

## **ADVICE GIVING AND PARTY LOYALTY: AN INFORMATIONAL MODEL FOR THE SOCIALISATION PROCESS OF NEW BRITISH MPS**

**ABSTRACT:** Post-election socialisation has frequently been identified as a source of parliamentarians' disposition towards party loyalty. Yet a recent study of the socialisation experiences of new members in the British Parliament, using tenure as proxy for socialisation, found little evidence of an effect on party loyalty (Rush and Giddings, 2011). This paper develops a new model of parliamentary socialisation and uses the same data to demonstrate that post-entry socialisation did in fact change legislators reported likeliness to behave in accordance with their party leadership's wishes. Specifically, a framework based on information exchange (advice giving) is used to show that positive interactions with party actors are associated with increased loyalty. Controlling for initial levels of loyalty, members who received more useful advice from party actors were more likely to rate themselves as highly influenced by the party leadership.

**Keywords:** British Politics, Cohesion, Parliaments, Parties, Socialisation, Surveys

All institutions face a 'new members' problem. If they are to successfully renew themselves, they must have the ability to recruit appropriate new members. Yet this presents a numbers of challenges. New members are by definition outsiders with little experience of 'how things are done here', and as such are a potential threat to established practices. Conversely, experienced from the point of view of a new member, entering a new institution presents the problem of adapting to a predetermined role while retaining a sense of the purpose for which one joined. Parliaments face these problems in a particularly acute form, with new members entering in large groups at a time of maximum institutional disruption around elections. Most of these new members have little or no previous experience as legislators at a national level, but frequently do possess a strong sense of mission and a desire to make change (Rush and Giddings, 2011). As an added complication, few systems impose

extensive formal constraints on how members carry out their legislative duties beyond the formal rules of procedure, and British parliamentarians in particular have traditionally been interpreted to be entitled to use their own judgement in deciding how to vote. The job of constraining such independent agents in most systems therefore falls largely to the internal mechanisms of political parties. To do so parties deploy a diverse range of strategies, from control over career advancement and reselection to various forms of formal and informal discipline (Kam, 2009). When these fail, however, they rely on having previously inculcated norms of loyalty and deference to leadership (Kam, 2009). This inculcation of collective values is achieved via the process of socialisation; the transmission of norms such as party loyalty from established members of the parliamentary community to a new generation over time (Scott, 1971).

This study presents a new analysis of this process of parliamentary socialisation. Instead of utilising a model based on parliamentary tenure as in previous socialisation studies, data from the Study of Parliament Group's (SPG) surveys of new parliamentarians in the UK is used to develop a model of advice giving exchanges - a proxy for information acquisition - as a determinant of party loyalty. Drawing on work from the organisational socialisation field, as well as some classic sociological accounts, the model places information, through the mechanism of advice giving, at the centre of the socialisation process (Blau, 1964; Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002). Instead of expecting socialisation to consist of uniform changes over time, therefore, as tenure-based studies have tended to assume, the paper uses measures of the helpfulness of advice from party actors to explore MPs' learning process and demonstrate information acquisition as a proxy for socialisation. This measure is shown to be positively related to increased loyalty, as new members reciprocate for useful advice with loyalty to senior party colleagues. Consequently party loyalty can be seen to develop in part as the product of the social learning process which new MPs undergo.

## **1. Loyalty and socialisation**

The focus here is on party loyalty as an individual disposition towards loyalty (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2010). Loyalty is a strong feeling of support or allegiance not directly related to

agreement, or any immediate expected gain or loss, resulting from association with the object of loyalty (Hirschman, 1970: p. 38). In Hirschman's (1970) classic account, loyalty was an irrational attachment which nonetheless interacted with the strategic context, affecting individuals' marginal choices about how and when to express dissent (Hirschman, 1970: pp. 76-106). In a parliamentary setting loyalty norms often have just such a marginal effect, getting the government 'over the line' when other incentives fail (Kam, 2009). This contrasts to standard measures of party loyalty which focus on the well-worn problem of 'cohesion' – the study of parliamentary rebellion, or, alternatively, the degree of ideological congruity between legislators of the same party (Krehbiel, 1999; Sieberer, 2006; Kam, 2009). Measures applied to study these concepts are generally defined at the level of the party group or the legislature as a whole, from the comparatively simple (Rice, 1925) to the highly sophisticated (Poole, 2007). Causal explanations are thus also directed at the macro-level and to system- or party-level structural factors (Sieberer, 2006).

By contrast, the analysis here uses individual level data on MPs' experiences and self-reported party loyalty to demonstrate a socialisation effect on underlying dispositions towards loyalty. Socialisation can be characterised as a learning experience in which various forms of institutionally situated values are transmitted to newcomers. This may take a variety of forms, but frequently includes a degree of ritual and ceremony as well as more day-to-day experiences of group membership (Spencer, 1970). Successful socialisation is manifested in the reproduction of the roles and behaviours of the current generation in the new one over time (Mayer, 1970). In a legislative context, MPs are socialised to adopt the norms of loyal partisan behaviour, over and above normal partisanship, which are essential for parliamentary party groups to function as coherent blocs (Kam, 2009).

Such post-election socialisation processes have long been identified as a source of party loyalty (Kornberg, 1967; Price and Bell, 1970; Searing, 1986; Kam, 2009). In one recent study Rosenblatt (2007) argues that British MPs undergo a socialisation process that underpins loyalty norms in British politics, with the experience even being compared to socialisation experiences in childhood. As she relates, '[one MP] remembered the experience as... comparable to starting at a new boarding school', a commonly used analogy which 'describes not only the atmosphere and surroundings, but also the

rules in place and the sense of hierarchy that exists between the new arrivals and the more established Members' (Rosenblatt, 2007). Yet concrete evidence of the effect of such experiences has often been harder to detect, with pre-election attitudes argued to shape views more than incumbent experiences (Price and Bell 1969; Asher, 1973). Crowe's (1983; 1986) frequently cited work links difference in loyalty to party identification but not length of service. Likewise, European Union scholars have failed to find evidence of systematic socialisation effects in the European Parliament, in spite of the prevalence of narratives about national legislators 'going native' as a result of exposure to EU institutions (Scully, 2005; Navarro, 2005). Rush and Giddings (2011) have recently examined the socialisation of new British MPs in one of few book-length treatments of the topic. With data from the 1992-1997 and 1997-2001 cohort surveys of MPs from the Study of Parliament Group (SPG), which we also use here, they show that little consistent change over time was detected in measures ranking various possible role orientations, including supporting the party group (Rush and Giddings, 2011: p. 112) and questions assessing the influence of party loyalty on an ordinal scale showed no clear pattern of increasing over time at the level of the party group mean (Rush and Giddings, 2011: pp. 113-116).

Simple change over time at the aggregate level is, however, a poor proxy for socialisation. Changes in attitudes can and do take place for a variety of reasons. Change over time therefore both over- and under-estimates socialisation effects. Without a clearer definition, either changes which are unaccounted for by other measures are simply allotted to socialisation, or behavioural shifts masked by other factors may lead us to conclude socialisation had no effect. Thus, Kam (2009) points out 'it is more precise to say that socialization is effective when MPs come to value the 'right' norms, to wit, loyalty, solidarity, and deference to leadership – and it is these norms rather than the amount of time the MP spends in parliament that constrain the MP's behaviour' (Kam, 2009: p. 194). In his analysis, however, individual-level differences in loyalty norms – measured through candidate surveys – remain an independent variable used to explain parliamentary behaviour (Kam, 2009). In this study, by contrast, information acquisition is used as a proxy for socialisation to explain differences in the strength of underlying loyalty norms, as well as how these change over time in new MPs.

## 2. Advice seeking and disposition towards loyalty

As noted, socialisation is in essence an exercise in learning, specifically role-acquisition, in which an individual learns the technical and social knowledge required to function in a specialised setting. However traditional accounts of this process suffer from a failure to fully conceptualise how this works in practice. In classic functionalist accounts, the socialisation process was seen as dominated by the institutional side of the ‘new member’ dilemma. Roles were seen as predetermined, with individuals simply adapted to them via organisational tactics (Parsons, 1964; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). This institution-led view also informed early studies of legislative socialisation. Price and Bell (1970), for example, were concerned primarily with the “rule structure of Congress” and the “content and effect of the rules” on legislators’ behaviour. Models utilising tenure as a proxy for socialisation also tend to implicitly accept this definition, as they expect uniform effects from institutional pressures ‘working on’ on legislators over time (Asher, 1973; Crowe, 1983).

Instead, I draw here on an alternative conception of the socialisation process which characterises it primarily as a form of information exchange (Blau, 1964). On this account, the experience of newcomers is dominated by a single imperative: the need for information. As well as being crucial for day-to-day effectiveness, the possession of knowledge about institutional practices is the most important marker of ‘insider’ status (Blau, 1964). Proactive information seeking is therefore central to the socialisation process. At the same time, however, this is a highly social process, with the most valuable information likely to be procured from more experienced colleagues. Miller and Jablin (1991), in a seminal article, distinguished between referent information; technical knowledge required to do the job, appraisal information; about the newcomers own performance and relational information; the nature of relationships with others in the organisation. These are interconnected, however, in as far as relational information is required to attain referent and appraisal information in an effective way – in short, to know who to ask for advice and how (Miller and Jablin, 1991).

From the point of view of established members, however, the newcomers’ need for referent information presents an opportunity. As newcomers have few other resources, they reciprocate by

showing loyalty to those from whom they have received the most useful advice. This supports a hierarchy where newcomers seeking information become subordinated to more experienced advice givers (Blau, 1964: p. 185). While advice seeking makes newcomers proactive in their own socialisation, therefore, it also reinforces hierarchies based on specialisation and expertise, establishing seniority relationships with more experienced colleagues (Morrison, 2002; Contractor and Monge, 2002). This dynamic has more recently been conceived in terms of social capital (Fang, Duffy and Shaw, 2011). However the idea of advice giving as the sociological foundation of institutional power structures has a longer heritage, stretching back at least to Peter Blau's seminal work on the transactional nature of social interaction 'Exchange and Power in Social Life' (1964). To the current author's knowledge, however, it has never been applied to parliamentary socialisation.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Hypotheses

The advice-information model has a number of implications for the 'new member' problem in parliaments. In a legislative context tasks and roles are often not only highly complex but loosely defined and poorly institutionalised. As such relational information is likely to be extremely important as a source of learning, with party colleagues the most significant source of such information. Rush and Giddings (2011), for example, found that new members saw MPs of their own party as the most useful source of advice on their role (Rush and Giddings 2011: p. 75).

Hypothesis One: New members who are satisfied with advice given by party actors will be the most familiar with the technical details of their role.

Secondly, in relation to the central question of party loyalty addressed here, we expect that when party actors are seen as valuable sources of advice and information by new members this will result in an

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<sup>1</sup> Although it has seen little use in political science, a considerable body of empirical literature from the organisational socialisation field attests to information acquisition behaviour, and the accompanying dynamic of advice giving, as a critical factor in successful institutional adaption to roles in a range fields, see for example Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002; Bauer, Bodner, Tucker, Erdogan, and Truxillo, 2007.

increase in party loyalty in the same individuals (Fang, Duffy and Shaw, 2011). In Blau's (1964) formulation, in return for the receipt of advice, new MPs incur a social debt which they repay by showing loyalty to senior party colleagues (Blau, 1964).

Hypothesis Two: New members who receive useful advice from senior party actors will have an increased tendency towards loyalty to party leaders.

However this situation is sensitive to the range of sources of advice available. When advice can be procured elsewhere its value as a social commodity declines and the advice-for-loyalty mechanism is weakened (Blau, 1964). This is particularly significant against the background of strengthening institutional support for new legislators in a number of countries (Steinack, 2012; Fox and Korris, 2012). If the advice-information model is correct, such diversification in sources of advice is likely to weaken loyalty to the party leadership. We therefore expect that new members who are already satisfied with levels of official provision will show lower levels of party loyalty.

Hypothesis Three: New members who are satisfied with official sources of advice will show lower levels of party loyalty.

#### **4. Suitability of the UK case**

The UK parliament represents a most likely case for the advice-information framework (Gerring, 2007). As Steinack (2012) points out, the UK has low levels of formal institutional support but strongly embedded parliamentary parties. In her study, it was the only country in which the majority of legislators opposed any move to initiate formal compulsory training programs for new MPs (Steinack, 2012). Indeed those who were in favour of such a move specifically identified weakening the parties as the potential outcome. As one British MP argued, "...I'm absolutely certain that parliamentarians can benefit from it. What I do think is they need it sharp, fast, upfront and before they've fallen into the clutches of the whips and the system and go native" (Steinack, 2012). Thus a strong *prima facie* case can be made for the role of sources of information as a vehicle for party control in the British House of Commons.

#### *4.1 Data: the Study of Parliament Group's (SPG) socialisation surveys*

To test the model, the Study of Parliament Group's (SPG) surveys of newly elected MPs in the 1992-97 and 1997-2001 Parliaments are used (Rush, 2012). These panel surveys of British parliamentarians were used by Cowley (2002) and Rush and Giddings (2011), and were specifically designed to investigate new members socialisation. They provide a wealth of useful data on sources of information and advice for MPs, as well as measures of role perceptions, behavioural influences and career aspirations. The SPG surveyed new MPs in three waves; immediately after election, again in the middle of the parliamentary session and finally at the end. 267 MPs responded to at least one wave of the survey, a response rate of over 70% for both cohorts, while 93 MPs responded to both the initial and final waves, representing a response rate of 25.2% for new members in the 1992-1997 parliament and 25.1% for the 1997 cohort. The SPG surveys pay unique attention to the sources of advice and information available to MPs and represent the best data available to test the model. As Table 1 shows, the subsample for which data is available from multiple waves is approximately 61% Labour MPs, with the majority in in the 1997 cohort. This is broadly representative of new members over this period given the large Labour majority in the 1997-2001 parliament, although in part this also reflects the cooperation of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) in administering the survey (Rush, 2012).

[Table 1 around here]

Using surveys such as the SPG data entail relying on self-reported measures. This is sometimes viewed as controversial, as the connection between reporting and actual behaviour can be unclear or questionable. On the other hand, survey measures and longform interviews have frequently proven extremely useful in probing aspects of legislators' experiences which 'hard data' analysis alone may be unable to capture (Heitshusen, Young and Wood, 2005). Ideally, survey data should be combined with hard measures to confirm predictions. Unfortunately the SPG data is anonymised and does not allow us to connect answers to relevant data such as parliamentary voting records. Anonymization also precludes the use of certain demographic controls which would ideally be included in a study of



loyalty, in particular the gender of an MP (Cowley and Childs, 2003) and the marginality of their constituency (Campbell, Cowley, Vivian and Wagner, 2016).

Nonetheless a strong case can be made for the validity of the measure used here. In the first place, it is highly likely that this measure is correlated with real world behaviour. Kam (2009), for example, has already demonstrated using a similar measure derived from the 1992 British Candidate Survey (BCS) that such self-assessed measures of loyalty were a determinant of dissenting votes cast by MPs (Kam, 2009: p. 189-203). Secondly, the aim is to assess underlying dispositions towards loyalty displayed by a legislator; that is, prior to being presented with a specific situation in which their party deploys formal and informal methods of discipline. A survey measure is well suited to this purpose as it effectively decontextualizes the loyalty norm by asking the member to reflect on it as a generality.

While the SPG surveys did include a control group of longer serving MPs, I include only the new MPs in the analysis. In the first place, the organisational socialisation literature emphasises that the most important socialisation experiences involving information acquisition occur early on after organisational entry, when newcomers are most inexperienced in their roles (Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002). Secondly, using only new members allows us to effectively control for variation in legislative tenure, as all MPs in the data had the same amount of parliamentary experience in terms of at the time they took the survey. Instead of a separate control group, therefore, we control instead for the answers given by new MPs themselves in the first wave of the survey. We therefore measure within-case changes directly.

## **5. Operationalisation of the variables**

### *5.1 Dependent variables*

The central prediction of the model is hypothesis two (H2); the positive effect of receiving useful advice from party actors on party loyalty. To test this, the dependent variable is drawn from a measure asking members to rate how strongly they were influenced by direction from the party leadership when deciding on how they acted and voted in Parliament; *nearly always, usually, sometimes, rarely*

or *never*. Answers on this measure may of course be driven in part by considerations beyond loyalty. However, subjects' interpretation of the question as relating to the exercise of discipline is minimised by the reference to advice, not direction or formal whipping, and the framing of the question as one of influence on a personal decision. The majority of members nonetheless responded to these questions indicating a high relatively high degree of loyalty, with decisions 'usually' or 'nearly always' influenced by the party leadership (Rush and Giddings, 2011: pp. 113-116). At the same time, a significant minority reported lower scores. These lower scores were combined into a single category so that each MP's level of loyalty was rated 'high', 'medium' or 'low'. This measure was included in all three waves of the survey, with the dependent variable being drawn from the third wave.

Hypothesis one (H1) in the model predicts that parties will be the most significant source of learning for new MPs. For this prediction, the measure of procedural familiarity from the SPG dataset is used. Respondents were asked how familiar they were with parliamentary procedure; 'very familiar', 'somewhat familiar', 'not very familiar' and 'not at all familiar'. Knowledge of the parliamentary process, including procedure for debate, is crucial for British MPs. The House of Commons is generally considered a quintessential 'arena' legislature in which MPs primary skills revolve around debate. Moreover, not all MPs were able to adequately master these skills, with a significant minority reporting struggling even after months or years in the House (Rush and Giddings, 2011: p. 182). This part of the model therefore attempts to account for this via the advice giving mechanism, with usefulness of party advice expected to be a significant predictor of gains in procedural familiarity. This is included primarily to verify that reported usefulness of advice is actually associated with (self-assessed) learning and not simply a reflection of a generally positive assessment of party actors. Again, this measure was included in all three waves of the survey, with the dependent variable drawn from the third (and final) wave.

## *5.2 Explanatory variables*

The model incorporates two explanatory variables; advice from party actors and advice from the House of Commons (HoC) officials. Both are composites of multiple Likert-type items from the

survey which asked about the general usefulness of various specific sources of advice (i.e. a Likert scale). For the Party Advice measure, respondents' answers for 'MPs of their own party', 'officers of the parliamentary party', 'Ministers or frontbenchers' and 'other party officials' were used to create an overall score. For House of Commons (HoC) Advice, responses for 'Parliamentary Clerks', 'Commons Library staff' and 'other Commons staff' were aggregated in the same way. The response categories ('not at all useful', 'not very useful', 'quite useful' and 'very useful') were coded 1-4 while a do not know/no interaction response was coded missing.

Scores for each specific actor were aggregated by calculating a mean score for each type of actor; the MP's political party and the House of Commons (HoC) authorities. The resulting continuous variables therefore assess the overall usefulness of advice received from two classes of actors; officials of the House of Commons, and the MP's party group. The items on advice usefulness were put to MPs twice; once in the second wave and again in the third wave. In order to minimise attrition between survey waves and create a more robust measure, both time points are used, so that if an MP failed to provide a score in one wave the score given in the other is used. If an MP provided two scores, an average of the two is taken.

Both the party and HoC measures are approximately normally distributed and provide sufficient variation for analysis. While these measures are of not perfect proxies for information acquisition, they are in line with those used in the organisational socialisation literature (Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002). In addition, the procedural familiarity dependent variable allows us to assess the importance of sources of referent information directly by showing its relationship to a learning outcome, albeit a self-assessed one.

### *5.3 Control variables*

The panel structure of the SPG data allows us to control for the responses given to the process familiarity and party loyalty variables in the first wave of the survey, immediately after MPs were elected. MPs entering the House for the first time may vary in their levels of loyalty for any number of reasons, from social and educational background to pre-parliamentary political experience

(Cowley, 2002; Allen, 2014). Although using data only from new MPs effectively controls for any unmeasured variance related to tenure, it does not account for the possibility that some MPs simply view interactions with party actors more favourable precisely *because they are more loyal*. By accounting for initial loyalty and process familiarity the possibility that results are driven by these endogenous factors is precluded. However, a number of other controls are also added to the model.

First, a dummy is added for membership of the two cohorts in the study (1992 = 0, 1997 = 1). As Cowley (2002) and Rush and Giddings (2011) have pointed out, parliamentary cohorts are not identical in their background, outlook or behaviour and some natural variation can therefore be expected. Second, a further dummy is added for membership of the governing party (Yes = 1, No = 0). Executives in parliamentary systems such as the UK rely on the backing of a majority for survival, as well as passing legislation, and are therefore expected to devote more resources to maintaining the loyalty of backbenchers (Sieberer, 2006). Party-level factors also play a role in bolstering cohesion. As Raymond and Overby (2014) argue, “party labels... reflect a social identity that is independent of legislators’ preferences and the rules used by party leaders to enforce discipline.” This effect varies by party and extends well beyond parliament into the activist base, with previous British studies showing a much stronger effect for Labour at all levels than the Conservatives (Crowe, 1983). The model therefore also includes a control for party identification (Party ID).

In terms of individual-level variables from the SPG data, whether an MP reported having ministerial aspirations is introduced as the final control. Governments in parliamentary democracies hold a near-monopoly over career advancement and have used this to bolster loyalty (Kam, 2009; Godbout and Hoyland, 2016). As well as aiding cohesion directly via the so-called ‘payroll vote’ of legislators currently inside the government, those aspiring to ministerial office must prove their suitability by demonstrating consistent loyalty to the government’s policy. Kam (2009) argues that hope of promotion and career advancement is the most significant individual determinant of loyalty in roll-call voting. Likewise, Cowley (2002) found that MPs in the SPG dataset with no ministerial ambitions were five times more likely to cast dissenting votes than those who hoped to be promoted in the future (Cowley, 2002: p. 110).

Controlling for ministerial ambitions further minimises the possibility of reverse causality. As Allen (2014) points out, not all British MPs are created equal. In particular, those with prior Westminster experience as ‘special advisors’ or MPs’ assistants appear to be able to advance more quickly in their parliamentary careers (Allen, 2014). In which case, it may be that those with strong ministerial aspirations have been preselected as particularly loyal group, and receive extra advice and assistance merely as a result of being groomed for accelerated entry into the leadership. In order to separate the effect of career advancement from advice giving, therefore, I also control for whether a new MP still stated that they had ministerial ambitions at the end of the parliament.

In addition to ministerial aspirations, two further variables are added to control for the pre-parliamentary experiences of MPs. As noted, the SPG data is anonymised and cannot be connected directly to any MP. As such, it is not possible to control directly for demographic factors which Cowley (2002) found to be significant predictors of dissent in these cohorts, such as local government experience or trade union backgrounds in Labour MPs. Nonetheless, the first wave surveys did ask the related question of who newly elected MPs reached out to for advice in preparing to do the job before they entered parliament; other MPs, party officials or trade union contacts (answering “yes” or “no”). While the vast majority of new MPs had consulted other MPs, there was more variation in pre-entry contact with party officials and trade unions. Both of these are potentially significant factors. If a new MP reaches out to party officials, it is likely they have the strong pre-existing relationships to the party in central office identified by Allen (2014). By contrast, MPs who reached out to trade unions for advice before entering parliament are likely to have the connections in the broader labour movement which Cowley (2002) identified as a source of rebellious attitudes.

## **6. Analysis**

### *6.1 Model Choice*

Given the structure of the data the preferred method for analysis is an ordered probit model (Winship and Mare, 1984). The ordered probit design allows for analysis of discrete dependent variables, like Likert-items, which can be placed on an ordinal scale and where an OLS regression is therefore

inappropriate (Fullerton, 2009). Both dependent variables fall into this category, as they ask respondents to place their level of party loyalty and knowledge of parliament into ordered categories. Ordered probit models estimate coefficients and the location of thresholds (or ‘cut points’) between each category of the dependent variable. These replace the constant estimated in other models but are not of substantive interest, though are presented in Table 2 to indicate which variables were significant. Substantive effects are shown in Tables 3 and 4 in terms of predicted probabilities for categories of the dependent variable. These are estimated for significant variables, with all other variables held at their means. Variables are entered stepwise into the model, beginning with the party and official (HoC) advice variables, as well as the control for initial loyalty/procedure familiarity.

## 6.2 Findings

[Table 2 around here]

Table 2 shows coefficient estimates for the ordered probit regressions conducted for party loyalty and procedural familiarity. As per hypothesis two, usefulness of advice from party actors was indeed a significant predictor of party loyalty and remaining significant across all models. On the other hand official advice from the House of Commons was not associated increased or decreased loyalty. The results therefore confirm the central relationship assumed in the information exchange model between advice giving and party loyalty. Moreover, as hypothesis one predicts, party advice was also associated with increased procedural familiarity, whereas official advice was not. As predicted by the theoretical model, therefore, advice giving interactions with party actors were associated both with increased loyalty and greater functional knowledge of the MPs role. The results therefore strongly indicate that useful advice based interactions with party actors not only boosted loyalty, but were also related to enhanced information acquisition.

[Table 3 around here]

Among the control variables, cohort, ministerial ambitions and high initial levels of loyalty all proved significant. Those with high initial levels of party loyalty were highly likely to retain their views through the course of the parliament. In addition, as expected members with ministerial ambitions

were more likely to report high levels of loyalty to the party leadership. However, ministerial ambitions had no effect on procedural familiarity, with no significant difference between MPs. Interestingly, in absolute terms, MPs with ministerial ambitions did show higher levels of procedural familiarity, with 23.6% who answered 'yes' reporting that they were 'very familiar' with parliamentary procedure compared to 6.45% for those who answered 'no'. However they also reported a higher initial level, with only 8.77% reporting that they were 'not at all familiar' with parliament compared to 18.18% of the no ambitions group. As our model controls for this initial level, the non-significance of this variable shows instead only that ambitions were not associated with any increased knowledge of procedure. At the same time, therefore, it reinforces that the main variable of interest – the usefulness of party advice – was associated both with more rapid learning and increased loyalty compared with initial scores.

[Table 4 around here]

Both of the controls for pre-entry advice also proved significant for the loyalty measure, indicating the pre-parliamentary background of MPs also played a role. However, only one of these was in the expected direction. While MPs with trade union links proved less loyal as predicted, this was also the case for MPs who had reached out to party officials for pre-entry advice. One possible explanation for this is that those who took active steps to reach out to officials pre-entry were in fact the least experienced in national party affairs. By contrast, well connected new MPs with previous national political experience did not reach out to party officials in preparing for the job because they did not feel the need to. In any case, while these background factors did impact on loyalty, the lack of an effect on procedural familiarity indicates that this was not related to the same advice-information mechanism which is evident from the post-entry party advice measure.

Harder to interpret is the significance of the cohort variable (Coef. = -1.04) for party loyalty in our model. The mean level of party loyalty diverged significantly over time between the two cohorts represented in the data. While the average score at the beginning of the parliaments was very similar between both cohorts in wave 1 of the surveys, there was subsequently a marked rise in the 1992

cohort and the opposite - a steep decline - in the 1997-2001 group. Unobserved cohort related variables therefore clearly also affected party loyalty. It should be noted that there were indeed a number of interesting differences between the two groups. The 1992-1997 cohort entered parliament at the beginning of a fourth term of Conservative government with a slim majority facing an increasingly tough fight against a resurgent Labour Party under leader and future prime-minister Tony Blair from 1994. By contrast, the 1997 cohort entered parliament during a time of enormous disruption, with a Labour landslide and a rate of turnover unprecedented in a peace time election after a four-to-five-year election cycle.<sup>2</sup> The 1997 cohort were also dramatically more diverse, with higher numbers of women and ethnic minority MPs than in any previous parliament. All these factors may have played a role. However, we should note here simply that the significance of party advice is not affected by the dummy and therefore this result does not obviate the main conclusions reached here.

[Figure 1 around here]

In order to illustrate the substantive effect of advice on party loyalty and procedural familiarity, the results of the regression model can be interpreted in terms of predicted probabilities. Tables 3 and 4 show results for the party advice variable as a set of predicted probabilities for the various outcomes, with other variables are held at their means. As they show, an MP who on average rated party advice as ‘very useful’ was most likely to be at least somewhat familiar with parliamentary procedure (.66) and to report a high level of party loyalty (.72). By contrast, an MP who rated party advice as ‘not at all useful’ was much more likely to be ‘not very familiar’ with parliamentary procedure (.34 compared to .02 for an MP who found advice ‘very useful’) and to report a low influence by party leaders on the loyalty measure (.55).

Indeed, at all levels, increases in reported usefulness of party advice were associated with increased loyalty and familiarity. As Figure 1 shows, the probability of an MP reporting the highest category in each variable (‘High’ loyalty and ‘Very Familiar’) increase relatively uniformly as scores for party advice rise. The relationship between party advice, procedural knowledge and party loyalty therefore

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<sup>2</sup> The 1945 election saw a larger turnover (496), in part due to a very large number of retirements given the ten-year parliament which preceded it and also because of the Labour landslide which occurred in the same year.



approximates exactly the kind of smooth increases we would expect if loyalty was a ‘commodity’ exchanged for information in the way the model implies. There is no apparent threshold denoting a distinct group which was more loyal, and thus receiving intense advice and assistance compared to an excluded and disloyal group, as we might expect were the ‘preselection for leadership’ logic as outlined above driving the results (Allen, 2014).

In sum, the results of the regression model provide support for the hypotheses outlined in the advice-information model of dispositions toward party loyalty. As per H1, parties appear to be the dominant actors in the functional aspects legislative socialisation. MPs satisfaction with advice from party actors was associated with significantly faster learning of parliamentary procedure. Moreover, as suggested by H2, they are able to use their dominance of the channels for acquiring referent information (advice giving) to reinforce norms of loyalty to the leadership in new MPs. This suggests that other authors may have underestimated the extent to which this is the case (Asher, 1973; Crowe, 1983; Rush and Giddings, 2011). On the other hand, interaction with the House of Commons authorities seemed to play a smaller role than some have envisaged in terms of functional socialisation, at least at the time of these surveys (Rush and Giddings, 2011). Not only was official advice not associated with accelerated learning, it may even have had modest negative effect on party loyalty. However, as the effect was not significant, we cannot confirm H3 from these results. The broader systemic role of official advice thus remains unclear.

## **7. Discussion**

This paper has presented a new theoretical approach to explain the connection between parliamentary socialisation and party loyalty. Instead of using legislative tenure as a proxy for socialisation, this process was instead conceptualised as an information exchange in which loyalty norms emerge as a by-product of the social learning process which new members undergo. This is in line with the expectations literature on organisational socialisation as it has developed in other fields, which finds ‘advice’ effects not only on role-specialisation and loyalty but also organisational commitment and career satisfaction (Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002). These results indicate that the same or

similar dynamics are also operative in legislative socialisation. The advice-information model outlined here thus provides plausible microfoundations for a model of the socialisation effects on party loyalty in new parliamentarians, and challenges the conventional wisdom that this is not the case. Parties do in fact socialise new MPs and change behaviour in ways relevant to party loyalty; specifically, by inculcating norms of loyalty and deference to the leadership through advice giving.

Nonetheless these conclusions have potentially wide-ranging implications. That parties are important vehicles for legislators to develop a working knowledge of their role is perhaps unsurprising.

However, the results emphasise that learning mechanisms play important secondary roles for legislative politics in terms of bolstering party loyalty. Given recent calls for greater institutional provision for parliamentarians professional development (Fox and Korris, 2010; Coghill, Lewis and Steinack, 2012) the conclusion that existing learning mechanisms through parties play a role in maintaining party loyalty should cause us to think more deeply about the potential effects of such reforms. On the one hand, independence on the part of legislators is increasingly part of what the public demands from politicians (Allen and Birch, 2012). As such, the issue of socialisation itself is often seen critically through the lens of public perception of the growing separateness of the 'political class' from the day to day concerns of citizens (Rosenblatt, 2007). Yet cohesion is both necessary for effective governance (Kam, 2009: p. 10). Thus if one consequence of encouraging legislators to eschew traditional advice relationships within their party is to compromise the mechanisms through which they come to view loyalty as an important norm, then a secondary consequence of modernisation may be a weakening of party unity, and, ultimately, public trust.

A number of caveats apply to these results. In the first place, they relate to a single case over a comparatively short period of time for which data was available. In addition, as the bulk of the SPG data was collected during the 1990s, the specific conclusions reached about the House of Commons in this study should properly be considered historic. The Commons has undergone considerable institutional development in the last two decades, with substantially greater provision of formal training and advice for new MPs. There has also been a profusion of sources of advice from new institutions such as the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), which now provides

induction courses on the expenses system. While in this study parties appeared to be the dominant informational actors, therefore, this may not still be the case today.

More importantly for the theoretical model presented here, however, are a number of other limitations imposed by the data which must be noted in order not to overinterpret these results. Firstly, as noted, the SPG surveys only tracked MPs over their first parliamentary term, and thus we cannot assess the long term effects of advice related socialisation. Thus, while Kam's (2009) work on socialisation has demonstrated that loyalty norms are important in the long run, the role of the form of information based socialisation advanced in this study remains unclear. Second, the combination of anonymised data and a comparatively small sample for multivariate analysis also impose limits on what can be concluded from this study. For example, recent research has demonstrated that parliamentary dissent is a valence signal which MPs in marginal constituencies can use to appeal to voters (Campbell, Cowley, Vivian and Wagner, 2016), though the effect of such fixed factors as electoral marginality is to some degree accounted for by controlling for initial loyalty.

Another missing demographic factor in particular bears mentioning in this respect, however. Gender is a factor in parliamentary dissent in the UK. Indeed, this was especially salient for the 1997-2001 cohort, in which Labour women were initially less likely to dissent but became significantly more so over time (Cowley and Childs, 2003). Importantly for this study, advice networks themselves are frequently gendered. While little of the organisational socialisation literature focusing on information acquisition specifically addresses gender, considerable attention to gender has been paid by the related literature on mentoring in career development. Scholars have identified a lack of such mentoring as a key problem in corporate life, with women often struggling to find mentors in male-dominated professions. Consequently they often lack access to sources of advice available to their male colleagues (Mullen, 1994). While this study was not able to address the role of gender, therefore, this may well have been a factor and should be addressed in future studies of parliamentary socialisation.

Lastly, as the results indicate that socialisation processes are not uniform between parliamentarians or across parliamentary cohorts, future research clearly needs to address the issue of socialisation in a

longer term perspective. This may prove extremely challenging, however, given the lack of appropriate long-term survey data on parliamentarians. It may therefore be profitable to develop a comparative framework. As noted, there is reason to believe that party-based learning and informal socialisation for new MPs is likely to be particularly significant in Britain and other Westminster systems where institutional support is lower (Steinack, 2012). Thus an alternative approach would be to investigate whether systems with higher levels of institutional support for legislators have generally lower levels of party loyalty when controlling for other structural factors (Siberer, 2006). In any event, further investigation into the systemic effects of parliamentarians' learning process on party dynamics is surely warranted.

**Table 1 Party Identification and Cohort Membership in SPG Sample**

Party	Cohort		Total
	1992	1997	
Labour	17 (18.3)	40 (43.0)	57 (61.3)
Conservative	11 (11.8)	9 (9.7)	20 (21.5)
Others	4 (4.3)	12 (12.9)	16 (17.2)
Total	32 (34.4)	61 (65.6)	93 (100)

Notes: Based on MPs who provided answers in the first and last wave of the SPG survey. Others category comprises minor parties and independents; Liberal Democrat, Plaid Cymru, Scottish National Party (SNP), Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), (Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). Relative frequencies are in parentheses.

**Table 2 Estimates for Party Loyalty and Procedural Familiarity**

	(1) Party Loyalty	(2) Party Loyalty	(3) Party Loyalty	(4) Procedure Familiarity	(5) Procedure Familiarity	(6) Procedure Familiarity
Party Advice	<b>0.982***</b> (0.290)	<b>0.948**</b> (0.302)	<b>1.275**</b> (0.391)	<b>0.656*</b> (0.283)	<b>0.641*</b> (0.293)	<b>0.633*</b> (0.305)
HoC Advice	0.0651 (0.244)	-0.0264 (0.255)	0.355 (0.318)	0.0129 (0.237)	0.0175 (0.244)	0.0192 (0.255)
Cohort		<b>-0.858*</b> (0.335)	<b>-1.128**</b> (0.409)		0.168 (0.316)	0.180 (0.325)
Party (Other)						
Conservative		0.0952 (0.497)	-0.423 (0.581)		0.184 (0.509)	0.161 (0.523)
Labour		-0.449 (0.449)	-0.404 (0.535)		-0.628 (0.454)	-0.596 (0.469)
Government Status		0.0490 (0.352)	0.566 (0.429)		0.105 (0.336)	0.111 (0.346)
Min. Ambition (No)						
Don't Know			1.052 <sup>+</sup> (0.547)			0.169 (0.453)
Yes			<b>1.639***</b> (0.456)			0.333 (0.344)
Pre-Entry Advice						
Party Officials			<b>-1.408***</b> (0.364)			0.218 (0.284)
Trade Union			<b>-0.984*</b> (0.453)			-0.105 (0.411)
Loyalty (Wave 1)	<b>1.100***</b> (0.242)	<b>1.339***</b> (0.279)	<b>1.441***</b> (0.344)			
Familiarity (Wave 1)				<b>0.425**</b> (0.164)	0.332 <sup>+</sup> (0.172)	0.347 <sup>+</sup> (0.179)
cut1 _cons	<b>4.041***</b> (1.158)	<b>3.283**</b> (1.249)	<b>5.521**</b> (1.809)	0.378 (0.984)	-0.190 (1.150)	0.109 (1.206)
cut2 _cons	<b>6.081***</b> (1.231)	<b>5.499***</b> (1.319)	<b>8.636***</b> (1.989)	1.637 <sup>+</sup> (0.937)	1.107 (1.106)	1.435 (1.158)
cut3 _cons				<b>4.073***</b> (1.016)	<b>3.690**</b> (1.168)	<b>4.042***</b> (1.227)
N	91	91	89	91	91	90
pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.191	0.258	0.462	0.091	0.131	0.145
Prob > chi2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0040	0.0073	0.0303

Standard errors in parentheses, <sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 4 Predicted Probabilities for Procedure Familiarity**

Party Advice	Procedure Familiarity			
	Not at All	Not Very	Somewhat	Very
Very Useful	0.000251 (0.000593)	0.0154 (0.0162)	<b>0.660***</b> (0.117)	<b>0.325**</b> (0.128)
Quite Useful	0.00221 (0.00340)	<b>0.0620**</b> (0.0264)	<b>0.797***</b> (0.0487)	<b>0.138***</b> (0.0396)
Not Very Useful	0.0135 (0.0177)	<b>0.174**</b> (0.0791)	<b>0.770***</b> (0.0698)	0.0427 (0.0318)
Not at All Useful	0.0571 (0.0791)	<b>0.343**</b> (0.175)	<b>0.591***</b> (0.212)	0.00929 (0.0158)

Notes: probabilities calculated from model 6 as shown in Table 2. All other variables held at means.  
 N=90. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.

**Table 3 Predicted Probabilities for Party Loyalty**

Advice	Party Loyalty		
	Low	Medium	High
Very Useful	0.000108 (0.000267)	<b>0.279*</b> <b>(0.146)</b>	<b>0.721***</b> <b>(0.146)</b>
Quite Useful	0.00767 (0.00750)	<b>0.747***</b> <b>(0.0647)</b>	<b>0.245***</b> <b>(0.0628)</b>
Not Very Useful	0.125 (0.0835)	<b>0.850***</b> <b>(0.0751)</b>	0.0247 (0.0257)
Not at All Useful	<b>0.550*</b> <b>(0.282)</b>	0.449 (0.281)	0.000595 (0.00170)

Notes: probabilities calculated from model 3 as shown in Table 2. All other variables held at means. N=89. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. Standard errors in parentheses.



**Figure 1 Predicted Probabilities for Maximum Party Loyalty and Familiarity Scores**

[Figure 1 here]

Notes: plot shows predicted probabilities for the highest response categories of the loyalty and familiarity items, full results for which are displayed in Tables 3 and 4. Lines show adjusted probabilities with confidence intervals at 95%. All other variables are held at their means.

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