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Conservative Ministers in the Coalition Government of 2010-15: Evidence of Bias in the Ministerial Selections of David Cameron?

Abstract

The article uses a dataset of the 2010-15 Parliamentary Conservative Party (PCP) to test a series of hypotheses in order to determine whether those selected for ministerial office during the coalition era were representative of the PCP as a whole. Our findings show no significant associations or bias by Cameron in terms of age, schooling, regional base, morality, voting for Cameron in the Conservative Party leadership election and most significantly gender. Significant associations or bias were evident in terms of Cameron's patronage with regard to University education and electoral marginality. Our findings demonstrate that any critique of current Conservative ministers based on their supposed elitism stem from the institutional and structural biases within the Conservative Party at candidate selection level, and cannot be attributed to bias on behalf of Cameron.

Keywords:

Cameron Coalition, Conservative Party, Government Ministers, Ministerial backgrounds.

Introduction

There is a considerable academic literature on ministerial selection within British Government. This article contributes to that literature by analysing ministerial selection from amongst Conservative parliamentarians within the coalition Government led by Prime Minister David Cameron between 2010 and 2015. The article creates and exploits a dataset of all Conservative parliamentarians in order to examine the relationships between membership of the parliamentary Conservative Party (PCP) and the ministerial ranks. The rationale for the article stems from the accusation of elitism levelled at Cameron's ministerial ranks. The unrepresentative claim was made by Ed Miliband who bemoaned the fact that there were as many Etonians in the Cameron Cabinet as female (HC Deb, 2013-14, 14 February 2014, vol. 575, col. 265). It was also made by Conservative parliamentarian, Nadine Dorries. Overlooked for ministerial office she accused Cameron of relying on a 'narrow clique' made of a 'certain group of people' and that those people were 'arrogant posh boys' (Orr, 2012).

This paper aims to explore these issues (and others) raised by Miliband and Dorries. The paper is organised around four sections. The opening section considers the literature on ministerial selection within British government in order to position the paper and to identify its contribution to the existing literature. In the second section we outline our hypotheses before explaining issues of data collection and our methods for testing our hypotheses. The third section presents the results and identifies whether our hypotheses were substantiated. In our conclusion we summarise our key findings and relate them to areas for further research development.

Academic Literature on Ministerial Selection

Our interest in studying the representativeness of ministers' vis-à-vis the PCP under Cameron stems from a desire to test the media driven assumptions of elitism within ministerial ranks – i.e. the elite-theory driven argument that implies that ministerial advancement is part of a 'self-reinforcing' process, in which the leadership promotes and protects like-minded people from similar backgrounds to the exclusion of those outside the elite inner sanctum (Sandbrook, 2011). This is a particularly pertinent theme to explore as Cameron had pledged to lead a more representative government by committing himself to a target of one third of ministers being female by 2015, and the difficulties that he would experience in hitting this target (Heppell, 2012; Annesley and Gains, 2012, see also Annesley 2014 and Childs and Webb, 2012).

However, before examining Cameron's record in terms of appointments and dismissals it is important to situate our study within the body of academic literature on ministerial selection. The rationale for analysing ministerial selection, whether scholars are considering ministerial longevity, turnover or dismissals, is that they all engage in some way with the principal-agent debate between the leader (principal) and the minister (agent) (Berlinski, Dewan, and Dowding 2012, pp. 1-3; see also Alderman and Cross, 1985; Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding 2007, 2010; Huber and Martinez-Gallardo, 2008; Indridason and Kam, 2005; 2008; Bright, Doring and Little, 2015). The principal-agent debate intrigues scholars as it provides an insight into the importance of reshuffles, through which Prime Ministers seek to reaffirm their dominance over their party colleagues, and limit the capacity for senior ministers to challenge their authority (see Alderman 1995; Alderman and Cross 1979; 1981; 1986; 1987; Alderman and Carter 1992; Indridason and Kam 2005) [1].

Conducting research on ministerial selection should also be seen within the context of the rise of the career politician as this has made the Prime Ministerial power of appointment and dismissal

more important (King 1981, pp. 249-85). This is because there is a 'high demand' for a good which is in 'short supply' and the Prime Minister is the 'monopoly supplier' (King 1991, p. 38). This argument is based on the following assumptions: (a) that most parliamentarians would like to secure ministerial office, and (b) having done so want to be promoted up the ministerial ladders (and equally fear dismissal) (King and Allen 2010, p. 251).

However, within the elected parliamentary ranks the potential talent pool is smaller than might be expected (unless Prime Ministers exploit the opportunity to appoint more ministers from the House of Lords, and appoint more peers in order to make them ministers, Jones 2010, pp. 618-9). Prime Ministers can only consider those fellow parliamentarians who are deemed to be suitable for the demands of ministerial office (for a wider comparative discussion on constraints in ministerial selection, see Strøm, Budge and Laver, 1994). This rules out of contention a small proportion of any parliamentary party, some because they are personally unacceptable and some are politically unacceptable. Political unacceptability relates to backbenchers who hold positions that are at odds with the party leadership and therefore cannot be incorporated into the ministerial ranks. Personal unacceptability can cover a range of issues and the Prime Minister will be made aware of these character issues through consultations with the Chief Whip and the Whips' Office (Searing 1994, pp. 240-82). This will contribute to the removal from consideration those who drink excessively or have engaged in behaviour that would more embarrassing to the Government if exposed when a minister than a backbencher (Jones 2010, pp. 618-9).

Suitability for ministerial office also implies competence. Backbenchers who want to be ministers have to establish their reputations in parliamentary debate in order to suggest that they have the ability to defend policies at departmental questions or when piloting legislation through Parliament. The performance of incumbent ministers is judged against their parliamentary abilities, but also against their administrative competence within their department. Are they able to follow

the agreed policy objectives of the Government and successfully implement those policies within their department? Increasingly, ministers and potential ministers are assessed on their effectiveness at political communication: are they able to explain departmental policy objectives on radio and television? Is their political persona or reputation an advantage or disadvantage to their department? (Heppell 2014, p. 65).

That complexity relates to variables beyond competence. What makes it such a complex jigsaw puzzle is the various types of balances that are expected in terms of the composition of the ministerial team vis-à-vis the parliamentary party, or even society as a whole. Balances need to be secured in terms of occupational and regional background, as well as gender, race and sexual orientation (Jones 2010, p. 621). A balance needs to be struck in terms of the age and experience profile within the ministerial ranks. Too many ageing ministers might create a detrimental image of a decaying administration devoid of the dynamism and new ideas required to justify re-election (for example, the notorious 1962 'Night of the Long Knives' reshuffle, see Alderman 1992). To the other extent, new parliamentarians are not usually considered for ministerial preferment because they are seen as being too inexperienced and in many cases are too young (Theakston 1987, p. 46).

One of the most complex balancing acts for the Prime Minister relates to party management. Backbench opinion tends to be an influence upon appointments and dismissals, and there is an assumption that the ministerial team should be ideologically representative of the parliamentary party as a whole (Kam, Bianco, Sened and Smyth 2010, p. 289, 301). However, to buttress their position leaders will normally ensure that an appropriate proportion of colleagues who backed them for the leadership, are rewarded with ministerial office. This is a balancing act. Prime Ministers sometimes 'err on the side of caution' and appoint the 'maximum level of personally loyal colleagues', (for example, Heath) but this needs to be 'counterbalanced' by the appointment

of some 'potentially disloyal' colleagues in order to '*gain silence*' (Rose 1975, p. 7). Normally Prime Ministers would incorporate the leading figures within the party who could be viewed as 'veto players', because they possess influence and provide gravitas and need to be accommodated (Allen and Ward 2009, p. 244). Upon entering government from opposition, new Prime Ministers have usually incorporated into their Cabinets principal opponents for the party leadership and those who have substantive followings within the parliamentary party and beyond (King and Allen 2010, pp. 256-7).

The above analysis demonstrates that although Prime Ministerial powers of appointment might appear to be about 'command' and 'obedience', they are actually characterised by 'bargaining' given the constraints identified (Alderman 1976). To date, the published work on ministerial selection under Cameron has been dominated by an emphasis on gender and ministerial preferment (Heppell, 2012; Annesley and Gains, 2012; Annesley, 2014, for a wider comparative analysis see Krook and O'Brien, 2012). However, gender is but one variable in terms of the background of Conservative parliamentarians and ministerial preferment. Currently existing research does not engage with the relevance or otherwise of other variables such as: age; education (school and university); and their constituency circumstances (i.e. location and marginality). Nor is there any systematic evaluations on ideological preferences and ministerial advancement, or whether a particular Cameron faction has been favoured (e.g. whether known backers are more likely to secure ministerial preferment). These variables form the basis of our hypotheses – see below – because issues relating to personal attributes (see Rose, 1975; King, 1981; and Heppell, 2012) and ideological preferences (Heppell, 2005; Kam, Bianco, Sened and Smyth, 2010) have long been identified as the central determinants of ministerial preferment. The hypothesis on marginality is included as it is a new and emerging determinant in ministerial preferment (see Martin, 2015 and Klein and Umit, 2015).

Hypotheses, Data Collection and Methods of Assessment:

We have constructed a dataset of each member of the 2010 PCP in order to test a series of hypotheses about ministerial preferment. If Cameron was so narrow in his approach between 2010 and 2015 then we can make the following assumptions that can form the bases of a set of hypotheses:

H1 Cameron will favour Conservative parliamentarians in the 41-50 age bracket as his preference will be for ministers in his own age bracket.

H2 Cameron will favour Conservative parliamentarians who attended private schools as he will have greater faith in those from elitist backgrounds.

H3 Cameron will favour Conservative parliamentarians who attended elite Universities as Cameron will have greater faith in those with higher educational attainment levels, most notably those from an Oxbridge educational background.

H4 Cameron will favour Conservative parliamentarians from southern constituencies as he holds one himself and the south represents the Conservative heartlands.

H5 Cameron will favour Conservative parliamentarians with larger parliamentary majorities as he will want those with marginal constituencies to concentrate on retaining their seats at the next general election.

The final three hypotheses are more complex than the earlier five. Here we want to test some ideological and leadership issues relating to Cameron. These hypotheses thereby deviate slightly from the elitist assumptions underpinning the earlier five. They are that:

H6 Cameron will favour Conservative parliamentarians who share his social liberalism.

H7 Cameron will despite his public pronouncements on feminisation remain elitist in his mind-set and thus will show a disproportionate bias in favour of men when selecting ministers.

H8 Cameron will favour Conservative parliamentarians (from 2005) who voted for him in the leadership election.

Our dataset of the 2010 PCP identified the following: (*H1*) the date of birth of each parliamentarian; (*H2*) their school; (*H3*) their university; (*H4*) their constituency location; (*H5*) their constituency marginality; (*H6*) their position on the liberal-conservative spectrum of Conservative thinking on social, sexual and moral matters and (*H8*) whether they voted for Cameron in the 2005 Conservative Party leadership election. To run the test on the success or otherwise of feminisation we also coded each parliamentarian by their gender (*H7*).

We should also clarify that our definition of a minister is any member of the PCP who has held ministerial office since 2010. This includes those promoted into office and not in the original ministerial team of May 2010, but it also includes those who have been removed from ministerial office in the reshuffles of 2012, 2013 and 2014. We have deliberately ring fenced our analysis to the 2010 to 2015 period for two reasons.

First, as they were part of coalition government the number of ministerial offices that Cameron could offer was reduced. Nearly one hundred Conservative parliamentarians had held shadow ministerial portfolios in the run up to the General Election of May 2010. Had the Conservatives been elected with a majority precedent would suggest that the shadow spokespeople pre 2010 would have virtually all been offered ministerial office – this is tied to the tradition that newly elected MPs are not trusted with ministerial office immediately. However, once in coalition Cameron had around twenty ‘bruised egos’ to contend with as shadow spokespeople from opposition missed out on ministerial posts to Liberal Democrats. Furthermore, many who did receive ministerial preferment did so at a lower level than they had anticipated (Jones 2010, p. 620). [2] Thus, the *demand* for ministerial preferment remained constant but the *supply* was limited from a Conservative perspective. From an intra-party perspective this means the choices that Cameron made were even more significant. Second, part of the analysis is based upon ideological profiling and the research necessary to create the datasets for the 2015 PCP cannot be completed until the new Conservative parliamentarians can be assessed – i.e. by parliamentary divisions; by EDMs; by more public statements.

Before we proceed we should stress two further caveats. The first is that our focus is on establishing bias in Cameron’s ministerial selection in terms of the relationship between his choices and the composition of the PCP. Thus our focus is on ministerial selection from the talent pool available to Cameron, whilst acknowledging, for example, that it is socially unrepresentative and that for example, 48 female Conservative parliamentarians out of 305, is an issue that has justifiably fuelled academic critiques of the party (Childs and Webb 2012; Hill 2013). Our second caveat relates to fact that we believe that background variables *should* influence ministerial selection, but we are not claiming Cameron has proactively and deliberately sought to over-promote and under-represent different groupings. Rather, what we are doing is merely identifying the trends in ministerial preferment vis-à-vis background variables.

Some of these variables require further explanation in terms of their coding within the dataset. Date of birth was differentiated by decades – 1930-39; 1940-49; 1950-59; 1960-69; 1970-79; and 1980-89, with the hypotheses assuming that Cameron would favour those in the 1960-1969 bracket (being between 41 and 50 years old when the Conservatives entered office in May 2010). For school we differentiated and coded members across the following types: grammar, state or private and within private we incorporated a coding for those educated at Eton and Harrow. For University we differentiated and coded members across the following types: post-1992 Universities; pre-1992 Universities; Russell Group Universities and then Cambridge and Oxford. Constituency locations we coded as either north, south, east, west, the midlands, Yorkshire, London, Scotland or Wales, whilst for marginality members were coded in the following groups: 100 or less, 101-1000; 1001-5000; 5001-10000, 10001-20000 and 20000 and above. The information required to construct these datasets in terms of the above was acquired from the Dods Parliamentary Companion 2012 and complimented by updates on ministerial positioning from the gov.uk website (Dods, 2013).

When it came to the hypotheses that related to the ideological affinity with Cameron on social liberalism, and known support for him in the 2005 Conservative Party leadership election, we were able to exploit existing research. On the social, sexual and moral ideological division within the PCP we coded members in accordance with the findings of Heppell, who had identified each member of the PCP as either socially liberal (89 or 29.2 percent of the PCP), agnostic (62 or 20.3 percent) or social conservative (154 or 50.5 percent) (Heppell 2013: p. 347 - for a discussion on sources informing his distinctions see pp. 344-46). In terms of known backers of Cameron in 2005 we exploited the research of Heppell and Hill (2009). Their 2009 publication provided details of all members of the 2005-10 PCP and whether they voted for Cameron, David Davis or Liam Fox in the final PCP eliminative ballot (Heppell and Hill 2009, pp. 388-99). We coded members of the

2010 PCP who were in the previous Parliament (2005-10) through this. However, we were unable to code those newly elected members in 2010. Thus members were coded as Cameron backers; non-Cameron, or if newly elected in 2010 they were coded as not applicable.

Research Findings

Table one provides an outline of the composition of the 2010 PCP in relation to all of the themes that inform the hypotheses. This covers all of the variables within our dataset. The dataset was then exploited in an attempt to test the validity of our hypotheses.

The Pearson Chi-Square test was selected as one of our methods as in each of the hypotheses one dependent variable (i.e. whether someone is a Minister or not) could be compared against one independent variable (e.g. their date of birth), and both the dependent and independent variables involved categorical data. This enabled us to compare the frequencies in certain categories (e.g. the number of Conservatives born in the 1950s who were chosen to be ministers) to the number you might expect to get in those categories, and thus to identify an association between the two categorical variables. When using this method, there were cases where the sample size would be too small and the sampling distribution too deviant for the Chi-Square distribution to be robust. Where this was the case we used the Fisher Exact Test to calculate the exact probability of the Chi-Square statistic, and in cases where there were more than two categories we used Cramer's V to measure the strength of association between the variables.

Table 1: All Variables covering the 2010 PCP

Variable		N= 305	Percentage
Minister	Yes	124	40.7
	No	181	59.3

Age (Date of Birth)	1930-39	2	0.7
	1940-49	27	8.9
	1950-59	94	30.8
	1960-69	108	35.4
	1970-79	70	22.9
	1980-89	4	1.3
School	Grammar	71	23.3
	State	76	24.9
	Private	135	44.3
	Eton/Harrow	22	7.2
	Homeschool	1	0.3
University	Russell Group	93	30.5
	Pre-1992	62	20.3
	Post-1992	14	4.6
	Cambridge	32	10.5
	Oxford	67	22.0
	Other	5	1.6
	None	32	10.5
Region	North	26	8.5
	South	108	35.4
	East	50	16.4
	West	1	0.3
	Midlands	63	20.7
	Yorkshire	19	6.2
	London	29	9.5
	Scotland	1	0.3
	Wales	8	2.6
Marginality (Majority)	100 or less	3	1.0
	101-1000	15	4.9
	1001-5000	66	21.6
	5001-10000	76	24.9
	10001-20000	139	45.6
	20000+	6	2.0
Social and Moral Issues	Liberal	89	29.2
	Agnostic/Neutral	62	20.3
	Conservative	154	50.5
Gender	Male	257	84.3
	Female	48	15.7
Leadership	Voted for Cameron	67	22.0
	Did not vote Cameron	86	28.2
	Not in 2005 PCP	152	49.8

N.B. The PCP amounts to 305 members for the purposes of this analysis. 306 were elected, but we exclude Cameron from our calculations.

Our findings demonstrated the following with regard to the hypotheses. The age hypotheses (*H1*) – i.e. that Cameron would favour Conservative parliamentarians in his own age bracket of 41-50 age bracket – was not supported (see table 2). As the count for the number of ministers in some of the categorisations was small (see table 2 for ministers born between 1930 and 1939) this meant that the Pearson Chi-Square test was problematic because the sample size in some cases was too small. However, the Fisher Exact Test indicated a statistically non-significant outcome: FET = 6.698, $p=0.194$ – and when we deployed Cramer’s V (as the variable of Date of Birth has more than two categories) the finding was Cramer’s $V=0.157$, $p=0.186$ confirming that there was no association between date of birth and ministerial preferment, when comparing those selected to the PCP overall.

Table 2: Age and Ministerial Selection: Actual vs Expected

Age (Date of Birth)		Minister	Backbencher	Total
1930-1939	Actual	0	2	2
	(Expected)	.8	1.2	2.0
1940-1949	Actual	7	20	27
	(Expected)	11.0	16.0	27.0
1950-1959	Actual	44	50	94
	(Expected)	38.2	55.8	94.0
1960-1969	Actual	48	60	108
	(Expected)	43.9	64.1	108.0
1970-1979	Actual	24	46	70
	(Expected)	28.5	41.5	70.0
1980-1989	Actual	1	3	4
	(Expected)	1.6	2.4	4.0
N=		124	181	305

FET=6.998, $p=0.194$
 Cramer's V=0.157, $p=0.186$

The hypotheses on the educational background of Conservative ministers' vis-à-vis the PCP in terms of schooling ($H2$), was also not proven. Our assumption was that if Cameron has the elitist mindset that his detractors imply then he would promote a disproportionate number from private school backgrounds at the expense of non-fee paying school backgrounds. The elite background of Cameron himself as an Etonian has been seized upon by political opponents, and although 7.2% of the PCP having attended either Eton or Harrow seems a high figure, it is lower than the 31% in the 1951 Churchill administration (these figures declined with each post-war Conservative administrations reaching 12% in the second Major administration 1992-1997, see Criddle 1994, p. 162). Equally, the overall number attending private schools at 44.3% does represent a significant reduction from the 74% in the 1951 Churchill administration, which was gradually reduced to 62% by the time of the 1992 Major administration (Criddle 1994, p. 162). Our findings on school background required that we use the Fisher Exact Test and Cramer's V. The Fisher Exact Test produced a statistically non-significant outcome: FET=3.251, $p=0.721$. The Cramer's V test confirmed that the hypotheses was invalid and that Cameron was not favouring private educated Conservatives when selecting ministers: Cramer's V=0.104, $p=0.651$.

Table 3: Schooling and Ministerial Selection:

School		Minister	Backbencher	Total
Grammar	Actual	24	47	71
	(Expected)	28.9	42.1	71.0
State	Actual	34	42	76
	(Expected)	30.9	45.1	76.0
Private	Actual	56	79	135
	(Expected)	54.9	80.1	135.0

Eton/Harrow	Actual	10	12	22
	(Expected)	8.9	13.1	22.0
Home school	Actual	0	1	1
	(Expected)	.4	.6	1.0
N=		124	181	305

FET=3.251, p=0.721

Cramer's V=0.104, p=0.651

Our third hypotheses (*H3*) assumed that Cameron would show a disproportionate bias in favour of those who attended Oxford or Cambridge when making ministerial appointments. Table one shows that nearly 90% of the PCP attended University, which continues the increasing trend as evidenced from the last three times the Conservatives were propelled from opposition into Government: 62% in 1951, 64% in 1970 and 69 in 1979 (the figures reached 73% by the Major era)(Criddle 1994, p. 162). Within this, however, the percentage of graduates from Oxford and Cambridge has decreased from 52% in both 1951 and 1970, up to 56 in 1979, and then down to 45% in 1992 and now 32.5% in 2010 (Criddle 1994, p. 162). As the count for the number of ministers in some of the categorisations was small we employed the Fisher Exact Test. This shows that Cameron has shown a disproportionate bias in favour of Oxbridge educated Conservatives when making ministerial appointments. Expected counts suggested that Cameron would appoint less (27) MPs from an Oxford background by chance than he has actually done (34). This produces a statistically significant outcome: FET=13.232, df=6, p<0.05 and thus we can accept *H3* as being proven. When applying Cramer's V (as there are more than two categories) the finding is Cramer's V=0.208, p<0.05, confirming the association.

Table 4: University Education and Ministerial Selection

University		Minister	Backbencher	Total
Russell Group	Actual	37	56	93

	(Expected)	37.8	55.2	93.0
Pre-1992	Actual	23	39	62
	(Expected)	25.2	36.8	62.0
Post-1992	Actual	4	10	14
	(Expected)	5.7	8.3	14.0
Cambridge	Actual	17	15	32
	(Expected)	13.0	19.0	32.0
Oxford	Actual	34	33	67
	(Expected)	27.2	39.8	67
Private	Actual	3	2	5
	(Expected)	2.0	3.0	5.0
None	Actual	6	26	32
	(Expected)	13.0	19.0	32.0
N=		124	181	305

FET=13.232, df=6, $p < 0.05$

Cramer's V=0.208, $p < 0.05$

The regional hypotheses (H_4) assumed that Cameron would disproportionately favour Conservative parliamentarians from southern constituencies. Table one confirms that 65% of Conservative parliamentary representation is based around the South, London and the Midlands, and highlights their weaknesses in Yorkshire and further North in England, and Scotland. But our tests showed no evidence that Cameron was skewing ministerial preferment towards his heartlands and under-representing the weaker areas (relative to the PCP as a whole). The Fisher's Exact Test showed that Cameron had appointed slightly fewer ministers from the North and Yorkshire, and slightly more from the South than would be expected, but the Fisher Exact Test (employed due to categories with low counts) showed a non-significant association: FET=11.947, $p=0.120$, which was reaffirmed by the Cramer's V test: $V=0.199$, $p=0.148$.

Table 5: Regional Background and Ministerial Selection

Region		Minister	Backbencher	Total
North	Actual	6	20	26
	(Expected)	10.6	15.4	26.0
South	Actual	49	59	108
	(Expected)	43.9	64.1	108.0
East	Actual	24	26	50
	(Expected)	20.3	29.7	50.0
West	Actual	1	0	1
	(Expected)	.4	.6	1.0
Midlands	Actual	23	40	63
	(Expected)	25.6	37.4	63.0
Yorkshire	Actual	4	15	19
	(Expected)	7.7	11.3	19.0
London	Actual	13	16	29
	(Expected)	11.8	17.2	29.0
Scotland	Actual	1	0	1
	(Expected)	.4	.6	1.0
Wales	Actual	3	5	8
	(Expected)	3.3	4.7	8.0
N=		124	181	305

FET=11.947, $p=0.120$

Cramer's $V=0.199$, $p=0.148$.

The electoral marginality hypotheses ($H5$) – i.e. that Cameron would show a disproportionate bias in favour of Conservative parliamentarians with larger parliamentary majorities was supported.

Our hypothesis was constructed on two assumptions. First, Cameron would favour for ministerial office those who had prior parliamentary experience, and many of the more marginal constituencies would have been acquired as part of the 100 gains made at the 2010 General Election. Second, we assumed that Cameron would also prefer candidates holding the more

marginal constituencies to concentrate their efforts on retaining those seats, rather than being absorbed in ministerial work to the perceived neglect of their constituents. Table 7 shows the findings from our Fisher Exact Test and this demonstrates that relative to the expected distribution of ministerial rewards, Cameron showed a bias in favour of Conservatives with majorities over 5000 and especially 10000 and a bias against Conservative with majorities lower than 5000. The Fisher Exact Test (that we employed as some categories had low counts) demonstrates a highly significant correlation: FET=43.592, $p<0.001$, which is reaffirmed by the Cramer's V calculation: Cramer's V=0.374, $p<0.001$.

Table 6: Election Marginality and Ministerial Selection

Majority		Minister	Backbencher	Total
100 or less	Actual	1	2	3
	(Expected)	1.2	1.8	3.0
101-1000	Actual	1	14	15
	(Expected)	6.1	8.9	15.0
1001-5000	Actual	14	52	66
	(Expected)	26.8	39.2	66.0
5000-10000	Actual	24	52	76
	(Expected)	30.9	45.1	76.0
10001-20000	Actual	78	61	139
	(Expected)	56.5	82.5	139.0
2000+	Actual	6	0	6
	(Expected)	2.4	3.6	6
N=		124	181	305

FET=43.592, $p<0.001$
Cramer's V=0.374, $p<0.001$

Our final three hypotheses embraced ideological disposition (specifically commitment to social liberalism, *H6*); gender (to test Cameron’s commitment to the one-third pledge which was made as part of the feminisation agenda, *H7*); and finally support for Cameron in the 2005 Conservative Party leadership election (*H8*). Our sixth hypothesis was based on the assumption that there would be an ideological dimension to Cameron’s ministerial preferences – i.e. that he would skew ministerial selection and we would find evidence of a disproportionate favouring of those who shared his social liberalism, (and thus a skewing away from traditional social conservatives). As there were no small categorisations within this dataset the assumptions of the Chi-Square were met and we used the Pearson Chi-Square calculation: $\chi^2=1.271$, $df=2$, $p=0.530$. We also employed Cramer’s V which had a finding of Cramer’s $V=0.065$, $p=0.530$ which confirmed that we can reject *H6* as there was no significant association between social liberalism and being appointed to ministerial office.

Table 7: Social Attitudes and Ministerial Selection: Actual vs Expected

Social Attitudes		Minister	Backbencher	Total
Liberal	Actual	35	54	89
	(Expected)	36.2	52.8	89.0
Agnostic	Actual	22	40	62
	(Expected)	25.2	36.8	62.0
Conservative	Actual	67	87	154
	(Expected)	62.6	91.4	154.0
N=		124	181	305

$\chi^2=1.271$, $df=2$, $p=0.530$.
Cramer’s $V=0.065$, $p=0.530$.

The gender hypotheses (*H7*) assumed that Cameron’s rhetoric of feminisation masked an elitist mind-set that would be evident from him showing a disproportionate bias towards appointing men

to ministerial office. The parameters of our study here were based on determining whether Cameron had shown a bias against women in terms of appointing ministers from *within* the current 2010 PCP. This is separate from the wider issue of parliamentary selection and the obstacles that exist for Conservative women to be selected as candidates for winnable constituencies (for a wider discussion on this, see McIlveen, 2009). Our Pearson Chi-Square analysis shows that Cameron appointed fewer male ministers (101) overall than would have been expected (104.5), and slightly more female ministers than would have been expected (23 to 19.5) from within his parliamentary ranks. Overall our data shows a non-significant association and thus no evidence of discriminating against current female parliamentarians: Chi=0.1245, df=1, p=0.265. Our Cramer's V=0.064, p=0.265 finding confirmed this.

Table 8: Gender and Ministerial Selection: Actual vs Expected

Gender		Minister	Backbencher	Total
Male	Actual	101	156	257
	(Expected)	104.5	152.5	257.0
Female	Actual	23	25	48
	(Expected)	19.5	28.5	48.0
N=		124	181	305

Chi=0.1245, df=1, p=0.265.
Cramer's V=0.064, p=0.265.

Our final hypothesis (*H8*) was specific to Cameron himself. Our assumption was that Cameron would demonstrate a disproportionate bias towards Conservative parliamentarians who had voted for him in the 2005 Conservative Party leadership election. Our dataset was different when we tested this hypothesis as the information of the voting behavior of new entrants in 2010 is not available. Therefore, our data was based solely on those parliamentarians in both the 2005 and 2010 PCP (n=153). Our findings show only a marginal difference between the actual pattern of

appointments and those that would be expected to ensure they were proportionate. Our Pearson Chi-Square test demonstrated that there was no significant association between voting behavior and ministerial preferment $\chi^2=0.001$, $df=1$, $p=0.974$; and this was reaffirmed by Cramer's $V=0.003$, $p=0.974$.

Table 9: Leadership Election Support and Ministerial Selection: Actual vs Expected

Leadership Support (2005)		Minister	Backbencher	Total
Voted Cameron	Actual	29	38	67
	(Expected)	28.9	38.1	67.0
Voted Davis of Fox	Actual	37	49	86
	(Expected)	37.1	48.9	86.0
N=		66	87	153

$\chi^2=0.001$, $df=1$, $p=0.974$
Cramer's $V=0.003$, $p=0.974$.

Analysis and Conclusion

Until now we have little academic understanding of the composition of the 2010 parliamentary Conservative cohort or the Conservative ministers appointed by Prime Minister Cameron. Addressing this gap within the academic literature was the rationale for the paper. Our concluding analysis therefore asks three key questions. First, what do these findings demonstrate? Second, how valuable are they to the academic literature on the ministers within the Cameron administration of 2010 to 2015? Third, how can the data that underpins this research, and the methods adopted, be utilised in future research?

Let us address the first question of what do the findings demonstrate. Given that the talent pool that Cameron has to find Conservative ministers is predominantly the PCP he is limited by the narrow social strata from which Conservative constituencies (in winnable constituencies) select their candidates from. What our paper allows us to assess is whether from within that restricted pool has Cameron demonstrated a discriminatory mind-set – i.e. are the ministerial ranks representative of the backbenchers? Could we find evidence to suggest that Cameron used his power of appointment to discriminate in favour of Conservative parliamentarians most similar him – i.e. aged 41-50; privately and Oxbridge educated; holding safe Southern constituencies and espousing social liberalism and thus defined as backers of Cameron?

Our tests demonstrated that there was no evidence of bias or disproportionate representation (vis-à-vis the PCP as a whole) by Cameron with regard to age, schooling, regional base, morality, and gender. Our tests failed to demonstrate that there was any significant association between prior support for Cameron in the 2005 Conservative Party leadership election and subsequent ministerial advancement. Our tests did identify an association between constituency marginality and University education and ministerial selection. Here our hypotheses were validated: Cameron had demonstrated a bias and a disproportionate number of Conservative parliamentarians from Oxbridge backgrounds, and he also skewed his appointment disproportionately in favour of those who held safer constituencies.

Given that six of our ‘elitist’ based hypotheses regarding the composition of the ministerial ranks vis-à-vis the PCP have been disproven we offer the following concluding claim. Media driven accounts that suggest the Conservative ministerial ranks are unrepresentative and elitist are a reflection of candidate selection processes (that Cameron has only indirect control over), rather than Cameron’s ministerial choices. The problem is reflective of institutional bias endemic to the

Conservative Party as a whole (a structural explanation), and has not been exacerbated further by the choices of Cameron as Prime Minister (an agency based explanation).

Let us turn our attention to our second concluding question: how valuable are our findings to the academic literature on the Conservative ministers under the Prime Ministerial tenure of Cameron? Our findings make a significant contribution because the existing literature on ministerial selection have thus far been dominated by one background variable, gender and the one-third commitment (see Annesley and Gains 2012; Heppell 2012; Annesley 2014). Other areas on ministerial selection - portfolio distribution and reshuffles (Heppell 2014) or ideological disposition (Heppell 2013), have shown scant interest in social background variables.

Our third and final concluding question considers the value of the data that underpins this research and whether they can be drive forward future research on ministerial selection or on the Conservative Party. Here our argument is that the data provides scholars with various potential avenues for further research development. Our approach could be re-applied to consider promotions and dismissals, rather than bundling the categorisations as being a minister at some time in the Parliament or not. Equally it could be argued that being a minister or not may be a distinction that requires further refinement. Thus, the dataset could be re-applied to consider the prestige of the ministerial office by drawing a distinction between Cabinet and junior level ministerial appointments. Furthermore, our approach could be re-applied to focus in exclusively on the 2010 cohort, which made up 147 of the 305 Conservative parliamentarians. For example, on gender Cameron has appointed 17 new male ministers from 112 new male parliamentarians from 2010; and he has appointed 14 new female ministers from 35 new female parliamentarians from 2010, meaning that a statistical bias in favour of new female parliamentarians from the 2010 cohort could be said to be evident.

The most significant further development would be to update the dataset on ideological categorisation for the new 2015 PCP (including the 74 new Conservative parliamentarians) and to apply the same hypothesis to ministerial selection across the next five year Parliament (2015-20). This would be a useful academic exercise as it would reaffirm (or challenge) the central finding of the this paper – i.e. that perceptions of the Conservative Party as elitist apply with equal merit to the PCP as they do Conservative ministers. Their elitist image problem can only be addressed through changes to candidate selection rather than ministerial selection.

Notes

[1] Indicative single country studies and comparative analyses are provided by Dowding and Dumont, 2009, 2015; O'Malley, 2006; Kenig and Barnea, 2009; and Kerby, 2009.

[2] This type of comment characterised much of the published work that does exist on how Cameron selected coalition era ministers (on the wider debate on Prime Ministerial constraints in coalition see Bennister and Heffernan 2012). The emphasis is on debating proportionality (the numbers of Conservatives vis-à-vis Liberal Democrat ministers) or the prestige of the portfolios between the parties; or the renegotiation of those numbers and prestige when reshuffles occur (see, Quinn, Bara and Bartle 2011; Debus 2011; Bäck, Debus and Dumont, 2011).

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