

# Intra-party group formation at the level of individual political actors The Liberal Party of Australia 1983-2013

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\*\*Suggestions for improvement welcome\*\*

Intra-party cohesion and factionalism are important phenomena shaping the behaviour of political parties. Currently we know little of the individualised and micro-level impacts of socialisation on the process of intra-party group formation and socialisation. This study seeks to identify socialisation processes that contribute to intra-party group formation. It also aims to identify where socialisation occurs within parties and what motivates individual political actors to form or join intra-party groups. Through a single case study of the Liberal Party of Australia, this study describes and examines these micro-level phenomena. The Liberal party of Australia is an unusual case because it grants its parliamentary party (ie. the party in public office) extraordinary authority to determine the policy direction and electoral strategy. Coupled with its weak conflict resolution structures and leader-follower culture, the personnel make-up of the parliamentary party assumes greater importance for both internal party management and shaping the party's overall direction. Using elite interviews, archival materials, party documents, diaries and memoirs, and newspaper accounts this study identifies how socialisation occurs within the three faces of the party, in addition to third party groups such as unions or interest groups. It also makes some progress towards a framework for analysing what motivates individual political actors to form or join groups.

## Introduction

This is an exploratory paper which seeks to examine and identify socialisation processes in political parties that lead to the development of intra-party groups at the level of individual political actors. Intra-party politics is a significant, yet poorly understood, aspect of party politics. Parties are not unitary actors and their internal party politics and its dynamics are an important dimension of how political actors understand their role, make decisions, and navigate their environment in order to achieve their goals.

This research grew out of a project examining political parties in opposition, particularly Australia's largest conservative party, the Liberal Party of Australia. In seeking to better understand how the party managed its internal politics in the resource scarce environment of opposition, the question of why the party descended into factional conflict began apparent. For a party which steadfastly refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of intra-party group organisation (see further details below) why did individual actors risk censure and sanctions?

This paper asks how and why do individual political actors sort themselves into groups within political parties. Currently, as far as the author is aware, this process is poorly described. Therefore, this paper seeks to first describe as far as possible how political actors become socialised into intra-party groups. In particular, this paper will focus on cases of intra-party group formation in settings where factional behaviour is informal. In such settings, actors who choose to socialise into groups must actively decide whether to participate or actively chose to abstain. Using the Liberal Party of Australia as a lens to examine intra-party group formation, this paper's aim is to develop a framework for analysis and generate hypotheses for further comparative investigation.

First, this paper will review how factionalism has been conceptualised and how this relates to processes underpinning intra-group formation and socialisation at the individual level. Second the methods and sources used in this paper are discussed. Third, the paper examines intra-party group formation and socialisation within the Liberal Party. Fourth a framework for analysing processes and locations of intra-group formation within political parties is developed. This framework focuses on where socialisation occurs within parties and what motivates political actors to become socialised into intra-party groups. Finally, as this paper is just the first step, the paper discusses the limitations of its findings and future directions for research.

## What are factions (or intra-party groups) and why do they matter?

The conception of parties as unitary actors has increasingly come under question in the parties literature. In recent years there has been a greater recognition of the reality that parties contain multiple groups of actors and this has implications for how parties determine policy positions (Bernauer and Bräuninger, 2009; Ceron, 2015a, 2012; Harmel and C.tan, 2003), form coalitions (Bäck, 2008; Giannetti and Benoit, 2008), maintain discipline and cohesion (Boucek, 2012; Ceron, 2015a, 2015b) and for parties/ party systems' stability and institutionalisation (Köllner and Basedau, 2005).

Factions are an understudied dimension of party politics. Much of the literature that does exist on the subject has attempted to find useful ways to define what a faction is and to conceptualise different types of factions or intra-party groups. While there has been no shortage of typologies or conceptualisations, there are some broad areas of agreement. At their most basic level, factions are conceptualised as 'groups within parties' (Köllner and Basedau, 2005, p. 7).

Most conceptualisations of factions have sought to account for the level of organisation in intra-party groups, their purpose in organising, or function. Zariski (1960, p. 33) conceptualised factions broadly as

any intra-party combination, clique, or grouping whose members share a sense of common identity and common purpose and are organised to act collective—as a distinct bloc within the party—to achieve their goals.

I argue that Zariski's definition remains useful, but better encapsulates intra-party groups more generally rather than factions specifically. Following on from Zariski, scholars have argued that the institutional characteristics of intra-party groups are important in shaping how intra-party groups behave. Rose (1964, p. 37) distinguished between factions and tendencies, where tendencies were defined by stable attitudes as opposed to formalised institutions or even the same group of people. Hine (1982) emphasised the importance of discipline and organisation as a distinguishing feature of factions as opposed to other intra-party groups. In contrast, Beller and Belloni (1978) distinguish factions as an overarching concept, with three subsidiary concepts. They grouped tendencies and cliques in one sub-group, personalised or clientalistic organisations in the second, and third, institutionalised and highly organised groups.

Other scholars have empathised the function of factions. Sartori (1976, p. 68) drew on eighteenth century debates to distinguish between factions of 'principle' (ideas groups through to ideological groups) and factions of 'interest' (spoils or naked power). In the Australian context, McAllister (1991) and Warhurst (1983) argued that factions act as useful strategic formations which helped manage internal politics and broaden parties' electoral appeal.<sup>1</sup>

More recently Bettcher (2005, p. 342) has sought to integrate both institutional and functional aspects into a single and useful typology which I use to distinguish between different intra-party groups. Bettcher distinguishes between weakly organised groups, which are either primarily motivated by principles (tendencies) or interests (clientele). Clientalist groups are distinguished by their emphasis on personal relationships and a hierarchical structure, while tendencies are essentially the same as Rose's conceptualisation—a group with some organisation, but lacking in durability and defined by ideas (Bettcher, 2005, pp. 343–344). By contrast, strongly organised groups are defined either through their motivation by principles (faction of principle) or interests (faction of interest). Here, the use of the term 'faction' denotes strong organisation. Factions of interest are similar to clientalist groups, but factions of interest are less dependent on personal relationships and more dependent on the faction's survival itself. Factions of principle are similar to tendencies, but have high levels of institutionalisation (Bettcher, 2005, p. 344).

Despite the effort to conceptualise different intra-party groups, little is known about why political actors themselves choose to organise into factions. While there have been studies which examine individual characteristics of political actors and their relationship to factional organisation (eg. Cox et al., 2000; Stern et al., 1971) we know little about how individual actors themselves rationalise their decision to join intra-party groups. Zariski (1960, p. 34) hinted at the dimension of individual rationalisation and motivation when he argued the existence of factions or intra-party groupings required a 'cognitive element'. Factions exist when the

party member is aware of certain fundamental differences which divide him from other members of the party, and is also aware that he and other like-minded party members have certain characteristics, interests, and aspirations in common and are engaged in a collective effort to overcome resistance within the party.

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<sup>1</sup> Though, this formulation seems to describe the Australian Labor Party better than the Liberal Party.

Köllner and Basedau (2005, p. 12), also suggest that factions can satisfy ‘emotional and social needs’ of members, though without offering further explanation. With this in mind, this study seeks to ask what motivates political actors to either create or join intra-party groups. It further asks how political actors are socialised into intra-party groups.

### Method and Sources

One of the difficulties of studying intra-party activity is that it is challenging to uncover and measure internal party processes. By their very nature, they are hidden away from public view and parties are often secretive and reluctant to reveal their internal processes. In Westminster contexts where party discipline is high and the number of parties is low, it can be challenging to find robust ways of measuring differences in intra-party organisation in parliamentary speech. In these systems, the incentive to vote or speak out against the party line is overwhelmed by pay-offs for towing the party line. Yet, as Helmke and Levitsky (2004, p. 726) argue, understanding informal institutions is ‘critical to understanding the incentives that enable and constrain political behaviour’. In such circumstances, a more detailed qualitative account of why individual actors choose to form or join groups is fruitful as a first step in understanding these processes more broadly.

This paper will use the Liberal Party of Australia as a lens to explore processes of intra-group formation at the individual level. The paper will draw on elite interviews with Liberal Party Federal parliamentarians and senior organisational figures who served between the 1980s and the present day. This data was collected as part of a larger project on the Liberal Party of Australia (Taflaga, 2016). This study also draws on archival materials, party documents, diaries and memoirs, and newspaper accounts to build up a picture of how intra-group formation and socialisation occurs. Given these processes of intra-party group formation and socialisation are poorly described, let alone understood, a qualitative approach allows for an examination of individuals motives and rationales alongside their actual behaviour as a first step on the way to generating a more general analytical framework that can be tested in comparative context. The time period selected also encompasses a period of growing intensity in intra-group formation and socialisation at multiple locales within the party.

### *The Australian Context and a brief organisational history of the Liberal Party*

Australia is a bicameral Westminster Parliamentary democracy. Both of these chambers are small: the House of Representatives has 150 members (in 1983, it was 124) and the Senate) 76 (in 1983 it was 64). Thus, governing parties are relatively small and made up of about 100 political actors. As the size of the executive, and its opposition shadow counterpart, ranges between 40 and 45 positions, almost half of governing parties (higher for oppositions) have some level of executive responsibility. The consequence is that party discipline is very high in Australian political parties (G. Maddox, 2005).

The Liberal Party of Australia has a number of specific institutional features that make it an interesting case study in the context of trying to uncover processes of intra-group formation. First, the Liberal Party of Australia is a decentralised party, organised on a federal model. The implication of this is that members and the party’s political representatives are recruited and organised at the sub-national level. These state divisions of the party are responsible for the provisioning of candidates for both the federal and state parliament. The party does have a federal organisational wing, but its role is primarily to support the leader of the federal Liberal Party, act as an election campaign fundraiser and organiser, and as a facilitator between the federal leader and the organisational wings of the state divisions. The Liberal Party’s state divisions retain high levels of autonomy from the federal organisation and exhibit divergent institutional patterns in the form of rules and cultures (Errington, 2015; Hancock, 2007, 2000; Jaensch, 1994).

For example, the two largest state divisions, New South Wales (NSW) and Victoria, display different patterns of intra-group behaviour<sup>2</sup>. Of these two states, NSW has developed three factions (the moderates, the right and the hard right), but has stopped short of formally recognising or formally institutionalising them (Hancock, 2007; Hyde Page, 2006). By contrast, Victoria exhibits evidence of clientalistic intra-party group formation. Currently in Victoria, two semi-organised groups are centred on two power brokers, who were former ideological allies (Ferguson, 2017; Wallace, 2016). As a result, the ideological difference between these groups in Victoria is negligible.

Second, the Liberal Party is unusual in that it grants its parliamentary party (ie. the party in public office) extraordinary authority to determine the policy direction and electoral strategy of the party at both federal and sub-national division levels. (Hancock, 2000). The party maintains a mass party model with a hierarchical branch structure. The design was intended to facilitate participation, but this structure has been moribund for decades (Liberal Party of Australia. Committee of Review and Valder, 1983; Reith, 2011). At both federal and state levels of the party, the party in public office is obliged to listen to the organisational wing in relation to policy (consisting of both the party on the ground and the party in central office). However, the party in public office not bound by a formal policy manifesto. Instead, the party has a statement of very general principles, mostly consisting of motherhood statements. Although this arrangement is the cause of much tension within the party (Jaensch, 1994, pp. 112-117), this principle has been affirmed several times during the party's history (eg. Hancock, 2000; Liberal Party of Australia. Committee of Review and Valder, 1983) and is even written into some state division's party constitutions (SA Division, 2015).

The impact of this organisational preference means that the personnel make-up of the parliamentary party assumes greater importance for both internal party management and shaping the party's overall policy direction (Taflaga, 2016). Leaders are given significant authority to determine policy directions by their parliamentary party. The implication is that without any formal binding rules or sanctions, leaders are incentivised to satisfy the policy preferences of their parliamentary party colleagues rather than party officials or party members in the organisational wing.

Third, one of the Liberal Party's rhetorical touchstones is that it is a party 'without factions'. The reason for this high level of intolerance of factions and factionalised politics is a reaction to its main rival for public office, the unionised, factionalised and even more highly disciplined Australian Labor Party (Brett, 2003). As a party that centres its ideological framework on individualism, it objects to factionalism as a means of binding MPs to collective decisions. This is ironic given the high level of party discipline that the Liberal Party exhibits. The party, which historically was a melding of two different centre-right traditions, has always seen tensions over its interpretation of center-right politics in Australia. Therefore, at the federal level, the Liberal Party's intra-group formations are far more akin to Rose's (1964), and Bettcher (2005) conception of tendencies.

The development of heavily factionalised politics in NSW and more explicitly clientalist formations in Victoria over the last three decades provides an opportunity to examine how political actors understand the process of intra-party group formation at multiple levels of the party. Moreover, as the federal party refuses to formalise itself into factions, its institutional architecture remains fluid, meaning that examining what political actors understand and think about factionalism over time is a useful exercise. In this context, political actors have to make

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<sup>2</sup> Other state divisions fall along a spectrum between factionalised politics, such as South Australia, which effectively has two factions (Moderate and Right) and more clientalist arrangements as in Western Australia.

conscious choices about how they will navigate their political environment as they do not have the luxury (or constraint) of transferring their intra-group allegiance from one level of the party to another.

## How have processes of socialisation and intra-group formation developed and changed

When the Liberal Party was established in 1944, the institutional expectation or norm within the party was that its members should not take direction from external groups and that they ought to undertake their duties in line with a Burkean understanding of representation (Hancock, 2000).<sup>3</sup> As noted above, this established an expectation among Liberal Party parliamentarians that they would not organise into factions, which were understood to be an affront to the party's belief in individualism, facilitate collusion against the public interest and directly undermine an MP's representative capacity (Jaensch, 1994, pp. 128-129). Despite these beliefs, by the late 1970s semi-organised intra-party groups had begun to form and by the mid-1980s, the party had developed two rival informal groupings. Why then did political actors choose to transgress the party's established norms?

### Right and Left Intra-party groupings: change over time

#### The Dries and The Modest Members

Intra-party groupings on both the right and left of the party were primarily motivated by ideas and policy advocacy. In the case of the first intra-party group to emerge—the Dries—this group initially coalesced around the example of a maverick member of parliament, Bert Kelly. Kelly had anticipated the neo-liberal turn of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and had been a long-time advocate of public choice theory and monetarism within the Liberal Party (Colebatch, 2012). However, Kelly lost a candidate selection battle within the party in 1977 and would be absent from the parliament just when a group interested in his ideas began to organise. In the mid to late 1970s, the Liberal Party during the Prime Ministership of Malcolm Fraser, was eager to use the rhetoric of monetarism, but stopped short of translating their rhetoric into policy implementation (Pincus, 2001). In frustration, the Dries emerged as an informal and semi-organised group within the parliamentary party which aimed to push the Fraser government on economic reform.

It is difficult to determine the exact size of the Dries, but their number ranged between 10, and at the very most, 20 members within the parliament. The group was organised by a core group of three members of parliament, John Hyde, Peter Shack and Jim Carlton. Carlton's previous career in management had an important influence on his approach to economic policy (personal Communication, 9 December 2012). Whereas Hyde had served at the same time as Kelly, and had struck up a stimulating friendship which would influence the remainder of his political career (personal Communication September 2013). Shack was socialised and introduced to the Dries through meetings with Carlton and Hyde in the earliest days of his political career, either within the parliamentary chamber or on the long flights from Western Australia to Canberra (personal communication, 10 March 2014).

The Dries had a deliberate policy of recruitment, which they dubbed 'the nursery', where they would 'pounce' on newly elected MPs and 'try to recruit them' to the cause (personal communication 9 December 2012). Between 1977 and 1983 the group's unofficial parliamentary network gradually increased in size, recruiting from members of the backbench

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<sup>3</sup> Conservative philosopher and 18<sup>th</sup> Century British parliamentarian argued that representatives should not seek to directly reflect exactly what their electors thought or believed, but should use their own judgement of the merits of individual legislative proposals.

with an interest in economics. These members of the group participated in informal discussions about policy on a regular basis. Participation was often driven by specific policy issues that were of particular interest to individual MPs. The Dries had few supporters in the Cabinet and in their first six years of existence they were relative outsiders, seeking to organise in order to bring their collective influence to bear on the government.

The Dries core aim was to influence the policy direction of their government. Their activities included allocating specific policy domains for core group members to research and become expert. They also engaged in strategic public praise of the government when it took a policy stance of which they approved. The Dries held regular strategy meetings where they would develop tactics for party room policy debates. Their tactics included deliberately not sitting together and spacing out their contributions to party debate to make it appear that their policy preferences were more widespread throughout the party. They agreed to always support each other when they made statements during internal party room debates. The Dries also discussed their tactics in relation to when would be the most appropriate time to approach the media and when it was best to keep disputes internal to the government (Hyde, 2002, pp. 106-107).

The second area of activity was to build up of a network of like-minded academics and economists, journalists, business leaders, bureaucrats, and interest groups outside of the parliament. Realising that they were unlikely to win many policy initiatives internally, the Dries attempted to build up locales of external pressure on the government. The Dries invested considerable energy attempting to establish a think tank, *The Centre for Independent Studies*, which would be able to provide an external source of research and policy development separate from the government (personal communication, 9 December 2012; Hyde, 2002). This network of fellow travellers became known as the Crossroads group, which organised conferences and produced a book of essays (Kasper, 1980). Within the parliament, the Dries formed an official parliamentary ideas group called 'The Modest Members', named after the regular newspaper column of their forerunner and inspiration Bert Kelly. As a vehicle, the Modest Members largely ran seminars and circulated policy papers for discussion. It was a far larger group, which aimed to be as inclusive as possible. It was used to circulate ideas and generate interest – for most MPs, membership of this group at this time did not signal a deep commitment to policy agenda espoused by the small core group of Dries. Indeed, a member of a rival faction recalled attending their meetings to keep up with their thinking and enjoy their good beer (personal communication 5 June 2013).

When the Fraser government lost office in 1983, a large number of 'Dries' and their sympathisers lost their seats in parliament. Yet, despite this loss of numbers, the Dries became more influential as long-serving ministers retired, making room within the party's shadow ministerial executive for younger MPs to take on leadership positions. The ranks of the Dries would be bolstered when several members returned at the 1984, and new dry recruits entered the parliament at subsequent elections during the 1980s and early 1990s. However, they always remained a loosely co-ordinated group which was dwarfed by a much larger, unorganised number of conservative traditionalists within the party. Despite this, the Dries would exert an important policy influence on the party, in part aided by the general neo-liberal turn underway globally and within Australia (Kelly, 2008).

Finally, as the Liberal Party prepared to return to government in 1996, the Modest Members effectively became 'dormant' because the policy agenda they had advocated for in the late 1970s had become the uncontested dominant policy position within the party that would soon form government (personal communication, 28 November 2012). Between 1996 and the late 2000s, parliamentary groups on the right wing of the party coalesced around Christian values, but this group (known as the Lyons Forum) did not actively organise itself as the Dries had

done to push a positive policy agenda (M. Maddox, 2005). Moreover, as the party leader and Prime Minister, John Howard, was both conservative and moderately religious, there was no great urgency to spur on parliamentarians to organise. The Modest Members were only revived again in 2009 when the party returned to opposition and the Liberal Party's leader, Malcolm Turnbull, was considered a 'moderate' (the opposing tendency to the Dries/Modest members/right wing of the party) (personal communication, 28 November 2012).

### The Liberal Forum and the Moderates

By contrast, a group called the Liberal Forum, (popularly known as 'the Wets' in direct contrast to 'the Dries'), began to informally (and namelessly) organise in response to the policy ascendancy of the Dries during the Liberal Party's first term in opposition from 1983 to 1984. Much like the Dries, the Liberal Forum was a group of 'self-selecting' and like-minded MPs, who chose to begin informally organising during 1984 and 1985 (Baume, 1987). In its early days it was primarily an ideas group, which aimed to promote 'social liberalism' that stood in direct opposition to the monetarist agenda of the Dries within the Liberal Party. As one member of this group recalled, they did not realise how influential the Dries had become within the party until they were dominating the party's shadow cabinet (personal communication 26 November 2013).

Of the accounts that exist of the group's formation, members were recruited by personal invitation, either by an 'old close friend' or other 'compatible' people. They were a tight-knit group that could exchange ideas and depend on each other for 'loyalty and support' (Baume, 2015, p. 171). The organisation's first meeting was held in secret in an East Melbourne home, and most of the groups larger meetings would be held in the homes of members (Baume, 2015, pp. 170-171) rather than at parliament house.

Unlike the Dries, the Liberal Forum was slow to deliberately and systematically co-ordinate its activities before party room meetings, nor did it seek to build a sophisticated policy network outside the parliament to bolster its position within the party. In general, the group was far less organised, meeting every six to eight weeks, in part because its core group was relatively large at around six to eight actors and scattered across the eastern seaboard of Australia's large geographic landmass.

The Liberal Forum put much of its organising effort into producing two monograph collections of essays (Brandis et al., 1984; Thompson et al., 1986), an occasional papers series, and a seminar series. The promotion of social liberalism was the group's official primary goal, but as the group's core membership was larger than the Dries, it was also subject to several simultaneous agendas. Some of these included the party leadership ambitions of Ian Macphree, who presented himself as leader of the group, and was recognised as such in the press, even though this claim would be contested by other members (Baume, 2015; Kelly, 2008). This had the effect of confusing the group's goals and meant they were far less co-ordinated than contemporary press reports suggested.

In contrast to the Dries, the key members of the Liberal Forum were split between the federal parliamentary party and the state level organisational wing. Moreover, around half the parliamentary members of the Liberal Forum had been members of the Fraser government Cabinet. They were a group of political actors that had arrived in parliament around five years before most of the Dries, and had been successful in the Fraser government. But by the mid-1980s, they were no longer in the ascendancy within the party and were now on the back-foot. In addition, their policy views, which were increasingly out of step with the policy direction of the Liberal Party more broadly, were beginning to significantly impact on their ability to maintain their candidate endorsement within the party (Kelly, 2008).

An important function of the Liberal Forum for members was that it provided ‘mutual group support’, which was ‘a much-needed improvement on the situation that most of us were feeling in the Federal Liberal Party Room’ (Baume, 2015, p. 171). Writing in his diary in 1987, Liberal Forum member Peter Baume noted that ‘for many of us, this was almost the first opportunity to be part of a sympathetic, collegial group pursuing compatible ideological goals’ (Baume, 1987). Baume’s recollections of the Liberal Forum’s work at the federal level mostly consists of pleasant conversations he had with other members at weekends away, boozy dinners or late night conversations over cinnamon toast. On the right of the party, members of the Dries also noted the importance of a ‘spirit of camaraderie’ and mutual support and loyalty (personal communication 10 March 2014; Hyde p. 109).

Indeed, as the political fortunes of Liberal Forum members declined (Kelly, 2008), this role of mutual support and tactical advice in managing their increasingly besieged position came to dominate more of Baume’s recollections of the group’s activity in his diary. The contrast between Baume’s recollections of his activities at the federal and state level of the party reveal that he invested far more energy and resources into organising at the state level in order to maintain his own endorsement (decided by the state organisation) and those of his intra-party group allies (Baume, 1987).

Several members of the Liberal Forum lost party endorsement by the 1990 election, and others, including Baume would retire from politics or lose endorsement by the mid-1990s (Kelly, 2008). The Liberal Forum transformed from a group designed to promote social liberalism into a group designed to protect the party endorsements of members, particularly in New South Wales (Wanna and Taflaga, 2015). The formation of the Liberal Forum at the Federal level coincided with the organisation of socially conservative groups at the New South Wales state division level (Hancock, 2007). The result of seeking to protect their party endorsements saw the Liberal Forum members from New South Wales increasingly invest resources in attempting to control the state division’s decision making body, which was responsible for arbitrating over party endorsement for federal candidates. The net result was that even once the Liberal Forum had ceased to function as a semi-organised informal group at the federal level, it would continue its existence at the New South Wales level as a powerful and highly organised faction in all but name, which would dominate that state’s internal politics for the next 15 years (Hancock, 2007).<sup>4</sup>

### The Costs of organisation

In the 1980s, both the Dries and the Liberal Forum members were accused of sowing division and were accused of disloyalty to their party leader because they offered an alternative view to voters. In seeking to organise intra-party groups, they challenged the primacy of the Liberal Party’s executive leadership to define and shape the party’s label. As internal letters and memos show, even ideologically sympathetic Liberals in the leadership structure did not approve of the organising activities of these intra-party groups. For example, Deputy Liberal leader, Fred Chaney, criticised parliamentary Liberal Forum member Max Burr for his actions which made the party appear in ‘disarray’ and went on to argue that the Liberal party offered ‘ample opportunities’ to ‘make a significant contribution to policy formulation and presentation’ (NAA: M3417, 307, letter: Fred Chaney to Max Burr, 3 September 1987). In another case, Hyde notes in his diary that Prime Minister Fraser had accused him of damaging the government’s electoral chances in a private meeting (Hyde, 2002, p. 108).

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<sup>4</sup> At the NSW level, the Liberal Forum came to be (confusingly) known just as “The Group” and more recently as “The Moderates”.

Revealingly, in his memoirs, Hyde notes that the Dries were ‘careful to observe the party rules, not betray confidences and accept [their] many party room defeats with grace’, because they were conscious of the fact that their activities would be seen by their colleagues as reducing the government’s chances for re-election, and the Dries were eager to retain their good will and ‘friendship’ (Hyde, 2002, p. 107). This suggests that Hyde was well aware of the expectations and existing norms within the party against intra-party group formation. Baume too demonstrates an awareness of such feelings in his colleagues, but the key difference was that as he was on the losing side, he grew disillusioned, and by the tail-end of his career felt little need to hide his frustration and contempt (Baume, 1987).

At the time, other faction members either resented the implication that they were wreckers or challenged the party’s right to police how they should behave in policy debates through their organisation (eg. NAA: M3417, 307, Max Burr, ‘Memo to all Liberal Members and Senators’, 20 August 1987). It revealed a major tension in the Liberal party’s understanding of how the party should operate and allow its parliamentarians to organise internally: on the one hand representatives ought to think for themselves, yet on the other, they should take direction from the leadership and not prosecute policy debates externally. Yet, the few Liberal Forum members that remained in the party to continue into the Howard government (1996-2007) reflected far more negatively on the how they had sought to organise internally in the 1980s. As one parliamentarian explained ‘it became apparent, in many ways, [that] portraying a range of different views was confusing to the electorate and not particularly helpful, electorally’. (Personal Communication, 5 June 2013).

Ultimately, by organising informally in semi-organised structures, MPs were attempting to create accommodating institutions (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004, p. 729). Their aim was to attempt to change outcomes by violating the spirit of the rules, but without attempting to break them entirely.

#### Contemporary parliamentarians views on intra-party group formation

A majority of contemporary Liberal party actors interviewed<sup>5</sup> expressed views on the existence of intra-party groups in line with the party’s longstanding norm that the party does not, and should not, have factions. Political actors interviewed typically conceived of the intra-party groups that existed within the Liberal party as ‘multiple groups of overlapping people who may co-exist in the same group at any particular point of time’ (personal communication 30 October 2012). The point parliamentarians were emphasizing was that ‘the alliances that form really do depend greatly on the issues’ that are under debate (personal communication 10 September 2012). Intra-party groups were issue contingent rather than rigid structures organised by a defined ideological position. Further to that, the implication of the above formulation, was that individual parliamentarians would coalesce into issue coalitions based on the merits of each argument—again in line with the Burkeian ideal that many Liberal MPs reflexively defer to when explaining how their party works to outsiders.

Only one participant strongly disagreed with this contention, arguing that the party ought to ‘acknowledge the reality that there are internal groupings and that they’re perfectly natural’ (personal communication 1 May 2013). The contention that ‘we [Liberal Party] must always resist that ever happening in our own party because look how terrible it [factionalism] is in the

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<sup>5</sup> A majority of participants were interviewed between 2012 and 2013, with a smaller number of participants interviewed in the first half of 2014. It should be noted that the majority of interview data on this subject was collected at a time of very strong party discipline within the Liberal Party. This was the result of the party’s ascendant position in national polling and its subsequent electoral victory in late 2013. If this study went out into the field today, given the breakdown in party discipline on display currently, its highly likely that participants’ views would be different, at least to a degree.

Labor party,' is an unhelpful 'mantra' that stops the party from developing infrastructure that could help the party manage its internal politics (personal communication 1 May 2013).

For contemporary Liberal Party parliamentarians, the vast majority saw little value in organising into formalised factions. If anything, factions created problems. As one Liberal politician explained 'we find it sometimes hard enough to get everyone to agree' and that it would be more difficult still to get 'everyone to agree to a factional position along the way' (personal communication 30 October 2012).

Virtually all participants were prepared to concede that the party had 'personality groupings', but they disagreed about what this meant. Several Liberal parliamentarians emphasised the importance of the personal charisma of individuals or their ability to effectively express ideas. As one parliamentarian stated 'because of that [charisma and persuasiveness], I think you'd find people that either naturally gravitate toward their perspective on the world, or not, as the case may be' (personal communication 9 October 2012).

Others felt that factions were a convenient cloak for more clientalistic behaviours. That is, 'faction' leaders would use faction labels, such as 'moderate' or 'dry/ right' as a counter point to incumbent party leaders or dominant figures within state organisations, without really espousing those views (personal communication 28 November 2012). For example, the deputy leader of the Liberal Party (1994 - 2007), Peter Costello, was considered leader of the moderate faction, despite the reality that many of his positions, particularly as the government got older, were in line with those of the Prime Minister, John Howard. Did Costello really represent different views within the party, or was this a convenient way to establish a rival power base by cultivating the support of disgruntled MPs?

Additionally, most participants felt that regionalism was important. They argued that there were distinct differences between regional and rural members and parliamentarians from metropolitan areas. Here, MPs appeared to be describing the likelihood that members from regional areas were more likely to be conservative compared to their city counterparts. Liberal party politicians further argued that there were different organisational cultures between the states. However, this emphasis on regionalism, appears to be a way of hinting to an outsider that different state divisions of the Liberal party have developed intra-party group formations and rules to govern them. Political actors characterised the intra-party organisation of some states, such as New South Wales as more 'destructive', because it had entrenched intra-party groups, or that other states, such as Victoria were 'entirely personality driven' (personal communication 26 March 2014). Other states, such as Queensland were seen as dominated by the presence of clientalistic figures, but that with the retirement of key figures the conflict had dissipated.<sup>6</sup>

Another dimension to the role of region was the fact that many MPs insisted that while some states may be factionalised, the closer actors came to 'Canberra, the weaker those [intra-party group] links become' (personal communication 6 December 2013). The reason, they argued, was that because the Liberal Party rejected the idea of factionalism, the party lacked linking infrastructure that would see intra-party group formation at the state level translate neatly to the federal level (personal communication 26 March 2014). This is in direct contrast to the Labor

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<sup>6</sup> Currently differences in intra-group formation within the Liberal party is undescribed in the academic literature with the exception of the NSW Liberal Party (See Hancock, 2007).

party, which organises its factions at the state level and then translates this institutional structure at the federal level (Warhurst, 1983).<sup>7</sup>

Finally, those politicians that were willing to discuss the party's intra-group organisation in a meaningful way had either served during the 1980s when the Liberal Party's intra-party conflict was at its height, or they had previously served as political staff. This suggests that perhaps another means of socialisation into intra-party groups may be linked to the professionalization of the Australian party system (Miragliotta and Errington, 2012; Van Onselen, 2004) which has seen the numbers of politicians with backgrounds in interest groups or as political staff increase in the last few decades.

## Towards a theoretical framework

This paper has identified locations for socialisation into intra-party groups, which can be applied generally. It has also identified some possible motivations for why political actors will become socialised into intra-party groups. These motivations are less generalizable and are currently still grounded in the context of the Liberal Party. However, they provide a framework for future comparative study to determine what are broad motivations driving political actor's and what are specific to individual party contexts.

### Locations for socialisation into intra-party groups

An examination of party histories and accounts of factionalized parties suggest that socialisation of political actors at the individual level into intra-party groups can occur within all three faces of a party organisation (Katz and Mair, 1994). An additional location for intra-group socialisation are affiliated or third party organisations, such as interest groups, unions and industry associations, which are increasingly linked to partisan politics (eg. Binderkrantz et al., 2015; Fraussen et al., 2015; Fraussen and Halpin, 2016; Gava et al., 2017; Stone, 1991). However when, where and why socialisation may occur is likely to depend on the institutional arrangements and incentive structures that exist within specific parties and party systems.

The framework offered in Table 1 reflects processes discussed above in the Liberal Party, but is more generalizable to most parties because it is conceptualised at the broadest party structure level.

[table 1 about here]

### Party on the ground (PoG).

*Before entering parliament.* Party members may be socialised into intra-party groups as a result of membership participation. The activities associated with active party membership (Scarow, 2014; Van Haute and Gauja, 2015) are essential to socialisation into political parties, and depending on the particular culture and norms of a party, into intra-party groups. Parties offer several possible avenues for members to participate which provide ideal environments for socialisation, including youth wings, student political organisations (Hooghe et al., 2004), party conferences (Gauja, 2013) and regular local branch involvement.

In the case of the Liberal party, this picture is complicated by the federal structure of the party – all member participation is occurring at the sub-national level, and by extension so is the possible socialisation of members. Local members are important campaign organisers, (Farrell and Webb, 2002) particularly in the Australian context where parties attempt to direct voters

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<sup>7</sup> For example, a politician in the Australian Labor Party who is part of the Victorian Right at the state Divisional level in Victoria, is also automatically a member of the Victorian Right at the Federal Level. In the Australian Labor party, the factions decide on ministerial candidates and policy decisions making factional membership essential for MPs.

behaviour by distributing ‘how to vote’ cards at thousands of polling places on election day. The act of supporting a factionalised or semi-organised parliamentarian may also socialise volunteers participating in campaigning activities. Historically, the Liberal Party’s youth wing (the Young Liberals) was considered an important locale for socialisation, particularly for the Liberal Forum and moderate groups (Hyde Page, 2006; Jaensch, 1994). In more recent times, leaked emails from the Young Liberals in New South Wales reveal the aggressive recruitment tactics of the ‘hard-right’, where group members were told by their vice president that when attending Young Liberal functions such as gala balls ‘its critical to identify and start to factionalise them [new members] ASAP’ (Robertson, 2014).

#### Party in Central office (PCO).

*Before entering parliament.* Party activists and officials may be socialised into intra-party groups as a result of their involvement in the party organisation or machinery. In most instances we would expect that most party officials would have likely already been socialised as a result of their active participation in activities at the party on the ground level. However, there could be cases where this could occur at the PCO level. One possibility would be in cases where policy experts are hired by the party to act as advisors without prior involvement in the party. Socialisation may be a product of the development of social capital through working together, or through policy advocacy. Another possible avenue could arise if an organisational worker is polarised by arbitrating over factional disputes, and becomes more sympathetic to one intra-party group over another.

#### Party in Public Office (PPO).

*Before entering parliament.* Political actors may be socialised into intra-party groupings through their work as political staff. This implies that the staff they work for are already (semi) organised into an intra-party group.

*After entering parliament.* As discussed above in the case study example, political actors may be socialised as a result of active recruitment by existing intra-party groups operating within the parliament. Members may be polarised and forced to join groups as a result of hard decision points such as leadership challenges or changes (Cross and Blais, 2012). However, this might be a very weak form of socialisation as the effect might dissipate immediately after the decision point is resolved. Political actors may also be socialised through group formation as outlined above.

#### Affiliated/third party associations.

Another source of socialisation at the individual level could be the result of pre-parliamentary career experience in interest groups, unions or industry associations. There is growing evidence in the Australian and international context more generally that experience in third party bodies in pre-parliamentary careers is an increasingly common pathway into politics (Miragliotta and Errington, 2012; Van Onselen, 2004) and some evidence that socialisation in terms of policy preferences is occurring (Kelly, 2016).

#### Socialisation Transfer.

*Before and after entering parliament.* The socialisation of political actors into intra-party groups can, and often does, transfer from one face of the party or third party group, to another face. However, how this occurs is often dependent on the institutional framework of parties. Parties that have official factions (eg. The Australian Labor Party) will likely have infrastructure that sees intra-party group allegiances transfer smoothly from one face of the party to another.

As noted above, parties such as the Liberal Party, which are intolerant to intra-party group formation, transfer from one face to the another face is more complex. It may be driven more by ideological factors, or, as noted in the above case study, political actors will operate on two

different modes depending on which face of the party they are engaging with at any one time. A better understanding of socialisation processes, particularly in comparative context is important to further understanding how socialisation transfer functions.

### Changing motives for intra-group formation

Several possible motives for intra-party group formation at the individual level of elite party actors have been identified (see Table 2), though some are far more easily observable than others. Furthermore, motivations can be divided between those that are ends in themselves: policy advocacy/dominance, social capital and promotion and those that are an intermediary step (selection incentives) to achieving end goals.

[table 2 about here]

#### End Goals:

*Policy advocacy/dominance.* From the accounts outlined above, it is clear that actors heavily involved in intra-group activities placed a high value on promoting their policy goals despite the sanctions they faced. For some actors, achieving their policy goal was an end in of itself, however, for most actors, policy advocacy and dominance appeared to be strongly linked with a desire for promotion.

*Social capital.* Another possible motivation for engaging in intra-group organisation is because it delivers social capital to members as outlined above. This is largely through mutual support in parliamentary debates and more general emotional support in dealing with the implications of internal party conflict. However, it is likely that this is not a primary motivator, but a contributing motivator for most MPs. It could be the case that it is the primary motivator for unambitious MPs or MPs that are feeling marginalised.

*Promotion.* Another possible motivation could be related to promotion. By acting collectively, intra-party group members improve their chance for influence on policy outcomes more generally. They can also build networks and reputations as serious policy thinkers making them more likely candidates for promotion. If the intra-party group becomes influential enough, they may also be able to demand positions in the executive (Bettcher, 2005). In the case of the Liberal Party, this picture is complicated by the messy leadership rivalry which takes on dimensions of 'factional' conflict that are difficult to disentangle.

#### Intermediary Goals

*Selection incentives.* The capacity to influence or control decision making bodies has emerged as another area of importance in the motivation for intra-party group organisation at the individual level. However, unlike the three features above, selection incentives are best understood as an intermediary goal for individual actors. Securing selection allows actors to engage in activities that could result in policy dominance, promotion and for the unambitious parliamentarian, a collegial and supportive network.

Furthermore, in the case of the Liberal Party, selection incentives are further complicated by the federal institutional features of the party. Patterns of intra-party group formation do appear to shape how political actors understand factionalism within the Liberal Party and there is some evidence to suggest that the intra-party group politics in individual states (and in other countries (eg. Verge and Gómez, 2011) is impacting upon political actor's socialisation. Further research is needed into how different rules in each jurisdiction operate and their interactions with other levels of the party and how this might shape patronage as a motivation.

### Other possible factors

Other possible factors that might be influencing intra-party group formation at the individual level might also relate to the composition of the parliamentary party (Peterson and Spirling, 2016) or the presence of key actors. This could operate in a clientalistic way, where key power brokers exercise influence. However in a party like the Liberal Party, where ministerial selection is left to the leader to arbitrate, it could be the case that clientalistic power relations are more impactful at the state level where influence can be brought to bear on candidate selection procedures.

The other way the presence of actors may impact on intra-party group formation may be the role of cohorts (Peterson and Spirling, 2016; Pickering, 1998). As Helmke and Levitsky (2004) argue, one way that informal institutions can change is through collapse of the initial conditions that foster informal institutions. In the case of tendencies within the Liberal party, and the patterns of socialisation that we are able to observe, personal recruitment and charismatic figures are considered important factors by party actors. Importantly, given the party on the ground and the party in central office have little capacity to influence policy directions, a presence in parliament is very important for shaping policy outcomes (Hancock, 2000). Thus, it could be the case that an important driver of intra-party group formation is simply who is present in the parliamentary party. Figure 1 shows the career lifespans of all members of the Federal Liberal Party serving in parliament between 1983 and 1996 which coincided with the height of the intra-party organisation and conflict within the party.

[Figure 1 about here]

Here we can see that the cohorts that entered parliament during from the mid-1970s until 1983 when the Liberal party lost government (red and light blue lines) are stable for the whole of the 1980s. In the case of the Fraser government cohort (light blue) they remain the dominant group in the party until 1990 when we see them replaced with a new dominant cohorts, entering in the 1990 (pink) and 1993 (purple) elections. This simplistic visualisation corresponds with qualitative accounts of internal party conflict and debates (Abjorensen, 2008; Kelly, 2008) . That is, the conflict between Liberal Forum members and the Dries dissipated around 1990, possibly because the critical mass of Liberal forum members were no longer there to continue the debate. This potentially also has implications for our understanding of how tendencies work, and it is likely that tendencies are also prone to collapse in similar ways to clientalistic intra-party group formations (Bettcher, 2005, p. 344). It could be the case that this is only relevant in small parties or small legislatures. However there is some evidence to suggest that cohorts matter in large legislatures such as the UK (Peterson and Spirling, 2016) in shaping other political phenomena such as polarisation. Given that intra-party group formation can have ideological dimensions, it is possible that cohorts could matter in this context as well.

### Conclusions and Limitations

This paper has uncovered processes that underlie individual actor's socialisation into, and decision to create intra-party groups. It has also gone some way to examining how political actors rationalise their choices. The paper has developed a framework to examine how socialisation into intra-party groups can occur across the three faces of the party, in addition to third party organisations such as interest groups or unions. The paper has also attempted to develop a framework for analysing individual political actor's motivations when choosing to join or form an intra-party group, making a distinction between actor's end goals and intermediary goals.

However, there are important limitations on this study's findings. First, this remains a single case study. There are genuine questions over the generalisability of the study's findings. It is not

clear which motivations make sense in the context of intra-party groups more generally, tendency-like intra-party groups, or the Liberal party specifically. Additional comparative research is needed to develop this framework further. In addition, other possible avenues for understanding intra-party group formation should also be pursued. It could be the case that modelling behaviour using the exit, voice and loyalty framework may prove the most profitable way to conceptualise individual political actors' motivations in the future, once these processes themselves are better described and understood in multiple contexts (Close, 2016). Finally, research into individual actor's motivations should be combined with quantitative approaches to understand broader processes of factionalism and cohesion within parliamentary legislatures. These methods may not be able to capture individual motivation, but could prove useful in demonstrating relevant shifts in actors' behaviour at the intra-party group level.

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**Table 1: possible sites of socialisation into intra-party groups**

| <b>Party on the Ground</b>  | <b>Party in central Office</b>  | <b>Party in public office</b>  | <b>Affiliated/ third party associatons</b>  |
|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Before entering parliament</b>   |   |  |   |
| Youth wings of parties  | State organsiaiton  | Political staff  | Interest groups   |
| Student politics  | Federal organisation  |  | Unions  |
| Local Branch  |   |  | Industry associations   |
|   | <i>Socialisaiton transfer (from party on the ground to party in central office)</i>   | <i>Socialisaiton transfer (from either party on the ground, party in central office or affiloated/ third party associatons )</i> | <i>Socialisaiton transfer (from either party on the ground or party in central office)</i>  |
| <b>After entering parliament</b>  |   |  |   |
|   |   | Recruited by existing group  |   |
|   |   | Polarised by leadership conflict   |   |
|   |   | Form group   |   |
| <i>Socialisation transfer (instituional arrangements exist to transfer existing factional membership into the parliament)</i> | <i>Socialisation transfer (instituional arrangements exist to transfer existing factional membership into the parliament)</i> |  | <i>Socialisation transfer (ideological preferences established and/or instituional links exist to transfer existing factional membership into parliament)</i> |

**Table 2 : Motivations for joining an intra-party group at the individual level**

| Motivation for individual (benefits)  | Expectation/ behaviour norm  | Threats to individual (Costs)  | Possible hypotheses   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>End goals</b>  |  |  |   |
| Policy advocacy/dominance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase influence over policy outcomes and preferences of the party</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parliamentarians will pursue policy through official channels and accept the final decision of the ministerial executive.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered disloyal and divisive by dominant group</li> <li>• Organisation: De-selection</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual actors will organise when unsatisfied with official policy processes and outcomes.</li> <li>• Individual actors will organise when their policy dominance is under threat</li> </ul>  |
| Promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reputation building (maximising chance of selection)</li> <li>• Network building</li> <li>• bargaining</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliamentarians should demonstrate to colleagues their skills as a potential minister through parliamentary and media work and serve at the pleasure of the party room leader</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered divisive by dominant group</li> <li>• Overlooked for promotion</li> </ul>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual actors will organise when an intra-party group offers opportunities for promotion to the executive</li> <li>• Individual actors will join an intra-party group when that group's bargaining position is strong</li> </ul>   |
| Social capital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual support</li> <li>• Access to information and networks</li> <li>• Support in policy debates</li> <li>• Support in preselection battles (minimising risk of de-selection)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members will socialise and discuss issues informally, but not coordinate activities</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered divisive by dominant group</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual actors will organise when they perceive their position is marginalised organisationally or ideologically</li> <li>• Individual actors are primarily motivated by survival (eg. To selection) will join a group. Often characterised by apparent lack of policy or executive ambition</li> </ul> |
| <b>Intermediary goal to build dominance</b>   |  |  |   |
| Selection incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater influence over selection decision making bodies (maximising chance of</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parliamentarians should be selected on their own merits in a competitive process</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered divisive by dominant group</li> <li>• Organisation: De-selection</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual actors will organise when they perceive their selection is under threat (risk minimisation)</li> </ul>  |

|   |                                 |  |   |
|---|---------------------------------|--|---|
| <p>selection)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater capacity to influence rules governing selection (maximising chance of selection)</li> <li>• Bargaining (maximising chance of selection)</li> <li>• Protect your own position (maximising chance of selection)</li> <li>• Increase group size (maximising chance of selection)</li> </ul> | <p>judged by party members.</p> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals will join an intra-party group that dominates the decision making body (benefit maximisation)</li> </ul> |
|---|---------------------------------|--|---|

Figure 1 Career lifespans of Coalition MPs that served in the oppositon  
1983-1996

