce visible results (Weick 1984). Once a small win has been accomplished, forces are set in motion that favour another small win.

Like managing by “groping,” which is discussed below, Weick (1984) argues that the optimal sequence of small wins is not known. Instead, each small win is bound only by the fact that it is generally moving in the same direction toward the desired change. This strategy cannot be pre-planned because of the changing environment of the organization that makes it hard to understand all possibilities (Weick 1984). However, unlike “groping along,” each decision that results in a small win pushes decision makers closer to their desired goal.

The second non-rational model considered is known as the “groping” model. In many respects, the “groping” literature rejects the underlying assumptions of the planners and the incrementalists. A manager who “grope along” is not an incompetent decision maker. Rather, the decision maker knows what to do, but nobody has provided the directions on how to get to the goal. This is sometimes also called management through

experimentation. It suggests that, at any given moment, the manager has several decisions that could be taken to change the organization (Behn 1988). A decision maker may be able to get closer to his or her desired end through a particular decision, but sometimes will be further from that end because of the experiences encountered along the way. When the decision maker realizes this situation by analyzing the organization's environment, other steps will be attempted to get back toward the desired goal. This is how "groping" works. The decision maker knows where he or she wants to go, but might get lost along the way.

Olivia Golden (1990) applied Behn's concept of management by "groping" to state and local government human services programs. She found that the policy area changed only through the manager's changing experience after the initial policy has been implemented. The important point here is that it is the top managers, rather than the organization itself, that appear to be "groping along." This leads Jeffrey Straussman (1993) to suggest that organizations change according to the objectives of the top managers, rather than the objectives of the specific program. This is how management by experimentation works. If the manager encounters a problem, he or she attempts to fix the problem. There is no clear plan for change and collective decisions may not move toward a specific overall goal.

The third non-rational model is the one most closely associated with irrationality in decision-making. Cohen and March (1974) see organizations as organized anarchies that are devoid of clear decision rules. Such organizations manifest considerable uncertainty regarding their internal and external environment, as well as in their decision-

making process. These sorts of institutions suffer from problematic goals, unclear technology, and fluid participation in decision-making. The issue with problematic goals is that they work on ill-defined preferences. Unclear technology suggests that the organization really does not understand how it is doing what it is doing. Furthermore, fluid participation means that the boundaries of the organization are uncertain and changing, which would include, for example, high turnover among top organizational decision-makers (Cohen and March 1974).

This makes rational decision-making extremely difficult, if not impossible. Decisions made in this manner have been dubbed the “garbage can” model. Michael Cohen, James March, and Johan Olsen (1972) liken organizations to irrational garbage can into which organizational participants throw assorted problems and solutions. Organizations under this model appear to have no clear idea of what they are attempting to do, or how they are supposed to do it. In this sense, organizations generate ill-defined problems, alternative solutions, and goals which are problematic when they plague all aspects of the decision-making process. The garbage can model suggests that there is no orderly decision-making process, such as strategic planning, that begins with a problem and ends with a solution. This occurs because decision makers are poorly equipped to evaluate the effect of their potential decisions. Decision makers in this model thus behave in a more irrational manner.

These are the three non-rational models that will be explored. The reasons that they are chosen relate to their association with public sector and government decision-making. The incrementalist and garbage can models are derived from presidential and

congressional studies on how decisions are made. The groping model is more closely associated with studies in bureaucratic decision-making. The models are also typically American driven studies on their system of government. Part of the goal of this dissertation, as noted earlier, is to determine whether these decision-making models can be applied to Westminster systems. These are the reasons why the selection of non-rational models is confined to the above three.

### *Hybrid models*

Beyond the rational and the non-rational models, there are some models of decision-making that do not closely fit either type, but they do exhibit some attributes of them (Leone and Flynn 2006). One common thread between these two models of decision-making relates to the two-stage analysis that they each undergo. The stages are separated by smaller decisions that have an effect on macro level changes. In the “mixed-scanning” model, the fundamental decision addresses the big picture, while the smaller decisions are the incremental decisions that add the specifics to the fundamental decision. In “drift,” the small decisions are arrived at rationally, but the net effect of all the rational decisions significantly alters the big picture. In this sense, there are two stages of analysis, and these will be elaborated below.

“Mixed-scanning” is the first of these hybrid models to be discussed. It was developed because the incrementalist approach was criticized for not capturing how major changes can occur that are in opposition to the status quo. Amitai Etzioni (1967) suggests that incrementalism is not suitable for major groups who find the status quo



unacceptable and seek to alter it. He suggests that there is a method of decision-making between the rational and incrementalist approaches which he calls “mixed-scanning.” Etzioni suggests that there are really only two types of decisions made by governments. One type is called the fundamental decision. These are decisions which are broad and capable of altering the status quo. Due to their broad nature, they do not contain much detail. After such decisions are made, incremental decisions help add specifics to the fundamental decisions. Subsequent studies have supported this view of the subordination of incremental decisions to fundamental ones (Starkie 1984). This means that numerous incremental decisions can never equal a fundamental decision. However, the subordinate nature of incremental decisions does not mean that incremental decisions always follow fundamental decisions because the reverse may also be true (Starkie 1984). It is a system and there are interactions between the types of decisions.

When decisions are made under mixed-scanning, the goal is to alleviate the concerns between incrementalist and planning models. The problem with incrementalism, according to Etzioni (1986), is that there is a bias toward conservatism. Incremental change cannot drastically alter the status quo, but there are periods in time when the status quo is dramatically altered, and these are through fundamental decisions. At the same time, planning models can account for significantly altering the status quo, assuming that this is the desired goal, but they have difficulty accounting for uncertainty. For this reason, this model attempts to combine the best of the planning and incrementalist approaches.

The second hybrid model that will be explored is called “drift.” Some suggest, such as James Thompson (1967), that organizations are capable of applying rational decisions to commonly defined problems. He argues that organizations have a technical rationality related to the extent to which activities are judged on both instrumental and economic bases to produce a desired outcome. However, Barbara Wake Carroll and Terrance Carroll (1980) suggest that rational decisions applied to problems that are understood and defined in organizations can lead to opposite solutions, or what is called “program drift.”

The definition of program drift “is the cumulative effect of a series of rational actions which, taken individually, correctly respond to the problem under consideration but which collectively produce either no solution, or the wrong solution, to the original problem” (Carroll 1995, 21). The term “drift” implies that individual changes to organizational structure, provided they are rational in the short term, may have the net effect of significantly altering the original and intended purpose of an organization. However, if organizations are acting irrationally, it logically follows that their actions will also be inconsistent with the original design. Thus, demonstrating that short term rational decision-making occurs by exploring whether there is consensus surrounding the defined problem and its solution, rather than irrational decision-making, where there is no such agreement, is the key to this model.

These two hybrid models are chosen for two reasons. The first relates to similar sentiments expressed during the explanation of the non-rational models chosen, which is that these models have been developed from public sector experiences. Etzioni’s original

work examined some congressional decisions made in, for example, President Kennedy's space ambitions. Etzioni's contemporaries have expanded this to other public sector avenues such as health care (Lees 1979). Similarly, drift has foreign applications. The term drift comes from Burns (1963) and the discussion in the first chapter of the two eras of American government (Jeffersonian and Madisonian). It has also been applied in Northern Ireland and Canada as well (Carroll and Carroll 1980). Therefore, we can discover from these cases whether it applies to decisions for parliamentary change as well. The second reason relates to the fact that these hybrid models provide a different interpretation of decision theories than the others. That is, because these two models contain stages of analysis that must both be understood, they provide a different perspective from the other models.

The preceding offers a sampling of the literature in organizational theory that can be applied to the parliamentary reform literature. The decision theories that are highlighted should not be taken to be an exhaustive list of all the decision theories that exist. This is simply a sample of them, and they will provide an understanding not only of the decision theory most likely at play, but also the level of rationality involved in the decisions that are found to exist.

## **Methodology**

As this dissertation is preoccupied with advancing two bodies of literature (i.e. ministerial responsibility and organizational decision-making), it is important to outline a

research methodology that will bridge these concepts. In this dissertation, the way that these two areas will be studied is through the use of content analysis.

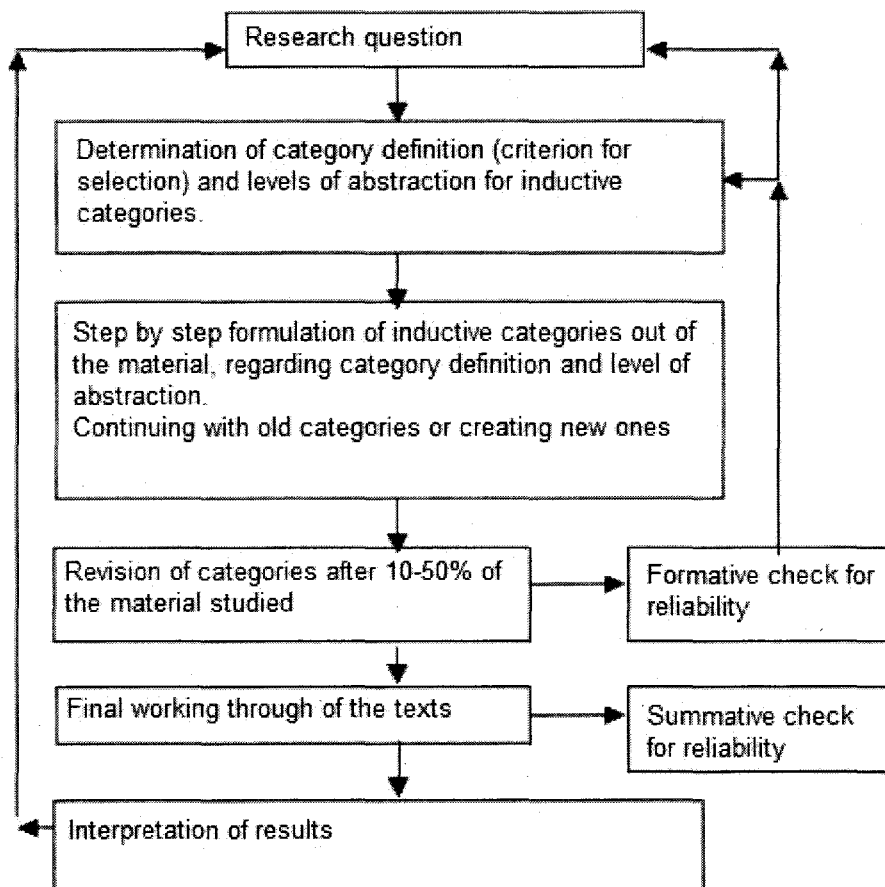
### *Establishing the need for content analysis*

Content analysis allows a researcher to quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of words and concepts and then craft inferences about messages within texts (Busch et. al. 2005). There are two approaches to content analysis: qualitative and quantitative. Gerald Adams and Jay Schvaneveldt (1985) suggest that the goal of qualitative content analysis is to understand subjective content such as attitudes or values. Quantitative content analysis is used to analyze the frequency and duration of events. Bernard Berelson (1952, 18) describes it as “the research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.” Both research methods are sophisticated and can yield different results based on the approach adopted. Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese (1996) suggest that one of the chief differences between the qualitative and quantitative varieties of content analysis is that qualitative analysis is a method of providing inferences to text within the historical context to which it is written while quantitative content analysis seeks to provide an understanding of future effects. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) essentially categorize the different conclusions that may be produced by the two different types of content analysis.

In terms of this study, a qualitative approach is adopted. One of the reasons for this is that the quantitative approach lacks the ability to provide the context that is

necessary for understanding how governments decide how ministers resign. Qualitative content analysis, on the other hand, can provide the context because it is not very interested in how many times a word is said, but rather it is interested in the meaning of the text. Furthermore, as Shoemaker and Reese suggest, qualitative content analysis seeks to provide historical meaning rather than attempting to predict future effects. Providing this historical meaning is precisely what this study seeks to establish.

Figure 2.1: Step model of deductive category application<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Philipp Mayring, "Qualitative content analysis," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 1(2) 2000: Art. 20

Nevertheless, there are limitations and criticisms to qualitative content analysis that should be acknowledged. Kimberley Neuendorf (2002) explains how content analysis should be quantitative because it is more scientific. She suggests that in the absence of such scientific rigour, qualitative content analysis becomes subject to the interpretation of the researcher. By association, this criticism can also be levelled against this dissertation because of the methodology that is utilized. According to Neuendorf (2002, 10), this scientific approach requires the need for “reliability, validity, generalisability, replicability, and hypothesis testing.” Quantitative methods provide these. While more tenuous, the qualitative approach discussed below will address some of these concerns to minimize the effects of this criticism.

One of the main benefits of qualitative content analysis is its category development and its theory guided nature (Kohlbacher 2006). In order to reduce the criticisms of classical content analysis, Philipp Mayring (2000) developed an inductive framework for using content analysis in Figure 2.1. This is the model for content analysis that this dissertation follows. The first task is to have a research question, which has already been outlined. The second task is to develop the criteria for the category development. The categories are based on the decision theories that have already been discussed in this chapter and the criteria for assigning cases to these theories will be discussed below. The criteria will be based on the characteristics of decision-making. The characteristics will then be used to determine whether old categories can continue to be used or whether new categories need to be created. After going through the Canadian

cases in chapter 3, which is between 10-50% of the material covered, the categories were revised and the reliability tests meant that revisions needed to take place. Once completed, another reliability test took place and some minor revisions also needed to be made. This then produced the framework from which the conclusions of this dissertation are made.

As mentioned above, the decision theories are going to be compared in order to formulate the categories for this study. This, in itself, is rarely done. One of the few examples of this was conducted by Howlett and Ramesh (2003). In that study, they have two criteria for comparing decision theories. These are complexity and constraints in the policy community or subsystem. They suggest that when there are few constraints, and a rather simple policy community, rational decision-making is likely to occur. This is because consensus is likely based upon rational policy analysis of available information. Consensus is achieved through persuasion and a shared view of the public interest. According to Howlett and Ramesh (2003), this is more achievable in simple systems. Conversely, when there are many constraints in the policy community, and it is rather complex, incrementalism is a likely result. This is because it is difficult to reach an agreement, and so the actors attempt to get to their goal in small steps.

*Table 2.1: Howlett and Ramesh framework*

	<b>High Complexity</b>	<b>Low Complexity</b>
<b>High Constraints</b>	Incrementalism	Satisficing search
<b>Low Constraints</b>	Optimizing adjustment	Rational model

The difficulty with adopting the Howlett and Ramesh (2003) framework is that it only includes four possible categories (See Table 2.2). These are avenues of high complexity and high constraints (incrementalism), high complexity and low constraints (what Howlett and Ramesh call the “optimizing adjustment”), low complexity and high constraints (the authors call this “satisficing search”), and low complexity and low constraints (rational model). This framework, while interesting and important, cannot be fully applied to this study. There are several reasons for this. First, there are only four possible outcomes in this matrix. Second, the complexity/constraint parameters are not used as the matrix will be constructed based on answers to four questions as will be discussed below. Finally, Howlett and Ramesh use a predictive framework while the framework that will be produced below is inductive. The study does not begin with a theory and end with a confirmation of the theory. In fact, the reverse is true. At this point, there are a several theories that have been outlined in this chapter that could explain how decisions have been made by various governments with respect to ministerial resignations. The goal of this research is to determine which one of these theories fits the observations that are made.

#### *The categories and framework for study*

The framework utilized in this dissertation to compare the decision theories must be broader, since there are six decision theories that are being explored. It is for this reason that the decision theories are going to be compared against four questions. These include the level of consensus, the knowledge of cause and effect of decision outcome,



the extent to which the decision is changeable, and the extent to which the decision is linked.

The first of these criteria is consensus. Thompson (1967) argues that a key component of a rational organization is the precise calculation and determination of problems and how to solve them. If organizations can precisely determine a problem in a rational manner, then there should be consensus with the problem definition. The same thing can be said about the solution to the problem. Consensus can be defined in many ways. In parliamentary systems where the opposition is institutionalized, it is very rare for all parliamentarians to agree on something. However, ministerial responsibility is one area where both the opposition and the governing parties may agree on the decision to resign and the operative definition of ministerial responsibility. It is assumed that the opposition will always go along with a resignation. Sometimes, however, the prime minister may not always agree with the reason for the resignation or that the cabinet minister disagrees that his or her actions should lead to a resignation. In the latter case, the underlying argument is that the minister was “forced” to resign. Therefore, consensus is defined as the agreement between the prime minister and the departing minister on whether a resignation was warranted. Statements that the prime minister makes when shuffling his cabinet can be revealing here as are responses to resignations by the departing minister in parliament and to the media.

As discussed in chapter 1 and reemphasized here, this is a dissertation on government decision-making. We are only concerned with the government’s public statements relating to the resignation and the response of the departing government

member. If there is a lack of consensus either on the part of the government, which does not wish to see a minister leave, or on the part of the minister who feels he or she was unjustly removed from the front bench, the expectation is that such disagreement will be reported in the media. Unless there are reports of disagreement, consensus will be deemed to exist between the government (mainly the prime minister) and the departing minister.

This dissertation will treat consensus as being present when the government and the departing minister agree that a resignation is warranted. Consensus will also be deemed to exist when there is no information available regarding the level of consensus. The reason for this is that conflict will arouse media attention, and the absence of conflict will produce little media attention. This view is consistent with the literature on the negativity bias in news coverage (Farnsworth and Lichter 2006; Jamieson 1992). Such a bias means that stories about political actors will tend to focus on perceived problems rather than good news. Thus, if there is a conflict between the prime minister and the departing minister, the media is likely to report on that story rather than in cases where all parties agree on the resignation. This is why consensus will be deemed to exist unless otherwise indicated in the news report.

The second criterion derived from Thompson (1967) is knowledge of the cause-effect relationship of a decision that is normally acquired through the organization's technical rationality. Ideally, organizations strive to understand the cause and effect of each decision. However, David Braybrooke and Charles Lindblom (1963) argue that there are certain types of decisions that are made where there is low understanding of the

cause and effect of decisions. Because there is the potential for discrepancy between cause and effect among the different decision-making theories, it becomes a suitable category to analyze.

To determine knowledge of cause and effect, the first question that must be asked is whether the government speculated on it. If the government does not speculate at all, then there is no evident knowledge of a cause and effect relationship. If they do speculate on cause and effect, the second question is whether they actually got it right. We can determine this based on what is said. Do they suggest, for example, that there is some type of “return” to ministerial responsibility? We infer from this that a return means that they are conforming to the traditional reasons for ministerial resignations outlined in Chapter 1. However, if this “return” is something different from how ministerial responsibility was conceived, then the speculation on cause and effect is wrong and they have no knowledge of it. This second step is equally important when exploring the cause and effect relationship because it seeks to assert the actual ability to know what the doctrine really means.

In terms of the categorization of cause and effect, there are five relationships that are of interest here. The first of these is the extent to which there is a policy dispute or a threat to cabinet solidarity. As has been discussed elsewhere, because cabinets have a collective responsibility, ministers will need to resign if they have significant disagreement with the actions of the government. The second category consists of those cases that exhibit poor administration of a government department or political office. Such cases involve the inability of a cabinet minister to alter the poor performance of a

government department or one that could not control the behaviour of his or her political staff. The third category is a correct appeal to parliamentary tradition. Examples of such appeals to parliamentary decisions would include things like stepping down from office when the minister is faced with a judicial proceeding, which includes both civil law suits and criminal proceedings.

The fourth category consists of cases where a government asks its senior ministers to step down in advance of an election, particularly when those ministers do not plan to seek re-election. The goal of this type of resignation is to make room for new or younger members to enter the Cabinet and to put a stronger image of the government forward in advance of an election. The final category relates to instances when a minister can no longer discharge his public duties. Such resignations typically involve major health concerns. These are the five types of cause and effect relationships that will be used in this study because they are more or less consistently applied. Consistency in this sense means that governments are unlikely going to avoid a resignation when such types of cases are present.

Given that there are consistent instances when ministers resign, there are also inconsistent reasons given for ministerial resignations. The most notable of these are conflict of interest reasons. Governments have not agreed on when ministers should resign because of a conflict of interest. The litmus test appears to be public opinion. If the public and media are not letting a story drop, then it is easier to cut off the minister in order for the government to save face. In both Canada and the United Kingdom, governments employ an ethics watchdog to guard against conflict of interest. However,

the degree of independence of these ethics watchdogs is questionable. This will be examined in further detail in Chapter 5.

Braybrooke and Lindblom (1963) also give some insight into the third category. Along with their position that decisions are either made with high or low understanding, they suggest that there are either large scale changes or incremental changes. Large scale changes are ones that are difficult, sometimes impossible, to undo. Incremental change, on the other hand, is much easier to modify over time. This study cannot borrow the large scale vs. incremental change distinction provided in Braybrooke and Lindblom (1963) because the types of large scale changes they envision, for example revolutionary changes as a result of war, do not apply to parliamentary reform. Instead, the focus will be on the extent to which changes to the decisions that led to ministerial responsibility can be undone, as incrementalists would argue. Where it can be undone, a minister will be invited back to cabinet because his or her original resignation was not deemed so significant that it would permanently damage the minister's career in government.

The final criterion that will be applied addresses the issue of whether the decisions being made are linked to each other. This category comes directly from the literature reviewed in the previous sections. Comments were made above that related to the connectedness of decisions. Some of the decision-making models suggest that past decisions link with future ones. Others suggest that future decisions have no relation to past decisions. Because of the distinction, it becomes an important criterion to use in differentiating the decision-making models. Thus, if the decision is linked and judged in

a manner similar to other decisions, we can say that there is precedent for the behaviour and everyone is acting accordingly.

A good way to think about this linkage is through understanding path dependence, which is typically associated with the literature of historical institutionalism. According to Peter Hall (1996), historical institutionalists suggest that path dependence is the extent to which forces are mediated by the contextual features of a given situation that are often inherited from the past. This means that the context of the decision environment is likely to repeat itself rather than suggesting that the decision made in the past will be the decision made in the future. Such a distinction is necessary for a discussion of ministerial responsibility. Because of the varying reasons for which ministers resign, it cannot be expected that a government that accepts a ministerial resignation today should accept one at a later date. It depends on the context and the framework for which the decision is being made. Questions like the degree to which a government is applying a standard for ministerial responsibility are imperative to ask. Therefore, to what extent are precedents being examined when calls for resignation get louder? This is the main question with regard to how we can determine the linkage of the policy.

With these categories, it is now possible to construct a matrix of decision-making. Table 2.2 outlines what this matrix looks like. Rational decisions find consensus in defining problems and finding solutions to those problems. The cause and effect relationship is known, since the rational decision-maker will have a clear understanding of what the rules imply (Weber 1947). He or she will also have a keen awareness of the organization's resources and the calculation of the costs and benefits of each alternative

choice (Munford and Pettigrew 1975). In terms of the permanence of the decision, it may be the case where a temporary resignation is required simply because the rules dictate that such a case requires one. However, it is also true that a minister who resigns is incapable or too weak to serve on the government benches and thus will not be invited back. Thus, a rational decision could be temporary or permanent. Finally, the decisions can be linked to other decisions or not. The strategic planners will see a sequential link between decisions in an attempt to apply their definition of ministerial responsibility. However, a decision may also be rational in the absence of the linkage. It could be that a government has not encountered such a decision before, but that the decision is rooted in the logic and approach of previous government resignations. These decisions will have no sequential link, but they are still rational because different people would apply the same decision in a given situation.

Table 2.2: *Decision-making Matrix*

	Is there consensus?	Is cause/effect known?	Can decision be changed?	Are decisions linked?
<b><i>Rational Model</i></b>				
Rational/planning	Yes	Yes	Yes-No	Yes-No
<b><i>Hybrid Models</i></b>				
Mixed Scanning	Yes	No	Yes	No
Drift	Yes	No	No	Yes
<b><i>Non-Rational Models</i></b>				
Incremental	No	No	Yes	Yes
Groping	No	Yes	Yes	No
Garbage Can	No	No	Yes-No	No

Mixed-scanning is applied differently in this matrix. This is because it accounts for two different types of decisions. However, to simplify it, the matrix only focuses on

fundamental decisions. The reason for this is that a fundamental decision is the only thing distinguishing mixed-scanning from incrementalism. Etzioni (1967) suggests that fundamental decisions occur when there is a general appetite for a major reform. This would mean that mixed-scanning works on consensus. The cause and effect of the decision, on the other hand, is not known. The reason for this lies in Etzioni's assertion that fundamental decisions are broad and vague, while incremental decisions add the specifications later. Thus, when the fundamental decision is being made, the cause and effect of that decision is not immediately understood. Furthermore, the nature of fundamental decisions relates to the ability to embark on rapid and significant change, which suggests that a fundamental decision can easily change when another fundamental decision replaces it. This also suggests that fundamental decisions are not linked because they seek to change the present structure.

Drift is interesting because decision makers think differently than their actions would predict. There is typically consensus with drift because problems and solutions are matched (Carroll 1995). The cause and effect, relationship on the other hand, is not known despite what the decision maker thinks. That is, while the decision-maker may rationally believe he or she knows the effect of a specific decision, that speculation is not within the traditional realm for ministerial resignations. Furthermore, decisions cannot be changed because the decision-maker's collective decisions have produced something that was unintended when it is too late to reverse the individual changes. The decision maker is then required to turn to one of the other decision-making methods to get back on track. Finally, decisions are linked even though decision makers think they are discrete.



Because managers think that the decision is discrete, they do not believe it affects the system as a whole, which is why the organization is “drifting.”

Incremental changes are said to be decisions in which there is no consensus because they usually occur when there is significant opposition to a major objective. For this reason, Weick (1984) suggests that a decision maker breaks down the major goal into smaller, more manageable decisions. Cause and effect are generally unknown to the decision maker because incremental politics suggests that there is a low understanding of the decisions that need to be made (Braybrooke and Lindblom 1963). Also, because of the incremental nature of change, decisions can change when the desire is present, which then sets off a sequence of rapid incremental decisions in another direction. Furthermore, the presence of inertia means that future policy decisions build on past ones. For this reason, they are said to be linked.

The “groping” literature does not discuss consensus in decision-making. However, it focuses on the knowledge and expertise of the decision maker. Because it is assumed that a different manager, with different knowledge and experience, might apply a different set of decisions, consensus is nearly impossible. Cause and effect are said to be known because the decision maker uses his or her own knowledge to try solving the individual problem (Behn 1988). However, because the decisions are not linked, it appears that the decision maker is lost. This is a point of distinction. The “groping” manager is not lost because he or she cannot understand cause and effect, but he or she is lost because there is no recognizable sequence for desired change. Furthermore, decisions can be undone due to the experimental nature of “groping along.” Changing a

decision when it is not the appropriate solution is part of the uniqueness of “groping along.”

The garbage can model is part of an irrational method of decision-making. There is no consensus because the problems are not agreed upon nor are the solutions to these problems (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972). The cause and effect of each decision is not known and the decisions are not linked to previous decisions. Within the above category of undoing a decision, it is possible that a decision can be undone, but it is also possible that some decisions can remain unchanged. If a decision is made early in the mandate cycle, then it becomes possible for the irrational decisions to become embedded in the institutional fabric, which suggests that they cannot be undone. However, this might not always be the case, as some irrational decisions are quickly disposed of when new decision makers are installed or present decision makers apply a new set of rules out of convenience. The fact that decisions can be made out of convenience also suggests that the decisions are not linked to each other.

### *Replicability and reliability*

The above represents the explanations of the categories that are going to be used in this study and how they are differentiated from each other. Assigning the decisions to the categories is the next step. There are two major stages to ensure that the coding is both reliable and replicable. The first is the establishment of coding sheet that organizes how consensus, cause and effect, changeability, and linkage to previous decisions are ascertained. If anybody wishes to repeat the study, they will know how the data was

interpreted based on this code sheet. Appendix A outlines how each case will be assessed and the rules for categorizing each case according to the decision-making matrix. In addition to this, one of the greatest strengths of content analysis rests in the fact that the media reports that will be used in this study are not going to change. As discussed in chapter 1, this study will rely primarily on media reports in Canada and the UK. The dissertation will be particularly interested in the letters of resignation from both the departing cabinet minister and the acceptance of the resignation on the part of the prime minister. Most of the cases of ministerial resignations in this dissertation rely on these letters to determine the assignment of the decision-theory category.

Reliability, on the other hand, involves some outside help to ensure that the definitions that have been established are reasonably interpreted by other people. That is, the way the information has been coded needs to be verified by third-parties. This verification has occurred by the author consulting with two people.<sup>3</sup> The author of this study analyzed the data, and it was verified by this group. Once this group considered the coded data, there were some necessary revisions to the categories made, which is consistent with the methodology in Figure 2.1. The first of two of the major revisions involved the adjustment of the matrix to account for some of the uncategorized cases that, on the basis of the information gathered, fit rational decision-making but the matrix was not accounting for it. The other major adjustment was to provide clearer rules related to

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<sup>3</sup> Of the two people in the reliability test group, one is a professor of political science who is knowledgeable about the concepts involved in this dissertation. The other is a PhD candidate in the Department of Psychology at the University of Guelph. She is not immediately involved in this study, and was asked to ensure that the coded information is not a stretch from how a typical person would understand it. In addition to this, members of this author's dissertation committee have also provided comments on the cases to ensure the categorization of cases is as accurate as possible.

how the relationships would be defined, particularly to the condition of cause-effect relationships. Because of the suggestions made by the reliability test group, the findings in this dissertation are stronger and more reliable.

### *Interpretation of results*

The final step in Figure 2.1 is the interpretation of results. Quantitative content analysis and some qualitative studies are typically associated with the frequency in which words or phrases occur that give strength to one definition or another. However, in this qualitative approach, frequencies are not an appropriate indicator of the questions being examined. Instead, this dissertation is merely interested in whether consensus, cause and effect, changeability, and linkage are present within each decision. If phrases within the speeches indicate a presence of them, then we can begin to address the categories. Therefore, quantitative methods that are sometimes used in content analysis will not be applied in this study.

Beyond the qualitative nature of this study, it is also necessary to place the results within the wider literature of parliament and public administration. To this end, the hypotheses discussed earlier in the chapter will allow for some further conclusions to be drawn from the comparison between Canada and the UK. The results will also explore some of the institutional similarities and differences in both Canada and Britain and explore what role they may have played in ministerial resignations. The variables of interest will be legislative size, committee structures, and officers of parliament. Also,

minority government and change of government resignations will also be examined. More elaboration of these differences will occur in Chapter 5.

### *Advantages and disadvantages to content analysis*

In terms of providing justification to content analysis, there are several advantages to this type of data analysis. Looking directly at the text allows researchers to analyze historical decisions over time without distortion. Getting these sorts of historical accounts are difficult through interviews because it relies on the ability of those interviewed to recall what happened in the past. The texts do not change over time so this is not a concern. It is also advantageous because the data are readily available.

However, Busch et. al. (2005) note that there are a number of disadvantages as well. First, content analysis can be very time consuming. While all research is time consuming, this disadvantage is minimised by the availability of the material at most university libraries and a list of resignations cases to be examined are readily available through government publications and prior research. This type of research is also subject to error if care is not taken to carefully draw the relationship of words to their meanings. The only way to minimize this problem is by carefully fitting words to their appropriate categories. The decision matrix will go a long way in preventing such an error. Also, human error which might be associated with content analysis is minimized through reliability testing. Although steps can be made to minimize human error, it still can happen if the coding is incorrect. Third, Busch et. al. (2005) suggest that those who

conduct content analysis sometimes forget to apply a theoretical base. This study avoids this problem because theories are a major component of the research design.

Another major criticism levelled against content analysis is that it too often consists of word counts alone. However, as already outlined in the methodology, this will not be the case with this study. It is also said that content analysis disregards the context that led to the production of a text and the aftermath. This study intends to avoid this problem by examining a mix of information from media sources and government records where applicable. These are some of the limitations to content analysis that are found in the literature, and how these problems are addressed in this study.

### *Triangulation*

This study has taken steps to ensure that the content analysis is done properly and eliminates most of the problems associated with it. Nevertheless, it is also important to discuss triangulation to make sure the study's findings are on a strong footing. Triangulation simply means to verify results and strengthen the argument. As Flick (1998) suggests, it is not a strategy of validation, but an alternative to it. Although we cannot fully capture the truth, triangulation is a way of getting us closer to objective reality (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

There are a number of ways in which this study can achieve triangulation. Norman Denzin (1978) suggests that there are four types of triangulation, and this dissertation incorporates three of them. The first is data triangulation, which is the use of a variety of data sources in a study. In this dissertation, the data comes predominantly

from media sources. Major Canadian and British newspaper databases were used to verify the context of events. In Canada, most of the media sources came from examining both the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* databases. In the UK, *The Times* database was available for all the cases and the Factiva database was available from cases from 1980 to the end of the study period. The Factiva database consists of a collection of newspapers from around the world, and *The Independent*, *The Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, and *The Guardian*, are among the British newspapers examined. In addition to these media reports, the official transcripts of speeches in parliament and Question Period were also consulted when more information was required or when media sources pointed to interesting statements.

The second is investigator triangulation, which is the use of several different researchers to come up with similar solutions. Although the author of this dissertation exclusively collected all the data, part of the validation of the research methodology provided the opportunity for other researchers to come up with the same conclusions. Where different conclusions arose, the cases were revisited to explore whether the assessment needed to be revised. This effectively satisfies triangulation by investigator. Third is theoretical triangulation, which is the use of various theoretical perspectives that arrive at similar conclusions. Since this dissertation utilizes a number of theories to test the hypotheses, it allows for a variety of different theoretical outcomes to be possible. All

of these forms of triangulation have been incorporated into this dissertation to ensure that the findings have appropriate methodological support.<sup>4</sup>

### *Time Frame*

The final consideration is the time frame. The time frame needs to be long enough to make the results meaningful, and short enough to accomplish the task within a reasonable time. For this reason, this dissertation will focus on reforms that have occurred from the Trudeau government in 1968 to the end of 2007 in Canada and from the Wilson government in 1970 to the end of 2007 in the UK. This time frame is chosen because there is ample change of government between political parties and there were also minority governments in both countries that could be explored.

### **Research Question and Hypotheses**

The selection of the literature to this point will form the backbone of this dissertation's hypotheses. These hypotheses correspond to the primary research question of this dissertation: How do governments make decisions concerning ministerial resignations? Table 2.1 summarizes the hypotheses of this dissertation.

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<sup>4</sup> The fourth method of triangulation according to Denzin is methodological. This pertains to the use of different techniques to collect data. Content analysis is the only method used and reported in this dissertation. However, informal discussions with some academics and politicians did take place during the course of this research. The reason why interviews were not formally utilized in this dissertation is that they generally involved opinion, which this dissertation limits because we are examining the official government response to a particular resignation case.



*Table 2.3: Summary of Hypotheses*

<i>Hypothesis 1:</i>	The level of rationality in decision-making regarding ministerial resignations is the same in the United Kingdom and Canada.
<i>Hypothesis 2:</i>	Non-rational decisions regarding ministerial resignations have led to a deviation from the original doctrine of ministerial responsibility over time in both countries.
<i>Hypothesis 3:</i>	The most prevalent decision theory in Canada will be different from the most prevalent decision theory in the United Kingdom.

The first hypothesis about the level of rationality in decision-making is drawn from the conclusion of the previous chapter that Canada and the UK have many similarities. To review the argument, it was said in Chapter 1 that commentators in both countries have, at varying points in time, held that the principle of ministerial responsibility is either alive and well or dead. That is, within each country, one is likely to find support for either position. Thus, this study will test whether ministerial responsibility as a foundational principle has faced an equivalent attack in both countries with the view that this will lead to a similar level of rationality (or non-rationality as the case may be).

In terms of the second hypothesis, it is expected that non-rational decisions will be the most prominent of the different kinds of decision theories. The reason for this relates again to the literature in Chapter 1. If ministerial responsibility is under attack, and if there are competing notions of responsibility and accountability at work, then we expect to see that the decisions for ministerial resignations would be anything but rational. Because rational decisions will lead to a consistent and coherent application of the foundational principle, one that is in keeping with the traditional understanding of when

ministers ought to resign, then those resignations will mean that ministerial responsibility is not under attack. We also expect that both countries will experience similar trends.

The final hypothesis that will be tested relates to the specific decision theory that is expected to be most prominent. It is not possible at this stage to predict which of the decision theories is most prevalent in either of the two countries. From the perspective of the literature review, there is no basis for suggesting that one model of decision-making is actually better at explaining ministerial resignations from the 1970s to the end of 2007. The fact is that proponents of each theory believe that they have correctly understood decision-making even though they contradict proponents of other theories who also believe they have unlocked the secret to how decision-making actually works. Thus, predicting the theory that applies to a given decision over ministerial resignations is difficult and is reduced to the framework that was discussed earlier in this chapter.

The only hint in the literature that may lead one to believe that the decision-making models for ministerial resignations are different in Canada and the UK is the rationale provided by Sutherland (1991). One of her conclusions posits that the reasons for ministerial resignations differ in both countries. Because the reasons for ministerial resignations are different, and that the decision-making models can differ based on whether these reasons align with the strict set of cause and effect relationships that will be outlined below, then this provides a motive to believe that the most prevalent decision theory will be different in both countries.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter set out to establish the parameters of this study. First, it outlined the foundation for the study of institutional change. Establishing this foundation is important because institutional change informs how parliamentary change is viewed in this study. Secondly, this chapter establishes the theoretical orientation of this dissertation. Specifically, decision theories are used to help understand the style of decision-making of successive governments. Few studies have examined the style adopted by government decision makers, and this is one of this dissertation's major contributions. Thirdly, this chapter discussed the methodology. Content analysis is going to be used, and a framework for doing so was presented. The chapter proceeded to discuss how all the conditions of that framework are addressed in this study. The fourth and perhaps the most innovative part of this chapter was the development of the matrix. This matrix will help with the categorization of decisions. It is also interesting because of the comparison of decision theories when they have traditionally been treated in a stand alone fashion. Fifth, other methodological considerations were discussed in order to address some of the potential criticisms of this study. Finally, this chapter outlined the hypotheses to be tested. These closely reflect the literature reviewed in this dissertation thus far.

With this chapter, the foundation for the study is now established. The next two chapters will discuss the decisions that lead to ministerial resignations. As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, the study of institutional change requires an understanding of the original conception of ministerial responsibility and an evaluation of how it exists

today. We discussed some of the original ideas associated with ministerial responsibility in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 will examine the Canadian cases of cabinet resignations. Chapter 4 will explore the British cases, and Chapter 5 will offer comparative analysis.

### **CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING HOW AND WHY MINISTERS RESIGN IN CANADA**

How do governments decide when ministers must resign? This is the research question that has brought us to this juncture. The story that unfolds in the next two chapters is that parliament has indeed changed somewhat with respect to how it decides when ministers should resign, but that the foundational principle still has life in both countries. There are certainly challenges to the doctrine and governments are sometimes too willing to dispose of a minister for political convenience rather than adhering to the administrative and policy rationale for ministerial resignations. Nevertheless, the practice of ministerial rotation, which is the reason why weaker ministers leave government, is still quite prominent in the parliaments of Canada and the UK. This chapter discusses the Canadian resignations, how they were assigned to each category, and concludes with a discussion on the implications of the results.

Table 3.1 shows the final tabulation of cases in the content analysis. In total, the governments of five prime ministers were examined. The first is the Liberal administration of Pierre Trudeau who was prime minister from 1968 to 1984 interrupted only for a brief time by the minority Conservative government of Joe Clark in 1979. Trudeau had a majority government from 1968 until 1972, a minority government from 1972 until 1974, a majority government from 1974 until 1979, and a majority government from 1980 until 1984. The second administration examined is Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government. Mulroney was in office from 1984 to 1993 with

two majority governments. The first of these was the largest majority government in the study period.

*Table 3.1: Ministerial resignations and decision-making in Canada*

	<b>Trudeau (Liberal)</b>	<b>Mulroney (Conservative)</b>	<b>Chrétien (Liberal)</b>	<b>Martin (Liberal)</b>	<b>Harper (Cons)</b>
<b>Rational/planning</b>	Paul Hellyer George McLlraith Eric Kierans Edgar Benson Gerard Pelletier Jean Marchand James Richardson Mitchell Sharp Ronald Basford Roger Simmons Francis Fox	Robert Coates John Fraser Marcel Masse (I) S. Blais-Grenier Andre Bissonette Roch LaSalle David Crombie Bernard Valcourt Alan Redway W. Wineguard Gerald Merrithew Robert De Cortet Jake Epp Marcel Masse (II) Benoit Bouchard	Andre Ouellet Roy MacLaren Shelia Finestone Sergio Marchi	J. Comuzzi	M. Chong
<b>Mixed Scanning</b>	Andre Ouellet (I)		Brian Tobin (I)		
<b>Drift</b>	Leo Cadieux John Turner Donald MacDonald John Munro	Sinclair Stevens Michel Coté Jean Charest	Brian Tobin (II) Paul Martin		
<b>Incremental</b>					
<b>Groping</b>				Judy Sgro	
<b>Garbage Can</b>			Sheila Copps Andy Scott Art Eggleton L. Macaulay		
<b>Outliers</b>	John Greene	Lucien Bouchard	David Collenette		

The third government studied is that of Jean Chrétien who was prime minister from 1993 until 2003 with majority governments and a fractured opposition. In 2003, the merger of the Progressive Conservatives and the Canadian Alliance produced a “united right” party that contested the 2004 general election. In that election, Chrétien’s successor, Paul

Martin, was successful in forming another Liberal government, but this time it was in a minority position in the House of Commons. Finally, in 2006, the Conservative Party formed “Canada’s New Government” with a minority parliament, making Stephen Harper the first Conservative prime minister since Kim Campbell in 1993. The remaining prime ministers in this time period did not have any resignations.

The content analysis shows that almost two thirds of the cases (62.7%) conform to the rational/planning model, while the remainder do not. The implications of this would lend some credibility to the perspective that the doctrine of ministerial responsibility is still alive in both countries, although it has been somewhat distorted in Canada. It is interesting to note that the next two largest categories are drift and the garbage can model. The presence of drift means that a series of short term rational decisions have changed the meaning of ministerial responsibility when the decisions are analyzed collectively. In the case of the garbage can model, the most irrational decisions have led to a more significant departure of ministerial resignations. These will be explained in further detail below.

### **Rational/Planning Model**

The first model to be discussed is the rational/planning model. In order for a case to be categorized here, one would have to determine firstly that there was consensus on the resignation. As noted previously, consensus among the parties is assumed unless there is some indication through media or government reports that this was not the case. Secondly, that there must be justified speculation on a cause and effect relationship. Finally, the decision can be temporary or permanent, and linked to other cases or not.

The cases presented below that correspond to the rational model are going to be presented in a chronological fashion. This should give some indication of how each Prime Minister properly conceived ministerial responsibility.

### *Rational/planning and the Trudeau Governments*

The first resignation of the Trudeau government was tendered by Paul Hellyer who resigned as Minister of Transportation in April 1969. It was discovered that Hellyer's reason for leaving the Cabinet was related to a policy disagreement in the areas of housing, inflation, and pollution. He essentially believed that the federal government could and should use more of its powers to fix some of the prevailing conditions in these areas. It was noted in the 25 April 1969 edition of the *Globe and Mail* that Hellyer's main qualm with the government was related to its approach to federalism.

Consensus was determined here by reviewing the tenets of the exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and Hellyer. On the front page of the 25 April 1969 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, it was reported that Trudeau accepted his resignation but rejected the arguments made by Hellyer with regard to his approach to federalism. Even though the argument was rejected, Trudeau accepted the resignation because he understood that deviations from government policy required such a move. In terms of cause and effect relationship, Hellyer reaffirmed the main reason was a policy disagreement in relation to federalism. In Hellyer's letter of resignation that was published in the same edition of the *Globe and Mail*, he wrote that Trudeau's approach to federalism "is more a theory of 10 essentially autonomous provinces held together by the string of a fairly weak federal



government, responsible largely for defence, tariffs, and customs....” This is an interesting quote because this is not the way we typically view Trudeau’s approach to federalism. Nevertheless, it does establish that there is a clear reason for a resignation decision with Hellyer. Neither the statements that Trudeau made nor the media review of the case turned up any evidence that Trudeau desired to have Hellyer return to cabinet. Finally, as we will see, there is a clear establishment of linkage from this case to several others in which policy differences exist with the government of the day.

The case of George McIlraith was also an interesting one. McIlraith resigned for personal and health related reasons that involved a car accident. The accident resulted in the need for two cataract eye surgeries that left him with temporary vision impairment, and it was difficult for him to read. His son, who was also in the accident, was still in hospital with more serious injuries. The exchange of letters between the prime minister and McIlraith is interesting because both McIlraith and Trudeau discussed the need to establish the practice of ministers and members of the House to move from private to government benches and from government to private benches without there being a pressing need to be removed from Cabinet. This is noted in McIlraith’s letter in which he stated that “I believe our system of government could be strengthened by a more general use of the practice of moving members of the House in to and out of Government from time to time as particular circumstances of a personal nature or indeed of a public nature arise.”

In Trudeau’s reply, he stated that “If a senior minister such as you, can with no divergence of view or policy and no personal differences or strains, move from the

ministry to the private benches, with continued public service in a new role, we may be able to establish a flexibility that can be greatly in the public interest.” Here is a suggestion by both men that there should be more movement between the benches as a regular practice which does not exist in Canada. Thus, in McLraith’s case, we can see that there was consensus on the resignation in the exchange of letters and we also see an appropriate call for cause and effect relationship due to the fact that McLraith is unable to discharge his duties because of a temporary ailment.

The case of Eric Kierans is also interesting because it seeks to understand how the prime minister tries to use his power to persuade a minister to remain in cabinet in order to work out differences. Kierans resigned from the Trudeau cabinet because he wanted to speak out freely against economic policies that prevented Canada from having full employment. When Kierans was about to make a major speech on the topic, he realized that he could no longer stay in Cabinet and continue with the speech. Clearly his ideas were more important to him than his cabinet position. This case most closely resembles that of Paul Hellyer, who also resigned because he was opposed to the direction of the government. Since Kierans disagreed with the government’s economic policies, this was an appropriate speculation of cause and effect because it affected cabinet solidarity. Finally, even though Trudeau was not in agreement with Kierans’ position, he finally accepted the resignation because it reflected negatively on cabinet solidarity.

The story behind Edgar Benson is also interesting. Trudeau’s typical practice in dealings with ministers who do not wish to seek re-election was to ask them in advance to step aside so that he could shuffle his cabinet in advance of an election. But Benson did

not inform Trudeau about his pending departure early enough for the cabinet shuffle. Trudeau's preference was to shuffle cabinet rather than ask for resignations of ministers who no longer wanted to serve in public life. Nevertheless, there was consensus on the matter because Trudeau wanted a team of ministers he could carry into the next election. The cause and effect relationship was to make way for new members. The decision is permanent and there is no link because Benson did not inform the prime minister before hand.

In the case of Gerard Pelletier, we have a good example of how a government strategically plans for resignation in order to bring new people into the Cabinet. Essentially, in order for Trudeau to have a communication guru in charge of the Ministry of Communications, he needed to find a way to move Pelletier and give him a significant diplomatic post in exchange for his department and seat. Consensus was confirmed in an article published on the front page of the 29 August 1975 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, which stated: "There have been recurring rumours for months that Pelletier, 56, would become the next ambassador to France." This seems to suggest that both Trudeau and Pelletier desired the move. In the same story, it was confirmed that Pelletier's resignation was part of a larger scheme to bring in a communications expert to the Ministry of Communications. The person who was immediately sworn in as the successor was Pierre Juneau, who did not have a seat in the House of Commons. Juneau was Chair of the CRTC and he announced at his swearing in ceremony that he would be running in the by-election which was called to fill Pelletier's vacated seat. Naturally, once this decision

was made, Trudeau did not intend to have Pelletier return to cabinet, and there was no speculation that would have led one to believe that this might have occurred.

A case related to the Hellyer resignation was that of Jean Marchand, who resigned as Minister of the Environment at the end of June 1976 because of his opposition to how the government was handling the air traffic controllers strike. At issue was an agreement made by the Transportation Minister with English-speaking airline pilots. On the front page of the 1 July 1976 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, it was reported that Marchand believed that the agreement had serious shortcomings and that he could not in good conscience stay in cabinet because of them. The question of the conflict between English and French was quite intense. It sometimes erupted in Cabinet, especially in this case when Marchand stipulated that part of the problem with the agreement was that it was made by an English-speaking minister. These sorts of disputes have a tendency to cause national unity crises.

In terms of consensus, there is definite evidence that it exists in this case. In the 2 July 1976 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A1), Trudeau stated in a media scrum that he had accepted the resignation “in the interest of the country.” Also in the same article, Trudeau writes: “I accept your resignation with the greatest respect and the deepest regret, but without bitterness. The soundness of our system of government demands that I do so, as does the Principle of Cabinet solidarity.” Naturally, the latter part of this quote also establishes the knowledge of cause and effect relationships. In Marchand’s resignation letter, he tends to agree with Trudeau’s view as he writes: “It would be impossible for me under the circumstances to abide by the rules of ministerial solidarity.” During this

dispute, nobody speculated on whether Marchand would return to the Cabinet, and so the decision seemed to have long term implications. Finally, as already mentioned, it is linked to the Hellyer case above.

The case of Mitchell Sharp involved the desire of the minister to resign in order to make room for newer members. It was reported on the front page of the 13 September 1976 edition of the *Globe and Mail* that Sharp had been thinking of resigning for months and he wanted to finally resign to make room for newer members, which appeared to fall in line with Trudeau's desire to plan cabinet rotation. In terms of the cause and effect relationship, Sharp stated the following in the abovementioned article (A1): "I believe that I should make way for someone who intends to contest the next election." This clearly shows an intention of planning in the cabinet-making process. The considerable length of time that he took to think about this change may lead some to believe he did not want to return to the cabinet; moreover, there was no specific mention of a desire to reappoint.

The next Trudeau resignation that falls under the rational category is that of James Richardson, who resigned from Cabinet due to his opposition to patriating the constitution, which would lock in French language and cultural guarantees. Thus, his resignation was predominantly related to a policy dispute. For his part, Prime Minister Trudeau accepted the resignation, even though he described the disagreement as "premature," as was reported in the 14 October 1976 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A1). Nevertheless, there was consensus on the issue and there was knowledge of the cause and effect, as it was related to a policy dispute that threatened cabinet solidarity.

The next case of rational decision-making in the Trudeau government is that of Francis Fox. This former solicitor-general resigned because of an affair he was having with a married woman who had become pregnant. The story, printed on the front page of the 31 January 1978 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, stated that she wanted to have an abortion. The abortion required the signature of the husband to protect the doctor against a lawsuit, but she asked if the minister could forge it for her. The 1 February 1978 edition of the *Toronto Star* (A1) stated that Fox resigned immediately following the request from Trudeau. This demonstrates that consensus is present. In terms of a cause and effect relationship, the reason why he had to resign was because he was alleged to have committed a crime and he was the solicitor-general. In terms of the temporal nature of the decision, it appears as though Trudeau kept the door open for a possible return to cabinet. On the front page of the 31 January 1978 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, Trudeau said that he hoped “that people will understand that this is a human failing and that he will not be lost to public life forever.” This indicated that the problem was not that serious in nature as to prohibit an eventual return to the Cabinet. Finally, there was no link to this case.

The next case is that of Ronald Basford, who officially resigned from cabinet for personal reasons related to his family. As reported in the 3 August 1978 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, Basford suggested that he did not wish to seek re-election and so he desired to resign from cabinet, but Trudeau wanted him to stay on until the summer so that his work for cabinet was complete and a cabinet shuffle could occur. There was consensus on the issue and the timing of the departure was planned, similar to the Sharp

case, which reveals some linkage between the two. The decision was also deemed to be permanent because Basford wanted to quit politics altogether. Finally, the cause and effect relationship was related to Trudeau and Basford's desire to bring new people into the cabinet. Therefore, this fits the rational/planning model and was the last such case for Trudeau.

The final Trudeau case is intriguing. This was the case of Roger Simmons who was Minister of State for Mines. Simmons officially decided to resign from cabinet for personal reasons according to his letter of resignation that came just ten days after his appointment to cabinet. The initial speculation that was reported in the 23 August 1983 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A8) was that Simmons had disagreements with the government's approach to Atlantic fisheries. The day after the resignation became news however, widespread rumours about his dismissal began to swirl, which suggested that income tax problems were the real reason. When the House resumed sitting, it was learned that the ex-minister was under investigation by the Department of National Revenue for income tax problems. Thus, what became apparent was that the resignation happened because an investigation was launched and charges were pending against Simmons. This was the reason for his departure, according to Trudeau.

Despite the fact that Simmons decided against raising the nature of the "personal reason" that led to his departure in his resignation letter, the government made sure that the reason for his resignation was known, and that it fell under normal circumstances for ministerial resignations. There was consensus in the fact that Simmons did not provide an explanation as to why he should not have been removed from the Cabinet. The

decision seems to have been permanent and it also does not appear to have linkages to any prior Trudeau government resignation.

### *Rational/planning in the Mulroney Government*

Brian Mulroney's government applied a much more rational approach to ministerial resignations. The first case of a rational/planning model is the case of Robert Coates who resigned as Minister of Defence. Coates was being chastised in Canada for visiting a West German strip club, which was also a "hang-out" for local prostitutes. The biggest allegation levelled against him was that Coates compromised national security. The front page article in the 13 February 1985 edition of the *Globe and Mail* provides the piece of evidence that sufficiently denotes consensus. It was reported that Mulroney's press secretary, William Fox, suggested that both the Prime Minister requested and Coates offered the resignation: The government was initially silent about the cause and effect relationship. Visiting a strip club has some moral and ethical dimensions, but it does not necessarily warrant a resignation itself. However, in an article published in the 9 April 1985 edition in the *Globe and Mail*, it was revealed that there may have been a potential breach of national security during that evening when it was discovered that during his conversations with a stripper from East Germany, he had NATO documents in his possession.

This tends to indicate that the reason for his resignation related to his having erred in the discharge of his duties. When Mulroney was asked about whether Coates might return to cabinet, he said in the 14 February 1985 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A2) that



the door was left open for Coates to return to cabinet at a later date. This case has linkage to the Profumo case in Britain, but there is not a similar Canadian example. The circumstances and allegations were quite similar and references were made to it in the media; however, there were no such cases in Canada that were similar in this study period.<sup>5</sup>

The next case of rational decision-making with Mulroney was the resignation of John Fraser as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. The case involves the releasing of one million cans of tainted tuna for public consumption against the advice of his bureaucrats. He also withheld information from the House in terms of the potential threat and how the public was being protected by the government. There was consensus in the case that this warranted a resignation because of the incompetence of the minister. The main reason why the minister resigned was related to maladministration of a government department. This is one of the few cases in Canada where maladministration resulted in a ministerial resignation. There was thus no linkage to any previous case, and there was no discussion about the temporary nature of the departure.

The third rational case is that of Marcel Masse's first resignation from cabinet where he resigned as a result of an RCMP investigation. According to the transcripts from Question Period in the 29 September 1985 edition of the *Hansard*, the Minister of Communications was under investigation for errors in reporting all of his election expenses during the previous campaign. Elections Canada noticed irregularities and called the RCMP, and the RCMP then informed the solicitor-general that a cabinet

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<sup>5</sup> The resignation of Maxime Bernier in Canada, which occurred during the spring of 2008, falls outside of the study period, but it is the closest approximation to the Coates case.

minister was under investigation. Consensus in this case was found in media reports. In the 26 September 1985 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A2), Mulroney was reported to have accepted the resignation with regret. He then said that “in the circumstances, I believe it is in our parliamentary traditions and practices.” This is an explicit indication that Mulroney was following the parliamentary precedent of soliciting a resignation when a minister was under investigation. The decision was also likely to be temporary. Conservative MP Paul Dick said in another story in the same edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A5) that somebody in the PMO told him that Masse “may be back in the Cabinet in 10 days time” if the investigation finds that he personally did nothing wrong.

In terms of policy differences, the first such case for Mulroney was that of Suzanne Blais-Grenier who was Minister of State for Transport. The reason why she resigned related to her public criticism of the government’s decision to sell Gulf Canada, which led to a loss of 450 jobs in Montreal. It was reported on the front page of the New Year’s Day edition in 1986 of the *Globe and Mail* that she publicly stated her opposition to the policy position of the government when she signed a petition against the proposal. These jobs affected Quebec and she felt that the decision made by the Transportation Minister, who was from Ontario, failed to consider the impact of these job losses. It is interesting to note that this has some similarities to the resignation of Jean Marchand from the Trudeau government because of his displeasure with an English-speaking transportation minister who accommodated Anglophone air traffic controllers and pilots.

In terms of consensus, there is little evidence that allows us to understand whether Mulroney asked for Blais-Grenier’s resignation or whether it was offered; thus it is

difficult to ascertain consensus. Again, this study assumes consensus between the two parties unless there was some indication otherwise. However, one Liberal MP, Marcel Prud'homme said in that *Globe and Mail* news report (A2) that “it was the only thing to do. If she hadn't resigned after shattering the ministerial solidarity, we would have demanded her resignation.” This is a good indication that there likely was consensus on the matter. Of course, breaking ministerial solidarity, as Prud'homme stated, is deserving of a ministerial resignation to maintain cabinet solidarity. In her resignation letter published in the 3 January 1986 edition of the *Toronto Star* (A4), Blais-Grenier agreed with the opposition when she stated that she resigned “so as not to have the principle of Cabinet solidarity questioned.” This shows that there was a pretty good understanding of the cause and effect relationship of the decision. This decision also appears to be permanent. Even before the resignation, there was speculation that she was going to be dropped from cabinet, and this shows that there is some evidence that indicates her falling out of favour with the Prime Minister. This demonstrates that the decision is likely to be mutually viewed as permanent. The *Globe and Mail* coverage of the resignation noted that this is the first resignation on a policy difference since Jean Marchand. The analysis in this chapter confirms that claim.

Following the Blais-Grenier case is the case of Andre Bissonnette, who was junior Minister of Transport when he resigned. This action was as a result of an investigation that was initiated by the RCMP that named the minister as being part of the land flipping and speculation deal that saw the value of 45 hectares of land increase by more than \$2 million in less than 2 weeks. The resignation occurred because of the RCMP

investigation, although speculation was rampant that Mulroney only sought the resignation to sweep the issue away. Nevertheless, Bissonnette tendered his resignation, and this demonstrated consensus. There was no indication of whether the decision would be temporary or not and there are several cases that are linked to that of Bissonnette such as Roch LaSalle and Bernard Valcourt, who were either investigated or charged with an offence.

The next rational case is that of Roch La Salle. He was Minister of State at the time of his departure from the Cabinet, and he resigned because of an embarrassing string of reports that suggested that he may have been associated with a bribery and influence peddling ring that had penetrated the Mulroney government and some of its caucus members. The allegations reported in the 20 February 1987 edition of the *Globe and Mail* were that La Salle received money to either relax the guidelines to award tenders or to put businesses on the Public Works tender list when he was the minister of that department.

Consensus is assumed in this case because there is not much that indicates otherwise. In his reply to the resignation letter, Mulroney expressed regret and said that he knew “how difficult and trying these last weeks have been for you.” The story on the resignation in the *Globe and Mail* (page A2) suggested that Mulroney had the option of waiting a week to accept the resignation but decided to accept it right away rather than wait. In terms of cause and effect relationship, La Salle was reported to have said in the same news report (page A2) that “I think it is necessary to find a correction on the climate of credibility, and I said that if it is better for the government if I resign, I am a

volunteer.” He then called himself a “good soldier” for the party. The reason for the resignation related to the fact that the Privy Council Office asked the RCMP to investigate further, which corresponds to the tradition of resigning while an RCMP investigation is ongoing. The decision is also deemed to be permanent not because of the nature of his departure, but because he stated that he did not want to seek re-election due to health reasons.

The next rational rational/planning case is that of David Crombie. This was the first case with Mulroney where there was a resignation in order to make way for a new member of cabinet. The Secretary of State resigned his seat to lead a Royal Commission investigation on Toronto’s waterfront redevelopment project. The 1 April 1988 edition of the *Globe and Mail* reports that he had mused about leaving politics for awhile and that he could not pass up the opportunity to lead an investigation he cared about. There was certainly consensus on the issue. A patronage reward that was offered and accepted demonstrates this consensus. There appeared to be electoral strategy behind the resignation because it occurred just before the 1988 election, which triggered what the *Globe and Mail* billed as the last major cabinet shuffle before that election. The decision was likely to be permanent and no speculation was found that Crombie desired to return to Ottawa after his commission concluded its work. This decision is linked to that of several others to be discussed below who were asked to resign before an election, and to a number of such cases with the Trudeau government such as Mitchell Sharp and Ronald Basford. This demonstrates how the prime minister can strategically use his powers to reshape the government in advance of an election.

The next case of rational/planning is that of Bernard Valcourt who resigned as Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs after pleading guilty to drunk driving. The front page story of the 3 August 1989 edition of the *Globe and Mail* stated that he was fined and had his driver's license suspended for 6 months when he admitted to his offence. In the story, the prime minister suggested that he accepted the resignation because it was in keeping with the traditions of parliament that ministers who are charged with an offence should resign from cabinet. This also shows the knowledge of a cause and effect relationship because it was in keeping with parliamentary traditions. Rod Murphy, a NDP party spokesperson, stated in the same edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A2) that this resignation was also related to "the Prime Minister's stance on drug and substance abuse, and the government's toughness on impaired driving." He further stated that "it would appear there was a double standard if Mr. Valcourt's resignation hadn't been accepted." There were several references in the article that seemed to suggest that his departure might not be permanent. Murphy is quoted as saying in the above story (A2) that the departure does not have to be a "life sentence." Since the offence had little to do with the discharge of duties, it would appear that this sentiment was shared. Murphy went on to suggest that there are many cases where a politician in similar difficulties can rehabilitate himself. The closest case to Valcourt's resignation is that of Marcel Masse's first resignation, since they both had been involved with legal infractions.

The case of Alan Redway, who served as Minister of State for Housing, is interesting. As reported on the front page of the 16 March 1991 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, Redway resigned because of a joke that he made while going through security at the

Ottawa International. He had joked that an acquaintance had a gun in a piece of luggage. The minister submitted his resignation when it became clear that the RCMP was continuing their investigation on this matter and the police did not rule out charging Redway, who was the Housing Minister, for a breach of the *Aeronautics Act*.

In terms of consensus, all that was said about Redway's resignation, and Mulroney's response to it, was that the prime minister simply accepted it. In a report in the 16 March 1991 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A4), Mac Harb, the opposition critic for Housing, said "that the minister had no choice but to step down." This denotes an element of consensus on the part of the opposition, even though there was no evidence of consensus offered by the prime minister. In terms of cause and effect relationship, it appears as though the minister resigned because the incident was under investigation by the RCMP. The government wanted to emphasize that its aeronautics controls were stringent, and that there would be no special treatment for cabinet ministers who casually decided to violate the tenets of an Act of the Canadian parliament. In essence, the government was upholding the rule of law in this case. The Solicitor-General told the *Globe and Mail* (A4) on the same day, that "Police forces in Canada carry out their investigations the same way for everybody" and because the minister was under investigation, he decided it was best to resign. There is nothing to directly indicate whether this decision of cabinet resignation was permanent or temporary. Indirectly, however, the news story suggested that Redway was a maverick who often strayed from the government position on the backbenches, and Mulroney only appointed him to keep him quiet. This provides a basis for assuming that Mulroney would not reappoint him.

This situation is linked to other ministers who were under investigation, and had to resign due to parliamentary privilege.

The remaining ministers resigned in the lead up to the 1993 general election. Mulroney had an especially large parliamentary majority after the 1984 election and a smaller, yet still significant majority after the 1988 election. It should thus be expected that a number of these types of appointments were made to keep ambitious backbench MPs happy, and to provide a fresh makeover to Cabinet in the lead up to the next election. It is interesting to note that the majority of these appointments came before Mulroney resigned as prime minister and leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. At the beginning of 1993, every indication was provided that Mulroney would fight the 1993 general election himself, which is why his cabinet was retooled.

As reported in several stories on the topic in the 5 January 1993 edition of the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*, William Wineguard, Gerald Merrithew, Marcel Masse (in his second resignation from cabinet), Jake Epp, and Robert De Cotret all resigned because Mulroney wanted to have by his side people who were prepared to defend the government record leading up to and through the 1993 election. Each of these members agreed to Mulroney's request, and the cause and effect relationship for all of these was to make way for new members. There was no indication that any of these ministers desired to return to cabinet because they were all leaving politics.

Special mention should be provided to Benoit Bouchard because, unlike Wineguard, Merrithew, Masse, Epp, and De Cotret, he did not resign in January 1993. Instead, Bouchard resigned as Minister of National Health and Welfare on 17 June 1993



to accept a patronage appointment to France. This occurred after Mulroney offered his resignation as leader of the PC Party. It was said that this was Bouchard's reward from the outgoing prime minister for his good service. Much like the case of Pelletier during the Trudeau administration, there appears to be consensus, a desire to make room for new members, and a permanent departure from Mulroney's cabinet. All of these point to rational decision-making.

#### *Rational/planning in the Chrétien Government*

This sums up the sixteen cases in which the Mulroney government applied the general rules of ministerial responsibility in Canada. The next government to have ministerial resignations was led by Jean Chrétien (Kim Campbell's government was between Mulroney and Chrétien governments, but it did not have any ministerial resignations). It is interesting to note that Chrétien was in office much longer than Mulroney, yet he had fewer ministerial resignations overall. Compared to all other governments, Chrétien also had a lower percentage of cases that could be assigned to the category of rational/planning.

The cases of Andre Ouellet, Roy MacLaren, and Sheila Finestone all occurred at the same time and Chrétien asked his senior ministers to step down so that he could bring in new blood to fight Quebec separatism and the subsequent election. Eddie Goldenberg (2006) suggested that Chrétien appointed senior people to cabinet in his first term so that they could provide some experience to his front bench in the early years of his administration. He did so with the idea that they would leave cabinet after serving for

most of the government's first term in office. Once the senior ministers left, Chrétien was free to appoint some of his young and ambitious MPs to cabinet.

The cases all show the desire to bring fresh blood into the Cabinet, which establishes the cause and effect relationship. Each of the departing ministers was given other appointments so that they could leave politics. Ouellet said he would not run for office again (recall that he was a minister in Prime Minister Trudeau's government who resigned from cabinet in the 1970s), and so he was awarded the chairmanship of the Canada Post Corporation where his salary tripled. MacLaren was appointed to be the High Commissioner to the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Finestone was promised a Senate appointment, which she took once a position became available during Chrétien's second term. The 26 January 1996 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A4) reported that her resignation was desired because Chrétien wanted to make room for Martin Cauchon who was a rising star in the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party. All of these decisions are linked to each other, and all of them are thought to be permanent departures from Chrétien's cabinet.

The case of Sergio Marchi also manifests some similarities. Marchi decided that he wished to leave politics after sitting in the House of Commons for 15 years and spending some more years as a political staffer on Parliament Hill. His resignation coincided with his appointment as Canada's ambassador to the World Trade Organization in Geneva after serving as International Trade Minister in the Chrétien government. This appointment was announced by a PMO Press Release on 3 August 1999. Again, this was another instance where Chrétien was moving a more senior cabinet minister out of his

portfolio and appointing him to a position that the ex-minister desired. The only difference between these rational/planning examples and those listed above was that Marchi's departure was prior to the 2000 general election, whereas the ones above occurred prior to the 1997 general election. Of course, Marchi's resignation was a clear sign that he was not returning to cabinet in the Chrétien government.

#### *Rational/planning in the Martin Government*

Aside from these examples, the practice of ministerial resignations in the Chrétien government did not follow a rational/planning model. His successor, Paul Martin, experienced one ministerial resignation according to the rational/planning model. Martin's only such cabinet resignation was due to a policy difference and a threat to cabinet solidarity.

The case of Joe Comuzzi, who was Minister of State for the Northern Economic Development Initiative, involved a policy dispute over the controversial same-sex marriage legislation. The issue divided parliament on a free vote, and Comuzzi, a devout Roman Catholic, decided that he could not support the redefinition of marriage for religious reasons, and so he resigned the morning of the vote. That way, he was free to vote according to his conscience. There was consensus on the issue. In the months leading up to the same-sex marriage vote, the Liberal caucus debated on whether to make this a truly free vote. However, pleas from within caucus suggested that the government was introducing legislation and the government ought to have solidarity on the issue. Comuzzi took part in this debate and had to agree with the opinion of his caucus

colleagues. In terms of knowledge of the cause and effect relationship, of course Comuzzi and the Liberal Party were conforming to the doctrine of collective responsibility and cabinet solidarity. There was no indication at the time that Comuzzi might be invited back into cabinet, and this was linked to several other ministers who resigned on principle, such as Blais-Grenier and Marchand in previous governments. But nobody else in the Martin government can be linked to this case, in part because Martin's government lasted less than three years.

#### *Rational/planning in the Harper Government*

Martin's short lived time as Prime Minister saw only two ministers resign. Similarly, in the first 18 months of the Harper government, the Prime Minister has had only one resignation to deal with. This was the case of Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Michael Chong. At issue during this resignation was the Canadian government's desire to recognize the Quebecois as a nation within a united Canada. As Intergovernmental Affairs Minister, Chong should have had some influence in the policy direction of the government in this area. It turns out that Harper pre-empted Chong's ideas of civic nationalism, which forced the latter to step down because he was not able to support the government position. There was consensus on the resignation, even though the prime minister disagreed with Michael Chong's position on the matter. In terms of the cause and effect relationship, it was correctly viewed as a policy difference, and it was considered necessary to maintain cabinet solidarity on this matter. There was no indication at the time of dismissal that this decision was only temporary. Also, it appears

that this case of resignation is linked to the last Martin resignation, in which Joe Comuzzi resigned as a result of a policy disagreement.

This concludes the cases of resignation that follow the rational/planning model. As previously mentioned it was the decision theory that closely approximates the traditional ideas that result in ministerial resignations. It is also the category that contains the most cases of all the decision theories by far. The next decision theory that is examined is the mixed-scanning model.

### **Hybrid Decision-Making**

Mixed-scanning is the first decision theory of the group that is referred to as a hybrid model of decision-making, because it exhibits short term rationality, but also produces non-rational outcomes. Overall, there are two cases that could be attributed to mixed-scanning. Mixed-scanning will show a tendency of marking a shift in the approach to ministerial resignations, but after the shift, incremental decisions appear to substantiate the way such ministerial resignations work. In terms of the matrix, mixed-scanning will show that there is consensus on the “new approach,” that the cause and effect relationship in these cases is not known because the parameters for resignation fall outside the five categories previously discussed, that the decisions have a tendency to be temporary, and that there is no link to past decisions.

#### *Mixed-Scanning Model and the Trudeau Government*

The first case that fits this decision theory is the first of two resignations by Andre Ouellet in the Trudeau government. The Minister of Corporate and Consumer Affairs resigned because he was charged with contempt of court. Ouellet made some comments criticizing Justice MacKay for his acquittal of sugar companies accused of forming cartels. Justice Andrew MacKay cited Ouellet for contempt of court, and he was found guilty of that charge by Associate Chief Justice James Hugessen.

Both Ouellet and Trudeau appeared to show consensus on the issue of resignation. In the prime minister's letter responding to the resignation published on the front page of the 17 March 1976 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, he stated that "I understand the reasons that motivate you and I respect them." However, the fact that Ouellet stayed in cabinet while being charged with contempt is in itself indicative of a lack of respect of parliamentary tradition. It is only when he was found guilty of that charge and resolved to appeal that verdict that he decided to resign from cabinet. This reflects a significant shift from past parliamentary practice, and represents a change in the traditional interpretation of when a minister ought to resign. Being charged with contempt of court should normally result in a resignation as it is a criminal offence to be so charged. This case also showed that Ouellet could be invited back into cabinet in the future. He resigned from cabinet pending the result of his appeal, which suggested his desire to return. As reported in the above mentioned article, Trudeau stated that it was possible for Ouellet and "about 90 other members" to be invited back to the Cabinet. While this appears to suggest that there were long odds for Ouellet's return to the government front bench, the door was not closed. There did not appear to be any linkages to a resignation

involving an appeal that was being heard in a case involving a minister, which is different from the other cases analyzed in this chapter.

### *Mixed-Scanning and the Chrétien Government*

There was only one case of mixed-scanning in the Chrétien government, and it was associated with Brian Tobin. Tobin resigned from cabinet because of his desire to pursue the leadership of the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Party after the Clyde Wells decided that he was going to leave the province's premiership. It is difficult to say whether Chrétien wanted Tobin to leave or whether he wanted him to stay. In a 5 January 1996 article in the *Globe and Mail* (A4), the Prime Minister sent mixed messages by stating that the minister had a "great future" ahead of him in Ottawa while also saying that "I think he would make a very good premier of Newfoundland." Later in the article Chrétien said that "He's a great minister and I would like to keep him, but I will understand if he decides to do something else." This left the impression that the prime minister was agreeing with Tobin's departure, but there were mixed signals nonetheless. In terms of the cause and effect relationship, there did not appear to be an acknowledgement of a relationship as outlined in Appendix A. Certainly, running for a sub-national government was not originally envisioned as a reason why ministers should resign. In terms of the quote from Chrétien above, it seemed as though Chrétien left the door open for Tobin to return to Ottawa at a later date. This suggested that the decision could be changed. Finally, there is no link to this case, since Tobin is the first minister in the study period to resign in order to seek election for a sub-national government.

This broad shift in the policy surrounding ministerial resignations that we see developed above can be summarized in one of two ways. The first is that the prime minister would like to provide such opportunities for his ministers to lead a government and install allies in the provinces. On the surface, this appears to be a strategic consideration. The second is that ministers themselves do not merely see cabinet as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. That is, cabinet is not the place for the best and most ambitious people, but a place that may be a springboard for future careers. In both cases, this is a departure from the way ministerial responsibility was initially envisioned.

#### *Drift and the Trudeau Government*

As mentioned, the second hybrid model is that of drift. Drift is categorized by consensus on the particular approach, by not having knowledge of what the effect of the decision will be, making a permanent decision, and linking decisions with other cases. Overall, drift is the second most prevalent type of decision theory in this chapter, with seven cases being categorized under this rubric. The government of Pierre Trudeau had the most cases of drift, followed by the governments of Brian Mulroney and Jean Chrétien.

The first case of drift is found in the early years of the Trudeau government. This is the case of Leo Cadieux who resigned as Minister of Defence and subsequently accepted an appointment as Ambassador to France according to the 24 October 1970 edition of the *Canada Gazette*. Unlike any of the other cases of ministerial resignation, very little was reported or said about the appointment. For example, apart from a small



paragraph in the business section of the *Globe and Mail* on 18 September 1970, the paper did not even report on this matter. On the same day, the *Toronto Star* had an article on Cadieux, but it was more biographical in nature. Therefore, this is admittedly a difficult case to categorize.

In terms of consensus, there is no indication in any report that was examined that suggested anything but consensus. Since this dissertation assumes consensus unless other evidence is revealed, it is determined here that consensus exists in this case. In terms of a cause and effect relationship, there appears to be no speculation in terms of a typical reason for resignation, such as making room for new members. The 18 September 1970 edition of the *Toronto Star* (A8) stated that the only reason seemed to have been a perceived need to repair relations between Canada and France. Once again, in terms of whether the decision was likely to be reversed, there was no indication that Cadieux would ever return to the Cabinet. Finally, in terms of linkages, it appears as though this may have been linked to others who have resigned for patronage reasons, such as Pelletier who later followed in Cadieux's footsteps.

Because of the lack of speculation on the cause and effect relationship, it cannot be said that this is a rational decision. The traditional doctrine of ministerial responsibility suggests that a government should keep its best people in the ministry rather than in a diplomatic post, even if the appointment was to help the ailing Canada-France relationship in the wake of Charles de Gaulle's "Vive le Quebec libre!" speech that he made from the balcony of Montreal's City Hall in 1967. This speaks to the issue of drift because the government's most pressing issue might be the relationship it has with

a key European country. It seems logical in the short term to send a close associate of the prime minister to be an envoy; however, the net effect of this decision moves us further away from the original conception of ministerial responsibility. It suggests that the best MPs in the House should be sent to perform other important tasks rather than become ministers in a government.

The next resignation that occurred during Trudeau's administration was that of John Turner, then finance minister, who resigned from cabinet to go back to private life. The move was said to be unexpected for Trudeau who had to consider a big cabinet shuffle to fill the gap. Despite the unexpected nature of the departure, Trudeau still accepted the reasons for resigning, denoting consensus. There was no speculation of cause and effect, since returning to private life is not one of the relationships that produce resignations. However, Turner also desired to replace Trudeau who had been prime minister since 1968. Because Turner was returning to private life, it seemed unlikely that he would return to the Trudeau cabinet. Finally, there was a link particularly to the later resignation of Donald MacDonald that will be discussed below.

The next case of drift in the Trudeau government involves a key member of his cabinet, Donald MacDonald. Circumstances surrounding this resignation are not very clear. MacDonald officially resigned for personal and family reasons, but allegations from the opposition were rampant that the real reason was related to policy differences with the Trudeau Cabinet. He also harboured leadership ambitions, and this also might have been a reason for his resignation. In terms of consensus, it is difficult to ascertain whether this resignation had consensus. The 7 September 1977 edition of the *Globe and*

*Mail* certainly suggested that Trudeau was sorry to see MacDonald go and wished him luck. Because this study suggests that consensus exists unless something else is otherwise detected, consensus is assumed to have existed. With the resignation, there was no mention of parliamentary tradition. In fact, MacDonald vigorously denied that his resignation was a result of a policy difference, which would have provided evidence of a cause and effect relationship relating to cabinet solidarity. There was also no mention of a desire to make room for new members. Therefore, evidence points to the conclusion that the resignation occurred either because it was an unplanned departure or to organize for the Liberal leadership race.

This was a permanent decision for MacDonald, as his response to reporters' questions about his future, which was published in the abovementioned edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A2), was that "I think this is the end of my political career." This obviously suggests that MacDonald believed that he would not be going back to Trudeau's cabinet. Also, since the case involved a desire by a minister to return to private life, it can be said that this case is linked to the cases of Ron Basford and John Turner.

The final case that can be attributed to drift during the Trudeau government was that of John Munro. The issue with Munro, who was Minister of Labour, was that he called a provincial court judge to give a character reference for a constituent convicted of assault. According to a 9 September 1978 news story appearing in the *Globe and Mail* (A1), this contravened a Cabinet code of conduct established by Trudeau. Consensus in this case can be found from a quote given by Munro to the media. He was reported to have said in the above mentioned news story appearing in the *Globe and Mail* (page A1)

that he “had no alternative but to submit my resignation from Cabinet and the Prime Minister had no alternative but to accept it.” In terms of a cause and effect relationship, Munro states that he had “quite clearly contravened the guidelines.” However, one of the reasons that conflict of interest guidelines are not considered to demonstrate knowledge of cause and effect relationships is because of the uneven application of the rules. For example, Charles “Bud” Drury in March 1976 offered his resignation to Trudeau for calling a judge on behalf of Ouellet who was facing a contempt of court charge, but the prime minister refused to accept Drury’s resignation as reported on the front page of the 13 March 1976 edition of the *Globe and Mail*. Thus, because of the inconsistent application of these ministerial guidelines, it maybe a matter of convenience for some ministers to resign but not others. In terms of whether the decision was temporary, it appeared as though nobody on either side speculated on a desire for Munro to return to the Cabinet.

This is a classic case of drift because cabinet ministers used to contact judges on behalf of their friends and constituents without reprimand. However, because a judicial report now showed that this practice threatened judicial independence, ministers are now obliged to resign when they interfere in judicial proceedings. Drift discusses the extent to which short term rational decisions, which is the case with resigning over judicial interference, can produce everlasting change. As we have previously discussed with the Charest case above, the fact that he called a judge on behalf of an organization that is a stakeholder of his department means that that the practice has not been undone.

*Drift and the Mulroney Government*

The analysis of the Mulroney government's experience with drift is quite interesting because there is a marked shift in terms of applying a code of conduct for ministers and the evolving relationship between this code and ministerial resignations. The first case of drift in the Mulroney government involved the resignation of Sinclair Stevens. The allegations were rampant that he had a conflict of interest between his private business holdings and his public duties. The issue was an interest free loan of \$2.6 million dollars that his wife arranged for Stevens' private company from people connected to big corporations who receive grants from the Minister of Industry. Both Stevens and Mulroney agreed with the resignation, however, Stevens maintained his innocence in terms of the conflict of interest. Yet, the appearance of the conflict of interest is what led to the resignation, which falls outside of the relationships that acknowledge appropriate cause and effect. Furthermore, as the 12 May 1986 edition of the *Globe and Mail* suggested, minimizing the political fallout was the main concern. At the same time, Mulroney pledged to fix the rules surrounding ministerial conduct to better reflect public opinion in these matters. This case is linked to the Côté case below, which marks a shift in how conflict of interest rules are affecting the way ministerial resignations are likely to work in the future.

The case of Michel Côté in 1988 is interesting because Mulroney had been in power for four years, yet he continually blames Trudeau for the problems that arise in terms of a conflict of interest code. Côté was Minister of Supply and Services when it was discovered that he contravened the conflict of interest guidelines. The issue involved

a personal loan worth \$250 000 from a friend who was a Quebec businessman and government contractor. The loan was obviously seen as a potential avenue for influencing government officials, but this falls outside the rules that relate to ministerial resignations. The decision was not likely to change. Mulroney's press secretary, Marc Lortie, said in the 3 February 1988 edition in the *Globe and Mail* (A1) that "I think it's permanent." Finally, the article suggests that there were a number of similar resignations that involved conflict of interest, like those of LaSalle and Masse, but this time, Mulroney was determined to change the way his government operated.

Mulroney stated in the 3 February 1988 article in the *Globe and Mail* (A1) that "The situation that I inherited from Prime Minister Trudeau was worthless... You can just imagine how difficult it is for a prime minister to have a set of guidelines, and be called upon to police them... on a regular basis, in the kind of climate that exists... I'm not satisfied; I would like to make these things work... I've read the riot act time and time again both to my caucus and to my ministry... to indicate that I am displeased and disappointed today is the understatement of the year." This has a tendency to show that the conflict of interest rule enforcement was about to change. Confirmation of this came at a caucus meeting where the same story in the *Globe and Mail* (A2) reported Mulroney as declaring the following: "We've had enough criticism of our honesty and nothing will be tolerated in the future." This suggests that while Mulroney had tolerated some questionable ethics in the past, he was ready to take steps to make sure his government would not be plagued by them again.

One of the reasons that this is labelled drift is related to the fact that the Mulroney then decided that he would no longer wait for a police investigation to be launched in order to ask for a resignation. If there was a degree of corrupt activity, particularly when loans are being hidden from the government, the prime minister was going to act on the information he had available, no matter how embarrassing it was to the government. This effectively shifted the burden away from the RCMP to launch an investigation and gave the prime minister's office a leading role in scrutinizing and investigating the government's own ministers.

The final case of drift in the Mulroney government is the resignation of Jean Charest, who served as Minister of State for Youth and of Fitness and Amateur Sports. The reason for his resignation, as stated during Question Period on 24 January 1990, was related to a telephone call he placed to a judge who was about to rule on a case involving the Canadian Track and Field Association. Political interference in the judicial process constitutes an abuse of power, and threatens the independence of the judiciary. The case demonstrates consensus because, as noted on the front page of the 25 January 1990 edition of the *Globe and Mail*, both Mulroney and Charest agreed that this resignation was out of respect for the traditions of the House of Commons, which also reflects the cause and effect relationship. There were also some concrete references to a possible return to the Cabinet. In his reply to the resignation letter, Mulroney wrote that "You have been a valued counsellor and Minister and I know you will have occasion to render great service in the future." The most natural link to this tradition is the resignation of John Munro during the Trudeau administration, who also resigned for placing a telephone

call to a judge. It used to be common practice for cabinet ministers to call judges and exert influence. However, since a judicial report in the 1970s concluded that this practice threatened judicial independence, such resignations are now deemed to be rational reasons for ministerial resignations. Munro's resignation thus established a new tradition in Canada. Calling a judge is now an offence that requires a resignation.

### *Drift and the Chrétien Government*

The only case of drift in the Chrétien government was that of Brian Tobin who was the Industry Minister. He officially resigned in January 2002 to return to private life and to spend more time with his family. Media reports suggested he did so because he harboured leadership ambitions and that Chrétien was looking like he was going to stick around for a while. The prospects of organizing a leadership bid from cabinet was becoming impossible in light of newly developed rules in that respect that had been implemented by the Prime Minister, and Tobin felt that his prospects for winning a leadership race were slim if he did so.

There appeared to be consensus on the matter between both sides, and nothing really suggests otherwise. However, there was no speculation on cause and effect to the extent that this resignation was desired. In fact, the reason Tobin was leaving office was because it appeared that the door to the leader's job was not then open. In a 15 January 2002 (A1) story appearing in the *Globe and Mail*, Tobin was reported to have said that jockeying for the leader's job outside cabinet was a motivation for him to resign. This could have been perceived as a potential cause and effect relationship because it would



have been a threat to cabinet solidarity. Yet, it appears that his reason for resigning was related to a perceived lack of opportunity for him to progress through the ministerial ranks. In that same news story, Tobin suggested that he no longer had the drive to pursue such a leadership bid. Again, this was not a typical reason to resign from office. There was no indication that Tobin would serve under Chrétien again, and so from that perspective, the decision was permanent. Some did mention that he would run for the leadership and might be back in cabinet after that (see the 15 January 2002 edition of the *Globe and Mail* on page A4), but that fell outside the parameters of a permanent decision because we are only interested in knowing if Tobin would be back with the government he left.

This example is labelled drift because Tobin came up with a unique reason for ministerial resignation. The reason Tobin resigned in both cases was related to his own personal ambitions that were independent of the government which he served. In his first resignation, he left to run for the leadership of Newfoundland's Liberal Party. He was successful in that endeavour and left the House of Commons for a brief period of time. Chrétien then convinced Tobin to return to Ottawa, suggesting that the Newfoundland and Labrador politician could do more for that province in Ottawa than he could do as premier. In the second resignation, Tobin once again decided that he was going to leave government, only this time his ambition was to go back to the private sector. Rather than Tobin's serving in the ministry to advance the government's interests, it seems the reverse was true – that government was a spring board for Tobin's personal interests.

The final rational decision case in the Chrétien government involves his most powerful cabinet minister who harboured leadership ambitions. Paul Martin departed from the Cabinet about six months after Brian Tobin. This case was interesting because the former finance minister no longer supported the aims and ambitions of the prime minister who had decided to fight an upcoming leadership review and vowed to fulfill his full term in office. If Martin desired to challenge Chrétien, he would not be able to do so from his cabinet position. There was consensus on the point that the two could no longer work together. Martin said that the writing was on the wall.

In terms of cause and effect relationship, in his letter to Martin in reply to his resignation, published in the 2 June 2002 edition of the *Toronto Star*, Chrétien said that he could no longer work with him on government policy. However, at a press conference, Chrétien said “This has nothing to do with the Department of Finance and the economic policies of the government. There were other problems that were making it difficult for him and difficult for me and we mutually agreed that it was time for him to leave” (*Globe and Mail* on 3 June 2002, A1). These “other problems” related to leadership ambitions. Various newspapers reported that Chrétien was increasingly displeased with ministers using their cabinet positions as a springboard for their leadership ambitions. For example, the 1 June 2002 edition of the *Toronto Star* (A1) stated that Chrétien was prepared to fire any minister who was abusing their government office. The decision to resign was deemed permanent. It would have been highly unlikely for this relationship to heal in enough time to allow Martin to return to the Cabinet. Finally, in terms of resignations due to leadership ambitions, Brian Tobin could be seen

as somebody who resigned due to leadership ambitions. The cases of John Turner and Donald MacDonald are also linked in this regard.

The cases of MacDonald, Turner, Tobin, and Martin point to a clear case of drift. These resignations appear to be part of the Liberal Party succession planning. In order to prepare to take the helm of the Liberal Party, these potential candidates felt that it was best to resign and organize from private life or the government benches. This points to the conclusion that because it takes a significant amount of time and resources to properly organize a Liberal Party leadership campaign, anybody with a realistic shot at succeeding a Liberal Prime Minister must do so from outside the government. In essence, it becomes a rational decision for ministerial resignation even though this is not related to administrative or policy differences.

To reinforce this finding, consider the contenders who declared their candidacy to succeed Jean Chrétien. Paul Martin left cabinet to pursue his leadership bid. John Manley and Sheila Copps both remained in cabinet and were not able to secure enough support to put a dent in Paul Martin's campaign. The end result was a virtual coronation of Martin who effectively took control of the party apparatus.

### **Non-Rational Decision-Making and Ministerial Responsibility in Canada**

Two non-rational models are evident in the Canadian cases. The first one is “groping” and it only has one case associated with it. The second is the garbage can model, which is the third most applicable decision theory of the six studied in Canada. In

total, there are five cases that follow the garbage can model. Incrementalism, which is the third non-rational decision theory, was not evident in any of the Canadian cases.

### *Groping in the Martin Government*

The only case in Canada that falls under the groping model is that of Judy Sgro, who was the Citizenship and Immigration Minister in the Paul Martin government. Her case involved many allegations of special treatment arising from the issuing of work permits to Romanian exotic dancers, and for issuing permits for temporary residency status to a pizza owner if he provided free pizzas and campaign workers to the Sgro election campaign team. These items were negotiated by Sgro's political staff. Sgro's case is groping first because there was no consensus on the resignation. Both Martin and Sgro denied any wrongdoing in the case, yet the resignation was accepted to end the political pressure mounting on both of them. In terms of the cause and effect relationship, this was a traditional reason for ministerial resignations. Sgro offered poor oversight to her political office, for which she is ultimately responsible. The decision appeared to be temporary. In the 15 January 2005 news story published on CTV.ca, Martin is reported to have said the following: "I think that she was a very strong minister... I think that she brought a great contribution... and I look forward to her continuing public career." It appears as though Martin was suggesting that Sgro could return to cabinet once she was vindicated. Finally, there are no linkages to this case in terms of resignations that involve the inadvertent errors of political staff.

As a theory, groping is the kind of model which suggests that decision makers know what they want, but they do not know how to achieve what they want. The impression that Martin and Sgro leave is that they desired to make the political firestorm disappear, and used a ministerial resignation to get there. However, this case raised questions as to how the Martin government viewed what constitutes an appropriate reason for resigning. Certainly, he seemed to have an idea of what an appropriate reason actually was, but the decision makers did not believe that this case fell within those reasons. However, in light of the reasons for resignation discussed throughout this dissertation up to this point, it appears that the Martin government incorrectly analyzed this specific case.

#### *The Garbage Can Model and the Chrétien Government*

Chrétien's government was the only administration to have cases categorized as the garbage can model. The first case is the case of Shelia Copps. She resigned from cabinet not because of a conflict with government policy, but with a personal vow to resign her seat if the Goods and Services Tax (GST), instituted by the Mulroney government, was not abolished as it stated in the 1993 Liberal Party platform dubbed "the Red Book." In a 2 May 1996 article published in the *Globe and Mail* (A1), Copps said she could not look people in the eye anymore because of the pledge she made to voters during the 1993 election. Her solution to her conundrum was extraordinary. She resigned her seat and decided to run in the by-election to succeed herself. There has not been a case quite like this one.

There was no consensus with the prime minister on Copps' desire to resign. Chrétien was quoted in the 2 May 1996 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A1) as saying that he "did not ask her to resign" and this was a personal policy choice. This would indicate that there was no consensus on the issue. There were also none of the conditions used in assessing a cause and effect relationship that affects ministerial responsibility. The prime minister did not agree with Copps' position that the Liberals would not axe the GST. He still maintained that the Liberals had not broken their Red Book promise. In the news story, Chrétien suggests that he was much clearer on the GST policy during the election than Copps was, and therefore did not break a promise. Of course, because she ran in the by-election, it signalled her desire to come back to parliament and to Chrétien's Cabinet. She was subsequently appointed back by Chrétien soon after her by-election victory. In terms of linkage, as mentioned before, this case stands out on its own from all the others studied.

The next case from the Chrétien cabinet categorized under the garbage can model is that of Andy Scott, who was the Solicitor-General at the time. Scott was overheard by New Democrat MP, Dick Proctor, on an airplane saying that the outcome of the APEC inquiry was that the blame would be placed on "Hughie." "Hughie" was the nickname of the Staff Sergeant seen pepper spraying a crowd of protestors at the APEC summit in Vancouver. There was a hint that consensus was not present in this decision. Although the Prime Minister accepted the resignation with regret, according to his letter of reply, he was reported as saying on the 24 November 1997 edition of the *Globe and Mail* (A10)

that he wanted Scott to stay on because he was a “good minister” and that he would have defended him had he desired to stick with being in Cabinet.

There was no knowledge of cause and effect relationship. The only speculation was that it was believed that the resignation would lessen the political firestorm around the situation. As the prime minister said in the *Globe and Mail* story (page A10), “because of the constant attack from the opposition, [Mr. Scott] decided that it was too difficult for him to do all his work...” By putting the blame on the opposition, Chrétien essentially avoids accepting the reasons that led to this resignation. In terms of whether the decision was permanent, the answer is that it was temporary. Chrétien left the door open for Scott’s possible return to cabinet. There is also no linkage or precedent that would seem to this case. The news article points out that Chrétien hates resignations that have the scent of scandal, and he avoids them at all cost.

The third case of the garbage can model in the Chrétien government is that of Art Eggleton. Eggleton was the Minister of National Defence when he resigned as a result of conflict-of-interest problems arising out of a research contract given to a former girlfriend, which the opposition claimed during question period on 27 May 2003 was untendered and worth almost \$40 000. The Ethics Councillor was called into investigate and found that the Minister broke the rules. Remarkably, Eggleton does not believe he should have been fired. This shows a lack of consensus on the issue because it appears as though he was forced to resign. The only speculation provided is that this contravened conflict-of-interest rules. Again, these are not reasons that ascertain cause and effect relationships in this dissertation because they are unevenly applied. For example, why

could Eggleton not help a friend when Chrétien did it in his own riding during the so-called “Shawinigate” fiasco or that Public Works did for a variety of companies through the Sponsorship program? It looks like Eggleton was a scapegoat and an exception to the practice of ministers resigning over a conflict of interest. Once the decision was made, it was a permanent firing from the Prime Minister. This was not linked to other cases because it was reported that Chrétien wanted to make Eggleton the example.

The final case of the garbage can model that was found is that of Lawrence Macaulay. The former Solicitor-General was at the centre of controversy surrounding the awarding of a contract to a PEI community college that his brother was the head of and there were allegations of conflict of interest. There was no consensus that the allegations merited a resignation by the Prime Minister. Chrétien said he would have defended the minister if he had decided to continue in his job. This shows that there is no consensus on whether a resignation should have occurred. Nobody believed that any rules in terms of conflict of interest were broken, and again, even if they were, they would not have been enough to establish knowledge of a cause and effect relationship. During the discussion about the resignation, there was no mention that Macaulay would return to cabinet at a later date. There does not appear to be a link in this case to the other cabinet resignations, especially since the prime minister did not see anything wrong with awarding the contract.

These cases demonstrate that there is often no rhyme or reason as to why the various prime ministers and their cabinets decide that a resignation is merited or not under the traditional characteristics of ministerial resignations. It is often seen that rules are



made up on the spot and to minimize the political fallout of some questionable behaviour. We also have a tendency to see that there is a disagreement with what the rules should be, with ministers and prime ministers not agreeing on when ministers should resign.

### **The Anomalies**

This concludes the categorization of cases according to the decision-making matrix. There are, however, some cases that do not fall under any of the categories outlined above. In total, there are three cases that fall outside the decision-making matrix. In one case, that of John Greene in the Trudeau government, there simply was not enough information to understand the relationship and the nature of his resignation. All that we do know is that he resigned because he had suffered a pair of heart attacks and a stroke. It is uncertain whether he agreed to resign or was removed by Trudeau. Thus, he remains in this category because the information gathered could not support a conclusion.

The only anomaly in the Mulroney government is that of Lucien Bouchard. He resigned as Environment Minister because of a controversial telegram he sent praising those who fought for an independent Quebec in 1980. At the same time, Bouchard suggested that he could not support the government position on Meech Lake, specifically the Charest committee report that recommended opening up the Accord. To Bouchard, the Meech Lake Accord had to stay intact and there was no way that he was going to support any amendment to it because it would make the five conditions for Quebec meaningless. The reason that this does not fall under the rational model is related to the fact that there is no level of consensus. Although it had appeared as though Bouchard

was preparing for his departure for some time, the 22 May 1990 story in the *Globe and Mail* states that he did not feel that his controversial telegram was, in fact, contentious. When the Clerk of the Privy Council, Paul Tellier, tried to talk to Bouchard, he dismissed their concerns as having no legitimacy. Bouchard was then told to go to 24 Sussex where he was “forced to resign” (A7). This provides the lack of consensus. In terms of the other categories, the cause and effect relationship was a policy difference, the decision was likely to be permanent, and the dispute was linked to other policy disagreements. Thus, the categorization does not fit any of the decision theories.

The final case that is an anomaly occurred during Chrétien’s administration and this was the case of David Collenette. He resigned due to a letter he wrote on behalf of an ailing constituent who wanted her husband to come to Canada on a Visa from a third world country. The result was a breach of the ethics code for ministers. In an article published on 5 October 1996 in the *Globe and Mail* (page A12), the Prime Minister said that Collenette made an honest mistake but “rules are rules.” Chrétien did not feel that the breach was so significant that the minister could not serve in a cabinet capacity at a later time, so the decision was temporary. The case was also linked to other conflict of interest cases like Lawrence Macaulay and Art Eggleton’s resignation. Because the case either did not properly speculate on cause and effect or that the decision was minor and thus likely to change, this decision could not be assigned to one of the categories.

### Discussion and Analysis of the Canadian Results

The summary of results is provided in Table 3.2. Overall, the presence of rational/planning more or less demonstrates that ministerial responsibility is adhered to most of the time. It is by far the most prevalent of any of the decision theories over the duration of the study period with nearly 63% of the cases being chalked up to a rational decision. The level of rationality in Canada is a surprising result given that some of the analysts of ministerial responsibility have considered the principle to be a dead concept here. Of the other theories, drift was the second most prominent decision theory evident with nearly 18% of the cases and the garbage can model is next with nearly 8% of the cases. It was assumed that these theories, along with the rest of the ones used in this study, would appear much more frequently. That they did not appear more frequently has led to the failure of the second hypothesis test in terms of non-rational decision-making being more prevalent due to the declining nature of ministerial responsibility.

*Table 3.2: Tabulation of Results for Canadian Resignations*

<b>Prime Minister</b>	<b>Rational/planning</b>	<b>Mixed-Scanning</b>	<b>Drift</b>	<b>Incremental</b>	<b>Groping</b>	<b>Garbage Can</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Trudeau	11	1	4	0	0	0	1	<b>17</b>
Mulroney	15	0	3	0	0	0	1	<b>19</b>
Chrétien	4	1	2	0	0	4	1	<b>12</b>
Martin	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>2</b>
Harper	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>51</b>

While the foundational principle of ministerial responsibility is still alive, the Canadian cases show that there are some troubling issues that have developed in the

application of ministerial resignations. The first one of these is the fact that cabinet ministers use their position as ministers of the Crown to serve as a launching pad for future careers in the private sector. This contravenes the idea that the best people in parliament are going to be in cabinet. What this suggests is that the private sector is more alluring to the best cabinet ministers rather than a career in government where the best people ought to remain according to Bagehot. The reasons for this are not readily clear, and they are further discussed in Chapter 5.

The second troubling issue that may hinder the further development of stronger conflict of interest rules is the extent to which prime ministers are too willing to defend ministers who should otherwise resign. Mulroney's shift to stronger conflict guidelines for ministers may have stalled during and after Chrétien. The cases show that both Chrétien and Paul Martin were willing to defend ministers who resigned because they did not feel that one was warranted. The extent to which there has been a decline in the level of rationality in this regard is a potentially dangerous trend for the doctrine in Canada.

The final point of interest in the Canadian case is the decline of rational decision-making pertaining to ministerial resignations in Canada since 1993. Chrétien's government is the only one to not have a majority of his government's resignations fall under the rational decisions resulting in ministerial resignations compared to all the other decision theory categories combined. In fact, over 58% of the Chrétien government resignations are assigned to the other decision theories, which means that fewer than 42% fall within the rational model, putting these results in stark contrast to the approach taken by the Trudeau and Mulroney administrations. This compares to nearly 65% of the cases

being rational in the Trudeau government and nearly 79% in the Mulroney administration.

The evidence here suggests that there is not a linear deterioration of the concept of ministerial responsibility over time. In fact, it appears as though either leadership or party in power affect the results of ministerial resignations. When considering the resignations by party, the Conservatives have 80% of their cases that are related to rational decisions, while the Liberals have just over 52% of their cases under the rational model. It is difficult to suggest what these results will mean in terms of the wider debate on democratic reform. Certainly, as it pertains to when ministers resign, the Conservatives appear to be more willing to accept the traditional doctrine, while the Liberals only do so in about half the cases.

The paradox that develops here is particularly interesting. The current policy positions of both the Conservatives and Liberals seem to be reversed from what these findings suggest. In terms of approaching democratic reforms, it is currently the Conservative Party that is proposing and acting on the desire to introduce democratic reforms such as fixed election dates and Senate reform. The Liberals appear less inclined to support these measures when examining their policy platform proposals. Yet, when we examine the numbers, it is the Conservatives who are adhering to this foundational principle much more closely than the Liberals.

The evidence in this dissertation cannot support a conclusive argument for why this might be the case. Several hypotheses are suggested here. The first one relates to the institutional legacy of the new Conservative Party. Since the Conservative Party merged

in 2003 from the Reform Party and the old Progressive Conservative Party, the populist elements in the Reform Party movement (Laycock 1994) are affecting the current directional shift of the new party on democratic reform. Since it was by and large the old Mulroney government that had rational decisions for democratic reform, to what extent has the newer elements in the Conservative Party taken over?

The second hypothesis is that the old rules have served to benefit the Liberal Party. Since the Liberals formed the government for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw Liberal governments in Canada, perhaps the ‘old way of doing things’ works primarily in their favour. If these rules are in place, but can be ignored when it is most beneficial to the Liberals, then why change the way democracy operates in Canada, particularly when the party’s chief rival is so good at embarrassing itself when they are in office. A third and related hypothesis would be to what extent are the Conservatives simply political novices who do not know any better when they are in office. Certainly, some of the resignations in the Mulroney government were a result of “rookie” mistakes. Perhaps it is the Conservatives who simply do not know how to play the political game. The discussion in Chapter 5 explores some of these themes.

This chapter has examined ministerial resignations since the beginning of the Trudeau government in 1968 to the end of 2007. The resignations were placed in the categories according to the content analysis methodology developed in Chapter 2. The results reveal some interesting findings as discussed above. In the next chapter, we will examine the British experience with ministerial resignations and analyze those findings.

In Chapter 5, we will then compare the results in both countries to see if there are any similarities and differences.

**CHAPTER 4:  
UNDERSTANDING MINISTERIAL RESIGNATIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

As the original creator of the Westminster parliamentary system, Britain has, in many ways, been the template for foundational principles such as ministerial responsibility. As we discussed in Chapter 1, there have been similar discussions in Britain and Canada related to ministerial resignations. Given the literature reviewed, we should expect to see a similar approach to resignations in the UK as we saw in Canada in the previous chapter.

The evidence presented in this chapter shows that there is little difference between the two countries and the decision for when ministers resign as both countries exhibit a high degree of rationality when discussing ministerial resignations. To demonstrate this argument, the chapter will once again apply the decision-making matrix to understand how ministers in the UK resign. The exact same method for understanding the Canadian cases will be used to understand the British ones. Once again, the rational/planning model of decision-making appears to be the most applicable of any of the models examined in this study. The chapter will begin by summarizing the cases and then it will further discuss the findings.

Table 4.1 outlines the summary of results by government and decision-making status in Britain. In total, there were six administrations that had resignations in the UK. The first was the Conservative government of Edward Heath. Heath won a majority in



Table 4.1: Summary of results by government and decision-making style

	<b>Heath (Conservative)</b>	<b>Wilson (Labour)</b>	<b>Callaghan (Labour)</b>	<b>Thatcher (Conservative)</b>	<b>Major (Conservative)</b>	<b>Blair (Labour)</b>
<b>Rational/planning</b>	Teddy Taylor Jasper More Reginald Maudling	Lord Brayley Norman Buchan Eric Heffer Baroness Hart Robert Hughes Joan Lester	Reg Prentice Joe Aston Robert Cryer	Nicholas Budgen Keith Speed Lord Carrington Humphrey Atkins Richard Luce Ian Gow Michael Heseltine Leon Brittan Edwina Currie Nigel Lawson Sir Geoffrey Row	Tim Smith Allan Stewart John Redwood Nicholas Baker David Willets	Malcolm Chisolm Frank Field Jack Cunningham Peter Mandelson Geoffrey Robinson Peter Mandelson Stephen Byers Estel Morris Beverley Hughes Robin Cook Lord Hunt John Denham Clare Short David Blunkett Tom Watson
<b>Mixed Scanning</b>					Timothy Yeo	
<b>Drift</b>	Lord Lambton Lord Jellicoe				David Mellor Michael Mates Lord Caithness Neil Hamilton Michael Brown Robert Hughes Roderick Richards	Glenda Jackson Frank Dobson
<b>Incremental</b>				Cecil Parkinson		
<b>Groping</b>						
<b>Garbage Can</b>				Nicholas Fairbairn Nicholas Ridley	Charles Wardle	Derrick Foster Andrew Smith David Blunkett
<b>Outliers</b>					Jonathan Aitken	Ron Davies Allan Milburn

in the 1970 election and Wilson did likewise in 1974. Two elections were held in the UK in 1974. The February election was the first one not to produce a majority government since World War II. It was an election that saw Wilson's Labour Party win four more House of Commons seats than Heath's Conservatives, even though Heath won the popular vote by about seven tenths of a percent. Heath tried to form a working coalition in the House of Commons after the February elections but failed to do so. Wilson was then asked to govern, but a hung parliament pushed Wilson to call another election in October. That election produced a razor thin majority for Wilson of just three seats. Between 1974 and 1976, the Labour Party lost their slim majority in the House of Commons through a series of by-election losses and defections.

Wilson's successor is the third administration studied. James Callaghan led a Labour minority government from 1976 until its defeat in 1979. He negotiated a Lib-Lab Pact that allowed the government to stay in power with a coalition partner. In 1979, a Conservative government headed by Margaret Thatcher took over from Callaghan. She won three majority governments in her time in office. The number of seats won was higher in the second and third terms than in her first. She resigned in 1990 and her successor, John Major, took over. Major governed from 1990 until his defeat to Tony Blair's Labour Party in 1997. The interesting point about John Major is that he continually faced threats of leadership challenges during his administration, and he finally resigned as Conservative leader and contested the leadership election to succeed himself. He won that contest easily and continued to govern. Blair's government is the sixth and final administration that is explored in this dissertation. He governed from 1997 until

2007 when he resigned as leader and prime minister. The remaining administrations in this time period did not have resignations to study.

As was the case with Canada, most of the resignations fall within the rational/planning model. Also, drift and the garbage can model are the second and third most prominent decision-making models. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the categorization of cases and conclude with an analysis of the numbers.

### **Rational/planning Model in Britain**

Once again, the first model that will be examined is the rational/planning model. In all, approximately 66% of the cases fall within this category, making it by far the most applicable theory. A similar approach to analyzing the cases was used with the British resignations as was used with the Canadian. These cases show that there is consensus on the resignation. Secondly, the cause and effect relationship in the decision was stated and there was agreement on the cause and effect being discussed. Thirdly, such decisions could either be permanent or temporary, and, finally, linked or not linked to other decisions.

#### *Rational/planning and the Heath Government*

The Conservative government of Edward Heath was the first British administration examined. There were five resignations in total during his term in office and, interestingly, the first three of his resignations are categorized as rational. This first rational case is the resignation of Sir Edward Taylor. Teddy Taylor resigned as Under

Secretary for Health and Education because of his disagreement with the government's position on the European Economic Community. In his resignation letter published in the 28 July 1971 edition of *The Times*, Taylor said that he resigned because it "was in the best interests of the country." The prime minister said that he agreed that Taylor's convictions regarding the government's policy toward Europe were well known and he respected Taylor's willingness to step down based on the policy disagreement. This demonstrates that there was consensus between the two. In terms of the cause and effect relationship, this was demonstrated by the actions of fifteen colleagues who tabled a motion in the House of Commons on 27 July 1971 to suggest that Taylor's resignation was "vindication for parliamentary and political conduct." In terms of the temporal nature of the resignation, there was no mention of this, and this resignation was related to several instances of policy disputes that had occurred before and since the Taylor resignation, such as the next case with Jasper More.

The second rational/planning case in the Heath government is that of Jasper More. He resigned as Vice-Chamberlain of the Household, akin to a junior whip, because he also disagreed with the government's policy toward European integration. There was not a great deal of discussion surrounding this resignation because the position does not rank very high on the governmental ladder. However, from the news that was available, there appeared to be consensus on the resignation, that the cause and effect relationship was related to a policy dispute, that there was no indication of whether the decision was temporary or not, and finally that More's resignation was most obviously linked to that of

Teddy Taylor. All of this demonstrates that More falls under the rational model of decision-making.

The resignation of Reginald Maudling was the third and final resignation of the Heath government that is categorized under the rational/planning model. Maudling resigned as Home Secretary after he was named at an inquiry investigating the bankruptcy of John Poulson, a well-known architect. The prime minister offered the minister another position, but Maudling refused citing in his resignation letter that being a minister of the Crown produced too much of a public spotlight on him and his family. The prime minister ultimately agreed with the minister and his desire to resign, and thus granted it. The cause and effect relationship pertained to the minister's need to resign once named to an investigation. There was also evidence that the decision was going to be temporary. In the prime minister's letter of reply to Maudling, published in the 19 July 1972 edition of *The Times* (1), Heath stated that "I hope it will not be long before you are able to resume your position in the public life of the country." Finally, the case is linked to the resignation of Lord Brayley in the Wilson government.

#### *Rational/planning and the Wilson Government*

With a minority government in February 1974 and a slim 3 seat majority in October of that year, Harold Wilson's second administration was turbulent. All but one of his resignations came when Wilson held a majority. However, the first of the rational decisions is the case of Lord Desmond Brayley. Lord Brayley resigned as Undersecretary of State for the Army at the Ministry of Defence in September 1974 because of a former

business deal that was being investigated. According to the 26 September 1974 edition of *The Times* (2), the reason for the resignation related to the Department of Trade having opened an investigation on Brayley after company auditors discovered some issues with its financial reporting.

In terms of the resignation, the letter published in the above edition of *The Times* states that Brayley concurred with the government in terms of his resignation and maintained that his name would be cleared. This demonstrates consensus. As Brayley was under investigation, it conforms to the parliamentary tradition of resigning while under investigation or part of a criminal proceeding. The usual expectation is that a minister who is under investigation will be reinstated once his name is cleared, which is evident in this case. There was no speculation on whether Lord Brayley would return to cabinet. This is linked closely with the Maudling case above, but there was no link to other ministerial resignations in the second Wilson government.

The second case under the Wilson government is that of Norman Buchan. He tendered his resignation as Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food because of certain policy disagreements he had with the government. Media reports surrounding the resignation, such as one published in the 18 October 1974 edition of *The Times* (1), show that Buchan had a significant policy disagreement with the senior department of agriculture minister. Both his personal statement in the House of Commons and media reports show that the speculated cause of the resignation was a policy clash. Thus, there was no cohesiveness in the ministerial team, and this threatened the principle of cabinet solidarity. This means that there was an accurate acknowledgment of cause and effect.

In viewing the information of this case, nothing suggests that there was a lack of consensus concerning the resignation, which means that it is assumed to exist. In terms of the temporal nature of the decision, there is no indication that Buchan might be invited back to the government benches in the future. In fact, it appeared as though Buchan has made some enemies in the senior ranks of the government. Finally, it is linked to several other policy disagreements such as those of Taylor and More in the Heath administration, but none in Wilson's second government.

The third case of rational decision-making is that of Eric Heffer who provoked his ouster as Minister of State for Industry by knowingly going against the prime minister's directive on how ministers ought to behave in light of a forthcoming referendum that was about to be held related to the UK's membership in the European Economic Community. Wilson sent a letter to Heffer, published in the 10 April 1975 edition of *The Times* (1) stating the following: "Your deliberate decision to speak against the government motion in today's debate, although you had been informed of the Cabinet's decision that ministers who dissented from the Government's recommendations should not speak out in the debate, makes it impossible for me to retain you in my government." The words "unable to retain you in my government" may appear, on the surface, as though the minister was fired. However, the context of the situation suggests that Heffer had threatened to speak out in the debate knowingly in defiance of government and he knew that this action would be met with his resignation from cabinet (see the 10 April 1975 edition of *The Times*, 1). It is in this context that we can come to the conclusion that there was consensus on the resignation.

At the same time, the cause and effect relationship is clearly indicated. The prime minister said that this would be a matter of cabinet solidarity in a very divisive policy for Britain. He requested that his ministers stay quiet if they disagreed with Britain's entry into the EEC. Furthermore, there is no indication that this would be a temporary departure for Heffer. Certainly, the prime minister's tone was one of annoyance at the deviance displayed by his departing minister. This resignation was linked to Buchan's case above in terms of breaking cabinet solidarity, and from the Heath government resignations that were also a result of government policy toward Europe.

The next case categorized under the rational/planning model was the resignation of Baroness Judith Hart. Baroness Hart was the fifth female in British history to be appointed to a ministry, and the front page of the 12 June 1975 edition of *The Times* suggests that she resigned because she felt the prime minister did not give her ministry the independence it deserved. She was a minister who had reservations about the open market economy and trade liberalization, and because this did not match the objectives of the government's intentions for her department, which was the Ministry for Overseas Development, she could not remain in the government. There was consensus on the resignation, since the front page story of the 12 June 1975 edition of *The Times* suggested that she wanted to go back to the back benches to pursue her left-wing views. The cause and effect was related to policy differences and cabinet solidarity. Baroness Hart could no longer support the government's open markets policy, and therefore resigned. There is no indication that the decision was temporary other than the fact that Baroness Hart was



offered another cabinet post, but she refused it. Finally the case was linked to other cases that involved policy disagreements such as Buchan.

The fifth case of a rational application of ministerial resignation was the case of Robert Hughes. He resigned his post as junior minister of the Scottish Office as a protest against the government's white paper on tackling inflation. He believed that the anti-inflation policy was contrary to what Labour MPs were elected to carry out. In the 22 July 1975 edition of *The Times* (1), Hughes suggested that he resigned because he felt that it was just another example of Labour not keeping its promises. There is no reference to dissent in this resignation case, and thus consensus on the decision is assumed to exist. The reason for the resignation was related to a policy dispute, and so the speculation of the cause and effect relationship of the resignation was appropriate. In terms of linkage to other cases, since this was a policy dispute, it is linked to the above cases of Heffer and his refusal to maintain cabinet solidarity over government policy.

The final case of rational/planning in the Wilson government was the resignation of Joan Lester. She resigned as Under Secretary of Education because of the cuts the Labour government was making to that department. Part of her issue related to an external governmental responsibility that had produced a conflict between defending government policy and advocating for government action. Not only was she a minister in the Department of Education, she was also chair of the Labour Party's National Education Committee. In the 23 February 1976 edition of *The Times* (2), she suggested that the government's actions were contradicting the committee's advocacy, and she felt that she

could not advocate for education effectively when the government was at the same time insisting on cutting its spending in that area.

Her case fell under the rational/planning category because it demonstrates all of the attributes associated with this form of decision-making. In terms of consensus, Wilson's letter in reply to Lestor's resignation does not disagree with the reasons for her resignation, and notes that she would have resigned at an earlier occasion had the prime minister allowed her to do so. Again, the cause and effect relationship was centered on a policy dispute. Lestor's resignation letter, published in the 23 February 1976 edition of *The Times* (2), stated that "I have not in fact been happy with the direction of some policies for some time." There was no indication that this resignation would be temporary, and the case was linked to other policy disputes in the Wilson administration. All of the rational/planning cases under the Wilson government, except for Lord Brayley's, were a result of policy disputes and cabinet solidarity, which demonstrates some linkages to other cases.

#### *Rational/planning and the Callaghan Government*

The Callaghan government had three resignations in total and all three of them are categorized under the rational/planning model. The first of these was the case of Reg Prentice, who resigned as Minister for Overseas Development because he was disenchanted with the Labour government and its leadership. In the 22 December 1976 edition of *The Times* (1), it was reported that the tipping point for Prentice was an economic aid package which he did not believe was substantive, and that he thought was

poorly implemented. Among his chief concerns was the fact that the package did not require legislation to be passed, since it relied on non-legislative mechanisms, and it failed to be scrutinized in parliament. In the House of Commons on 21 December 1976, he suggested that the government created the economic package that was “designed to avoid the situation in which the Government would have to rely on Labour MPs to carry through legislation of a Labour Government.” He went further to say that “Looking through the measures, the most obvious point was that none required legislation and hardly any of them required statutory instruments.”

In terms of the characteristics of the decision, consensus is present. In the prime minister’s letter of reply to the resignation published in the 22 December 1976 edition of *The Times* (1), he said that “I am not surprised at your decision.” This shows that Prentice seems to have been displeased with what was going on in the government and that the prime minister expected the resignation. The cause of the resignation was once again for policy reasons. While in his reply to Prentice the prime minister defended his actions and did not agree with Prentice’s categorization of his government, they both believed that this disagreement necessitated a resignation. The resignation decision seemed to be permanent, and was linked to many of the policy disagreements that have already been discussed in this chapter.

The next case was that of Joe Ashton, who spoke in the House of Commons about the need to get the nationalized power authority to pay the wages of its workers for the work that had been done, and asked the government to lean heavily on the corporate managers of the power authority to pay the wages. As reported in the 10 November 1977

edition of *The Times*, at issue was the fact that Ashton spoke out against his own government's handling of the dispute between the workers and managers of the power authority. The cause and effect relationship here is one of cabinet solidarity. While Ashton refused to say that the resignation was based on the fact that he had a policy dispute, he nevertheless knew that by speaking out against his government's handling of the dispute, he would have threatened cabinet solidarity on the issue. Thus, both he and Callaghan agreed on the resignation. The cause and effect relationship was the threat to cabinet solidarity. The decision was deemed to be permanent, as Ashton continued to discuss the fact that he wanted to return to the government's backbench from which he could more freely discuss the issues of government.

The final case under the Callaghan government was the resignation of Robert Cryer. He resigned as Under Secretary of State for Industry because he did not agree with the government's decision to cut off funding for the Kirkby Manufacturing and Engineering workers cooperative. The 22 November 1978 edition of *The Times* (29) also stated that he was not pleased about the end to sanction policies in place for Ford Motor Company's wholly owned British subsidiary, which essentially allowed the foreign owned company to challenge domestic corporations for government contracts.

A story in the 21 November 1978 edition of *The Times* (1) suggested that Callaghan was indifferent about the resignation. This indifference suggests that there was no overt disagreement with the decision of Cryer's resignation and, because of this, consensus is said to exist. This was also another obvious policy disagreement, which is linked to the other two resignations in the Callaghan administration. There was also no

indication that Cryer would be back in cabinet after this resignation, meaning that the decision was likely a permanent one, and the prime minister's apparent indifference leads to the conclusion that Callaghan was not anxious to bring him back into the government.

### *Rational/planning and the Thatcher Government*

Unlike the Callaghan administration, there were many resignations in the Margaret Thatcher administration. The vast majority of these resignations were under the rational/planning model. The first resignation of the Thatcher administration categorized under the rational model is that of Keith Speed, who resigned as Minister of State for the Navy because he disagreed with the government's plans to reduce navy expenditures. In the speech to the House of Commons on 15 May 1981, he stated that the government's planned cuts would "threaten the security of every man, woman and child living in Britain." As Minister, he felt that the government had contravened the direction he thought it should take in his own ministry, and thus he could no longer serve in a government that did not support his vision.

There was no indication of a difference of opinion on the resignation; therefore consensus was considered to have existed. There was also a policy difference because the government acted in opposition to what the minister had suggested. This depicts a cause and effect relationship. The evidence gathered on Speed's resignation did not provide any indication that he may be asked to rejoin cabinet at a later date and so the decision was likely a permanent one. Finally, this decision was linked to the long list of cabinet departures in the UK that were a result of policy disputes before and since Speed's

resignation such as Cryer's in the Callaghan administration and the next resignation, which is that of Lord Carrington.

The second case of resignation under the rational/planning model is that of Lord Carrington. He resigned as Foreign Secretary because of the government's poorly executed policy toward the Argentine seizure of the Falkland Islands, which, in his opinion, made Britain an embarrassment around the world. This is not a dispute about policy; rather it was an administrative issue related to poor policy implementation. Essentially, the British and the Argentine forces were engaged in an undeclared war over the islands. Although the British outnumbered their opponents by a significant margin, the undeclared war lasted over two months, and it showed that the military might of Britain was no longer as great as it once was. Thus, as the minister responsible for the response to the Argentine seizure, Lord Carrington felt that it was necessary for him to take responsibility for the failure in dealing with the issue more adequately.

This was a rational decision because both Thatcher and Lord Carrington did not seem to disagree that the departure was the right move. Also, in the resignation letter published in the 6 April 1982 edition of *The Times* (4), Lord Carrington wrote: "I have been responsible for the conduct of that policy and think it right that I should resign." This shows that Lord Carrington was resigning because of maladministration, and shows appropriate knowledge of cause and effect. The resignation also appears to be temporary. Thatcher's letter of reply to Lord Carrington's resignation, which was published in the 6 April 1982 edition of *The Times* (4), said that she is "strengthened by conviction that you have great service still to render our country." This suggests that Thatcher valued Lord

Carrington's service, and wished him to return to the government benches. In terms of linkage, although this was one of the first resignations for administrative reasons, the resignations of Humphrey Atkins and Richard Luce that soon followed were linked to the Carrington case.

Atkins and Luce both resigned as Lord Privy Seal as a result of the failure of government policy related to the Argentine seizure of the Falkland Islands. Both decisions exhibited consensus between the prime minister and the ministers. The administrative failings in the Falklands dispute were the cause of their resignation. Aitkin's letter or resignation to the prime minister, which was also published in the 6 April 1982 edition of *The Times* (4), stated that "While Peter Carrington is Secretary of State, I as a member of your cabinet, share fully with him the responsibility for the conduct of Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs." This shows the same acknowledgement of the administrative and policy failure that Lord Carrington showed. The decisions of both Atkins and Luce to resign appeared to be temporary. In the prime minister's response to Atkins, published in the same edition of *The Times*, she stated: "You have given your country service of the utmost value, and I have no doubt that you will continue to do so in the future." In Thatcher's response to Luce, again published in the same edition of *The Times*, she stated the following: "It was in recognition of your considerable qualities that I appointed you minister of state in September of last year. I am sure you will have another opportunity in due course to render further service." Thus, both decisions to resign were temporary, and they were both categorized as rational decision-making.

The next rational decision regarding ministerial resignations in the Thatcher government was the case of Nicholas Budgen. As reported in the 10 May 1982 edition of *The Times*, he resigned over a policy disagreement with the government on how to deal with the situation over Northern Ireland devolution, which was a common matter of cabinet disagreements throughout the study period. Consensus appeared to exist not only between the minister and the prime minister, but also among other cabinet colleagues. For example, James Prior, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, suggested that he shared the minister's regret, and said that he had high regard for Budgen, which was reported in 11 May 1983 edition of *The Times* (4). The cause and effect relationship was acknowledged to be one of policy disagreement. There was no indication that the decision would be temporary, and it is linked to other policy disagreements such as the case of Keith Speed.

The seventh case of rational decisions related to ministerial responsibility was that of Ian Gow, who resigned as Treasury Minister of State because he disagreed with the government's Anglo-Irish agreement. In his resignation letter, published in the 16 November 1985 edition of *The Times* (1), Gow stated: "I believe that the change of policy in Northern Ireland, including the involvement of a foreign power in a consultative role in the administration of the province, will prolong, and will not diminish Ulster's agony." This was another resignation related to the whole issue of relationships between Britain and Northern Ireland. In this case, the prime minister accepted the resignation and there was consensus. The cause of the resignation was a policy disagreement, and therefore this was an accurate speculation of the relationship. The decision also appeared to be



permanent and it involved a long list of cases that served as precedents, particularly Budgen's resignation immediately before it.

The resignation of Michael Heseltine is the next case of a rational decision taken in the Thatcher administration. Heseltine officially resigned because he wanted the government to intervene in the affairs of helicopter manufacturer Westland PLC. Thatcher refused to provide such assistance because it went against her free market values. There was consensus on the resignation. An article appearing in the 10 January 1986 edition of the American *Wall Street Journal* reported that he resigned because a "basis of trust" no longer existed between him and the prime minister. The cause of the resignation was thus a break with cabinet solidarity. It has been reported that Heseltine tried to put the subject up for discussion at cabinet. Every time he attempted to do this, his efforts were blocked. This left Heseltine unable to support the cabinet. It was not that Heseltine disagreed with cabinet policy, but rather that the cabinet did not agree with the minister's ideas, which links well to the Keith Speed resignation. Finally, in terms of the temporal nature of the decision, it appeared to be permanent. The same *Wall Street Journal* report said that "Heseltine is something of a "loner" in the House of Commons, without strong support in the backbenches. His fate, some say, might be simply to disappear." Since there was no indication from any of the British media examined that suggests that Heseltine would come back, this decision is deemed to be permanent.

The Westland affair, as it became known, saw a bitter government fight arise between Heseltine and the prime minister. The main issue here was that there was a bid by an American firm to purchase the last helicopter manufacturer in the UK. Heseltine

wanted the government to try to forge a European solution with Italian and French manufacturers, but the prime minister did not feel that it was necessary to intervene. Yet, there was another aspect to the story. Thatcher was not the only person to disagree with Heseltine in cabinet.

Leon Brittan, whose resignation was the next rational decision under the Thatcher government, was Trade and Industry Secretary and he agreed with the prime minister. He resigned because he was the minister who leaked an internal government letter that caused the break of cabinet solidarity and Heseltine's resignation. Even though the prime minister resisted accepting the resignation, she eventually decided to do so because it threatened to thwart the work of cabinet. There are two cause and effect relationships that need to be mentioned. First was the issue that had a resignation not been accepted, it threatened to create disunity in the Thatcher cabinet. It also pertained to the discharge of personal duties. Had Brittan not issued the leak of an internal memo, he probably would not have been asked to resign. The fact that he did reflects on his negligence in discharging his duties.

The next case involves Edwina Currie. As reported on the front page of the 16 December 1988 edition of *The Times*, she resigned as junior Health Minister for saying: "most of the country's egg production is infected with salmonella." The fallout of this statement was significant since it almost led to the collapse of the domestic egg production industry. It was said that there was consensus about her need to resign. *The Times* further reported that "at least one senior minister said that as the situation deteriorated it had been agreed that it was impossible for her to stay in the Government."

The cause and effect that led to this resignation had to do with the discharge of Currie's government duties. Because of her statement that was so damaging to the government and to the domestic egg industry, Currie could not remain in cabinet after her outlandish remarks. The decision to resign was not greeted with a hope for the minister to return to the government, and this decision was linked to other mistakes in the personal discharge of duties such as the preceding case of Leon Brittan.

The next resignation in the rational category is that of Nigel Lawson who resigned as Chancellor of the Exchequer because he was involved in a policy dispute with advisors at 10 Downing Street. Sir Alan Walters was the prime minister's economic advisor and much of the economic policy was being established by him, and not the cabinet minister. This is an interesting case since Canadian observers such as Donald Savoie (1999) have written about the increased concentration of power at the centre, with the centre being the prime minister and the central agencies he controls. In the resignation of Lawson, we see a similar trend occurring, and the minister was resigning because of this reality.

There was consensus on the resignation. The cause of this resignation appears to be cabinet solidarity. In his letter of resignation published in a 26 October 1989 *Reuters News* report, Lawson wrote: "The successful conduct of economic policy is possible only if there is -- and is seen to be -- full agreement between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer." If the minister responsible for the country's finances cannot agree with the prime minister and her office on economic policy, the potential exists for disagreement and conflict in the development of government policy. Furthermore, the decision seemed likely to be permanent, as there was no indication that

the prime minister wished Lawson to rejoin her cabinet. In terms of linkage, the case is closely associated with the resignations of Keith Speed and also that of Michael Heseltine in the sense that none of the policies Lawson was advocating would ever achieve the approval of the cabinet.

The final resignation in the Thatcher era that falls under this category is that of Sir Geoffrey Howe. Howe resigned as Deputy Prime Minister over the government's policy related to the European Union. His resignation came a few days after he made a television appearance stating that Thatcher would eventually end her opposition to the European common currency, in explicit opposition to the government position, as reported in the 2 November 1990 edition of *The Times*. The prime minister appeared to agree with the resignation showing consensus, although she stated in her letter of reply to Howe that the differences "are not as great as you suggest."

In terms of the speculation over the cause of the resignation, Howe was quite clear that it was about cabinet government. In his letter of resignation to the prime minister, which was published in the abovementioned edition of *The Times* (1), Howe wrote: "Cabinet government is all about trying to persuade one another from within. So too, within the unique partnership of nations that is making the European Community. Plain speaking certainly – but matched always by mutual respect and restraint in pursuit of a common cause." This is a clear reference as to the cause of the resignation being associated with cabinet solidarity. This was also a case where Howe acknowledged that his public statements were hurtful to the government position, and thus he admitted that he did not discharge his duties appropriately. In terms of the permanence of the decision

and linkage, there was no indication of a return to cabinet for Howe, and the case is most obviously linked to the Edwina Currie case as they both made comments that were contrary to government policy.

In all, the rational decisions in the Thatcher government involved either a policy dispute, maladministration, or a failure in the discharge of personal duties. In the next section, we look at the John Major administration, which, despite being in office for a shorter time frame than Thatcher, had more ministerial resignations than his predecessor. Somewhat interestingly, only two of these are under the rational model.

#### *Rational/planning and the Major Government*

The Major administration had the worst record among governments in terms of applying a rational model to its cabinet resignation decisions. He is the only prime minister studied where there were fewer rational decisions than other cases. One of the major reasons for this is the fact that private scandal played a much more prominent role in Major's resignations, and this was not related to one of the cause and effect relationships that were outlined in Appendix A. Because one could not determine the cause and effect relationship in many of these resignations, they could not be categorized as rational.

The first rational/planning case under the Major administration was that of Tim Smith who resigned as junior Northern Ireland minister in what was known as the cash-for-questions scandal. Smith accepted monetary compensation from Mohammed Al Fayed to ask a question on his behalf in the Commons. Not only did he receive these

consultancy fees, he failed to disclose the length of this relationship according to the 21 October 1994 edition of *The Times* (1). Al Fayed paid these fees by stuffing envelopes full of cash, thus making the money difficult to trace. He was interested in seeking information on the sale of the Harrods department store in which he had an interest.

There was a clear consensus on the resignation. Major's letter of reply to Smith's resignation, which was published on the front page of the 21 October 1994 edition of *The Times*, stated the following: "I accept your account of the background to this. None the less, it was clearly wrong, and in these circumstances I accept your resignation." A cabinet minister who accepts payment in exchange for a service or good is engaged in influence peddling in contravention of the law, and thus it is necessary for the minister to leave cabinet. In this sense, it dishonours the traditions of parliament. In terms of the permanence of the decision and whether it was linked, there was no indication that this was a temporary decision, and it was linked to the Hamilton case.

The second case was that of Allan Stewart. This is a bizarre case when viewed in retrospect. Stewart resigned as the Scottish Industry Minister because he waved a pickaxe at protesters. In the 8 February 1995 edition of *The Guardian*, Stewart was reported to have admitted to the police that he picked up the pickaxe, but says he acted in self-defence. A protester, on the other hand, counterclaimed that Stewart held the axe overhead and used threatening language when he did so, according to a report in the 8 February 1995 edition of *The Independent*. Because police were investigating the situation and could not rule out the possibility of charging Stewart, he resigned from office. He was later fined for breach of the peace. Both the prime minister and the

departing minister appeared to have agreed that the resignation was warranted. The cause and effect relationship was both a poor discharge of public duties and a violation of parliamentary tradition. There was no immediate link to this case.

The next rational case is that of John Redwood who resigned as Welsh Secretary in cabinet because he wanted to replace John Major as the party leader after the prime minister decided to resign and contest the leadership to silence his critics. There was consensus on the issue, since Major was about to resign his position as prime minister temporarily to contest the leadership of his party as well, and so there is congruency between the two. The cause and effect relationship here was essentially cabinet solidarity. Once a minister contests the job of the prime minister, it suggests that the minister no longer has faith in his leader. The departure was likely permanent. Certainly, Major made no mention of his desire to reappoint a minister who had denounced his leadership. Finally, there was no evident link to any of the resignations seen to date.

Nicholas Baker is the next case that is categorized as a rational decision. Baker resigned as home office minister because of ill-health. He would not elaborate on the nature of his medical condition and was going to remain as an MP until the next election. Baker ended up passing away just before the 1997 election. Consensus was assumed because there was nothing to indicate that there was none present. The cause and effect relationship was that the member could no longer adequately discharge his duties due to his medical condition. The decision was likely permanent as he decided not to contest the 1997 election campaign. Finally, the decision did not appear to have any linkages to other previous ministerial resignations.

The final example of a rational/planning model in the Major government was that of David Willets who resigned as Paymaster General because of a scathing report issued by the Commons Standards and Privileges Committee. The December 1996 report said that “We are very concerned that any Member should dissemble in his account to the committee” (as cited in the 12 December 1996 edition of *The Herald*, 1). This underlines the importance parliament places on being told the truth. If a minister is going to mislead parliament, it is a resignable offence, and has a direct link to the poor discharge of his public duties. This is the most obvious cause of his resignation. There was also consensus demonstrated in the resignation. In the 12 December 1996 edition of *The Herald* (1), a Downing Street spokesperson was reported to have said that: “Mr Willets is an honourable man and he had said very firmly that he believed the only course for him was to resign and therefore the question did not arise.” In saying this, the prime minister did not request that Willets remain in his government, and thus agreed that the resignation was warranted. In terms of whether the decision was permanent, it appears that the prime minister would not invite Willets back to cabinet, and the case was linked to people who had misled parliament like Mates.

#### *Rational/planning and the Blair Government*

The Tony Blair government was one of the longest serving in British history. This may explain why Blair had the most resignations of any of the prime ministers studied in Canada and Britain. The first case under the rational/planning model was that of Malcolm Chisholm, who resigned as a minister in the Scottish Office as a result of the



disagreement with the government's single parent policy. At issue was the government's plan to reduce the benefits to single parents with the hope that this decreased reliance on the public purse would encourage more women to seek work. Chisholm claimed that this went contrary to the values of the Labour Party, and it was the opposite of what they said they would do when elected. He thus could not support the government on this issue.

There appears to be consensus on the issue. The prime minister's letter of reply to Chisholm, which was published in the 11 December 1997 edition of *The Times* (12), Blair suggests that he agrees with the minister's sentiments, but argued that the government had to make tough choices. The cause of the resignation, as stated in Chisholm's resignation letter was policy related. He wrote the following in his letter of resignation published in the same edition of *The Times*: "I have enjoyed my work there enormously but cannot bring myself to vote with the Government tonight on lone parents." Clearly, he felt strongly enough not to support the government in this instance and resigned. There was no indication of whether this disagreement would be temporary and it is linked to many other policy disagreements in previous governments.

Frank Field is the second resignation that can be categorized under the rational model. Field resigned as a junior minister of social security who was responsible for welfare reform because he felt that he could do a better job advocating for welfare reform from the backbenches. This is notable disagreement with the overall direction of the Blair government. The 30 July 1998 edition of the *Financial Times* has a story saying that there was a disagreement between social policy advocates such as Field and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown who did not want to loosen the purse strings.

In terms of the four questions that categorize this decision as a rational one, there appears to be consensus on the issue. In an article appearing in the 29 July 1998 edition of the *Daily Mail* (8), it is suggested that Field wanted to offer his resignation a dozen times before it finally was accepted. While this suggests that the prime minister did not want to see Field go, it inevitably indicates that he finally agreed that it was time for him to do so. In terms of the cause of the resignation, Field could no longer maintain cabinet solidarity. Downing Street is reported to have said in the same article that “he was a source of friction and discontent.” There was no indication that this decision would be temporary, and it is linked to others who have policy disagreements and could not maintain their support for the government, such as Chisholm.

Peter Mandelson resigned twice from the government and these resignations were for similar reasons. The first case involved a loan that the Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robinson, gave to the Trade and Industry Minister. The sum amounted to 373,000 pounds in 1996, which was 9 times the amount of money Mandelson was making as an MP at the time. He used the money to buy an expensive home. The issue here is two fold, as reported on the front page of the 24 December 1998 edition of *The Guardian*. One is that Mandelson did not disclose the loan, against ministerial guidelines, and secondly that Robinson’s vast business empire was under investigation by Mandelson’s department.

There was consensus on the need for a resignation as no dissension against the decision emerged. In terms of the cause and effect relationship, an examination of the resignation letters to some extent reveals what led to the resignation. In Mandelson’s resignation letter, which was published in the 24 December 1998 edition of *The*

*Guardian*, he was quoted as follows: “As I said publicly yesterday, I do not believe that I have done anything wrong or improper. But I should not, with all candour, have entered into the arrangement. I should, having done so, told you and other colleagues whose advice I value. And I should have told my permanent secretary on learning of the inquiry into Geoffrey Robinson, although I had entirely stood aside from this.” In saying that he should have disclosed the loan to the prime minister, Mandelson is suggesting to his colleagues that he misled them, which is a failure to properly discharge his public duties. The decision also appears to be temporary. The prime minister’s response to Mandelson, published in the above mentioned article was as follows: “But I also want you to know that you have my profound thanks for all you have done and my belief that, in the future, you will achieve much, much more with us.” This suggests that the decision is temporary. Finally, this decision is linked to other decisions in which parliament was misled, such as his second resignation (see below) and the resignation of Willets in an earlier government.

The next rational case is the resignation of Jack Cunningham. Cunningham resigned as Minister for the Cabinet Office to make way for newer members. On the front page of the 12 October 1999 edition of *The Guardian*, Cunningham reveals this when he wrote that “the events such as George Robertson’s appointment and Frank Dobson’s resignation have dictated an earlier, more significant reorganisation of the cabinet than may have been anticipated.” This is one of the few resignations in Britain whereby a member of the cabinet resigns to make way for new members, and allows the government to carry out a more elaborate reorganization of its cabinet. Cabinet rotation

is one of the cause and effect relationships sought in a rational decision. There is consensus between the departing minister and the prime minister on this resignation. The prime minister's letter of reply, found in the abovementioned article, demonstrates consensus by saying "it is typical of you that you should have offered to put your position at my disposal earlier this year." This quote also shows that there has been some plan in place to remake the face of the Blair cabinet, and to make way for younger members. Cunningham was 60 at the time of his retirement, and his letter of resignation stated that he wanted to move on to do other things. The retirement was seen to be a permanent departure from the government, and there were no links to other government resignations.

The next case of a rational resignation in the Blair government is the second resignation by Peter Mandelson. In this case, Mandelson resigned because he had misled parliament over his intervention in a passport application for a Millennium Dome sponsor. An article in the 25 January 2001 edition of *The Daily Telegraph* chronicles the evolving story. What started as a denial and a plea of innocence turned into a story in which the minister knew what was actually occurring within his department in a matter of a few days.

There appears to be consensus with this resignation, and the cause was misleading parliament and the prime minister, which amounts to the inappropriate discharge of government duties. In terms of whether the decision could be changed, it appeared as if Mandelson's government career was over with this second resignation. A story appearing in the 25 January 2001 edition of *The Times* (1) stated that this brought "his ministerial career to a very public end." However, that sentiment was changed later in

2002 when Mandelson was cleared of lying. Nevertheless, the temporal nature of the decision must be assigned at the time of the decision, and this minister's second resignation was not met with universal support about a return to cabinet. Finally, this resignation was linked to his own prior resignation and to others who have misled parliament, such as David Willets in the previous administration.

The next case assigned to this category is the resignation of Stephen Byers who was Minister of Transport. The reason for his resignation related to a sequence of problems related to the administration of his government department and his political staff. As the party's "spin doctor" who was often placed in challenging portfolios, Byers was frequently put in a position where he was involved in misleading and deceiving parliament. However, Byers had problems with his political staff stemming from an 11 September 2001 e-mail by his political adviser, Jo Moore, that essentially said that it was a good day to release something the government wanted to bury. The following year, Byers staff brought the issue up again during the funeral of Princess Margaret, as Byers' press secretary, Martin Sixsmith, suggested that Moore better not bury any news on the day either. This resulted in an apparent resignation of both staffers, which Byers announced at that time. However, it was later discovered that he had misled parliament, and that one of the staffers did not in fact resign.

The pressure mounted on Byers to resign, and the prime minister accepted his decision. The cause of the resignation can be associated both with his poor administration of his political office, and more importantly, his misleading of parliament. He appeared to be nonchalant about this however. In a press interview that appeared in

the 29 May 2002 edition of *The Guardian* (3), he said the following: “The danger is that if people have a view, then there will be a textual analysis of every word you say. You can do an extended interview for half an hour and if people then pick through it, I am sure you can find inconsistencies.” He was suggesting that the inconsistencies that led to the allegations of misleading parliament could happen to anybody if one looked very carefully at what the person was saying. The decision also seemed to be permanent, as the minister had been a controversial figure in cabinet for some time. Finally, this case was linked to the second Mandleson resignation because of the extent to which Byers misled parliament.

In the seventh case, Estelle Morris resigned as Education Secretary because of poor administration of her department. There were a series of problems that were associated with the resignation, including the government’s inability to meet its literacy targets and making the exam easier to boost test scores. The prime minister demonstrated consensus with Morris by accepting her resignation with regret. In terms of determining the cause, it was poor administration in her department. In the 24 October 2002 edition of *The Guardian*, Morris stated the following: “If I am really honest with myself I was not enjoying the job. I could not accept being second best. I am hard at judging my own performance. I was not good at setting the priorities. I had to know I was making a difference, and I do not think I was giving the prime minister enough.” This clearly shows that she was not happy with her own performance, and the performance of her department. There was no indication that the resignation would be temporary and the fact

that this was a case of poor administration was linked to others such as that of Lord Carrington.

The next case is that of Beverly Hughes, who resigned as immigration minister because of a visa scandal involving Romanian and Bulgarian nationals. The major issue was that this immigration minister misled parliament while discussing the matter in the House of Commons. The 4 April 2004 edition of *The Times* (3) reported that the explanation given to Members of the House was untenable. It became clear from Downing Street that the minister had actually known about the visa scam that allowed Eastern European immigrants to enter the UK with forged documents for several years. The news reports studied in this resignation confirmed that there was consensus between the prime minister and the minister, that the cause leading to the resignation was misleading parliament, that the decision was likely to be permanent, and that the decision was linked to Mandelson's second resignation.

One of the most notable resignations of the Tony Blair administration was the resignation of Robin Cook, which is the next rational case. The resignation is notable because it was the first break from the Tony Blair government in terms of the government's policy on international terrorism and the Iraq War. The resignation made international news because it showed that Blair was losing the support of his own party by siding with the United States and its views on fighting terrorism, instead of using multilateral agreements at the United Nations. Cook's letter of resignation to the prime minister, published in the 18 March 2003 edition of the *Financial Times* (4), stated the following: "In principle I believe it is wrong to embark on military action without broad

international support. In practice I believe it is against Britain's interests to create a precedent for unilateral military action.” This set the stage for a political battle in the UK that threatened to split the Labour Party.

In terms of consensus, there was agreement that a resignation was necessary because Cook broke ranks with the government on an important policy direction. The prime minister tried to get Cook to agree to the policy, but once it was determined that this was not going to happen, then a resignation was sought and received. In terms of meeting the cause and effect conditions, it was quite evident in this case. In the 18 March 2003 edition of *The Times* (1), Cook said the following: “I can't accept collective responsibility for the decision to commit Britain now to military action in Iraq without international agreement or domestic support.” His statement points quite clearly to his inability to support cabinet solidarity on this issue and therefore his need to resign. There was no acknowledgement that this resignation would be temporary, and it was linked to other policy disagreements such as Chisholm's resignation.

The three remaining resignations came as a result of Cook's inspiration for leaving the government because of Iraq. The first two of these were most obviously associated with this decision. Lord Philip Hunt resigned as a health minister for the same reasons as Cook. The 18 March 2003 *Reuters News* report quoted the minister as saying: “At the end of the day, I don't support this action [on Iraq] and it would be hypocritical for me to stay in government.” The other resignation was that of John Denham. According to the 19 March 2003 edition of *The Guardian* (5), Denham resigned as Home Office minister because of the UK's stance on Iraq. Clare Short, the third resignation,



was also displeased with the government's position on Iraq, but she stayed on for a few more weeks. Her case will be discussed below.

Like the Cook resignation, both the Hunt and Denham cases showed consensus between all parties. Both also showed that the reason for their resignation related to a policy disagreement with the government and cabinet solidarity. In his letter of resignation published in the 19 March 2003 edition of *The Guardian* (5), Lord Hunt wrote that "No one who has been in government will say they can support everything the government does, but I think a government minister must support the broad direction of policy." In failing to do this, Hunt felt that he should resign. The same sentiments were expressed by Denham. In both cases, the agreements appear to be permanent, and they are linked to each other, and to the resignation of Cook.

The next ministerial resignation case categorized as rational/planning case in Britain is that of Clare Short. She resigned as Secretary of State for International Development because she was increasingly straying from the government message and displeased with the policies that were being framed by the government. In her statement to the House of Commons on 12 May 2003, Short stated the following:

Expertise in our system lies in departments. Those who dictate from the centre do not have full access to this expertise and they do not consult. This leads to bad policy. In addition, under our constitutional arrangements, legal, political and financial responsibility flows through secretaries of state to Parliament. Increasingly those who are wielding power are not accountable and not scrutinized. Thus we have the powers of a presidential-type system with the automatic majority of a parliamentary system. My conclusion is that these arrangements are leading to increasingly poor policy initiatives being rammed through Parliament, straining and abusing party loyalty and undermining the people's respect for our political system.

These are very powerful words coming from the former minister. She is uttering a complaint that parliamentary government in Britain is increasingly ignoring the institutional processes of parliament, and this is leading to poor policy choices. Once again, we have a case of ministerial resignation that speaks to the power at the centre of government.

In terms of the characteristics of the decision, they all reflect rational decisions to resign. Consensus is shown by the many articles (e.g. 10 May 2003 edition of *The Times* on page 8) that point to her declining stock as a minister. She was skipping cabinet meetings and was seen by her supporters in the backbenches as too weak to appear in cabinet as an advocate of a policy that the government expected to rush through the backbenches. In their view, if Short could not stand up for a policy as a minister who is supposed to support the government under cabinet solidarity, then why should the backbenchers do so? This addresses the cause and effect relationship. In fact, Short effectively mocks the entire notion of cabinet solidarity, as she noted in her statement to the House of Commons on 12 May 2003 that “There is no real collective responsibility because there is no collective, just diktats in favour of increasingly badly thought through policy initiatives that come from on high.” This provides further evidence that Short could no longer support the government under the tenets of collective responsibility. In term of the permanent nature of the decision and linkage to previous decisions, there was no indication that this departure was temporary, especially considering her overall dissatisfaction with the government, and this decision was linked predominantly to those of Cook, Lord Hunt and Denham.

The next case of a rational resignation is the first resignation of David Blunkett. He resigned as Home Office Secretary because he was involved in getting his partner's nanny, who is from the Philippines, a permanent residency visa. An article in the 16 December 2004 edition of the *Financial Times* (2) suggests that the minister was providing special treatment to this nanny, which effectively amounted to an abuse of power. There was consensus around the issue. In terms of cause and effect relationship, this was an error in the discharge of his government duties. Clearly, the minister was abusing his power to fast track the visa of his partner's nanny. This case has similarities to the second Peter Mandelson resignation where the latter fast tracked a Millennium Dome applicant outside the established protocol. The decision for Blunkett seemed likely to be permanent. The exchange of letters between Blair and Blunkett, published in the 15 December 2004 edition of *The Times*, do not offer any indication that Blunkett will be invited back to cabinet. The prime minister made meticulous note of Blunkett's achievements while in the government. He then suggested that "You leave Government with your integrity intact and your achievements acknowledged by all." This appears to indicate that Blunkett might not return to the government (despite the fact that he later did and resigned from government again – see below). This is categorized as a permanent decision because the emphasis is on leaving government with no mention of a possible return.

The last case of a rational resignation is that of Tom Watson who resigned as Junior Defence Minister because he could no longer support the leadership of the prime minister. It was part of a revolt on the part of government MPs to try and force the prime

minister to announce a resignation date. Tom Watson was an ally of Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, and clearly wanted his man to be prime minister. Blair agreed to his cabinet departure thereby showing consensus. The cause and effect relationship being speculated was confirmed when Watson wrote in a letter published in the 7 September 2006 edition of *The Guardian* (5) that he shares “the view of the overwhelming majority of the party and the country that the only way the party and the government can renew itself in office is urgently to renew its leadership.” This is obviously a threat to cabinet collective solidarity if a minister does not believe in the direction of the government nor has faith in the prime minister. This resignation is likely permanent since it is unlikely that the minister will be back in a government in which he has lost faith. This case is linked to Redwood, who challenged John Major’s leadership, but there are no Blair resignations that are quite like this one. It was also linked to all the ministers who disagreed with the prime minister’s direction on a host of issues, such as the resignations due to the government’s position in Iraq of Cook, Lord Hunt, and Denham.

This concludes the 41 cases of rational decision-making in the UK. Most of the reasons for rational decisions involved questions of policy, cabinet solidarity, maladministration, and also instances where ministers departed because they misled parliament. The following sections will highlight some of the hybrid and non-rational cases of decision-making. Only about one third of the cases examined fall under these two headings, with a small number remaining outside the decision theory matrix.

### **Hybrid Decision-Making in Britain**

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are two decision theories that are part of the hybrid decision-making category. Mixed-scanning is the first of these. Overall, there was only one case that could be attributed to mixed-scanning, and it occurred during the John Major administration. Recall that in the matrix, mixed-scanning will show that there is consensus on the newer interpretation of whether somebody should resign, that the cause and effect relationship is not known because the parameters for resignation fall outside the four categories previously discussed, that the decisions tend to be temporary, and that there is no link to past decisions.

#### *Mixed-Scanning and the Major Government*

The case of Timothy Yeo in the John Major Government is a classic case of how mixed-scanning can be applied to decisions of parliamentary government. The case is very interesting because, as the front page story in the 6 January 1994 edition of *The Independent* states, it was the constituency association of Timothy Yeo that passed a motion of non-confidence in their member. The reason for requesting the resignation had nothing to do with his ministerial duties, but with his private life. Because the members of the constituency association voted non-confidence in their member, they felt that the prime minister should drop him from his cabinet. The constituency association voted non-confidence in the minister because of an extramarital affair. This has nothing to do with the discharge of his duties as a minister. This certainly marks a change from when ministerial resignations were originally thought to be appropriate. It is not only the

government that can control when a minister must go, but rank-and-file members of a political party as well.

In his resignation letter, published in the abovementioned edition of *The Independent*, Yeo states the following: “Although I consider that my personal life has never in any way prevented me from discharging my duties as a minister, I now believe that I have no alternative than to step down from the Government.” This suggests that he is forced to accept the rationale of his constituents, and that the government accept this as well. The cause of this resignation does not fall under the relationships that provide adequate cause for a resignation, since the reason is related to his constituency association’s decision. The decision also appears to be temporary. In the prime minister’s reply to the resignation letter, published again in the same edition of *The Independent*, he states the following: “I am sorry that your talents will not now be available to the Government; I hope that they may be used again at a future stage.” This shows that the prime minister is interested in seeking the return of his departing cabinet minister at some point in the future. In terms of linkage, the articles painstakingly suggest that this resignation is in stark contrast with others like Mellor and Profumo, and quite rightly so. There are no other cases that place a constituency association in such a powerful position as to scrutinize the sexual misbehaviour of a member of cabinet. This therefore shows quite clearly that this decision falls within the mixed-scanning category.

*Drift in the Heath Government*

The second hybrid model is drift. This model shows that short term rational decisions, which made sense at the time the decision was made, lead to a deviation from the foundational principle when such decisions were taken collectively. As was the case in Canada, the drift category contained the second largest number of ministerial resignations. Only three governments had cases that fell under the drift category. The governments of Heath and Blair each had two while John Major's government had by far the largest number.

The first of the cases of drift in the Heath government is that of Lord Lambton who resigned as Under Secretary of State for Defence, due to a "call girl scandal" that was emerging. The scandal involved ministers of the government who were involved with an escort agency. In his letter of resignation, he stated that he was resigning for personal and health reasons. Heath, who was on a trip to Paris at the time, accepted the resignation there rather than doing so upon his return. This demonstrates the consensus that was apparent with this resignation. In terms of the cause and effect relationship, the speculation was related to the "call girl scandal," and was a private matter. This is not a traditional reason for ministerial resignation, as it did not affect the administration of a government department, even though it may have raised some issues of personal character. In terms of the permanence of the decision, Lord Lambton stated that he was going to resign his seat and thus it was quite clear that this was a permanent decision. In terms of linkage, there were many who linked the resignation to the precedent case of Profumo, but this is most closely associated with the resignation of Lord Jellicoe below.

Lord Jellicoe resigned as Leader of the House of Lords and Minister of the Civil Service because he was also associated with the same ring of escorts. As the story in the 30 May 1973 edition of *The Times* (1) highlights, this caused embarrassment not only to himself but to the entire government. Because it was embarrassing to the government, both the minister and the prime minister agreed that the resignation was necessary. The cause of the resignation deviates from those matters which are typically associated with resignations, since this is a private matter. Furthermore, the decision was likely to be permanent, and it was most obviously linked to Lord Lambton's case.

These two resignations came as a result of private affairs. Private affairs do not constitute a breach in the administration of a department or a policy dispute. Since they do not constitute a breach of the duties of the minister, they were never part of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. These cases constitute one of the bases for the rest of the cases under drift. John Major has the most cases of drift in his application of ministerial responsibility. As we look at those cases after 1990, we begin to get a sense of how these decisions in the early 1970s have effectively led to a deviation from the foundational principle when taken collectively.

#### *Drift and the Major Administration*

In total, the John Major administration had seven resignations that can be categorized under drift. The cases that were placed in the drift category for Major amount to the biggest decision-making category for that government. This is the first time this has happened in either the Canadian or British case. In fact, 40% of the cases for the



Major administration fall under drift. This underlines some of the problems Major encountered as he tried to keep his government together.

The first case under the Major administration was that of David Mellor who resigned as National Heritage Secretary because of an extra-marital affair he was having with an actress. In his letter of resignation, published in a 24 September 1992 *Reuters News* story, Mellor wrote that “I have concluded that it is too much to expect of my colleagues in government and parliament to have to put up with a constant barrage of stories about me from certain tabloid newspapers.” He felt that the only way he could avoid dragging the government down was to resign.

Consensus can be seen in the letter of reply that the prime minister submitted to Mellor. In the letter published in the abovementioned news story, Major stated the following: “As you know, you have always had my warm personal support, and I accepted your decision with deep regret. I admire the courage with which you have handled difficult circumstances in recent weeks.” In terms of cause and effect, once again, there was no speculation on parliamentary tradition. *Reuters* reported that when the story of his affair with the actress first surfaced in July, Mellor tendered his resignation, but it was rejected by Major. In the statement in the House of Commons on 24 September 1992, Mellor said: “And to those who think it could have been sooner, I think it is legitimate for the Prime Minister and senior colleagues to take the view that in this day and age - sorry and distressed though I was at the revelations and inevitably how cheap and sordid it might have looked - this wasn't a reason for a Cabinet minister to resign.” Here, Mellor corroborates the argument for not including a private affair in a

ministerial resignation – it is not a traditional reason for a minister to resign – yet he did so anyway. As for the other two characteristics, there is no indication that this decision would be temporary, and it is linked to other affairs in the Heath government in the sense that they involved extramarital relationships.

The second case is the tragic story of Lord Caithness. Lord Caithness resigned as Minister of State for Aviation and Shipping after his wife committed suicide by shooting herself in the head. The reason she did this was related to an alleged affair Lord Caithness was having at the time. This case shows that these affairs are being discussed in a very public light, and families are being destroyed in a visible way. Upon hearing of the news, the prime minister swiftly accepted the resignation of Lord Caithness whose personal life was in turmoil. The cause of the resignation was undoubtedly for personal and family reasons. The root cause of the suicide was Lord Caithness' indiscretion with another woman, which, by the time of the resignation, was very well publicized. There was no indication from either party that this decision was temporary and it was linked most closely to David Mellor.

The next case in the Major administration was that of Michael Brown. He resigned as government whip because the tabloid *News of the World* alleged he had a homosexual relationship with a student, as reported in an 8 May 1994 story by *Reuters News*. This continued to go against Major's "Back to Basics" policy and the need for ministers to lead by example. Brown said he was taking the tabloid to court so he needed to resign for the proceedings to take place. Major agreed with Brown that a resignation was necessary. The cause of the resignation was a rumour that the married man had

sexual relations with a male student. Again, this was a resignation as a result of an alleged personal affair. It appeared in a tabloid and it had not been verified. One has to question why somebody would resign on an allegation rather than fact, except to say that such an accusation is highly defamatory. There was no indication that the resignation was temporary, and it was linked to Mellor and Lord Caithness.

The fourth case categorized as drift is that of Neil Hamilton. He resigned as junior Trade Minister after being implicated in the cash for questions scandal. There was consensus between the minister and the prime minister on the resignation. However, the reason for the resignation is different from that which we saw with Tim Smith, another minister who was implicated in the scandal. The prime minister's letter of reply to the resignation, published in the 26 October 1994 edition of *The Times* (1), states the following: "I must be concerned at the general perception of the Government and capacity of Ministers to carry out their work without damaging distractions. I believe that the cumulative impact of the allegations that you face, even though I accept that they are unsubstantiated, did make it impossible for you to continue to carry out your responsibilities as Corporate Affairs Minister." What is interesting here is that Hamilton is only resigning on an "unsubstantiated" claim and because of "the general perception of the Government." Thus, this resignation is a pre-emptive move to avert embarrassment to the government. At the same time, the prime minister does not give any assurances that Hamilton will return to cabinet if and when he is exonerated, and it is linked to the Smith case.

The fifth case involves that of Robert Hughes who resigned as junior minister for the Citizen's Charter and Science because he wanted to repair his marriage after an affair. In the 6 March 1995 edition of *The Times* (1), he was reported to have told the Conservative whips he was resigning and that no pressure was put on him to go. In his letter of resignation to the prime minister, published in the 7 March 1995 edition of *The Times* (20), he said: "I cannot carry out my ministerial responsibilities at the same time as putting my marriage together. The pressure has become great and I felt now is the time to go." The prime minister accepted the reasons. However, the reason does not fall under the normal parliamentary tradition. *The Times* article points to the fact that ministers increasingly seek to resign at the first sign of personal trouble. The mere trend in this direction pushes us further away from the true meaning of ministerial responsibility, and thus the cause and effect of the decision is not known. The decision does not appear to be temporary and it is linked to Mellor and others who have had private indiscretions.

The last case of drift under the Major administration is that of Roderick Richards. He resigned as junior minister in the Welsh office because of yet another extramarital affair. The 3 June 1996 issue of *The Times* said that this was linked to a series of private life scandals and that ministers now resign at the first scent of it. The amusing part of this resignation, as reported on the front page of the 3 June 1996 edition of the *Independent*, is that there was such a high level of consensus on the decision that Downing Street said the customary exchange of letters was "unnecessary." Again, this is a private matter has become an offence leading to a government resignation. As noted on the front page of the 3 June 1996 edition of *The Times*: "Since a series of private-life

scandals, most notably those affecting the former ministers David Mellor and Tim Yeo, it has been a clear if unwritten rule that members of the Government caught out in this way must go immediately.” This was a significant departure from the accepted meaning of ministerial responsibility, namely a check on the administration of policy and on cabinet solidarity. The decision seems to have been permanent and was linked to the other cases that reflect personal indiscretion.

In considering all the ministerial resignations associated with drift, a few points should be highlighted. The first is how a series of short term rational decisions have led to a changing understanding of ministerial resignations. The decision to resign because of the extramarital affairs made sense; the government wanted to minimize the damage to its image. This is particularly true because the John Major government promoted a policy that preached family values. Ministers who were contravening that ideal by their actions effectively damaged the image of the government. In doing so, they had changed the meaning of ministerial responsibility to include aspects of ministers’ personal lives, particularly those activities that are sexual in nature. To modify Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau’s famous phrase, the state has no business in the nation’s bedrooms unless you are a cabinet minister in the UK. The point here is that this has the potential to become a permanent change. It is equivalent to asserting that in future governments, private indiscretions should now be met with a resignation, a theme continued from the days of Edward Heath, and visible in the Tony Blair government as well.

The second point with Major’s cases included in the drift category relates to that of Neil Hamilton, which did not involve personal indiscretion. In that case, the decision

was again based on an unsubstantiated claim. The reason Major sought the resignation related to the accumulation of unsubstantiated claims made against him. This seems to suggest that if the opposition continued to focus on one minister and make unsubstantiated claims, they would inevitably force his/her resignation. Samuel Berlinski, Torun Dewan, and Keith Dowding (unpublished, 1) offer a very interesting argument for this: “ministers facing a second call for their resignation have a significantly higher hazard than those facing their first, irrespective of the performance of the government.” Thus, there is an incentive to continually call for a resignation even if the claims being made do not accord with the typical reasons for ministerial resignations.

#### *Drift in the Blair Government*

The final two cases under drift occur during the Blair government. These involve the resignations of both Glenda Jackson and Frank Dobson. Both Jackson and Dobson resigned from cabinet to contest the Labour Party nomination for London’s mayor. The major issue with this resignation is that Ken Livingstone decided to seek the nomination for the Labour Party. Livingstone was a maverick in the Labour Party who did not get along with the party leadership. Thus, the Labour Party was actively in search for somebody within the party that had as much of a recognized name as Livingstone to contest and defeat him in the subsequent nomination battle. It was felt that only members of the Tony Blair cabinet could gather enough momentum to win the party’s nomination.

Glenda Jackson resigned as junior minister responsible for transport to contest the nomination before Frank Dobson’s resignation. She resigned to become London’s first

mayor in 2000 as part of the devolution of powers in Britain. Prior to the London devolution referendum, London's mayor was not directly elected. As part of the devolution package for the Greater London Area, it became the first jurisdiction in the UK to elect a mayor.

Jackson was not considered a very strong candidate for the position, certainly not one who could defeat Livingstone in Labour's nomination. Her resignation had all of the signs of a decision that leads to drift. Blair agreed that he needed a cabinet minister to resign to contest the nomination who was acceptable to the government. The cause of the resignation to become mayor does not fall under the normal circumstances of ministerial resignations. The decision was said to be permanent, and it is linked to Dobson's resignation.

Like Jackson, Dobson resigned to run for the nomination of London mayor. The 11 October 1999 edition of the *Daily Mail* (7) suggested that there had been some speculation that Dobson was going to be dropped from cabinet, and that fact was reinforced by the need for a stronger Labour candidate to go against Livingstone. According to a story from *Reuters News* on 10 October 1999, this was exactly what the Labour Party hierarchy desired. Again, consensus is said to exist in this decision as both accepted the rationale for the resignation. The case was linked to Jackson and the resignation was deemed to be permanent.

These two cases are categorized as drift because they both seem to make logical sense: a friendly candidate as London's mayor would not cause any headaches for the government. However, even though these appear to make some rational sense in the short

term, when taken collectively, these decisions deviate from the original intent of cabinet making. A government should be concerned with keeping its top talent in cabinet, rather than helping them win in an election for the new government in London. Thus, in the British case, we appear to have a movement away from the original meaning of why resignations ought to be sought, which include extramarital affairs, an accumulation of unsubstantiated claims, and finally to strategize about electing cabinet ministers to sub-national governments.

#### *The Sole Case of Incrementalism*

The only case of incrementalism came under the Thatcher government. Like the Canadian study, there was not a significant presence of incrementalism in the UK. Cases of incrementalism exist when there is no consensus on the decision, that cause and effect are not associated with parliamentary tradition, the decision is temporary, and that there is a link to other decisions. The case of incrementalism came with Cecil Parkinson who resigned as Trade and Industry Minister because of an affair with his former secretary. As reported on the front page of the 15 October 1983 edition of the *Financial Times*, the resignation came after eight days of speculation and conflicting pressures following the disclosure that Sara Keyes, his former secretary, was due to have his child. It was also reported that he had made an offer of marriage, which was later rescinded. There was no consensus because, as the above mentioned article states, initially the Prime Minister said the matter was a private one and that Parkinson should not resign, but Parkinson did so to “save the party.” In terms of cause, since this is a private concern, it falls outside the



parameters of why ministers should resign. The article suggests that the resignation may be temporary as Thatcher praised Parkinson for his work for the government and in preparing for the election. She also hinted that he might be back in government in the future. Finally, this resignation had some linkages to resignations in the Heath government.

This case fits incrementalism because the action to leave was not universally accepted. Incrementalism suggests that the acceptance of resignations based on this idea will be slow and gradual. What is seen here is that this decision for resignation in the Thatcher government begins to set the stage for what will happen in the Major government. In fact, of the other private affairs by ministers that occurred under the Thatcher government, none resigned because of them. It is with this backdrop in mind that we see the Thatcher administration struggle with how to deal with private indiscretion in her government.

#### *The Garbage Can Model and the Thatcher Government*

There are six cases under the garbage can model in total. Two of these occurred during the Thatcher administration, one during the Major government, and the other three occurred during Tony Blair's tenure. These decisions are categorized by no consensus on the decision made, no knowledge of cause and effect, of permanent or temporary decisions, and no apparent linkage. For both Thatcher and Blair governments, it is the second largest category of decisions.

The first case during the Thatcher government classified as the garbage can model is that of Nicholas Fairbairn who offered his resignation as solicitor-general for Scotland following his controversial decision not to prosecute three Glasgow men who were charged with rape. In this instance, there was no consensus on the resignation. In 22 January 1982 edition of the *Financial Times* (8), Fairbairn was said to be forced to resign. Even though Fairbairn provided reasons for his decision, including the mental state of the victim, the government did not concur. There was no speculation as to what the cause and effect might be. One of the reasons that was highlighted in a story appearing in the 22 January 1982 edition of the *Canadian Globe and Mail* was that he infuriated many MPs by talking to the press about the case before offering an explanation to the House of Commons. This act was presumed to mean that the resignation occurred to silence caucus critics. The decision seems permanent and there is no apparent link to the resignation because there have not been any other cases that discuss internal caucus issues that lead to resignations.

The second case of the garbage can model in the Thatcher government is that of Nicholas Ridley who resigned as Trade and Industry Secretary because he made anti-German remarks to the *Spectator* magazine, according to a story from *Reuters News* on 14 July 1990. There was no consensus on the resignation since it was reported that the departing minister did not want to quit earlier. This was partly because two polls were published that supported Ridley's comments, which suggested that public opinion was on his side. The remarks in question effectively compared the UK's entry into Europe to handing over the country's sovereignty to Hitler. The issue here was not that there was a

terribly significant issue with the policy position of the minister, but rather it was presented in such a harsh tone. Thus, this is not a policy disagreement. This is an unfortunate use of words to describe the country's position on policy. There was no indication that this would be a temporary decision, and there is not another example of this happening in the UK.

### *The Garbage Can Model and the Major Government*

The only case of the garbage can model in the Major government is the resignation of Charles Wardle, who was junior minister for Trade and Industry. Wardle resigned because he believed that there was the potential for the UK to dismantle its border controls due to decisions being made at the European Union. A news story published by *Reuters News* on 14 February 1995 reported Wardle as saying that this would lead to thousands of immigrants entering Britain which would threaten "our quality of life." Thus, this was not a policy disagreement with the government, but with what was happening within the supranational institution that is the EU. The front page story on the 15 February 1995 edition of *The Guardian* quotes Major's letter of reply that corroborates this view: "I am sorry you think it necessary to resign where there is no disagreement between us on the Government's objectives or fundamental policy."

In terms of consensus, the tone in the letter of reply suggests that the decision to resign was Wardle's alone and that Major did not believe a resignation was necessary, particularly because he did not feel that there was a disagreement with government policy. This was an EU decision, and the government had the duty to respond to it, but

the government itself could not alter that decision. The cause of the resignation is a novel one for this dissertation. It is that a resignation could occur based on the decision of another body. The decision was likely permanent and there did not appear to be a link.

### *The Garbage Can Model and the Blair Government*

The final three cases of the garbage can model occurred during the Blair government. The first such case was that of Derek Foster's resignation. He resigned as Minister of State at the Office of Public Service just three days after being selected for the job. He considered it somewhat of a demotion, as he was the former Labour chief whip and shadow cabinet member. The 7 May 1997 edition of the *Financial Times* (12) suggested that the post he received was different from what was promised to him. This is an unusual case in terms of ministerial resignations. There is obviously no consensus, as the prime minister had appointed him only three days before, and so he obviously disagreed with the minister's departure. The cause of the resignation appears to be based on the minister feeling snubbed, which is not one of the causes normally associated with ministerial resignations. There was obviously no apparent link to the case, and the decision was likely permanent.

The second case is that of Andrew Smith who resigned as Work and Pensions Secretary for the stated reason that he wanted to spend more time with his family. However, the front page story appearing in the 7 September 2004 edition of *The Herald* suggested that he was resigning because of his allegiance to Gordon Brown, the heir-apparent to Tony Blair. There was no consensus, as *The Herald* reported that Blair tried

to persuade Smith from leaving his post. There was no clear acknowledgement of cause and effect. Smith stated that he wanted to spend time with his family, but he also had some policy disagreements with the Blair government. Smith did not, however, pick one of the cause and effect relationships identified in Appendix A, and so there appeared to be no clear speculation on the cause and effect relationship. There was also no indication as to whether this decision would be temporary, and there was no apparent link to this case either.

The final case is that of David Blunkett's second resignation from cabinet. The issue was a lack of disclosure on the private jobs the minister had with DNA Bioscience, Indepen consulting and a charity. Although Downing Street believed this was a breach, the front page of the 3 November 2005 edition of *The Guardian* suggested that this was not an incident that was so significant as to merit a resignation. This reflects a lack of consensus because nobody was sure that this was a resignable occasion. The cause of the resignation was a conflict of interest, but the rules here are inconsistently applied, and thus they are not included in the types of cause and effect relationships likely to produce resignations. There was no indication that after his second resignation, Blunkett would be invited back to cabinet. Indeed, many of the major newspapers covering the story, such as the one above, indicated that this was the end of Blunkett's front bench career since he resigned twice in 12 months and collected a pension because of it. There was no apparent link to the case since the government did not think the breach was so significant as to force a resignation on the matter, and it thus deviated from the pattern of other cases that involved a conflict of interest.

These cases show the potential for rules that involve ministerial resignations to change to suit the particular circumstance. This is what we would expect with cases that involve the garbage can model. The cases above show that changing perceptions of conflict of interest, personal ego, decisions by another legislative body, and personal dissatisfaction with the government which the government sought to dispel, resulted in ministerial resignations that exhibit irrational tendencies.

### **The Anomalies**

As was the case with the Canadian analysis, there were some cases in Britain that were simply too difficult to assign to any category. Overall, there were three such cases. This means that of the 65 cases of ministerial resignation in the UK, over 95% of the cases were categorized as falling into one of the decision-making categories in the matrix. Of the three anomalies, one occurred during the John Major and two occurred during Tony Blair's administration, which means that all of these anomalies have occurred since the 1990s.

#### *Anomalies in the John Major Government*

The case of Jonathan Aitken's resignation from the John Major government is the first anomaly. Aitken resigned as Chief Secretary to the Treasury because of his prior business dealings in which he was associated with the Saudi royal family. The front page of the 5 July 1995 edition of *The Guardian* reported that there were allegations that the departing minister was involved in the arms-to-Iran affair. The affair involved a company in which Aitken used to serve as a director prior to entering the government. The

company played some role in the shipment of weapons to Iran, but the extent to which Aitken knew about these as a director of the company was less known. Major appears to have been in agreement with the minister's decision to resign, and there was no indication that the minister would return to the government later. The issue is to what extent should past business dealings, which a member of cabinet might not have known about while sitting on the corporate board of directors, lead to ministerial resignations, particularly when they occurred prior to being elected to cabinet? Because the rules in this regard are not very clear, it becomes very tricky to categorize.

#### *Anomalies of the Blair Government*

The final two anomalies occurred during Blair's administration. The first of these is the resignation of Ron Davies. He resigned as the Welsh Secretary for what amounts to poor judgement in a very bizarre sequence of events. In his letter of resignation, published in the 28 October 1998 edition of *The Independent* (3), he states his case:

After driving back from Wales last night, I parked my car near to my home in south London. I went for a walk on Clapham Common. Whilst walking, I was approached by a man I had never met before who engaged me in conversation. After talking for some minutes he asked me to accompany him and two of his friends to his flat for a meal. We drove, in my car, to collect his friends, one male, one female. Shortly afterwards, the man produced a knife and together with his male companion robbed me and stole my car, leaving me standing at the roadside.

It is very hard to understand what would lead a minister of the Crown to compromise himself so blatantly and negligently. There was consensus on the issue, and it was deemed to be a permanent decision with no link. The main reason why this remains an

anomaly is because the only stated cause of his resignation was poor personal judgement, and this is different than other cases because the case had nothing to do with policy or administration.

The final anomaly is that of Alan Milburn who resigned as Secretary of State for Health because he wanted to spend more time with his young family. Milburn felt that he was missing out on his children's upbringing. The 13 June 2003 edition of *The Guardian* (6) reports that he had not made a school event during the week for his 11 year old son in the 7 years since Labour took office. This case is an outlier because it is different from most other people who resign to spend more time with family. In other cases where family reasons have been cited, it was usually in conjunction with perceived wrongdoing or lack of cabinet solidarity. There is no such controversy surrounding the Milburn resignation, and so it cannot be linked to people like Lord Caithness who resigned to spend more time with his family in the wake of his wife's suicide. It is not rational decision-making because it did not occur during a cabinet shuffle. The case in fact precipitated a cabinet shuffle. There was no ability for the government to plan for this resignation, and this is the reason why it does not fall under the rational model.

### **Discussion and Analysis of the British Results**

With all the cases discussed above, a summary of results is provided in Table 4.2. Once again, the presence of rational/planning more or less demonstrates that ministerial responsibility is adhered to most of the time. It is by far the most prevalent of any of the decision theories over the duration of the study period, with over 66% of the cases falling



within the rational/planning category. The level of rationality in Britain closely corresponds to the Canadian results where about 63% of the cases fall within the same decision-making category. Of the other theories, drift was once again the second most prominent decision theory, with nearly 17% of the cases falling into this category. In Canada, 18% of the cases were associated with drift. The garbage can model is next with just over 9% of the cases, which is nearly equivalent to the proportion of the Canadian cases with just under 8%. As was the case with Canada, these non-rational and hybrid theories did not occur as frequently as was assumed at the onset of this study, which suggests that second hypothesis fails for Britain as well as Canada.

*Table 4.2: Tabulation of Results for UK resignations*

<b>Prime Minister</b>	<b>Rational/planning</b>	<b>Mixed-Scanning</b>	<b>Drift</b>	<b>Incremental</b>	<b>Groping</b>	<b>Garbage Can</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Heath	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	<b>5</b>
Wilson	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>6</b>
Callaghan	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
Thatcher	11	0	0	1	0	2	0	<b>14</b>
Major	5	1	7	0	0	1	1	<b>15</b>
Blair	15	0	2	0	0	3	2	<b>22</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>65</b>

While ministerial responsibility is not a dead concept when analyzing ministerial resignations in the UK, as is also the case in Canada, there are several troubling issues that emerge in the UK that threaten the continued utility of the concept. The first of these is the extent to which private affairs have emerged after 1990 to be resignable offences. While the existence of private relationships has always had a certain appeal to interested followers of Westminster, what does not appear to be readily understood is why issues

coming from those relationships result in a ministerial resignation. Certainly, a person's marital status may be important in order to understand the personality of a minister, yet it is not clear how these relationships affect the administration of a government department or the ability of a minister to maintain his solidarity to the government. However, since the Major administration, it appears as though resignations as a result of private indiscretions will remain a long lasting reason to resign even though this is not how the doctrine was initially intended to apply.

Another aspect of interest is the extent to which ministers are exhibiting poor judgement in other conduct of their personal lives. These extend beyond simple conflict of interest allegations. Whether it is taking a stroll in a park and getting mugged or wielding a pickaxe at protestors, there are several examples of errors in personal judgement. This appears to be an increasing trend after the 1990s in the UK, and this is also some evidence of it in Canada as well. Precisely why this is occurring and what leads a minister in the upper echelons of government to engage in such dubious activities remains outside the realm of this study and an area to pursue in future research.

Many of these resignations for private indiscretion or poor judgement have been linked to the government's need to avert any long lasting damage to its overall image. However, in regarding the overall perception of the government as a paramount concern, what this effectively does to ministerial responsibility is that it ignores the real purpose of this doctrine, which is to ensure the sound administration of departments and of the government's public policy decisions. The increased propensity of governments to effectively drop ministers because of their personal behaviour has pushed us further away

from the original intention of ministerial responsibility. The John Major administration, which appears to jump from private scandal to private scandal, has largely done a disservice to the foundational principle of ministerial responsibility.

Several remaining points should be highlighted. First, there appear to be more resignations related to cabinet solidarity and maladministration in the UK than in Canada. This corroborates what Sharon Sutherland (1991) conclusion. In terms of the analysis of the UK administrations, only John Major had fewer rational decisions than those in the other categories. Only one third of his cases resulted in rational resignations. This is in itself an anomaly, as the other governments each had a convincing majority of their cases associated with rational decisions. Heath's Conservative government came closest to Major with over 60% of his resignations falling within the rational model. Two governments before 1980 reflected nothing but rational decisions with their ministerial resignations. These were the Labour governments of Wilson and Callaghan.

The party breakdown is also interesting in the British case. Labour governments tended to do far better at keeping within rational decision-making, with 77% of their cases falling within that model. Conversely, the Conservative governments had just over 55% of their cases falling within the rational category. Once again, the party that has proposed democratic reforms, as Labour did with the enactment of the *House of Lords Act, 1999*, was more likely to follow the foundational principle than the party less inclined to change the country's democratic institutions. This corroborates what first became evident in the Canadian cases discussed in the previous chapter. This is only an

initial finding, since a proper analysis of parties and their democratic reform policies would need to be established, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The next chapter will continue to highlight the comparison of Canada and the UK in order to provide further explanation as to why there are some similarities and other differences between the two countries. It will explore some of the institutional features that are similar and different to explain some of the points highlighted in this chapter, as well as to discuss some of the hypotheses tested.

## **CHAPTER 5: COMPARATIVE LESSONS FROM CANADA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The preceding analysis of ministerial resignations has shown us a great deal about how the foundational principle works in Canada and Britain, how it has evolved, and some of the challenges it faces in the future. This chapter will cover two issues. First, it will return to the hypotheses outlined in Chapter 2 and discuss whether they were confirmed or nullified by the evidence. Secondly, it will offer further comparative analysis on ministerial resignations and place the discussion within the wider literature on governing institutions, with particular emphasis on how varying approaches to legislative scrutiny in both countries have affected ministerial resignations. Of interest will be some of the institutional similarities and differences between Canada and the UK, such as legislative size, officers of parliament, the impact of minority government, and the extent to which an electoral change to a new governing party makes a difference in terms of the level of rationality in the cases studied. What this discussion will show is that there is not much difference between Canada and the UK in terms of the style of decision-making on ministerial resignations despite the institutional differences.

### **The Hypothesis Tests**

Table 5.1 outlines the results of the hypothesis tests. The first hypothesis about the level of rationality in decision-making was drawn from the literature in Chapter 1 that Canada and the UK have applied the doctrine of ministerial responsibility more or less in a similar manner, since commentators of ministerial responsibility in both countries have

been discussing the same issues. The results show a remarkable similarity between Canada and the UK. The level of rationality is nearly identical at 63% and 66% respectively. While the hypothesis suggests that there would be a similar level of rationality, both Canada and the UK exhibited much higher levels of rationality than anticipated.

*Table 5.1: Results of the hypothesis tests*

<i>Hypothesis 1:</i>	<b>Pass</b>	The level of rationality in decision-making regarding ministerial resignations is the same in the United Kingdom and Canada.
<i>Hypothesis 2:</i>	<b>Fail</b>	Non-rational decisions regarding ministerial resignations have led to a greater deviation from the original doctrine of ministerial responsibility over time in both countries.
<i>Hypothesis 3:</i>	<b>Fail</b>	The most prevalent decision theory in Canada will be different from the most prevalent decision theory in the United Kingdom.

In terms of the second hypothesis, it was expected that non-rational decisions would be the most prominent of the different kinds of decision theories. The reason for this relates again to the literature in Chapter 1. If the assumption is that ministerial responsibility is dying, or has at least changed significantly, the expectation is that more non-rational decisions are being made. This hypothesis was nullified. As noted above, the largest category of decisions were rational, contrary to what was expected.

The final hypothesis suggested that the most prominent decision theory in Canada would be different from that in Britain. This related to the differences in the reasons for resignation that were evident in both countries from Sutherland's (1991) comparison. Despite the differences in the reasons offered for these resignations, both countries had

similar proportions of resignation cases allocated to each decision-making category. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the level of rationality in Britain regarding the decisions for ministerial resignations was calculated to be 66% of the cases, whereas the Canadian results show that 63% of the cases fell within the rational model. Drift was the second largest group in both countries, with 18% of the cases in Canada and 17% in the UK falling within this category. Finally, the garbage can model was third with just under 8% of the Canadian cases assigned to this category, whereas just over 9% of the British cases were part of the model. This was a surprisingly similar finding in the analysis of the decisions that led to ministerial resignations in both countries since the Trudeau government in 1968 and the Wilson government in 1970.

The high degree of rationality indicates that the foundational principle is doing better than was assumed. Nearly two thirds of all resignations fall under the rational/planning model, and this shows that there is still significant attachment to the principle of ministerial responsibility. The five relationships discussed in Appendix A are still viewed as valid reasons for resignation. However, at the same time, there are a number of challenges to the doctrine, since more than one third of the cases are not categorized as rational. Some of the major challenges have been highlighted in the previous two chapters, and they are summarized once again here.

In particular, the number of resignation cases categorized as drift show how ministerial responsibility is an evolving concept. In Canada, the cases of drift included the inclusion of tougher conflict of interest rules that became stronger with each successive government. Stricter adherence and tougher ministerial codes that guard

against potential corruption can be construed as a positive evolution of the principle, since it gives the impression that government behaviour is “cleaner” and this should increase voter confidence in the government. Since one might presume that governments wish to increase their confidence to the greatest extent possible, central agencies might see their job as protecting the government from embarrassing conflict of interest rules. Government agendas are derailed when conflict of interest allegations accompany a ministerial resignation, and this also appears to give central agencies a greater role in monitoring the conduct of their ministers to stop a potential breach in ministerial code. However, since the Mulroney government, fewer people are participating in elections, as voter turnout rates have declined since the 1980s. This suggests that voter confidence in government is continuing to decline despite these increasingly stringent conflict-of-interest ministerial guidelines and codes. One might well question whether these tougher ministerial guidelines have solved one problem (less corruption in government) but created another issue (stronger prime ministers and central agencies).

Is there a potential link between tougher conflict of interest codes or ministerial resignations and declining voter participation? Certainly, many present studies on voter participation rates have focused on the systemic bias of the present first-past-the-post electoral systems and fixed election dates (see Milner 2005). Others have explored the flexibility of partisanship (Clark et. al 1979). This pertains to the extent to which Canadian voters feel less inclined to identify with one party. The less attached one feels to a political party, the less likely they will be to turnout and support that party in subsequent elections. Clark et. al. (1996) examine some of the reasons for lower voter



turnout, which include the attitude that parties quarrel with one another rather than solve problems, that parties fail to provide a real choice, that MPs become disconnected with their constituents, and that politicians break promises. All of these are likely to turn voters off from participating in elections.

One of the answers to declining participation rates could be in the changing nature of why ministers resign. If one examines voter participation rates in Canada and the UK, both declines occurred during administrations that had the worst record on rational ministerial resignations. In the UK, voter participation was rising through the 1980s to a high of nearly 78% in 1992. It then sharply declined to 71% in 1997, and a low of 59% in 2001 before regaining some ground in 2005 with 61% voter turnout. This coincides with the John Major's tumultuous tenure as prime minister from 1990 to his defeat in 1997. The same can be said of Canada. Approximately 75% of registered voters voted in the 1988 election, which was the last one Brian Mulroney contested. In 1993, less than 70% voted in that election, and it declines to 67% in 1997, 64% in 2000, to a low of 60% in 2004 before regaining slightly in the 2006 election. The first drop is reflective of some of the problems in Mulroney's government toward the end of his tenure, which were partly related to conflict-of-interest allegations in his government. They continued to decline during Chrétien's administration which exhibited the worst record of rational resignations. If, as Samuel Berlinski, Torun Dewan, and Keith Dowding (Unpublished) suggest a larger number of ministerial resignations is an indication of a government's poor performance, then this link needs to be further studied.

It is not a stretch to consider this to be a distinct possibility. Jon Pammett (2004) suggests that voters are most likely to vote according to the political party rather than leaders or local candidates by a wide margin. Pammett suggests that this can be associated with the fact that people are driven by the policy proposals of political parties more than the personalities. What is not immediately clear is whether party preference can be altered by how one perceives the performance of the party, particularly the government, in the legislature. Neither Pammett (2004) nor Clark et. al. (1996) discuss the overall competence of the government as being a factor that affects voter choice. The evidence presented above suggests that there is a preliminary relationship between non-rational decision-making and declining voter participation. Subsequent voter surveys would be needed to establish this link, yet students of parliament may be interested in the possibility.

The Canadian experience with drift also provides a glimpse into how ministerial resignations can occur to boost the prospects for the departing minister's post-government career. If this is the case and becomes a greater trend in the future, the ability to retain good people in government is threatened by more appealing careers in the private sector. This problem has been confronted from the perspective of compensation. The salary of members of parliament has evolved over time, from part-time to full-time employment to adjusting salaries to meet the growing demands and increased sitting days of parliament (Docherty 1997). Compensation might be an issue for those seeking political office because many people categorized as potential candidates (see Fox and Lawless 2005) will choose not to run because of the pay cut that one would have to take with a move to the

public sector (Ehrenhalt 1991). Such analyses assume that money is the chief motivating factor for a person's candidacy to public office. On the other hand, William Mishler (1978) suggests that candidates consider more factors than compensation. Major political parties are more able to attract "star" candidates to run for them than minor parties. Electoral competition is another factor. If a political party is not competitive, ambitious politicians will be less inclined to participate. This also contributes to the difficulty of minor parties attracting good quality candidates.

While the debate on compensation certainly does not produce a universal conclusion as to whether salary is a determining factor for candidacy to public office, studies that examine why people are retiring from Cabinet and politics is more revealing. Anthony King (1981) suggests that the main reason why people are retiring from cabinet is because they are career politicians retiring at a normal retirement age that he defines as over 60. Career politicians are those who have a passion and zest for politics and usually enter politics at a very young age. King notes that "non-career" politicians are in the minority in the British cabinets he studied. The motivating factor for career politicians leaving government is a sense of accomplishment and is usually voluntary. He also argues that none of the British cabinets after 1970 contained ministers who were not defined as career politicians.

Quality of life issues surrounding a career in the public spotlight may also be a reason for why politicians retire. David Docherty (1997, 184) highlights some complaints from politicians with a quote from a two-term MP:

One of the things that gets me the most is the fact that I can't run down to the store on a Saturday afternoon in an old ripped pair of

jeans, or even wear old shorts in the summer. People will look at me and either think I am not working or that on my salary I should be able to afford better clothes. I always feel that I am on display, and constantly held to account for my actions... The same is true for my own activities. I love to play golf and still have my membership in a local club. I only get out two or three times a year, but when I am there, even my friends take it as a sign that I am not a hard worker. There they are on the golf course, making comments about me being lazy! Everyone I see I have to say, 'It's my first time out.' But even then, I am not sure they believe me.

With this quote, Docherty suggests that MPs are put under a microscope, and that the problem is likely more severe in rural constituencies than urban ones. The research discussed in the previous two chapters suggests that cabinet ministers face additional scrutiny by the prime minister's central agencies and the media. Spending a great deal of time in the capital is also another example of the toll faced by politicians who desired to leave public life. There have been many ministers in both countries that have talked about the stress on family life and about public life being too intrusive. Such evidence may speak to the need for further improvements that make public life more attractive not just to those who may wish to enter it, but to those who are already serving.

Another plausible reason why politicians retire is related to the "not fun" hypothesis. Sean Theriault (1998) highlights the fact that increased partisanship, longer hours, higher ethical standards, and fundraising are just part of the reason why politicians are not having fun in their jobs. However, American research suggests that such a hypothesis is invalidated because 90% of voluntary congressional resignations occur because candidates seek another public office (Theriault 1998, 420). This can explain Tobin's first resignation from government. He left his cabinet position to lead the

provincial government in Newfoundland and Labrador. It seems to suggest that Tobin enjoyed public life.

The story of Brian Tobin's career in cabinet is hard to fully understand. His stated reason for departure was the toll it was taking on his family, and the public spotlight is difficult to manage. However, one cannot ignore the unplanned nature of this departure on the government, and the political climate that was ensuing at the time of his resignation. Certainly, it does not appear that money was a motivating factor in his departure, since compensation levels were significantly higher at the time of his resignation than they were when he first entered the House. Tobin would be categorized as a career politician by King (1981), but he certainly retired before he was 60, which is contrary to King's analysis. Tobin appeared to enjoy being in cabinet, and it is hard to suggest that any of the conditions in the "not fun" hypothesis, particularly the long hours, increased partisanship and fundraising activities, bothered Tobin who was quite accustomed to them. Perhaps the most plausible is that Tobin harboured leadership ambitions, and many thought he might resign so that he can organize a leadership campaign to defeat his chief rival, Paul Martin. Martin's lead was insurmountable, and Tobin never returned to politics.

What is more interesting is the extent to which federalism in Canada and devolution in the UK may have altered the nature of ministerial resignations in ways that could not have been anticipated at the time of Bagehot. The reality that ministers resign for a prospective position in a sub-national government is a new concept. In Canada, this was expressed with Tobin's first resignation that was categorized as mixed-scanning, and

in the UK it occurred with the resignations of Dobson and Jackson which were categorized as drift. One would assume that a government wants its best ministers to stay in its own government, yet Tobin left because he wanted to lead another government, Jackson did much the same for London mayor, and Dobson was hand-picked by Tony Blair to run for the Labour nomination in London. Whether because of personal ambition or strategic reasons, this marks an interesting departure from the traditional conception of ministerial responsibility, and it is unknown whether the departure will be seen positively or negatively.

The instances of the garbage can model were not as high as anticipated. Resignations that involved the garbage can model are not rational and they tend to indicate an overall depreciation of ministerial responsibility. Upon reflection, the level of such resignations that was found in this dissertation, namely that less than 8% of the cases being attributed to it, suggests that the option of adopting the garbage can model is probably not entirely a bad thing. Certainly, one of the major reasons for forcing a resignation is to protect the image of the government. Since these resignations tend to do this, they might be a “necessary evil” of modern government. There are occasions when governments need to remove poorly performing minister in order to project a better public image. While ministers who are forced out generally do not agree with their ouster, the collective image of the government can surely improve when there is a resignation by a weak minister or one whose integrity is under a cloud. This tends to suggest that there is another side to cabinet solidarity. In order to keep the front bench happy, a prime minister might recognize that unacceptable or unethical personal

behaviour on the part of a minister could also damage those feelings of solidarity. Thus, a government has to be concerned with more than a minister's fate.

The fact that governments have an image to protect as a collective has been of interest to the wider literature in political science. Certainly, this is part of the explanation for the increasing concentration of power at the centre thesis posited by Donald Savoie (1999) in Canada. The British cases, such as Clare Short's resignation, also suggest the same sentiment exists in the UK. What is not understood is how ministerial resignations factor into this argument. From the evidence presented in this dissertation, protecting the image of the government is mostly a secondary consideration. Yet, Mulroney's approach to seeking resignations before problems emerge shows that he was not very concerned about the image of his government. Nevertheless, Mulroney's role in strengthening central agency oversight into the personal lives of ministers certainly contributes to Savoie's argument.

Protecting the image of the government was not just a matter for cases categorized within the garbage can model. It was also referenced in the other decision theories, including rational ones. Moreover, many of the decisions for ministerial resignations were not requested by the prime minister. There were often cases where the prime minister would have defended a departing minister had he or she decided to continue as minister. That some of these resignations were advanced by cabinet ministers appears to lend credibility to the thesis that the prime minister is *primus inter pares* (first among equals). It is not simply he who requests the resignation, which would indicate more

influence from the centre, but cabinet ministers have often offered resignations, which seems to indicate some parity of power.

### **Institutional Comparisons and Scrutiny**

In terms of the comparative study, there are also many interesting findings in this dissertation. In Chapter 1, a discussion focused on the similarities of foundational principles, but Canada and Britain also share other similarities. As a constitutional monarchy, Canada and Britain have a head of state that is the Queen. Britain and Canada both have bicameral legislatures with an elected lower chamber and an appointive upper chamber (with some hereditary component in the UK). Legislative review is the upper chamber's main task in both countries. Significant similarities can also be found in the lower chamber of both countries. They are both subject to the same electoral system of single-member-plurality, which is more commonly known as first-past-the-post. However, there are also institutional differences that are important to analyze.

Legislative size, parliamentary committees, and officers of parliaments are three institutional differences that will be analyzed in depth. We will also discuss minority governments and change of governments later in this chapter. The problem of legislative size is a static one, and it is a result of the significant population difference between Britain and Canada. It is static because the problem has existed throughout the nearly 40 year study period and the differences in size have not really changed. The other two areas of interest have seen significant changes. Parliamentary committees have evolved throughout the period, but significant changes occurred in the early 1980s in Britain and



during the late 1960s and mid-1980s in Canada. Extra parliamentary scrutiny, which, for the purpose of this dissertation includes a select group of officers or agents of parliament that act as watchdogs, has continued to have an evolving role throughout the period.

### **Size of Legislature**

The House of Commons in the UK is bigger than the lower chamber in Canada. In total, there are 646 Members of Parliament in Britain's House of Commons. This is more than double the number of MPs in the Canadian House of Commons which currently stands at 308 members. David Docherty (2005) highlights this problem succinctly. He notes that the smaller the legislature is, the more likely that most members of the governing party are part of cabinet. Because of the ideal of cabinet solidarity, it is difficult for members of the governing party in the legislature to contradict each other. The problem is more acute when there are fewer governing party backbenchers who seek to enter cabinet.

According to Docherty (2005), the problem is exacerbated by an electoral system that favours single-party majorities. The distorted electoral system favours winning parties with a proportion of seats far greater than their proportion of popular vote (Courtney 2004). This tends to thin out the opposition in terms of scrutinizing the government during question period and in committees. Part of the problem with question period is that it is leadership focused. It gives very little opportunity for individual members to ask meaningful questions and perform their scrutinizing function. Furthermore, government backbenchers during question period are allowed to ask

questions during the time allotted for oral questions. Docherty (2005, 127) states that these “regular scripted questions” that government backbenchers “lob” to cabinet ministers dilutes the effectiveness of question period. In Britain, where the legislature is much larger, the problem of the questions being scripted from the government side is less evident.

Related to this is the fact that party discipline is more relaxed in the UK than Canada. C.E.S. Franks (1987) suggests this is a result of a greater number of legislators in Britain who are more willing to consider themselves constituency MPs. Franks (1987) also notes that there is no independent block of backbenchers in Canada where they exist in Britain. Government whips enforce discipline through the rewarding of prime office space, deciding who asks a question in Question Period or participates in committees, awards foreign trips with a parliamentary delegation, and provides advice on promoting a backbencher to other parliamentary duties (Franks 1987). Guilt is another tool employed by the party leadership in the House. Whips can go to their colleagues and suggest the need for party solidarity on legislation that originates from their party’s cabinet ministers (Docherty 1997).

Even though it is far more common for backbenchers to avoid the whips in Britain, there are some who believe that the case is somewhat overstated. Depending on which side of the House a member is located, Andrew Adonis (1993) suggests that one of the MPs foremost jobs is to either keep their party in government if they are on the governing side, or vote with their opposition party to throw a government out. Because of this reality, almost all legislation of significant importance passes in the legislature,

and if the government was threatened, many of the mavericks would find it within themselves to sustain their government. Adonis argues that part of the reason why these mavericks exist is because there are enough members to sustain the government which is a function of a legislature's size.

On the surface, the larger legislature in the UK does not appear to make a difference in terms of the level of rationality of decisions for ministerial resignation. Although the reasons for resignation may be different, the level of rationality is essentially the same. Where legislature size does make a difference is in those reasons for resignation. In the UK, there were cases of resignation involving the policies toward Europe, international policies such as ones involving international terrorism and the Iraq War, and leadership squabbles. In many of these cases, internal caucus pressure precipitated ministerial resignations. Because the larger legislature encourages the formation of voting blocs on particular policies, and looser party discipline furthers this possibility, a group of backbenchers can take a stand and potentially alter the course of the government's direction. This is not possible in Canada, which has stricter party discipline and fewer mavericks. Nevertheless, in terms of the decision theories, larger legislature size does not make much of a difference as the level of rationality is almost identical, with over 60% of the cases in both countries categorized as rational/planning,

### **Parliamentary Committees and Scrutiny**

Parliamentary committees in Canada and Britain are generally said to be much weaker than their American counterparts. American congressional committees are

considered to be the locus of political power in that country's system of government (Lees 1979) where as the prime minister and cabinet control parliaments in the Westminster systems (Franks 1987). Parliamentary committees were first referenced in sixteenth century Britain (Norton 2005). However, there was not a comprehensive use of committees in Britain until Margaret Thatcher's government in 1979, who acted on a 1978 report by the Modernization Committee. Canada's history with parliamentary committees is similar. During the first 100 years of parliament, parliamentary committees were used infrequently, and had unstable membership (Stewart 1977). This was partly the reason why the committee system before 1968 lacked cohesiveness. Before the reforms to committees in the 1960s and 1970s in both Canada and Britain, government leaders paid very little attention to the committees, which further contributed to their lack of significance in the legislative process.

Despite the early reforms, parliamentary committees have continued to struggle to gain recognition for their scrutiny function. As Jonathan Malloy (1996, 316) points out, "the standing committees of the Canadian House of Commons have been called many things: proving-grounds for ambitious MPs; a place for members to lay aside partisanship and work across party lines; meddlesome obstacles through which legislation must be piloted; a high profile public forum for non-elected individuals and groups; and glorified play pens to keep backbenchers busy and out of mischief." Unlike the Canadian committee system, members in the standing committees at Westminster tend to take their jobs quite seriously (Silk and Walters 1987).

The ability of parliamentary committees to scrutinize cabinet ministers and their departments is of great concern in this dissertation. It is unclear whether parliamentary committees take this task seriously. In 1993, the Liaison Committee of Standing Committee Chairs conducted a study to see how Canadian Members of Parliament classified an effective committee system. They based their criteria on a similar survey conducted in Britain. In the British model, success was based on holding ministers accountable, the number of reports published by the committee, their effect on the proceedings of the House and the general public, and influencing government policy (Canada 1993). The Liaison Committee then distributed a questionnaire to parliamentarians and asked them to discuss committee effectiveness according to these four criteria. The result of the study was that committees in Canada are viewed as effective only when they can affect government policy (Canada 1993). Having an influence on government policy is also a major outcome that parliamentarians wish to see in Britain (Silk and Walters 1987), however, they also pay considerable attention to their scrutiny function (Giddings 1994).

Scrutiny became a much more prominent task for committees in both countries during the 1980s. Reforms to select committees under the Thatcher administration allowed select committees to be established for every department, which then became a permanent feature of parliament. They could do this by summoning ministers to be accountable for their department, although the Thatcher government refused to compel its ministers to attend select committee meetings (Adonis 1993). They could also call civil servants to discuss matters of concern to the department. Finally, they can ask members

of the public at large to submit evidence before the committee. In Canada, parliamentary scrutiny through committee work became a much more prominent task during the Mulroney administration. Much of this is attributed to the McGrath Committee who published a series of reports on reforming the legislative process. The Committee made several recommendations regarding the enhancement of standing committees of parliament. These included changes to the committee structure to more closely resemble government structure, enhancing the ability to obtain information from departments, reviewing policy and departmental estimates, and the authority to hire specialized staff. Many of the recommendations made by the McGrath Committee Report were instituted in 1986, which enhanced the scrutiny function of committees (Robertson 1999). The immediate impact of such committees is that they began to probe into departments.

Despite the improvements in both countries in their committee structures, the results in this dissertation tend to suggest that committees are not very relevant avenues for eliciting ministerial resignations. There were only two instances that committee work led to a ministerial resignation. In the Canadian case, Lucien Bouchard resigned because he did not like the recommendations outlined by the Charest committee studying the Meech Lake Accord. This example was not about the committee scrutinizing a cabinet minister; it was about a cabinet minister scrutinizing committee work. The scrutiny was thus reversed. In the UK, one case exists where a minister resigned because of a scathing report issued by a parliamentary committee. This was the case of David Willet's resignation from cabinet. This suggests that less than one percent of resignations occurred as a result of committee scrutiny on a cabinet minister.

It should be noted that the increasing investigative powers of committees have allowed them to research problems after resignations. Committees have been used in this capacity to study the extent to which there was a breach in a government department in both countries. In Canada, the practice began with Mulroney, but appeared to die with Chrétien's government. It appears to be alive again in the Martin and Harper minority parliaments. In the UK, there appears to be a consistent trend in post-resignation investigations by parliamentary committees. This appears to confirm the fact that committees in the UK are more independent, but this independence has not yielded more resignations.

### **The Extra-Parliamentary Arena and Scrutiny**

Beyond committees, parliaments in both countries rely on a network of officers of parliament who have varying degrees of independence from the legislature. There are similarities in terms of job descriptions between the two countries, but there are significant variations in terms of their independence and how they are used in the parliamentary process. Oonagh Gay (2003) suggests that officers of parliament across all Westminster systems exist to assist parliament in its two major tasks. One of these tasks is to authorize expenditures and ensure that the taxpayer's money is being spent appropriately. The other is to manage grievances against the government. In Britain, there are three officers that fall under the category of extra-parliamentary officers that are relevant to ministerial responsibility. These include the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, and the Parliamentary

Commissioner for Standards.<sup>6</sup> In Canada, there are several.<sup>7</sup> Like Britain, Canada has an Auditor-General. It also has an Ethics Commissioner that performs a role similar to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. However, Canada during the study period did not have an ombudsman office similar to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Instead, different areas have different officers associated with them, such as the information commissioner, privacy commissioner, and official languages commissioner, and these officers perform a similar role as the ombudsman. Together, extra-parliamentary officers offer an extra line of scrutiny and accountability in the system, and with the exception of the auditors, are more contemporary additions to parliament.

Of great interest with respect to officers of parliament is the extent to which they are independent. There are a number of indicators of independence. First, independence can be secured by the budget appropriations. If the budget for an officer of parliament is set by a parliamentary committee, then the officer is not hindered by cabinet's refusal to provide the officer more money. Secondly, if a parliamentary committee is involved in the selection of the officer, it again establishes further distance between the officer and

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<sup>6</sup> In the UK, a form of national auditing dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Reforms to the Comptroller and Auditor-General occurred during the administration of William Gladstone in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, steps have been taken to create a more independent auditing office, which was established in 1983. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration was established in 1967, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards was established in 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Canada has had an Auditor-General since Confederation. The Ethics Counsellor was established by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in 1994 as part of the 1993 Liberal Party manifesto, *The Red Book*, which promised to strengthen ethics in government and lobbying. Since the enactment of the *Federal Accountability Act, 2007*, an Ethics Commissioner was established to enforce code of conduct and conflict of interest rules for all members of the House and cabinet. The Information Commissioner was established in 1998, the Privacy Commissioner was established in 1983 to protect federal legislation that was emerging in the mid-1980s, and the Official Languages Commissioner was established in 1970.



the government. Finally, a term limit and/or rules surrounding when a government can remove an officer can also help secure the independence of that office.

Even though the independence of the auditor exceeds that of the other officers of parliament in Canada, the office-holder still does not enjoy the same level of independence as her British counterpart. There are two reasons for this. In the first instance, the budget of the auditor-general is not independent of the government. In fact, part of the Harper government's *Federal Accountability Act, 2007* introduces measures that enhanced both the scope and the budget of the auditor general's activities. This has occurred because of the perceived lack of accountability within the parliamentary system. At the same time, it has made the issue of the auditor's budget a political one that will likely divide along party lines. It stands to reason that if the auditor's budget can be increased, a government could just as easily and arbitrarily reduce the money that goes to that office. Paul Thomas (2003) suggests that the reason for this is cabinet's need to control all expenditures, and so they must be able to determine the budgets of officers of parliament. He argues that "this insistence has led [the executive] to oppose proposals calling for parliamentary committees to propose budgets for officers of Parliament" (Thomas 2003, 301). The Canadian parliament seems to have the opposite mentality in this regard from its British counterpart, since committees in Britain establish the budget for their auditor and other officers.

The second factor that limits the independence of the Canadian auditor-general compared to his/her British counterpart is in the method by which he/she is selected. Currently, the appointment for Auditor-General occurs through a governor-in-council

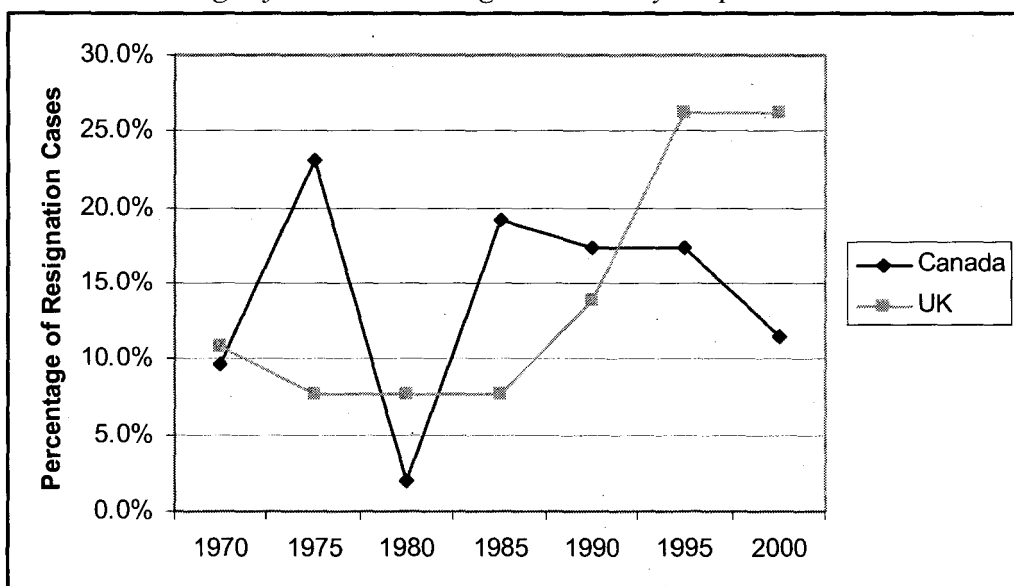
appointment for a ten year term (Thomas 2003). This essentially means that cabinet has authority to determine who the chief auditor will be once every ten years. To ensure that the candidate is qualified, a committee is struck with industry actors to advise the prime minister on the merits of each short-listed candidate (Kernaghan and Siegel 1987). As a result of this process, Canada has had decent choices for the position. Nevertheless, the prime minister and cabinet's role in appointing the auditor could open the door to partisan patronage that would ultimately undermine effective scrutiny. It is for this reason that the Auditor-General in Canada can be considered less independent than his/her British equivalent.

Despite the lack of independence compared to its British counterpart, the Office of the Auditor General tends to be quite critical of the government, and its reports receive significant attention from the opposition and the media (Docherty 2005). Kenneth Kernaghan and David Siegel (1987, 581) suggest that one of the reasons for this is that the "independence is adequately served by the safeguards that are in place." Thus, while there appears to be less independence of the auditor in Canada compared to Britain, there is still a great degree of independence.

Given this information, one would expect that a country's auditor would play a prominent role in ministerial resignations. In conducting the audits, it is assumed that the auditor will uncover issues of poor public administration and misappropriation of funds. This has indeed happened in both countries; however, what is surprising is that there has not been a single resignation as a result of such poor administration. This is in light of some very high profile cases that involve overspending on government programs. There

was the gun registry that had hundreds of millions of dollars in cost overruns. There was also the sponsorship scandal that involved the misappropriation of funds for the Canadian government's Quebec-based Sponsorship Program to combat separatism in that province. Neither of these high profile cases produced a cabinet resignation. Instead, the government has provided an account for the cost overruns and shuffled embattled ministers out of their portfolios. In the UK, the National Audit Office had been involved in investigating poor government administration in response to super bugs, troop levels and funding in Iraq, and the cost overrun and delays in the implementation of the new computer system for the National Health Service. In all of these cases, ministers have not resigned because of the poor administration uncovered by the national audit office. In many of the cases above, the bureaucrats tended to resign rather than their political masters.

Figure 5.1: Percentage of ministerial resignations in 5 year periods<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> The 1970 period includes Hellyer's resignation in Canada in 1969 and the 2000 period contains all the resignations until 2007 in both countries.

This tends to reinforce some of the tenets of new public management. Because government is getting bigger, it is too hard for ministers to keep track of everything that is going on in their departments. However, if this is true, it might be assumed that we would see fewer ministerial resignations and greater answerability by bureaucrats in parliament, particularly after the emergence of new public management. Figure 5.1 outlines the resignations in both countries in five year increments.<sup>9</sup> Since new public management is said to have emerged after the Thatcher administration in Britain, the points of interest are after 1985. In the Canadian case, we do see a marginal drop in the number of resignations that are occurring, which would correspond to the literature on new public management. However, in the UK, we see a completely opposite trend. More resignations are occurring after 1995 than at any other time period studied.

It is too difficult to make any conclusions regarding new public management based on this aggregate data. Many of the British resignations after 1995 were not a result of poor administration. Rather, many of the resignations related to private scandals that forced a resignation. One would have to devise a better measure to account for the number of cases of poor public administration (auditor reports would be a likely source) and then calculate the number of resignation cases associated with poor administration. This research project was not designed to make such an assessment; however, it can be said that the point raised in the previous chapters suggests that the ratio of resignations to poor administration will be low, since very few cases were related to poor administration.

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<sup>9</sup> Note that the last increment contains resignations until the end of 2007.

This would tend to suggest that the arguments regarding the decreased responsibility of ministers and the increased answerability of bureaucrats is likely to still be evident in the literature.

The other officer of parliament that is relevant to this discussion on scrutiny is the cabinet ethics commissioner. This is a natural fit for a study on ministerial responsibility because it involves the code of conduct and declares potential conflicts of interest that can determine a minister's suitability in office. In Britain, the position is held by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. The duties of the office holder include the maintenance and monitoring of the Register of Members' Interests which is the declaration of what members own or have a stake in, providing advice on a confidential basis to individual members, reporting to the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges about the interpretation of the various codes of conduct, and receiving and investigating complaints about members who might have breached the various codes of conduct established by the committee (Saint-Martin 2003). Once this commissioner finds a case worthy of investigating, he turns it back to the select committee. This occurs because the commissioner is not authorized to call witnesses on his own, since he lacks the authority granted through statute. The all-party committee therefore carries on the investigation when one is warranted. This returns the power of scrutiny back to the legislature.

The commissioner offers some degree of independence in the duties he/she performs. Like the auditor and ombudsman, the Commissioner has a related committee to whom he/she must report. However, Gay (2003) suggests that budgetary and staffing

decisions are not sufficiently independent from parliament, and so the office is not as independent as that of the two British officers discussed above. Also, the Commissioner is appointed by Resolution of the House of Commons and is an officer of the House. The Eighth Report of the Committee for Standards in Public Life (United Kingdom of Great Britain 2003) complained that the officer cannot be independent of the House if the House employs him. The preferred route would be to have a committee, rather than parliament, appoint the commissioner to ensure greater independence. Despite these two perspectives, the Office of this commissioner is still independent in terms of the nature of its reporting to the committee that oversees the position.

The situation in Canada is much different. During the study period, the Ethics Counsellor had the lowest level of independence of all the aforementioned officers. This has changed since the adoption of the *Federal Accountability Act, 2007*. The Ethics Counsellor used to be appointed by the prime minister to enforce the code of conduct for ministers and to keep a registry of members' business interests which are defined by the House of Commons (Bell 2006). Denis Saint-Martin (2003) analyzes the ethics counsellor on a comparative basis. When compared to all the Canadian provinces and to other Westminster jurisdictions, the federal ethics counsellor is most closely associated with the executive branch. Most other provinces and the other Westminster examples, such as Britain, make the legislature the body to which the ethics commissioner is accountable. Saint-Martin (2003) reminds us that the problem with a partisan ethics counsellor is that it is plagued by political direction. The government can manipulate the Office of the Ethics Commissioner to show that all ministers are acting ethically even

when this might not be the case. In other words, the office can be used as a tactic in order to silence the opposition from continued attacks.

Despite the apparent disparity in independence, ethics commissioners in both countries have figured into ministerial resignations. In Canada, Art Eggleton resigned due to an investigation by the ethics commissioner that essentially made the departing minister an example of how questionable conduct should lead to a resignation. In the UK, David Blunkett resigned because the country's ethics czar found that the departing minister also broke rules. Yet, there are also examples in both countries where these officers were also not able to produce a resignation. In the UK, for example, there were calls for Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell to resign in 2006 because of the disclosure of her family's financial interests. The commissioner decided that she complied with the rules, yet it still did not discourage the opposition from pursuing a conflict of interest allegation. Similarly, in July 2008, the ethics commissioner cleared Canadian Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty of conflict-of-interest in the fact that he gave all private schools a tax credit while he had a financial stake in a private school in his home riding. Again, the opposition continues to press the finance minister, but the ruling has taken the wind out of their sails.

What this tends to mean in both countries is that the presence of these ethics czars has not dampened the opposition's pursuit of a resignation. Much of the debate on whether a minister should resign involves political considerations of trying to change the public's perception of the amount of conflict and sleaze that is in a government.

However, whether these officers are independent or not does not appear to matter very much. Their records in producing resignations are about equivalent in the two countries.

### Minority Governments and Ministerial Resignations

Another way to examine scrutiny is by exploring how governments make decisions for ministerial resignations when they have fewer than half the seats in the lower chamber. When a party has fewer than half the members in the House of Commons, it has to rely on other parties to cooperate with it to pass bills and generally move the business of the House forward. With more opposition than governing members holding the government to account, and with more opposition members on parliamentary committees than government members, one should expect a difference in behaviour towards cabinet resignations.

*Table 5.2: Decisions for ministerial resignations during minority governments*

Minority Government	Rational Decisions	Groping
Canada <sup>10</sup>	Joe Comuzzi (Martin) Michael Chong (Harper)	Judy Sgro (Martin)
UK	Lord Brayley (Wilson) Eric Heffer (Wilson) Baroness Hart Robert Hughes (Wilson) Joan Lester (Wilson) Reg Prentice (Callaghan) Joe Aston (Callaghan) Robert Cryer (Callaghan)	

<sup>10</sup> There were no resignations during the minority governments of Trudeau from 1972-1974 nor Joe Clark's government in 1979.



With the exception of one resignation case, all other resignations during a minority government were categorized as rational/planning, as shown in Table 5.2. In Canada, minority government resignations resulted in roughly the same distribution as the results for all Canadian resignations, with nearly 66.7% of the cases categorized as rational during minority governments and 62.5% of the cases during minority governments being similarly categorized. In the UK, all the resignations were categorized as rational, which compares to 62% of the cases during majority governments categorized as rational. The numbers indicate a higher degree of rationality in both countries during a minority government when compared to rationality during majority governments. This may suggest that the legislature is better able to scrutinize the government when there are more opposition members and more resources that accompany the extra MPs.

In addition to this, both countries have fewer resignations during minority governments. In Canada, minority governments produced about half a resignation per year, whereas taken entirely, the governments in that country produced about 1.3 resignations per year. In the UK, the results are not as great, but there still is a degree of difference in the numbers. During British minority governments, there were about 1.4 resignations a year, while during all governments, there were about 1.7 resignations a year.

The difficulty with putting much weight behind these numbers and understanding their significance is compounded by the fact that the resignations were occurring in different time frames. In fact, all of these minority government resignations came at

times when governments in both countries did not have many resignations (see Figure 5.1). The resignations in Canada came after 2004, which was a low period compared to the decade before it. In the UK, the Wilson and Callaghan governments did not produce nearly as many resignations as the Thatcher, Major and Blair governments. It is thus difficult to conclude whether minority governments produce fewer resignations or whether something else explains why fewer resignations occurred during these time frames, such as changing notions of accountability in Canada for example.

### **Change of Government and Ministerial Resignations**

The final comparison to be made between Canada and the UK is the extent to which a change in government affects the decision-making theories. The assumption is that because there is a change in government, members of the opposition may have experience in cabinet and better know how to scrutinize the newer government. It is also a period of time when the newly formed government, which spent a great deal of its time in opposition seeking resignations for alleged improprieties, now has to face the same barrage of requests for ministers to step down. It is a test of the new government to see whether they conform to or contradict what they said in opposition.

Table 5.3 summarizes the resignations that occur due to a change in government. The Canadian cases during a change in government show that 11 out of 15 resignations were rational, which represents over 73% of the cases. This number is higher than the total number of rational decisions (63%) meaning that the first term of a change in government corresponds to a higher degree of rational decisions. In the UK, 16 out of 22

cases that occurred during the first term of a change of government (almost 73%) are rational as well. This corresponds favourably with the total number of rational decisions in the UK, namely 66% of cases. What is striking once again with this number is that it shows a remarkable similarity with the Canadian cases.

*Table 5.3: Resignations in the first term of a change in government*

Country	Government	Rational	Mixed-Scanning	Drift	Garbage Can	Outlier
Canada	<b>Mulroney</b>	R. Coates J. Fraser M. Masse (I) S. Blais-Grenier A. Bissonette R. LaSalle D. Crombie		S. Stevens		
	<b>Chrétien</b>	A. Ouellet R. MacLaren S. Finestone	B. Tobin		S. Copps	D. Collenette
	<b>Harper</b>	M. Chong				
<b>Canada Total</b>		<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
UK	<b>Heath<sup>11</sup></b>	T. Taylor J. More R. Maudling		Lord Lambton Lord Jellicoe		
	<b>Wilson<sup>12</sup></b>	Lord Brayley N. Buchan E. Heffer Baroness Hart R. Hughes J. Lestor				
	<b>Thatcher</b>	N. Budgen K. Speed Lord Carrington				N. Fairbairn
	<b>Blair</b>	M. Chisolm F. Field J. Cunningham P. Mandelson (I)		Glenda Jackson Frank Dobson		
<b>UK Total</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>11</sup> Heath is included in the change of government table because he took over from Wilson's Labour government in 1970.

<sup>12</sup> Since Wilson's first term after Heath lasted less than one year, all of Wilson's resignations are included in the table.

This tends to suggest that governments are more likely to undertake rational decisions for ministerial responsibility when they are newer to the job, and more likely to skirt the traditional doctrine the longer they stay in office. This gives credibility to the assumption that newly changed governments generally have to live up to the expectations that they set while in opposition and that the newly formed opposition's experience on the government benches allows them to be better able to spot the need for a resignation.

In conclusion, of all the issues discussed with these variables, few provide much explanatory value in terms of the similarities and differences between governments. This tends to suggest that the foundational principle may be the consistency that determines the similarity of results in both countries. Other than that, the variables discussing change of government and minority government provide an interesting explanation on the rationality of decision-making.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION**

This dissertation has sought to do three things. The first of these is to examine whether Canada and Britain have maintained their foundational principle of ministerial responsibility or whether the concept is dead. Secondly, we are interested in exploring how well the matrix accounted for the cases in this study and whether it is useful to continue its use. Finally, the dissertation offered a comparison between these two countries. This chapter will discuss each of these three points and plot future research that will emerge from this dissertation.

### **Ministerial responsibility: Injured rather than dead**

The fact that the level of rationality was so high in Canada and the United Kingdom was a surprising finding in this study. It shows that governments in both countries still have some attachment to the foundational principle even though they do have their moments when they ignore it. In fact, if we exclude both the Chrétien government in Canada and the Major government in the UK, the instances in rationality would be far higher. Subsequent administrations seem to have repaired the strain caused by Chrétien and Major, and this requires examination in the future to determine whether those two governments were anomalies.

In terms of institutional change, both countries continue to have a fairly strong attachment to the foundational principle. When we apply the definition of institutional change discussed in Chapter 2, the goal is to see how closely the current institutional

configuration matches the original. If there is a difference, then there has been a change in the foundational principle. Given the high degree of rationality and the presence of institutional change, it leads to the conclusion that the concept of ministerial responsibility is injured rather than dead. The concept is still mostly intact, yet there are new and competing reasons that lead to a minister's resignation. The first of these is that sex scandals in the United Kingdom are now treated as rational reasons for ministerial resignations. Ministers in the UK since John Major's administration now resign at the first whiff of an allegation levelled against them of extramarital relationships. Major took office with a promise to bring the country "back to basics" and promote a family values policy. The only problem is that his ministers were not really practicing what the prime minister was preaching. The result was a government that was plagued by sex scandal, and most of these cases led to a resignation. Resignations related to private scandal continued under Blair, signifying the continuance of the practice. Drift suggests that a series of short-term rational decisions lead to everlasting change that are almost impossible to reverse. We see the evidence of this in the dissertation.

Second, Liberal Party succession planning in Canada has also become a rational reason for ministerial resignations. The cases of Donald MacDonald, John Turner, Paul Martin, and we could potentially include Brian Tobin, promote the idea that it is an acceptable practice to leave government office in order to prepare for the leadership of the Liberal Party. What is interesting to note here is that the practice of stepping down to contest the leadership of a political party has long been an acceptable practice in the UK. However, the difference in Canada is that the above mentioned ministers are not upfront

with their leadership ambitions. Also, in the UK, it was evident that both Labour and Conservative parties have a history of cabinet ministers stepping down, but only the Liberals do in Canada. These resignation cases were again associated with drift, and it serves to reason that it may well be necessary for any would-be leadership contestant to take some time to build an organization capable enough of winning the reigns of the party.

Finally, the effects of federalism in Canada and devolution in the UK have also led to ministerial resignations for ministers who seek to lead a sub-national government. It seems that governments are willing to tolerate or even promote the idea of having a member of their own government leave to lead another sub-national government. This is extraordinary because Bagehot argued that the government should seek to keep all of its top people within their government. Strategizing over who should take over sub-national governments did not used to be part of the foundational principle of ministerial responsibility.

All three observations, one affecting the UK, one affecting Canada, and the other affecting both countries, lead to the conclusion that the foundational principle as envisioned by Bagehot has changed to include these new reasons for acceptable ministerial resignations. The implications for this are important to understand. If the new reasons for resignation continue to drift from the original understanding, the foundational principle may lose its meaning. Discussion will need to take place that either seeks to return governments to applying ministerial responsibility as it was intended or to go to a different conception. Since this dissertation has only examined resignations within a

roughly forty year time period, understanding resignation cases more historically, and continuing to track future cases, will be necessary to determine whether such a different conception is necessary.

### **The success of the decision-making matrix**

Another goal of this dissertation was to make a theoretical contribution with the decision-making matrix. In total, there were 116 cases of ministerial resignations in Canada and the UK. Of the 116 cases, 110 of these could be categorized by one of the decision theories in the matrix. This represents a 95% success rate. Thus, this study shows the applicability of the decision theories that were predominantly derived from studies of American government and applied to the Westminster-parliamentary model. From the results in this dissertation, it appears as though these decision theories are applicable to a different governmental structure, and it should continue to be used.

The reason why these predominantly American-based theories have relevance to Westminster theories can likely be traced to the fact that presidential-congressional and Westminster parliamentary systems are both organizations. Even though there is some variation between the structures of who makes a decision in both countries, it is still possible to analyze the way in which a decision is made, since both systems have a hierarchy and identified decision-makers to study. This suggests that the structure of government matters much less in the analysis of decision-making, and the evidence in the results show that it is possible to apply the framework to Westminster systems.



### **The comparison between Canada and the UK**

The comparison between Canada and the UK provided some interesting findings, some of which were not entirely expected. There were a number of similarities between Canada and the UK beyond the fact that both exhibited high levels of rationality. These similarities include the deterioration of rational decision-making in the 1990s, the effect that political parties and leadership have on the matter (even though the parties are ideologically different), and the extent to which change of governments and minority governments are more likely to produce rational decision-making than parties that stay in office for longer periods of time. These points seem to indicate that the similarities in terms of the system of government and the prevalence of foundational principles are quite strong.

This point is reinforced by the evidence produced in this dissertation. In essence, the differences highlighted in the previous chapter could provide an explanation to the results. In particular, the UK has a bigger legislature than Canada, yet the similarity in results between the two countries means that this has little impact on the decisions to resign. The UK has more independent scrutiny than Canada, both in its committees and in its officers of parliament, yet this independence did not yield many resignations in either country. It can therefore be concluded that these differences, which are normally highlighted between the two countries, have not mattered much when it comes to analyzing the decisions for ministerial resignations in Canada and the UK.

### **Future directions**

Given the relationships outlined above and in previous chapters, there are many avenues to pursue future research. This final section will discuss some of the future research that will emerge as a result of this dissertation. Five of them will be explained below. The first of these seeks to understand why negligent conduct has become one of the major reasons for ministerial resignations. This dissertation highlighted some peculiar cases for ministerial resignations, ranging from a pickaxe waving minister, to a minister who was mugged in a park, to a minister who says that there is a gun in the luggage of another traveller at the airport. Are there reasons for the rise of such unusual cases? This research will likely assess the behavioural characteristics of ministers who make foolish mistakes to determine why we may be seeing more dramatic instances of “stupidity” today than ever before.

A second avenue for future research is to understand how and why independent scrutiny does not produce ministerial resignations. Parliamentary committees and officers of parliament rarely figure into ministerial decisions. Even though the UK has greater independence in its committees and officers of parliament, resignations as a result of scrutiny have not been any different there than in Canada. This may point to the more prominent role of the media and the government to police itself. The question of importance here is whether it is ineffectiveness of these modes of scrutiny or disinterest from them to pursue ministerial resignations.

A third possibility for future research is to examine the effects of federalism and devolution on ministerial responsibility. Bagehot (1878) suggests that governments

desire to have their best people in Cabinet. However, federalism in Canada and devolution in the UK have changed this idea because there is now competition for good people between national and sub-national governments. The question is whether the recent use of this practice in Canada and the UK is also evident in other federal Westminster parliamentary systems.

Fourth, the cases associated with drift require further study. With the similar level of rationality being evident in Canada and the UK, this dissertation suggests that the similarities of parliamentary government and the foundational principles led to nearly identical numbers. However, if this is true, why are both countries drifting in separate directions. In Canada, one of the main reasons for drift was linked to Liberal Party succession planning. It now becomes a rational decision for would-be successors for the Liberal leadership to resign from the government, which is a deviation from the original intent of ministerial responsibility. In the UK, private scandal is the chief reason for the foundational principle to be drifting. Why is there such dissimilarity between the two cases given the similarity in rational cases?

Finally, one of the interesting threads of literature in organizational theory is the literature on organizational change. One can analyze whether an organization has changed based on whether the present organization is consistent with its mission, principles, and objectives. If it is not consistent with these, the organization has changed. The question is whether we can apply this logic to parliamentary democracy. Doing so requires the use of the foundational principles to highlight the principles and goals of the organization.

The above discussion demonstrates the numerous avenues from which to pursue further research. It also demonstrates that there is much yet to be learned about ministerial responsibility. Beyond ministerial responsibility, future research will build upon the decision-making matrix and apply it to studies in public policy and public administration.

**APPENDIX A:  
CODING RULES**

Condition	Rules	Examples
Consensus	<p>Statements highlight an agreement between the Prime Minister and the departing Minister</p> <p>If there was no suggestion of consensus from either or both parties and/or their spokespeople, then consensus is assumed.</p>	<p>Teddy Taylor's resignation letter said that he resigned because it "was in the best interests of the country." The prime minister returned saying that he respected Taylor's willingness to step down based on the policy disagreement.</p> <p>The case of Roch LaSalle was one where consensus was assumed. Mulroney expressed regret and said that he knew "how difficult and trying these last weeks have been for you." This suggests that there was an acknowledgment that a problem led to a resignation.</p>
No Consensus	<p>Either the prime minister or the cabinet minister expresses disagreement with the decision after it was made.</p>	<p>Shelia Copps' case where the PM was quoted as saying that he "did not ask her to resign" and this was a personal policy choice in the May 2, 1996, edition of the <i>Globe and Mail</i> (Page A1).</p>
Knowledge of Cause and Effect? Yes	<p>There must be correct speculation that there is a cause and effect relationship with only the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A policy dispute or a threat to cabinet solidarity</li> </ul>	<p>Joe Comuzzi's resignation came as a policy disagreement with the Martin government's same-</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor administration of a government department</li>   <li>▪ An appeal to parliamentary tradition, such as breaking a law or being under investigation.</li>   <li>▪ Cabinet rotation/ making way for new members.</li>   <li>▪ A minister can no longer discharge his public duties due to health reasons, an inappropriate action by a minister in his/her capacity as a member of the government (private actions excluded), and misleading parliament.</li> </ul>	<p>sex marriage legislation.</p> <p>Estelle Morris resigned because of the her poor performance and the government’s inability to meet its literacy targets and the downgrading of exam scores.</p> <p>Marcel Masse resigned because he was under investigation for poor election expense reporting. PM Mulroney said that: “in the circumstances, I believe it is in our parliamentary traditions and practices.</p> <p>Andre Ouellet, Roy MacLaren, and Shelia Finestone all resigned to make way for new members according to the Chrétien plan.</p> <p>George McIlraith resigned for personal and health related to a car accident. The accident resulted in the need for two cataract eye surgeries that left him with temporary vision impairment and it was difficult for him to read.</p>
<p>Knowledge of Cause and Effect? No.</p>	<p>Cases where there has been speculation, but he speculation was incorrect.</p> <p>Relationships that were speculated that fall outside</p>	<p>Art Eggleton gave a department research</p>

	<p>those listed above, .e.g. conflict of interest.</p> <p>No speculation of cause and effect.</p>	<p>contract given to a former girl-friend, which was untendered and worth almost \$40 000</p> <p>Leo Cadieux's resignation occurred with no apparent reason provided in terms of cause and effect.</p>
Can decision be changed? Yes.	If colleagues suggest that a departing minister will be back because of a promising career or a temporary absence.	The case of Marcel Masse, Conservative MP Paul Dick said that somebody in the PMO told him that Masse "may be back in the Cabinet in 10 days time."
Can decision be changed? No.	<p>If the departing minister, other MPs or ministers suggest that a resignation is the end of a career.</p> <p>No speculation also suggests permanence.</p>	<p>The case of Donald MacDonald is most explicit. MacDonald himself said "I think this is the end of my political career."</p> <p>Robert Cryer's resignation offered no speculation and the PM was quite had little positive to say about his departing minister.</p>
Is the decision linked to past decision?	When the decision is clearly linked to other similar decisions	Lord Hunt resigned because he no longer supported the broad direction of the government. This is similar to Malcolm Chisholm who resigned from cabinet because of a policy disagreement with the single parents policy.
Not Linked	When there is no evidence of a link due mainly to an unusual circumstance.	Allan Stewart waved a pickaxe at protesters. This was a bizarre case that had no linkages to other cases.

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