Achieving party unity : a sequential approach to why MPs act in concert

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Chapter 3

Unpacking the unitary actor

3.1 Party group unity

Of the responsible party model's three conditions for effective representation, it is the third requirement, that political parties ought to behave as unitary blocs, that is considered the least problematic in most parliamentary systems of government. And indeed, when it comes to voting in parliament, MPs who belong to the same party group tend to vote together. Scholars also often take party group unity for granted, as evidenced by the fact that many studies on political representation and behavior tend to assume that political parties can be treated as unitary actors, and refer to the party as the main representative actor. As argued by Kam (2009, 21), however, "[u]nity is not preordained". Given the potential diversity, and possibly conflicting nature, of MPs' backgrounds, political opinions, interests, ambitions and role conceptions, one would actually expect party group unity to be "problematic and conditional rather than static and fixed" (Collie, 1984, 20). Moreover, the shift towards audience democracy and increase in personalization forecasted by Manin (1997), has led some to predict that party group unity may be becoming more difficult to maintain, which leads to the further questioning of scholars' unitary actor assumption.

Within the study of legislative behavior, and that of legislative voting in particular, political scientists concentrating on parliamentary systems of government have only paid only scarce attention to *how* party group unity is brought about. According to Collie (1984, 5), this is because "it seemed reasonable to conclude that a single factor (i.e., party) was the primacy determinant" of MPs' behavior. What the variable 'party' actually encompasses is, however, subject to disagreement. Moreover, many studies that do seek to explain party group unity tend to focus on the level of the political party group or parliament as a whole, ignoring the fact that party group unity is the result of decision making by individual MPs, who are constrained by their relationship with their political party and influenced by their institutional environment.

3.1.1 Conceptualization

The literature on party unity is plagued with conceptual confusion (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a), as the terms party unity, party cohesion, party coherence, party homogeneity, party loyalty, and party discipline are often used interchangeably. Early on Özbudun (1970, 305) defined party cohesion as "an objective condition of unity of action among party members", to which Skjaeveland (2001) added that the unity of action must be 'external' to the parliamentary party group (i.e. public) to make the concept entirely distinct from any explanatory connotation. Nonetheless, the term party cohesion is still often used in reference to mechanisms that are hypothesized to *cause* unity of action among MPs. In order to avoid this confusion, in this study the term party cohesion is avoided altogether when referring to the final outcome—MPs' concerted behavior. We follow Hazan (2003, 3) in his definition of *party unity* as "the observable degree to which members of a group act in unison" (thus referring strictly to the behavioral outcome) and reiterates the point made by Skjaeveland that the term ought to refer to behaviors external to what goes on within the parliamentary party group, which is in line with the delineation between the 'open' and 'closed' theaters of representation suggested by Copus (1997b).[1] In addition, this study focuses specifically on MPs, and thus party groups in parliament.

Kam (2001a, 95) calls attention to the fact that party cohesion (which in this study is referred to as party group unity) is often conceptualized as the inverse to dissent, but that the two are measured at different levels of analysis. Whereas party group unity is measured at the party group level, dissent is measured at the level of the individual MP. The degree of party group unity, however, results directly from the collective behavior of individual MPs; it is a function of its aggregation. MPs who assent to the party group line contribute to the group's unity, whereas MPs who dissent from the party group line contribute to the breakdown of their political party group's unity. Party group unity, therefore, is not only a collective phenomenon but also a continuous variable, since political party groups can be more or less unified, depending on the degree to which their MPs act in concert (Olson, 2003, 165).

3.1.2 Measurement

Legislative voting is usually used as a measure of party group unity. From a theoretical perspective the study of legislative voting behavior is linked to the most prominent questions in legislative studies, including the nature of representation, the role and strength of legislative party groups, and the durability of government (Collie, 1985, 471-472). In

[1] In his study of the relationship between local councilors and their party groups in the United Kingdom, Copus (1997b) classifies council sessions, council committee and public meetings, as well as the local press and electronic media, as 'open' theaters of representation because they all take place in public and enable high transparency of action. The party group and local party meetings, as well as private meetings between councilors, take place within 'closed' theaters of representation; councilors' behavior in these settings is much less transparent. Copus (1997b, 310) maintains that it is in the 'closed' theaters that councilors meet privately to determine how they will act in the 'open' theaters, entailing that what goes on within the party group (in part) determines how representatives will act external to it.

reference to the notions of representation and accountability, for example, Carey (2009, 4) argues that the act and result of voting on legislation is the most transparent and ultimately important behavior in the legislative process. Voting is an act of legislative decisiveness, and therefore demonstrates representative actors' (political parties and individual MPs) ability or failure to enact promised policy most clearly to their ultimate principals (voters) who, depending on the voting procedure, incur relatively low costs in monitoring this behavior and holding their agents to account. Given the principal-agent relationship between the political parties and their MPs, the voting stage is also the most important from the political party's perspective. In fact, political party (group) leaders often have an informational advantage over voters when it comes to monitoring the behavior of their MPs at the voting stage.

The analysis of legislative voting behavior predates the 1950's behavioral revolution and goes back to the classic studies on representation in the United States by Lowell (1902), Rice (1925) and Key (1949) (Collie, 1985, 471). The most commonly used measure of party voting unity is the Rice Index of Cohesion (Rice, 1925, 1928) which aggregates individual representatives' votes and then calculates party group unity coefficients on the basis of probability theory (the percentage of party representatives who vote alike on a given vote).[2] Given the availability of roll call voting data in the United States, it is no surprise that most legislative voting studies are about the United States Congress and House of Representatives, where party group unity is found to be relatively low.[3]

Studies of legislative voting in Western European parliaments reveal party voting unity to be generally much higher than in the United States. Many of these studies are limited to a single country case.[4] In one of the earliest comparative analyzes to include political parties from both the United States and Europe, Olson (1980) includes 10 political party groups from France, Britain, West Germany and the United States, and finds that only the French Radical Party (*Parti Radical*) scored as low as the two parties in the United States when it comes to party group unity. Harmel and Janda (1982) extend their analysis of legislative voting in the United States to include 67 (out of the total of 95) parties from 21 different countries, and find party group voting unity in all European parliaments included in their analysis to be higher than in the United States. More recently, Sieberer (2006) as well as Depauw and Martin (2009) reveal high Rice scores for a

[2] One of the disadvantages of the Rice Index specifically, forwarded by Desposato (2005), is that it may lead to a systematic overestimation in small and relatively divided party groups (Sieberer, 2006). Desposato (2005) suggests adjusting the Rice Index of Cohesion according to party group size.

[3] Early analyses by Harmel and Janda (1982) show that party group voting unity averaged 64 percent for Republicans and 69 percent for Democrats in the United States House of Representatives between 1954 and 1978. Taking on a longer period of time, Brady et al. (1979) examines changes in party group voting unity, revealing that average party Rice scores actually decreased slightly between 1886 and 1966 in the House of Representatives.

[4] For France see Wilson and Wiste (1976) and Converse and Pierce (1979, 1986), for Finland see Pesonen (1972), for Germany see Özbudun (1970) and Loewenberg (1967), for Italy see Di Palma (1977), for the Netherlands see Tazelaar (1974); Visscher (1994); Wolters (1984), for Sweden see Clausen and Holmberg (1977), for Switzerland see Hertig (1978), and for the United Kingdom see Norton (1975, 1978, 1980) and Crowe (1980). Mezey (1979) also conducted a number of single country studies.

number of European parliaments. All in all, these results on voting behavior show that, when it comes to voting, party group unity in Western European parliaments is generally very high.

As a measure of party group unity, legislative voting has a number of advantages as well as disadvantages. First, voting takes place in almost legislatures and thus, at least in theory, serves as a useful comparative measure. Voting procedures can also differ between legislatures and over time, however. In some legislatures all votes are automatically recorded (in some cases electronically) and published on an individual basis, whereas in others roll call votes are infrequent and atypical, and most votes are taken by show of hands or are registered by political party group (Owens, 2003, 15). This has skewed the quantitative empirical analysis of voting behavior and party group unity towards those legislatures that frequently make use of roll call voting procedures or register all votes automatically on an individual basis (Sieberer, 2006, 159).

Moreover, as pointed out by Carrubba et al. (2006) and Hug (2010), the reliance on votes that are recorded and published on an individual basis (roll call votes) as a measure of party group unity may lead to biased results for those legislatures in which not all votes are taken by the same procedure, as these votes do not constitute a random sample. Some legislatures require roll calls on certain issues or classes of votes and allow for other voting procedures on other issues or types of votes, thereby creating a potential selection bias. There are only a limited number of studies that address this potential bias, but Hug's (2010) study of the Swiss Parliament confirms that party group unity (measured by the Rice Index of Cohesion) is higher for votes that are automatically recorded and published on an individual basis (which include, for example, final votes and votes on urgent matters) than for votes taken through other procedures.

Another potential bias associated with the use of roll call votes specifically in studies of party group unity is the problem of endogeneity (Owens, 2003, 16-17). This may occur in the study of legislatures where roll calls have to be explicitly requested by (a number of) individual MPs or party groups, as roll call can be used as a disciplining tool and for signaling to the public (Hug, 2010). On the one hand, the legislative party leadership may request a roll call in order to monitor the behavior of its own MPs and force them to close ranks, thus leading to higher levels of party group unity in comparison to other voting procedures. On the other hand, however, roll may be called to draw attention to MPs' dissent and disunity in other political party groups, resulting in lower levels of party group unity than would be case if all votes were included in the analysis. As highlighted by Depauw and Martin (2009, 104), these two strategic functions of the use of roll call votes are expected to have opposite effects on party group unity scores, and therefore may cancel each other out to a certain extent.

An advantage of using legislative voting behavior as a measure of party group unity is that votes are a fairly simple measure, as voting almost always take on the form of a binary choice: MPs vote for or against the proposal, with or against the other members of the parliamentary party group, and thus either for or against their party group's position (Carey, 2009, 20). In most legislatures, however, nonvoting is also possible. First, MPs may be absent from the voting session for a variety of reasons, either professional (e.g. prior engagements) or personal (e.g. illness, family circumstances). If voting by proxy is

not possible, then this will result in nonvoting. But absence can also be purposive, i.e. an MP is physically able to attend, but chooses not to. Second, there are also legislatures also allow their MPs to formally abstain from voting even if they are present for the vote. The motivation behind purposive absence and abstention may be related to issues of party group unity, because they can be used by MPs to explicitly show discontent with the party group line, without going as far as to vote against the party group. Nonvoting can, however, still have an effect on the final outcome of the vote, depending on the rules of the legislature, as some require a minimal number or percentage of MPs to be present (or to partake in voting) in order for voting to commence or for the vote to be considered valid. Party group size, and in the case of government participation, the margin of the government majority, may also influence the effect of nonvoting on the end result of the vote. Whereas some scholars ignore nonvoting, other authors try to disentangle nonvoting according to its potential causes (Ames, 2002; Haspel et al., 1998), and still others treat nonvoting according to its effect on the outcome of the vote (Carey, 2007, 2009).

Nonvoting left aside, as opposed to other legislative behaviors, the position MPs take vis-a-vis their party group on a vote is considered rather easy to identify. Determining whether MPs' behavior is 'in concert' in the case of legislative debates and media appearances, for example, is more challenging. The focus on voting, however, leads to a disregard of these other behaviors through which the degree of party group unity may be revealed. This includes the submission, (co)signing and content of private member bills, motions and amendments, the submission and content of (written and oral) parliamentary questions, the content of legislative debates and speeches, committee work, and even public and media appearances. Each one of these situations also represents an occasion when MPs may either toe the party group line or not (Kam, 2001a, 95; Owens, 2003, 16).

That the political party (group) leadership is aware that party group unity is reflected through these other behaviors, and thus also monitor the behavior of their MPs during these other activities, is illustrated by the parties in the Dutch Second Chamber (*Tweede Kamer*), where a number of the parliamentary party groups require their members to run their oral and written questions by the party group leadership or weekly party group meeting before formally introducing them to Parliament (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2005). As such, political party (group) leaders can try to control party group unity and influence the behavior of their individual MPs through agenda control (Carey, 2007), keeping certain issues off the legislative agenda if they consider these to be politically risky, perhaps due to known or suspected intra-party group divisions (Owens, 2003, 16). Political party (group) leaders can monitor and attempt to control the behavior of their MPs not only in the final voting stage, but also in the proceeding stages, as well as other public behaviors in and outside of parliament.

Another behavioral outcome external to the parliamentary party group that has been connected to party group unity is party group defection, an MP's early departure from his parliamentary party group (Owens, 2003). Heller and Mershon (2008) and Desposato (2006), for example, explicitly connect party group switching to party group unity. One could argue that if an MP leaves his parliamentary group, either by switching to another

party group (floor crossing) or by becoming an independent, this could be taken as an indicator of party group disunity. Once the MP has left his parliamentary party group, however, party group unity can be said to have been reestablished to a certain extent. It is, however, more difficult to interpret party group defection as a case of party disunity when an MP not only defects from his party group, but actually leaves parliament altogether, as this could be done for other reasons as well, of a personal or career-oriented nature, for example.

3.2 Explaining party group unity

Within the body of literature that seeks to explain party group unity and individual MPs' voting behavior, different lines of work can be identified. On the one hand, comparative studies generally focus on how government and electoral systems, party level institutions and rules, and societal differences and changes, can explain cross-national variation in party group voting unity. On the other hand, there are also a number of theoretical and (small-n comparative case) studies that deal with the party- and individual-level mechanisms that lead MPs to vote with or against the party group line.

3.2.1 Institutions and party group unity

Comparative studies generally deal with the effects of different institutional configurations on party voting unity. Although numerous scholars alluded to the influences of institutional factors on party group unity, Ozbudun (1970) was among the first to theorize the connection explicitly. Most authors agree that the structure of the relationship between the executive and legislature, whether presidential or parliament, has a profound effect on the level of party group unity. It is in particular the (explicit or implicit) confidence rule—the fact that the executive does not have its own mandate and is dependent on the support of a majority of the legislature—found in parliamentary systems, that leads to the expectation that party voting unity is higher in parliamentary systems than in presidential systems, especially among governing parties (Carey, 2007, 2009; Harmel and Janda, 1982; Owens, 2003; Ozbudun, 1970). Indeed, past research has found party voting unity to be much higher in parliamentary systems, as is the case in European democracies, than in presidential systems, as in the United States and Latin America. A second important institutional factor is the degree of government decentralization: party groups in federal systems, where political parties are required to organize on a regional or state base, are expected to have lower levels of party voting unity than party groups in unitary systems, which allow parties to organize at the national level (Carey, 2007; Harmel and Janda, 1982; Key, 1949; Owens, 2003).

Harmel and Janda (1982) introduced electoral systems as a third important institution affecting party voting unity. Later, authors such as Carey and Shugart (1995) further specified the electoral connection, hypothesizing that electoral systems that create incentives for personal-vote seeking (candidate-oriented electoral systems) lead to lower levels of party voting unity than electoral systems that do not create such incentives

(party-oriented electoral systems). Olson (1980) and more recently Rahat and Hazan (2001), explicitly separated the candidate selection process that takes place within parties from the effects of electoral institutions, and argued that candidate selection procedures that are exclusive and centralized are expected to lead to higher levels of party voting unity than candidate selection procedures that are inclusive and decentralized. Indeed, much of what is ascribed to differences in the level of government decentralization and electoral system may actually be linked to the differences in political parties' candidate selection procedures (Depauw and Martin, 2009). Other institutional and societal factors that are expected to lead to high levels of party group unity include system stability (Owens, 2003) and electoral (de)alignment (Kam, 2009), the effective number of parties (Turner and Schneier, 1970; Loewenberg and Patterson, 1979; Harmel and Janda, 1982), party age, party (group) size, party ideology, ideological polarization (Özbudun, 1970) and the shape of political competition (Owens, 2003), the effectiveness (strength) of legislature (Mezey, 1979), and committee strength.

Although many of these hypotheses are corroborated by different studies (the difference in party voting unity between parliamentary and presidential systems, for example), some of the results concerning these different theoretical expectations about the effects of institutions on party group unity are mixed. Regarding electoral institutions, for example, Carey (2007; 2009) finds that intra-party electoral competition depresses party group unity in Latin American legislatures. In their study of the European Parliament (EP), Hix et al. (2005) also conclude that there is a relationship between voting unity within the EP party groups and the electoral system by which the members are elected. Contrarily, Depauw and Martin (2009) find that electoral rules only partly account for party roll call voting unity in their 16 European parliaments, and although Sieberer (2006) concludes that party-oriented electoral systems indeed place rigid constraints on MPs (i.e., high party group unity), his analysis also reveals that candidate-oriented electoral systems are not a sufficient condition for low party group unity. To a certain extent, the different country cases included in each of the analyzes, the different operationalizations of the institutional variables, as well as the previously mentioned disadvantages of using (roll call) voting data as a measure of party group unity, may account for these mixed results.

Carey's (2007; 2009) *Theory of Competing Principals* provides an overall framework through which to approach the effects of institutions on legislative voting behavior, but can also be used to illustrate another problem with the institutional approach. Namely, that the focus on the direct impact of institutions on legislative voting behavior ignores an important step in the process of party group unity formation, specifically, individual legislators' decision-making mechanisms. Working from the perspective of *Principal-Agent Theory*, Carey argues that institutions determine the way in which valuable resources are distributed among legislators' principals, and thus influence the extent to which legislators are dependent on—and thus accountable to—different principals. The more legislators are dependent on their political party, and more specifically, on political party (group) leaders, the more likely it is that party voting unity will be high. Contrarily, the less dependent legislators are on their political party (group) leaders, and the more institutions make them dependent on alternative, often competing principals within the

political system (such as voters, presidents, etc.) that "drive wedges into party groups" (Carey, 2009, 162), the more likely it is that party voting unity will be low (Carey, 2009, 14-20).

Carey's theory alludes to a number of different causal mechanisms that may be affected by these institutional configurations. Questions arise as to what exactly these institutions do to foster a situation in which party group unity is high. Does a lack of competing principals enable party selectorates to select only those candidates whose policy preferences are in line with their own? Does the fact that legislators owe their selection to their party leaders instill in them a sense of loyalty towards their party leaders? Or does legislators' sole dependence on the party give party (group) leaders more disciplinary leverage to (threaten to) coerce legislators to toe the party group line? Carey mentions all of these possibilities, but generally remains at a theoretical level when it comes to the workings of these mechanisms. Other authors also make assumptions or theoretical arguments as to the effects of institutions on MPs and their relationship with their political party. Bowler (2000, 177), for example, argues that parties' nomination procedures may influence the homogeneity of parliamentary party groups. Sieberer (2006, 154-155) makes a very similar argument when he hypothesizes that party leaders' control over candidate selection allows them to determine the future composition of the parliamentary party group. Depauw and Martin (2009, 117), however, contend that centralized selection methods appear to lead to higher levels of party group unity because party leaders control MPs' future careers, and legislators seem to be motivated by the desire to be promoted. And Rahat and Hazan (2001, 314, 317) argue that exclusive selectorates allow parties to reassert both party discipline and cohesion. These examples illustrate the two main problems with the institutional approach. First, the explanations offered as to the workings of these causal mechanisms and the effects of institutions on these causal mechanisms differ per study and are often limited to theory and are thus not tested empirically. Second, focusing on legislative voting behavior as the main dependent variable and indicator of party group unity, does not allow one to distinguish between the different causal mechanisms, or reasons why MPs behave in accordance or in discord with the party group line. As recognized by Krehbiel:

> "In casting apparently partisan votes, do individual legislators vote with fellow party members *in spite of their disagreement* about the policy in question, or do they vote with fellow members *because of their agreement* about the policy in question?" (Krehbiel, 1993, 238)

3.2.2 Pathways to party group unity

In line with Krehbiel (1993), part of the theoretical literature on party group unity has moved beyond the outcome of voting unity and focuses on the 'pathways to party unity' (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a), the mechanisms that play a role in generating party group unity. Returning to the conceptual confusion that was mentioned at the start of this chapter, most scholars acknowledge that party group unity can be achieved in (at least) two ways: either by MPs voluntarily sticking to the party group line as a result of

their 'like-mindedness', or alternatively doing so involuntarily under the threat, anticipation or the actual use of positive and negative sanctions by the parliamentary party (group) leadership, or other individuals and/or organs within the party that control these resources. Many authors refer to the voluntary pathway as *party cohesion*, whereas the involuntary pathway is typically referred to as *party discipline*. The former is associated with a certain consensus in values and attitudes among MPs resulting in their voluntary conformance to the party group's position, while the latter entails a form of compulsion or the enforcement of obedience, usually applied by the political party (group) leadership (or whoever controls the resources that can be used as potential carrots and sticks) (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a; Bowler et al., 1999a; Hazan, 2003; Krehbiel, 1993; Norpoth, 1976; Ozbudun, 1970).

The voluntary pathway, party cohesion, is also conceptualized in different ways by different scholars. Whereas some emphasize the homogeneity of MPs' policy preferences, others refer to cohesion as MPs' shared subscription to norms of party group solidarity. The former situation, that of shared preferences, is often associated with Krehbiel's (1993) preference-driven approach and is referred to in this study as *party group agreement*. It holds that party group unity results from MPs voting together simply because of their agreement about the policy in question (Krehbiel, 1993, 238). Whereas some assume that MPs' policy preferences are formed exogenously to their work in parliament, others point out that MPs' opinions may also result from processes of argumentation and deliberation as a part of their parliamentary function, through their contacts with actors outside of parliament (such as voters and party members), within the parliamentary party group, and in parliament itself.

Party group agreement assumes, however, that MPs actually have an opinion on all issues that are voted on. As pointed out by Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a, 657) and Whitaker (2005, 9-10) this need not be the case. Due to the workload of parliament (distributional logic, Shepsle and Weingast, 1994) and technicality of certain issues (informational logic, Krehbiel, 1991), many parliamentary party groups apply a division of labor. The party group policy specialists and/or spokespersons are responsible for the party group position (Patzelt, 2003, 106-107), as far as this position has not been stipulated in the party program, electoral manifesto or, in the case of government participation, the government (coalition) agreement. Thus, MPs may often rely on the cues given to them by their fellow party group members when it comes to issues outside their own portfolio. In the absence of MPs' personal opinions (due to a lack of information or time to invest gathering the information needed to form an opinion), party group unity can also be brought about by MPs' *cue-taking*. One could question whether cue-taking falls under party cohesion, as in this situation policy preferences are not shared, but absent in the case of some MPs. On the other hand, cue-taking is of a voluntary nature, which is in line with the general understanding of party cohesion in the literature.

The other facet of party cohesion, MPs' subscription to norms of party group solidarity that results from MPs' internalized role perception (Searing, 1991, 1994) acquired through a process of internalization and socialization in the parliamentary party group as well as through MPs' previous political party experience (Asher, 1973; Crowe, 1983; Kam, 2009; Rush and Giddings, 2011), is associated with the sociological approach and

is referred to in this study as *party group loyalty*. As is the case in any group or organization, informal norms, defined as commonly held beliefs about what constitutes appropriate conduct, may guide the behavior of parliamentary party group members. Although there is no precise threshold, it seems that a majority of group members must hold the same belief about what constitutes appropriate conduct for a norm to exist (Crowe, 1983, 908). At the same time, however, one can argue that although norms are probably created and reinforced by selection and socialization, the internalization and judgment regarding the applicability of norms in particular situations, is an individual decision. If MPs subscribe to a particular norm, and consider it relevant in a certain situation, they will apply it whether their direct environment abides by the same norm or not. Party group loyalty, as a mechanism leading to party group unity, entails that in the case of disagreement with the party group's position, MPs opt to still vote with the party group because they subscribe to the norm of party group solidarity.

Party group loyalty is often confused with *party discipline*, as both only need to come into play when there is a conflict between MPs' preferences and the party group's position, i.e. MPs vote together in spite of their disagreement (Krehbiel, 1993, 238). But whereas party group loyalty is brought about by MPs' adherence to a 'logic of appropriateness' and is of a voluntary nature, party discipline in the form of positive and negative sanctions brings about MPs' decision making according to a 'logic of consequentiality', and is of an involuntary nature. Party discipline is usually associated with a rational-choice perspective on legislative behavior, highlighting the interaction between MPs' purposive goals (policy, office, and votes) and political party (group) leaders' hierarchical control over the distribution of influence, office perks, and re-(s)election (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a; Crowe, 1983; Jensen, 2000; Kam, 2009). Positive incentives usually include the promised or actual advancement of MPs to higher positions in the party. Negative sanctions may range from threat or actual removal of MPs as parliamentary party spokespersons or committee member for a certain period of time, to the demotion on, or exclusion from upcoming electoral party lists, or even to the expulsion from the parliamentary party group.

Empirical studies that deal with these mechanisms mainly rely on attitudinal surveys[5] among MPs and/or candidates and are usually limited to a single mechanism or a single case, although there are a few notable comparative exceptions (including Jensen's (2000) comparison of the Nordic countries and Kam's (2009) study of Westminster systems). Norpoth (1976), for example, uses the interviews held in 1958-1959 for the Representation Study conducted by Miller and Stokes, and compares the policy attitudes indicated by Congressmen in the survey to roll call voting behavior in Congress (both ag-

[5] There are also studies that rely on legislative (roll call) voting records to ascertain both MPs' and party groups' policy positions. The main problem with this measure, however, is that using votes to explain voting behavior may be tautological (Jackson and Kingdon, 1992; Kam, 2001a; Vandoren, 1990). Another method is the use of experts to judge the level of agreement within a political party (group). Ray (1999), for example, conducted an expert survey for all parties in the EU and EFTA concerning the degree of dissent over European integration between 1984 and 1996. However, the problem is that although the interviewees are experts, they are still far removed from MPs' actual decision-making processes and may also not be able to distil the effects of agreement with the party group's position from other determinants.

gregated at the party group level). Norpoth (1976, 1171) concludes that shared policy attitudes leave "a partisan imprint on the ultimate voting decision of a congressman". Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a) rely on the Dutch Parliamentary Studies, a series of interviews held with members of the Second Chamber (which are also used in this study), to gauge the different mechanisms. Agreement with the party group in the form of the ideological homogeneity, was found to be high, but not perfect, among the parties in the Dutch Parliament. Similarly, Willumsen and Öhberg (2012) connected Swedish MPs' voting behavior to the distance MPs perceive between their own position and that of their party on the ideological Left-Right scale (as first suggested by Kam, 2009), as indicated by MPs themselves in the Swedish Members of Parliament Surveys. Their study reveals that the smaller the distance MPs perceive, the more likely it is that MPs vote with their political party group in parliament. Bailer et al. (2011) take a different approach, by asking Swiss MPs what their individual preferences are on two specific votes in parliament, and compare these preferences to how the individual MPs actually voted during the final votes in parliament. They find that MPs' self-indicated preferences lose their explanatory power once the general Left-Right policy position of MPs' constituency and political party are taken into account.

As party group loyalty results from a process of socialization, studies often rely on years of incumbency or tenure as a proxy. Time spent in parliament does not reveal which norms MPs subscribe to or how intensely they do so, however. As is the case with policy attitudes and party group agreement, party group loyalty has also been measured through the use of elite surveys. Relying on MPs' responses to a survey held among British Members of Parliament in 1971 and 1972, Crowe (1983, 1986) attempts to gauge the relative strength of norms of party group loyalty in the British House of Commons, and shows that both frontbenchers and backbenchers consider cross-voting to be the most serious breach of party group unity.[6] Crowe (1983) also finds that the importance of a particular norm is structured by the public visibility of the behavior with which the norm is concerned and, in the case of government participation, the risk that violation of the norm poses to the government. Basing his analysis on Australian (1993), British (1992) and Canadian (1993) candidate surveys, Kam (2009, 197-201) constructs a three-point loyalty scale, and connects these responses to MPs' later voting behavior in parliament.[7] He finds that in the United Kingdom, the more importance an MP attaches to these facets of party loyalty, the less likely it is that the MP casts dissenting votes. In

[6] British MPs were asked to rank the following breaches of party discipline (in this study referred to as party group unity, as most refer to behavioral outcomes that take place outside of the parliamentary party group) according to the severity of the breach: privately expressing dissent to whips, making a critical speech in Parliament, cross-voting, abstaining, signing a critical Early Day Motion, writing critical letters and articles in the press, and making critical speeches outside the House Crowe (1983, 911).

[7] Kam (2009, 197-201) constructs a three-point loyalty scale for the British and Canadian House of Commons and the Australian House of Representatives using the questions 'In your view, how important are the following aspects of an MP's job 1) supporting the party leadership, 2) voting with the party in Parliament, and 3) defending party policy'. (Questions were included in the 1992 British Candidate Survey, the 1993 Canadian Candidate Survey, and 1993 and 1996 Australian Candidate Surveys respectively.) For the British case, Kam also interacts party loyalty with years in office and finds that there is evidence for the hypothesis of decreasing party loyalty with parliamentary experience.

Canada and Australia, however, there is no evidence that party loyalty has an impact on MPs' voting behavior. Rush and Giddings (2011) conclude that in the United Kingdom MPs who consider the party their main focus of representation and most important influence on their behavior are less likely to rebel in comparison to MPs who consider the entire nation or their constituency their main focus or influence. And in the above mentioned study by Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a), party group loyalty, measured as an MP's response to the question as to how an MP ought to vote in the case of disagreement with his party group, seems to play an increasingly important role in the Dutch Parliament over time. The study by Andeweg and Thomassen therefore explicitly associates party group loyalty with an MP's internalized role conception, specifically that of the party delegate role identified by Converse and Pierce (1979, 1986) in their study of representational roles in the European context (see chapter 2).

Norton's (2003) study of the British House of Lords exemplifies a case of party group unity brought about by party group loyalty, although he relies only on behavioral voting data. Norton points out that the members of the House of Lords lack the common backgrounds (some do not even have a political party background and many Lords are recruited from different fields) that would result in high levels of prior policy agreement. Furthermore, the House of Lords is in essence a discipline-free environment, as its members are appointed for life and there is no evidence of nomination being contingent on voting behavior commitments. Norton ascribes party voting unity (which is not complete, but high), to tribal loyalty, which he defines as the emotional or intellectual commitment of an MP to instinctively vote with his party. Russell (2012) also deals with party group loyalty in the House of Lords, but instead borrows concepts from social psychology, thereby making a novel interdisciplinary contribution. Early social psychological studies confirm that individuals conform easily to group norms, without rewards and punishment, and even without shared background or characteristics. Using survey questions, Russell taps into the House of Lord's members' 'feelings of belongingness' to the party group and how these emotions relate to MPs' attitudes towards toeing the party group line. She concludes that a sense of collective responsibility and sociability are important factors in explaining MPs' attitudes towards party voting.

Although there are many studies that claim to deal with party discipline, many of these studies actually focus on the influence of institutions, or consider any case of non-preference related voting with the party group line to result from party discipline. As highlighted above, party discipline can be difficult to distinguish from party group loyalty, and it is probably even more difficult to observe. Negative sanctions, for example, can often count on negative media attention. Therefore, the assumption is that party (group) leaders prefer to keep their application secret and behind the closed doors of the parliamentary party group. Furthermore, using negative sanctions can be costly, and when used too often may also initiate a counter-reaction, thereby leading to an increase of dissent from the party group line rather than a decrease (Depauw, 2002), making it an inefficient means of obtaining party group unity (Kam, 2009, 187-188). Norton (1978, 222-253), for example, argues that the overuse of negative sanctions was the reason behind the decrease in party voting unity in the British House of Commons during the 1970s, when the Conservative parliamentary party group was under the leadership of

Edward Heath. From what is known about the application of negative sanctions in European democracies, the overall conclusion is that their use of scarce. Depauw (2002, 125) finds that in the Belgian Parliament MPs deny the influence of sanctions on their decision to toe the party group line when voting. In the Netherlands, Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a) argue that MPs' satisfaction with the current use of party discipline could mean that party (group) leaders rely less on sanctions than is often assumed. Jensen (2000) uses the same measure of party discipline as Andeweg and Thomassen in his study of Nordic MPs, which also reveals that the vast majority of MPs are satisfied with party discipline, especially when it comes to sticking to the party group line when voting. Kam (2009), who as mentioned before is one of the few who has connected attitudinal data with actual voting data,[8] argues that although policy preferences do have an impact on voting behavior, party (group) leaders also take advantage of their control over MPs' future parliamentary career to maintain party group unity.

Given that many of the empirical studies dealing with these pathways have been of a case study nature, the effects of institutions on these pathways and their associated mechanisms have not been given their due attention. As highlighted above through the example of Carey's (2007; 2009) *Theory of Competing Principals,* institutions do not affect party group unity directly, but instead affect the different mechanisms highlighted above, potentially in different ways. As is the case in the literature employing an institutional approach to explaining party group unity, scholars often make theoretical arguments and assumptions concerning how these mechanisms are affected by institutions. Electoral systems and candidate nomination procedures, for example, are hypothesized to influence the ideological composition of parliamentary party groups (leading to higher or lower levels of party agreement), but they are also supposed to instill in MPs a stronger or weaker a sense of loyalty towards their party group (depending on the number of competing principals) as well as to influence the ability of political parties to elicit party group unity through party discipline, by providing the political party (group) leadership with various kinds of carrots and sticks. It is the aim of this study to tease out the effects of institutions on each of these mechanisms separately.

Moreover, most of the studies of party group unity in European Parliaments tend to aggregate the mechanisms at the level of the party group, i.e., not only party group unity, but also its determinants, party cohesion (agreement and loyalty) and party discipline, are seen as a party level characteristic. One could argue, however, that the most accurate level to measure the workings of the mechanisms is at the level of the individual MP: party group unity "must be constructed one MP at a time" (Kam, 2009, 16). A party group that is cohesive in terms of shared ideological preferences, for example, results from each individual MP's agreement with his party group. The level of party cohesion in the form of shared norms of party group solidarity is the aggregate product of each individual MP's subscription to those norms. And a disciplined political party emerges from individual MPs' responsiveness to positive and negative sanctions. As such, a party group's final level of unity consists of the adding up of all party group members' individual behavior, and each MP's behavior results from his own decision-making process.

[8] But see Willumsen and Öhberg (2012) for a recent addition.

3.2.3 Decision-making models

In her review of legislative voting behavior literature Collie (1985) distinguishes between two schools of research: one that focuses on legislative voting at the level of the collective (i.e., the level of the political party group or legislature as a whole), and the other that looks at legislative voting at the level of the individual legislator. Collie concludes that when it comes to the latter, there is a great imbalance between the American and non-American setting in terms of the number and the content of studies. Research dedicated to the American context tends to focus on individual legislators as decision makers, whereas outside the United States "it has been assumed that *party* predicts individual decision making" (1985, 28, emphasis added), which she ascribes to the lack of variance in legislators' voting behavior. Collie also rightly points out that there is disagreement about what 'party' actually is (i.e. there is no clear conceptualization). Indeed, different authors tend to equate the party as an explanatory variable with the different pathways to party group unity discussed above. Most pointedly, however, is that it seems unrealistic to assume that whereas legislative voting behavior by American legislators results from individuals' decision-making processes involving multiple variables, MPs in the non-American setting would not engage in comparable processes.

The early studies of legislative voting in the United States were conducted within the parameters of representation studies (Collie, 1985, 494). Legislators are confronted with numerous actors and influences, and the main question is in how far legislators are responsive to each. From the start, the relative importance of party versus constituency was central to the debate. Some scholar concentrated solely on the influence of constituency policy preferences, whereas others argued that legislators' voting behavior was a function of both constituency and the party preference (Collie, 1985, 492). The relevance of legislators' personal attitudes and perceptions, as well as legislative norms and roles (Wahlke et al., 1962), were also incorporated, the latter gaining prominence with the research and findings by Miller and Stokes (1963). Questions were raised concerning the operationalization and measurement of constituency, party and legislator preferences, and the critique was that there was too much emphasis on correspondence between preferences, and not enough focus on the actual influence. The results of these different studies and approaches have been mixed, and as put by Collie (1985, 493): "[t]he fairest summary of their conclusions is that the impact of party and constituency varied between Democrats and Republicans and across issue areas, legislatures, and time".

Expanding the foci of representation beyond the constituency and the party led to the development of a number of legislator decision-making models. These include the consensus model (Kingdon, 1973), which holds that a legislator first determines whether the issue put to vote evokes controversy within the legislative arena. If not, he 'votes with the herd'. If there is controversy, the legislator ascertains whether there is any consensus on the matter among the different actors who may influence him, of which Kingdon emphasizes six: the legislator's constituency, his House colleges, the party leadership, the executive administration, the legislator's own staff, and interest groups. Again, if there is consensus on the matter among these different groups of actors, he votes

accordingly. If there is conflict, he votes with the majority of actors.

The cue-taking model, developed by Matthews and Stimson (1970), also distinguishes between multiple actors who may influence legislators' voting decisions, but contends that legislators develop hierarchies of 'cue-givers'. The authors also argue that cue-taking is only relevant when the vote at hand concerns a topic outside of the legislators' own area of specialization or expertise, thereby acknowledging the problems of decision overload and poor information. The policy-dimension model (Clausen, 1973) holds that the nature of the policy that the vote falls under determines which of the different actors the legislator will be influenced by most. Clausen finds, for example, that the influence of the party is strongest when it comes to social welfare and government management, and legislators are influenced most by the executive administration when it comes to issues of international involvement, but only when the president in office belongs to the same party. Asher and Weisberg (1978) voting-history model confirms that the actors who influence legislators' decisions differ per policy area, but the authors find that legislators are much more likely to deviate from their previous positions within certain policy areas when there is a change in the partisan composition of the House or the presidency switches partisan control.

In an attempt to integrate these models, Kingdon (1977, 571) argues that "...the legislator's search for some sort of agreement among a set of possible influences on the vote which predisposes him in a certain direction, and some further decisional process in the absence of that agreement—is a thread common to a number of the models of legislative voting". Thus legislators start out searching for some form of consensus, first in the legislative arena and second in their perceived field of influences. If no consensus can be found legislators pick cues from particular actors in light of various potential goals (e.g. constituency satisfaction, influence in Washington, good policy, etc.). Kingdon (1977, 571) further highlights that a certain sequentiality of decision-making mechanisms and rules are often implicit included in many models of legislative voting in Congress (see for example Clausen, 1973; Cherryholmes and Shapiro, 1969; Matthews and Stimson, 1970, 1975).

In the European literature, the argument that the pathways leading to party group unity can be viewed as working within a particular order is also implicitly included. Bowler et al. (1999a, 5), for example, argue that cohesion and discipline are related, in that high levels of cohesion render discipline unnecessary, but at the same time discipline requires a certain level of cohesion to be effective. On the one hand, if consensus in values and attitudes among individual representatives is high, there should be no need for disciplinary measures by party (group) leaders to obtain party group unity. On the other hand, discipline is only effective when there is a minimum level of cohesion present among members of the parliamentary party group, as the shared value that MPs place on the party group determines their responsiveness to disciplinary measures. When party group cohesion is low, MPs will not respond to (threats of) party discipline. As suggested by Hazan (2003, 3), whose use of the term cohesion encompasses both shared policy preferences and norms of party loyalty, "discipline starts where cohesion falters", indicating a sequential relationship between the two mechanisms.

In their study of the pathways to party group unity in the Netherlands, Andeweg

and Thomassen (2011a) suggest that the pathways are "different horses for different courses", and also hint at a possible sequential relationship between them. They argue that depending on the nature of the issue, MPs will have an opinion on the topic at hand or rely on the cues provided by the party group specialists and/or spokespersons. In the case of relatively uncontroversial and technical issues (and for which the party group's position is not specified in the party program and electoral manifesto), MPs will most likely rely on the cues provided by their party group specialists and/or spokespersons. In the case of politically controversial and non-technical issues, there is a high probability that MPs will have an opinion, and that this opinion is in agreement with the party group's position. MPs also vote in line with the advice of the party group policy specialists and/or spokespersons in this situation, but because they agree with them in the first place, not because they defer to their opinion. The active mechanism is thus MPs' agreement with the party group's position, and not cue-taking, because MPs do have a personal opinion on the topic. Only if MPs disagree with the party group's position or the position advocated by the party group's specialists and/or spokespersons, does party group loyalty become relevant. And finally, if all other mechanisms fail, the party (group) leadership may consider the use of sanctions.

Finally, Kam's (2009, 15) synthetic LEADS model (MPs Loyalty Elicited through Advancement, Discipline, and Socialization) is also a sequential model, but does not take the perspective of decision making by individual MPs. Instead, Kam (2009, 15) argues that party leaders' dependence on different mechanisms is contingent on the stage of MPs' careers. Ideological differences and electoral incentives set the stage for dissent to occur. Party leaders rely on positive sanctions (promotion, for example) to prompt MPs who are in the early stages of their career to vote with the party group line despite their disagreement. Positive sanctions work less well, however, for MPs who are already highly ranked and cannot be promoted, or are in the final stages of their career. Party leaders then prefer to rely on informal measures and norms of party group loyalty, acquired through the process of socialization. Finally, leaders may then resort to negative sanctions, but need to do so strategically and focused, as they may carry substantial costs.

What these models have in common is that voluntary party group agreement in the form of the homogeneity of preferences is usually the first stage in determining party group unity, with the exception of Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a), who acknowledge that MPs may not be able to form an opinion on all matters and thus implicitly place cue-taking from the party group specialists and/or spokespersons at the start of the decision-making sequence. Also, party discipline is usually positioned as a last resort, at the final stage, because of its involuntary nature and associated high costs, which make its frequent use an inefficient pathway. Thus, in the case of disagreement, party group loyalty comes into play before sanctions.

3.3 The sequential decision-making model

3.3.1 MPs' decision-making process

The model presented in Figure 3.1 forms the basis for the empirical analyses in this book. It outlines an individual MP's decision-making process in determining whether or not to vote according to the party group line (i.e., contribute to party group unity).[9] The different decision-making mechanisms, as well as the order in which they are placed, are derived from the main pathways to party group unity found in the (theoretical) literature.

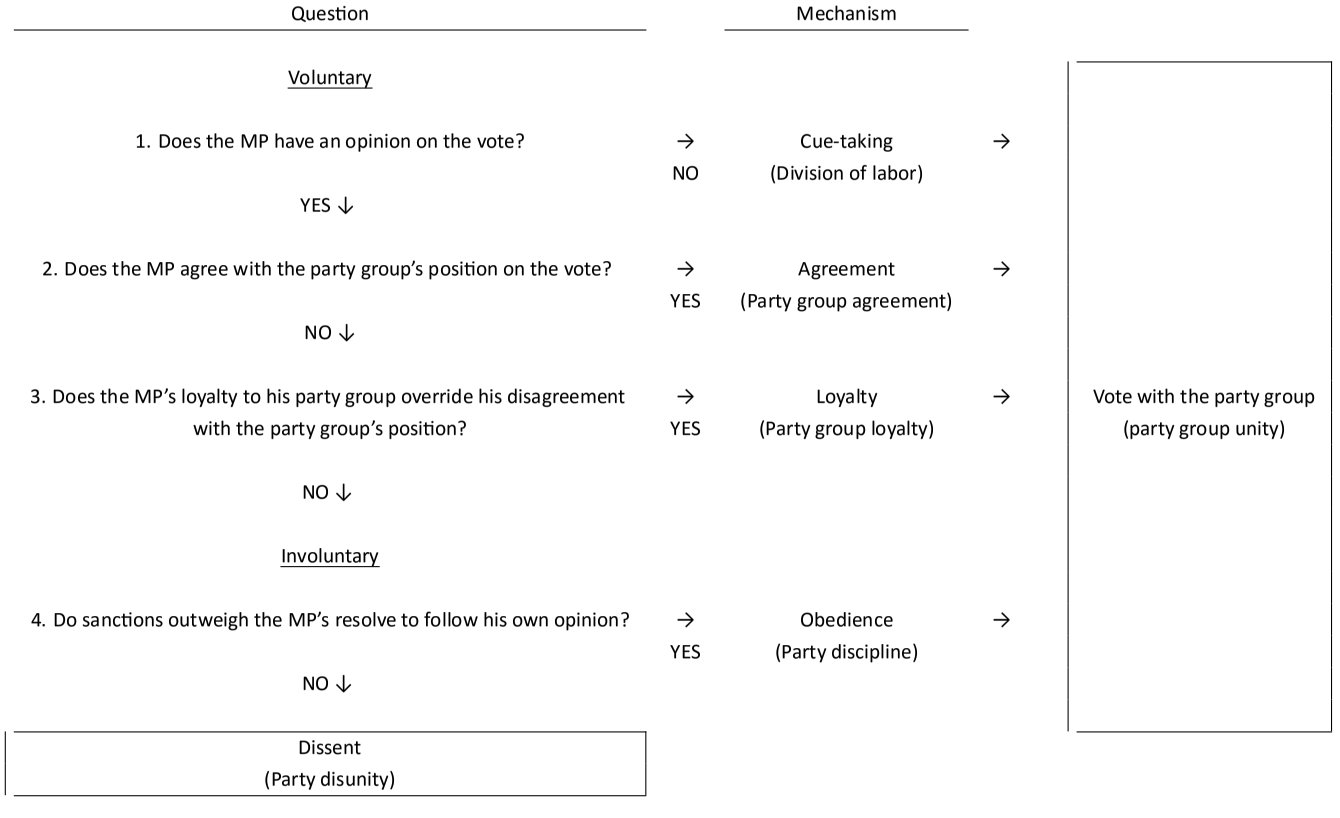
First, in determining whether to vote according to the party group line on a given vote in parliament, an MP assesses whether he actually has an opinion on the matter at hand. If the MP lacks a personal opinion, he votes according to the party group line in accordance with the party group's position as stipulated in the party program or electoral manifesto, but also the voting cues provided by his fellow party group members. To a certain degree, cue-taking is made possible, but also necessary, by party groups' solution for dealing with the workload of parliament. Applying a division of labor for which MPs each specialize in, and/or act as parliamentary party spokespersons for, particular policy areas, allows party groups work more efficiently, but also entails that MPs will probably not be able to develop a personal opinion about all matters that are put to vote.

Whether an MP has a personal opinion on a particular vote is likely to also depend on whether he has a background or some expertise in the topic area, whether the MP acts as a parliamentary party spokesperson for a topic that is closely related to the issue at hand, the level of technical and detailed knowledge required to form an opinion about the vote, the amount of time and resources the MP would need to invest in developing a personal opinion, and the importance the MP personally, and/or his party (group), ascribe to the matter at hand. If the MP needs to make quite an investment in terms of time and resources to understand and then develop an opinion about a rather technical issue, and/or the issue is not that important to him or his party (group),[10] he may prefer

[9] As mentioned above, party group unity "must be constructed one MP at a time" (Kam, 2009, 16); for each vote in parliament each MP must individually decide whether to vote according to the party group line or not, and this decision-making process consists of a number of steps that are arranged in a particular order. The collective outcome, a party's final degree of unity on a particular vote, is therefore a function of all individual MPs' sequential decision-making processes.

[10] MPs' lack of an opinion may also result from the party group's (informal) rules concerning the division of labor itself. As mentioned by Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a, 657) the division of labor encourages MPs not to interfere in each other's policy areas. MPs therefore lack an personal opinion not (only) because they do not have the time and/or resources to invest in forming their own opinion, but because they have agreed not to interfere in other MPs' issue areas. This agreement could a formal group rule, but it could also be an informal rule, or tacit agreement, in which case it could be conceived as a party group norm, and thus is closely related to our third decision-making mechanism, party group loyalty. Alternatively, an MP could also not form an opinion on certain issues area not out of respect for the implicit normative agreement to not interfere in each other's policy areas, but because of the strategic agreement with other MPs to support each other's positions and initiatives (logrolling). It could also be that MPs do not form an opinion on votes that fall outside their own designated issue areas because they fear that if do, others may do the same to them in the future (i.e., undermine an implicit tit-for-tat strategic agreement (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a, 657)), which may make their job more difficult and may frustrate their role and authority in the party group.

Figure 3.1: MPs' sequential decision-making process



(or need) to rely on the voting cues provided by his fellow party group members. The MP has to trusts that the voting advice provided by his fellow party group members is in line with the party program and electoral manifesto, and is representative of the opinion the MP would have held had he developed his own.

If the MP does have an opinion on the matter, or he considers the development of his own opinion worth the investment of time and resources, he moves on to the second decision-making stage, at which he gauges whether there is a conflict between his own personal opinion and the position of his party group on the issue. The party group's position is to a large extent specified in the party program or electoral manifesto. Furthermore, the party group's position on a specific topic can be developed during the parliamentary term by the party group specialists and/or spokespersons, the parliamentary party group leader(s), the parliamentary party group as a whole, or even the political party as a whole, depending on the division of labor and the hierarchy within a political party. Thus, there may be an array of sources that determine the party group's position on a given vote. The main question, however, is whether the MP agrees with his party group's policy position on a particular vote in parliament. If there is no conflict, then one can say that the MP's contribution to the unity of his party group is brought about by policy agreement.

If there is a conflict between the MP's preferences and his party group's position, the MP moves on to the third decision-making stage, at which point he decides whether or not his subscription to the norm of party group loyalty overrides his conflict with the party group line. If the conflict with the position of the party group is relatively minor, and/or the norm of party group loyalty is sufficiently internalized by the MP, it ought to be enough to persuade the MP to voluntarily submit to the party group line. As highlighted in our review of the pathways to party group unity literature above, MPs' subscription to the norm of party group loyalty is likely to result from a process of group socialization through previous party experience. However, whether or not the norm is considered applicable in a particular situation is an individual MP's decision.

If the MP does not subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty, or the MP does subscribe to the norm but his disagreement with the party group's position is so intense that it supersedes his loyalty to the party group, the political party (group) leadership enters into the equation at the final stage of decision making, making use of the available positive and negative sanctions to force the MP to vote according to the party group line. If (the threat of) sanctions outweigh the MP's resolve to follow his own opinion, his contribution to party group unity is brought about by the MP's obedience. If the sanctions are not enough to elicit conformity to the party group line, the MP dissents.[11] Negative

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Although this does not immediately mean that an MP lacks an opinion as a result of the fear of (threat of) negative sanctions (i.e., party discipline, which is associated with the rational-choice approach to explaining party group unity), it does mean that the decision to develop an opinion is not only based on whether an MP has the time and/or resources to do so. In a sense, both normative considerations and strategic calculations can play a role in determining whether an MP will invest the time and resources needed in developing an opinion in the first place.

[11] Some legislatures and political parties have designated votes about certain issues (e.g., the death penalty, abortion, stem cell research, gay rights, marriage, etc.) 'votes of conscience' or 'free votes' (Cowley, 1998;

sanctions may still follow. Who exactly controls which potential positive and negative sanctions may differ depending on formal and informal rules of the party organization. Whereas in some parties the parliamentary party group (leadership) may actually control the application of certain sanctions, in other parties the party group leadership itself may only an advisory role in the application of these sanctions; the sanctions being controlled by another organ of the political party organization.

The model developed above disentangles the different decision-making mechanisms derived from the pathways to party group unity highlighted in the theoretical literature. One of the most important novelties of the model is the placement of these mechanisms in a particular order, a sequence that generally matches the order usually suggested in the existing theoretical literature mentioned above, and is arguably logical from the perspective of both the individual MP and the party. As is the case with most theoretical models, however, our sequential model of MP decision-making is also a simplification of political reality.

3.3.2 The sequential logic

As stated above, the logic of the order of mechanisms in our decision-making model can be explained from both the perspective of the individual MP and the political party, specifically the party group leadership, who is likely to be responsible for the parliamentary party group's behavioral unity.[12] At the first stage of our decision-making model, an MP who does not have a personal opinion contributes to the unity of his party group by voting according to what is stipulated in the party program or electoral manifesto, or following the cues provided to him by his fellow party group members. We assume that during their political career MPs self-select into political parties whose policy positions they agree with the most, and thus that when an MP is unable to form a personal opinion, he considers the position of his own party (group), or that which is advocated by a fellow party member who is responsible for the party group's position, his default option. Party group agreement is not relevant because without a personal opinion, an MP cannot ascertain whether he agrees with the party group's position on the vote. And although he may also be toeing the party group line out of loyalty, this is not the determinant decision-making mechanism that leads him to vote with the party group when

Mughan and Scully, 1997; Pattie and Fieldhouse, Edward Johnston, 1994). In similar vein, party groups may also have formal and informal rules about under what circumstances dissent from the party group line is permissible, and thus MPs can expect that deviating from the party group line will not entail any short-term or long-term negative repercussions for the MP. In general however, these situations are the exception rather than the rule. Our model still works, as an MP still has to decide whether he has an opinion on the matter, and he is still able to gauge whether his opinion is in line with the party group's position. And even though the vote has been declared free, he may still consider it appropriate to toe the party group line out of solidarity. If this is not the case, the MP moves on to the fourth decision-making mechanisms, at which point je asks himself whether (potential) positive and negative sanctions outweigh his resolve to vote according to his own opinion. As the party (group) leaders will likely not apply party discipline in this situation, they cannot outweigh the MP's resolve to vote according to his own opinion. This means that the MP will dissent from the party group line, and that party voting unity will not be complete.

[12] This again may differ depending on a political party's rules and organization.

an MP lacks an opinion. The same holds for party discipline; while the MP without an opinion may be responsive to (threats and promises of) party discipline, it is again not likely to be the determinant mechanism of his decision to vote with the party group. Both mechanisms are only determinant of behavior when an MP has an opinion and is in disagreement with his party group's position.

Party group leaders are likely to encourage cue-taking as a means of achieving party group unity in parliament from an efficiency perspective. The division of labor not only allows party groups to deal with the workload of parliament, but the resultant decision-making mechanism cue-taking may ease and quicken party group meeting discussions on the group's position concerning the substantive content of parliamentary votes. Moreover, if an MP does have an opinion, there is always a chance of the MP disagreeing with the party group's position, in which case the party group leadership is dependent on either the MP's subscription to the norm of party group loyalty (which the party group leadership is ultimately unable to control), or the MP's responsiveness to (the threat of or promise of) sanctions, which can be costly. Moreover, the threat, promise or application of discipline in response to an MP who simply lacks a personal opinion can be considered quite premature, and may even have a negative effect on the party group leadership's authority.

Once an MP has an opinion, cue-taking is not a relevant decision-making mechanism, and he moves on to the second stage of the decision-making model, at which point he assesses whether his own opinion is in line with the party group's position. If this is indeed the case, his contribution to party group unity is determined by his simple agreement. As was the case as the earlier stage of cue-taking, the MP may also subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty, or may be responsive to sanctions if they are applied, but these pathways are redundant because he already agrees with the party group's position, and thus he will contribute to party group unity by simply following his own opinion. MPs who vote with the party group line out of agreement are also likely to be preferred by the party group leadership over those who do so out of loyalty or obedience. Although an MP's subscription to party group loyalty is likely to result from, and be reinforced by, socialization and selection, and party group leaders can try to create an environment that is conducive to adherence to the norm, the internationalization, and actual application of the norm in a particular situation is an individual's own decision. Relying on an MP's subscription to party group loyalty as a pathway to party group unity carries certain risks as it makes behavioral party group unity dependent on the individual MP's decision as to whether is loyalty is strong enough to outweigh his resolve to vote according to his own conflicting opinion. When it comes to party discipline, threatening with or actually applying sanctions to elicit compliance from an MP who already agrees with the party group line anyway is likely to be considered exorbitant, and thus counterproductive. Moreover, (the threat or promise of) sanctions are always costlier than simply relying on an MP's voluntary agreement.

If an MP disagrees with the party group line, he has to decide whether his subscription to the norm of party group loyalty outweighs the intensity of his conflict with the party group's position. If this is the case, discipline is unnecessary because the MP will toe the party group line voluntarily. Although relying on an MPs' subscription to the

norm of party group loyalty is riskier for party group leaders than relying on the first two decision-making mechanisms, party group leaders are likely to still preferred that MPs vote with the party group of their own accord, as again, the unnecessary application of discipline can be costly and undermine the party group leaderships' authority. It is also likely that an individual MP prefer voting with the party group despite his disagreement of his own accord rather than being forced into obedience. Thus, in our model, (the threat of) negative or (promise of) positive sanctions are used as a last resort to get an MP to vote with the party group line despite his disagreement.

As stated above, we do not argue that for a given vote there is always only one potential decision-making mechanism present in the mind of MP. For example, an MP without an opinion may also subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty, but he does not need to weigh whether his subscription to the norm outweighs his resolve to follow his own opinion, because he does not have a personal opinion to take into consideration. Moreover, an MP who lacks an opinion and does not subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty is also likely to toe the party group line as a result of cue-taking. In both cases, an MP has already decided to vote according to the party group line at the first decision-making stage; he does not need to move on to the mechanisms that follow (unless he decides that he wants to develop his own opinion, in which case the decision-making process starts over once his opinion is formed, and cue-taking will not be the determinant decision-making mechanism anymore). Agreement, loyalty and discipline thus presume that an MP has an opinion. Loyalty and discipline are only relevant decision-making mechanism when an MP disagrees with the party group's position. Discipline is only relevant when an MP disagrees with the party group line and will not vote with the party group line voluntarily despite his disagreement.

3.3.3 Simplification

The sequential decision-making model in Figure 3.1 is, of course, a simplification of what goes on in political reality. For example, determining the position of the party group, as well as the position of individual MPs, is likely to be an iterative process that takes place over weeks, months or even years, during which both the party group's and MPs' positions on the matter may change (if MPs form an opinion at all). This process of position formation does not take place in isolation, and both the party group's and MPs' positions may be influenced by actors both outside and inside the parliamentary party group. The model does not aim to explain how MPs come to their opinions, or the substantive content of their opinions, however, only how they come contribute to party group unity, by deciding to vote with the party group or not. Thus, the model only comes into play when an MP's and the party group's substantive positions on a vote (or lack thereof) are finalized. If something happens that leads to an MP (or the party group) to change his (its) position on a particular vote, the decision-making process is started over.

As opposed to the decision-making models found in the literature on the United States in the 1970s', which were developed in the context of representation studies and explicitly included the influence of different potential foci of representation (voters, interest groups, the president, etc.) on the MP, the model developed above aims to ac-

count for how MPs come to vote with their party group's position or not; it therefore only includes MPs' decision-making process in relation to the party group's final position on a specific vote. The model assumes, however, that if an MP's personal opinion is indeed influenced by other potential foci of representation, this occurs before the MP finalizes his own position. Thus, the different foci of representation may be the cause of the disagreement between the party group's position and the MP's opinion, but according to our model, their influence is already encompassed in the MP's own position on the vote. The same assumption holds for decisions made in regard to the third decision-making mechanism, loyalty. An MP's loyalty to other principals may be the reason why the MP has not sufficiently internalized the norm of party group loyalty, or account for why an MP's loyalty to his party group does not supersede his resolve to vote according to his own opinion in the case of conflict with the party group's position on a particular vote.

In our model, we acknowledge that fellow party group members play the role of cue-givers for an MP who lacks a personal opinion about a specific vote. However, if an MP decides that he does want to invest time and resources in developing his own opinion, these fellow party group members may serve as important sources of information in their opinion formation process. For an MP who does have an opinion, but one which is in conflict with the party group's position, fellow party group members may play a role in trying to change the personal substantive position of this MP through deliberation and argumentation. An MP may also try to convince his fellow party group members to change their minds and/or the party group's position. If the conflict between the MP's and the party group's position remains, internal party group discussions may still take place, but this time the aim is not to change the MP's opinion, but to persuade the MP that voting with the party group line despite disagreement would be most appropriate, i.e., to convince the MP that as a party delegate, he ought to vote with the party group line out of loyalty. Finally, although the control of positive and negative sanctions is likely to be located in the hands of different organs and individuals within the party organization (both inside and outside the party group), fellow party group members can also apply pressure and warn an MP of the potential negative consequences of dissenting from the party group line, or remind him of the potential rewards for toeing the party group line despite his disagreement. Sanctions can also take on the form of social pressure and/or rewards, which can often be quite subtle.

In other words, there is likely to be a constant process of deliberation and discussion within the party group that may influence whether or not an MP has an opinion, the substance of the opinion, and whether the MP considers his loyalty and/or the (threatened or promised) sanctions to outweigh his resolve to dissent from the party in the case of disagreement. This process is not only limited to the parliamentary party group; an MP may also enter into discussions with other members and/or parts of the party organization.[13] We argue, however, that as is the case with the influence of other po-

[13] We are aware that it is unlikely that in practices the content and aim of these discussion and deliberations will take place in such a organized fashion. Indeed, arguments pertaining to the substantive content of positions, but also those that play on an MP's party group loyalty and the consequences and benefits of an MP's decision, are likely to be used simultaneously and may even be muddled.

tential foci of representation, that these discussions and deliberation may influence the whether the MP has an opinion and the substance of his opinion, they do not affect the questions that an MP asks himself in determining whether to vote according to the party group line or not (see Figure 3.1). In other words, the fact that these discussions take place does not mean that, when deciding whether to vote according to the party group line or not, MPs do not apply the mechanisms outlined by the model.

3.4 Conclusion

The study of party group unity is confounded by terminological, conceptual and measurement ambiguities. One of the most important novelties of this study is the disentanglement of the different decision-making mechanisms derived from the pathways to party group unity highlighted in the theoretical literature, and the placement of the mechanisms that MPs apply in determining to vote with the party in a particular order. As with any model, it is a simplification of reality, and thus does not take all aspects of, and possible influence on, MPs' decision-making processes into account. The aim of our studies is not a comprehensive explanation of MPs' decision-making process including all potential independent variables, but to test the sequential approach and illustrate is potential in three studies with a limited set of variables.

As previously mentioned in the introductory chapter, the ultimate test of the model would apply it to MPs' decisions regarding specific votes. Unfortunately, we do not have the data to do so. Our survey data do, however, allow us to place the mechanisms in the sequence outlined above, and gauge the relative contribution of each of the pathways to party group unity, and see whether their contributions differ between parliaments or change over time. Moreover, the data also allow us to test the assumptions and hypotheses about the influence of these institutions on these different pathways. In the following empirical chapters, we develop and test hypotheses concerning the effects of institutions on each of the mechanisms separately, and ascertain the relative contribution of each the mechanisms, and the extent to which political parties can count on these pathways for the unity of their party in parliament.