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

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Chapter 5

Different pathways for different levels: representatives' decision-making mechanisms at the national and subnational level

5.1 Different pathways for different levels of government

The previous chapter focused on the effects of a number of institutions on MPs' decision-making mechanisms and the pathways to party group unity in 15 national parliaments. In most democracies, representation is not limited to the national level, however, and political parties are active in the electoral and legislative arenas at the lower levels of government too. As such, the normative and rationalist arguments for party democracy and its associated criterion of party unity (see chapter 3) are likely to hold at the subnational level as well. Indeed, although the number of studies on representation at the subnational level is limited in comparison to those concerning the national level, existing research points in the direction that unified political party groups are the rule in representative assemblies in parliamentary democracies at the subnational level as well. However, we have reasons to expect that the way in which party groups achieve unity, and thus the relative importance of representatives' decision-making mechanisms, is different at the subnational level than it is at the national level.¹

¹ Note that our aim is to compare representatives' decision-making mechanisms and the way in which parties achieve party group unity at the national and subnational levels of government; we do not deal with the interaction between representatives and their parties at multiple levels of government, which is also argued

5.1. Different pathways for different levels of government

Surveying the literature, it seems safe to assume that in most (European) parliamentary democracies, politics at the subnational level is dominated by political parties, as is the case at the national level. Leach and Copus (2004, 337), for example, describe political representation at the municipal level in the United Kingdom as typical of ‘partyocracy’. And in their comparative analysis of the influence of political parties at the local level, Denters et al. (2013, 669) rate the local government system of the Netherlands, along with that of Austria, Norway and Sweden, as ‘party democratic’ with a strong emphasis on party discipline, party loyalty and the implementation of the party program. In passing, Deschouwer (2003, 218) mentions that in Belgium, party discipline is high at both the federal and regional level, whereas in Switzerland party discipline is actually stronger in the cantons than it is in the federal parliament. The fact the political party is taken to be the main representative actor in many studies on electoral (Jeffery and Hough, 2001; Laffin et al., 2007; Scarrow, 1997), legislative (Allers et al., 2001; Jeffery, 1999) and government politics (Bäck, 2003b,a, 2008; Seitz, 2000) at the subnational level, also indicates that the political party model stands at the basis of representation at the lower levels of government.

There are also a few studies that focus on the subnational level that deal with party (voting) unity specifically. Copus (1997a,b, 1999b), for example, finds that municipal councilors in the United Kingdom struggle to combine the party group system, with its emphasis on party unity through loyalty and discipline, with their scrutiny role, but usually end up privileging the former over the latter. Copus bases his analyses on the 1986 Widdicombe committee of inquiry’s research team, which found that 92 percent of Conservative, and 99 percent of Labour councilors, indicate to usually or always voting together in the municipal council (Copus, 1997a, 62-63).² Patzelt (2003, 102) argues that in Germany, the 16 state (*Länder*) legislatures do not bother to keep any systematic record of individual members’ voting behavior (with the exception of the infrequent occurrence of roll call votes), because “... final unity of action is taken for granted to such a degree that neither the margin nor the actual composition of a German cabinet’s majority on the floor is treated as a topic worthy of documentation ...”. Stecker’s (2013) later analysis of party unity on roll call voting in 16 German state parliaments between 1990 and 2011 is one of the most comprehensive analyses of party voting at the subnational level. He finds that in 77.5 percent of the 2402 analyzed votes perfect party unity is achieved, with the average index of agreement reaching over 95, leading him to conclude that perfect unity is the rule rather than the exception at the German state level (2013, 6).

The subnational level has also been used in a semi-experimental research design to discriminate between the explanatory power of the sociological and rationalist / institutionalist approaches with regard to party group (voting) unity. In her study on budget voting in Berlin’s 23 city district councils in 1997, Davidson-Schmich (2001) finds that the vast majority of the party groups in western Berlin city district councils voted in unison.

to be a lacuna in the study of representation in general, and political parties in particular (Deschouwer, 2003; Kjaer and Elklit, 2010).

² The figures taken from the 1986 Widdicombe committee of inquiry’s research team are based on survey responses, not actual voting behavior.

5.1. Different pathways for different levels of government

Party groups were less unified in eastern Berlin, where in the majority of the city district councils at least one party group experienced dissent when voting on the budget. In an earlier study, Davidson-Schmich (2000) also personally observed assembly and committee voting in seven western and six eastern Berlin city councils between 1997 and 1998, and found that whereas in western districts the established parties voted in perfect unity on almost all votes, their eastern counterparts were less likely to do so.³ The author concludes that most eastern Berlin parties responded to the introduction of western German political institutions with stronger party discipline, although lower levels of ideological cohesion (which resulted from the fact that eastern political parties did not have enough time to develop clear stances on local issues), preexisting normative opposition to party discipline, and smaller candidate pools (which make it difficult for party (group) leaders to credibly (threaten to) sanction party group members) explain why party voting unity was below the levels found in western Berlin city councils.

Davidson-Schmich (2003) later extended her analysis of the German subnational level in her study of party voting unity in eastern German state legislatures during the 1990s, where party group unity on both roll call and regular votes on substantive matters increased dramatically throughout the first decade after Germany's reunification.⁴ She also explicitly compares the voting behavior in these recently established eastern German state legislatures to the voting behavior in the national *Bundestag* during its first terms (1949-1953, 1953-1957 and 1957-1961), during which the development towards increased party voting unity was clearly mirrored. With party groups obtaining Rice scores very close to 1.0 by 2000, party voting unity in these eastern German state legislatures was near complete and closely resembled voting unity in the western German state legislatures. Finally, both Cowley (2001) and Dewan and Spirling (2011) explicitly compare party unity on roll call votes between the national Westminster parliament and the regional Scottish Parliament. Cowley (2001), whose analysis only covers the first year of the Scottish parliament, concludes that there are no noteworthy differences in party voting unity between the national and subnational parliament. Dewan and Spirling's (2011) analysis is more complete, as it deals with the two first terms of the Scottish parliament. During both terms the Rice scores attained by the Scottish party groups was well above 95 (including free votes), which leads the authors to conclude that party group unity is "as prevalent and robust in the Scottish Parliament as in the

³ In the eastern districts, it was the Party of Democratic Socialism (*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus*, PDS) that did not vote in unity in 52 percent of the 25 analyzed votes. The Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei*, SPD) (92 percent), Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich Demokratische Union*, CDU) (80 percent) and Alliance '90 / The Greens (*Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*) (80 percent) in the eastern districts were clearly more unified, albeit less than the SPD (100 percent), CDU (100 percent) and Alliance '90 / The Greens (97 percent) in the western councils (78 votes were analyzed in the western councils) (Davidson-Schmich, 2000, 17-18). Davidson-Schmich (2000, 15-16) excludes votes on which the entire council voted unanimously, and counts abstentions as defections because abstaining representatives usually publicly announced that they were abstaining because they disagreed with their party group's position.

⁴ Davidson-Schmich (2003) bases her analysis on roll call votes and a sample of floor debates, voting declarations and regular legislative votes obtained from the plenary session transcripts for the years 1991, 1996 and 2000.

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House of Commons” (2011, 341).⁵

Although these studies show that party group (voting) unity seems to be as high at the subnational level as it is at the national level, this does not automatically entail that the way in which party group unity is brought about is the same at both levels of government. Within one country, the electoral and legislative institutional settings that are held to affect the different pathways to party group unity may be different at the subnational levels than they are at the national level. However, one could also argue that there are differences between the national and subnational level that hold across countries. For example, subnational parliaments tend to be smaller than national parliaments in terms of the number of legislative seats, which entails that party groups are generally smaller as well. This is likely to affect the way in which party groups function, and thus may also affect the way in which representatives come to their voting decisions. Moreover, the smaller size of constituencies at the subnational level may also affect representatives’ decision making, as they are likely to have a closer and more direct relationship with their voters. On the other hand, whereas the number of national parliaments in one country is usually limited to one (unicameral) or two (bicameral), territorial decentralization entails that at one subnational level multiple representative assemblies exist, which means that the total number of seats that political parties need to fill is a lot higher at the subnational level than it is at the national level. Intra-party competition is therefore likely to be lower at the subnational level, thus affecting candidate (re-)selection criteria, and also party (group) leaders’ ability to employ candidate selection as a disciplining tool.

All in all, our argument is that although representatives at the national and subnational level employ similar decision-making mechanisms in determining whether to vote with or dissent from the party group line, the relative importance of the mechanisms, and therefore the contribution of the pathways to party group unity, may differ at the different levels of government. In the next section, we outline how we expect each of the four mechanisms included in the decision-making model is affected by the general differences between the national and subnational level. We first test these hypotheses on the national and regional legislatures in the nine multilevel countries included in the 2010 PartiRep Survey. Subsequently, we test the same hypotheses on Dutch data that allows us to add the local level to the national and regional levels.

5.2 Expectations

5.2.1 Division of labor

In most countries, the job of a national MP is a full-time occupation with a considerably heavy workload. In order to deal with this workload, parliamentary party group are likely to apply a division of labor (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a; Krehbiel, 1991; Shepsle

⁵ Another example of a cross-level comparative analysis is Di Virgilio and Pinto’s (2013) study of roll call voting in the Italian national parliament and the regional councils of Emilia Romagna, Latium and Lombardy. The authors seeks to explain voting behavior in general, however, and do not deal explicitly with party group unity.

and Weingast, 1994; Skjaeveland, 2001), for which parties select candidates who are specialized in a particular policy area and who as MPs are likely to subsequently act as the parliamentary party spokesperson for these topics in their legislative committees. As a result of their workload and specialization, it is likely that national MPs do not have the time or expertise to form an opinion on all topics outside of their portfolio, and thus rely on their fellow party group members for voting advice.

At the subnational level, the workload is (comparatively) lighter than at the national level (depending on the degree of decentralization), and one could argue that subnational representatives are more likely to have the time to form their own opinion about a wider range of topics. On the other hand, being a representative at the subnational level is usually not a full-time occupation (this usually depend on the size of the district, among other things), entailing that representatives may hold another job as well, which limits the time they can spend on their representative function. But because subnational legislatures and party groups are usually smaller than at the national level, party groups have fewer members over which they can divide the workload, and party groups are less able to apply a strict division of labor. Moreover, government jurisdictions and decision-making powers also tend to become more limited as we move down the ladder of government levels, which entails that political party groups need fewer specialists and policy experts in order to develop the party's stance. Thus, we argue that during the process of candidate recruitment and selection, parties are less likely to select policy specialists, and instead prefer to opt for candidates who are able to keep up with the full range of issues that play a role at the subnational level. These generalists are more likely to have a personal opinion on a broad range of topics, and therefore less likely to rely on their fellow party group members for voting instructions. We therefore expect that *subnational representatives are less likely to engage in cue-taking as a result of the division of labor than national MPs (H1)*.

5.2.2 Party agreement

There are also a number of reasons to expect differences between national and subnational level with regard to representatives' second decision-making mechanism, party group agreement. This pathway entails that representatives do have a personal opinion on a particular vote, and that this opinion coincides with the position of their party group. They thus vote with their party group's position out of simple agreement.

From the perspective of the political party, party agreement is a relatively reliable and 'easy' pathway to party group unity, as it does not require relying on representatives' voluntary subscription to the norm of party group loyalty or their responsiveness to positive and negative sanctions. Therefore, parties try to maximize agreement among their representatives before entering the legislative arena. The extent to which potential candidates' own policy preferences match the ideological profile of the party, and their agreement with the party program and electoral manifesto, are thus important recruitment and selection criteria at all levels of government.

As mentioned above, subnational legislatures are usually smaller than national legislatures, and thus party groups are also generally smaller. This entails that the number

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of (potentially conflicting) viewpoints in the party group is likely to be smaller as well (Hare, 1952; Mohammed, 2001; Wessels, 1999). On the other hand, we argue that as a result of their small size, subnational parties are more likely to select policy generalists as opposed to specialists, which may again increase the number of opinions on matters that are put to a vote. But whereas large party groups are likely to employ a hierarchical group organization and thus decision-making schemes (e.g., a division of labor organized around policy specialists who provide voting advice to the rest of the members of the party group, or a decision-making rule that grants the party group leadership the authority to determine the party group's final position), small groups are more likely to engage in consensus and unanimous decision making (Burawoy, 1979; Buchanan and Tullock, 1962; Romme, 2004). Combined with the argument that subnational parties are more likely to select policy generalists, this may entail that individual representatives are more involved in determining the position of the party group during the parliamentary party group meeting the first place, which would make them more likely to agree with the position of their party group when the issue is put to a vote. This leads to the expectation that *subnational representatives are more likely to frequently agree with the party than national MPs (H2)*.

5.2.3 Party loyalty

At the third stage of the decision-making sequence, representatives who disagree with the position of the party group on a vote must decide whether their subscription to the norm of party group loyalty overrides their conflict with the party's position. If so, representatives submit to the party group line voluntarily.

Again, party group loyalty is likely to be an important candidate selection criterion at all levels of government, and although the decision to adhere to the norm lies with individual representatives, party group loyalty is argued to be the result of a process of socialization; representatives internalize norms of solidarity through their previous party experience. In their study of career patterns, for which they use the same PartiRep Survey and background data as is used in this study, Pilet et al. (2014, 212-215) find that although the majority of representatives included in their analysis had been active at only one level of government, 20 percent of national MPs had previously been active as a representative at another level of government, whereas only 6 percent of regional representatives had been. Although the authors omit other types of previous party experience and the total amount of time representatives had already been active in party politics from their analysis, their study does provide some evidence for the claim that MPs at the national level are more likely to have previous party experience, and are therefore more likely to be socialized into norms of party group loyalty, than representatives at the subnational level.

Moreover, party group loyalty may also be weaker at the subnational level than at the national level due to the relatively smaller size and closer proximity—in terms of both geography and population—of representatives' constituencies. This may lead subnational representatives to engage in a more direct dyadic relationship with their voters, who act as competing principals to political parties (Carey, 2007, 2009). Copus (1999a, 89)

contends that due to both the nature of the issues that dominate the decision-making agenda and as well as the closeness of citizens to the political systems at the local level specifically, “[i]t is [...] at the local rather than national level, that the potential for connection between governor and governed is greatest”. Although Copus’ (1999a) study focuses on the municipal level in the United Kingdom, one could argue that the lower the level of government, the more likely that representatives’ loyalty to the political party group is diffused by their loyalty to voters.

Indeed, in his comparison of constituency representation in legislatures at the Federal and *Länder* level in West Germany, Patzelt (2007, 59-64) finds that *Länder* representatives have a stronger desire to represent their constituents’ views closely, and are less inclined to vote against their constituents’ preferences, than national MPs. In line with Copus (1999a), Patzelt’s (2007) explanation for this difference is that the smaller districts at the regional level allow for closer linkage between representatives and their voters. Relying on the same PartiRep Survey as is used in this study, Dudzińska et al. (2014, 26-28) find that the percentage of representatives who are classified as ‘voter delegates’ is slightly higher at the regional than at the national level in both multilevel and unitary settings,⁶ and that voter delegates are more likely to consider the people in their constituency, and their voters specifically, a much more important focus of representation than other potential foci of representation.⁷ André et al. (2014, 172-173, 184), who also use the PartiRep Survey data, observe that regional representatives tend to prioritize constituency work more than their national counterparts,⁸ and that this prioritization

⁶ Dudzińska et al.’s (2014, 26) study is based on respondents’ transitive patterns of answers to three questions concerning their styles of representation (Wessels and Giebler, 2010). In the PartiRep Survey, respondents are asked how an MP ought to vote in the case of disagreement between 1) his own opinion and his party’s position, 2) his own opinion and his voters’ positions, and 3) his party’s position and his voters’ position. A respondent who indicates that the party’s position should prevail above both his own opinion and the position of his voters is categorized as a *party delegate*, a respondent who selects his voters’ position above both his own opinion and his party’s position is considered a *voter delegate*, and a respondent who chooses his own opinion above his party’s and his voters’ position is labeled a *trustee*. Respondents who do not consistently select one above the other two have intransitive preferences when it comes to their style of representation (only 5 percent of respondents included in Dudzińska et al.’s (2014, 26) analysis is categorized as such).

⁷ In order to determine respondents’ focus of representation, Dudzińska et al. (2014) use the PartiRep Survey question ‘How important is it to you, personally, to promote the views and interests of the following groups of people?’. The different foci included are: a) ‘all the people who voted for you’ (only included for respondents in legislatures with a preferential electoral system or single-member districts), b) ‘all the people who voted for your party’, c) ‘all the people in your constituency’ (or area of residence for Israel and the Netherlands), d) ‘your party’, e) ‘a specific group in society’, f) ‘in your region’ (option was only put to regional MPs, excluding Austria), and g) ‘all the people in the country’ (included for respondents in all national legislatures, and only in the regional legislatures in Austria, Belgium and Switzerland).

⁸ In the PartiRep Survey, respondents are asked what they consider the most important task they themselves fulfill as an MP, which is used to gauge respondents’ role orientation as developed by Searing (1994). Respondents are categorized as *policy advocates* if they consider ‘influencing government policy’ most important. *Parliament men* pick ‘liaising between members of the parliamentary party and the party leadership and managing Parliament’s business’ above the other tasks. *Welfare officers* consider ‘providing assistance to individual voters in their dealings with public authorities’ most important, whereas *local promoters* hold the opinion that ‘looking after the collective social and economic needs of the local area’ is their most im-

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also translates into more time spent in the constituency itself and more constituency-oriented behavior in the legislative arena (the proportion of legislative initiatives that are derived from meetings with individual citizens, for example, is higher at the regional level than at the national level). All in all, given that constituencies' opinions are likely to be more diverse than, and not always consistent with, the party group's position, it is probable that subnational representatives, who are more likely to have a stronger direct connection with their constituencies' than national MPs, are also more likely to experience a pull away from the party group in terms of their loyalty in the case of disagreement with the party's position. Our third hypothesis is therefore that *subnational representatives are less likely to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than national MPs (H3)*.

5.2.4 Party discipline

At the final stage of the decision-making process, representatives whose opinion on a vote conflicts with that of the party group, and who do not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty, are confronted with disciplinary measures by the party (group) leadership in order to elicit them to vote with the party group, albeit involuntarily. At this stage of the decision-making process, representatives decide whether defying the party group's position outweighs the potential negative repercussions they may incur if they dissent. Parties can also try to get their representatives to vote the party group line by promising certain rewards for doing so.

In principle, political party (group) leaders at the subnational levels of government have access to many of the same types of carrots (positive sanctions) and sticks (negative sanctions) that political party (group) leaders at the national level have. But because subnational representatives are less dependent on their party than national representatives, the threat or actual use of these tools is probably less effective than at the national level. Whereas in most countries national MPs 'live off politics' (Weber, 1919) and are employed full-time, subnational representatives usually only engage in politics part-time, and in some countries are even non-salaried, receiving only modest financial compensation for their work. Moreover, given that only a small percentage of subnational representatives are eventually promoted to higher positions within their party organization or are selected as representatives at higher levels of government, subnational representatives are also less dependent on their political party in terms of their future career ambitions, which are likely to extend beyond the political realm. Thus, because representatives at the lower levels of government do not depend as much on their party for their (future) livelihood, they have far less to lose when confronted with the (threat or promise of) sanctions when they threaten to dissent from the party group line, rendering the sanctions themselves less effective. Moreover, as a result of the large number of seats to fill at the subnational level, intra-party competition is lower, and parties are also limited in their ability to use candidate reselection as a credible disciplining

portant job. André et al. (2014) combine the latter two categories into *constituency members* (Strøm, 1997, 167).

5.3. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies

tool. Finally, the use of formal discipline often necessitates drawing on party group hierarchy, but because party groups are generally smaller at the subnational level than at the national level, doing so could have a structural negative effect on the functioning of the party group, and thus the party group leadership at the subnational level is likely to think twice before doing so. All in all, we expect that *subnational representatives are less likely to be disciplined than national MPs (H4)*.

5.3 Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies

In order to test the hypotheses developed above, we first take a look at differences between national and regional parliaments in the nine multilevel countries included in the PartiRep Survey.^{9,10} Whereas at the national level about 24 percent of MPs from these multilevel countries participated in the survey, response rates are slightly higher at the regional level with on average 27 percent of representatives from the selected legislatures participating in the survey (see Table 5.1). We are again faced with the fact that the national level response rates for Italy (7 percent), France (9 percent) and the United Kingdom are below the threshold set by the members of the Comparative Candidate Survey (2007). At the regional level, all country response rates are above 20 percent, although with 21 percent, Switzerland and Italy are only just above the threshold. These figures should again be kept in mind during the analyses that follow.¹¹

At the national level, MPs from governing parties and MPs whose parties are in the opposition are represented almost equally in these nine multi-level countries (49 percent are government MPs, and 51 percent are opposition MPs, not shown in Table 5.1). At the regional level, about 66 percent of respondents are from governing parties, and 34 percent are members of the opposition. The sample of surveyed representatives closely resembles the population not only in terms of government-opposition, but also party group membership (of which there are over 100), although there are a few exceptions (Deschouwer et al., 2014, 11).¹² In the tables below, responses are weighted for party group and parliament size, and respondents from party groups with only one legislative seat are excluded from the analysis. Table 5.1 also displays the regional legislatures' 2006 scores on the Regional Authority Index (RAI) on the self-rule and shared

⁹ For a description of the PartiRep Survey data collection process, see chapter 4.

¹⁰ For the purpose of this analysis, the national/federal parliaments included in the PartiRep Survey are referred to as 'national parliaments', and the subnational representative assemblies (including *Länder*, communities, regional assemblies, etc.) are referred to as 'regional parliaments'.

¹¹ All analyses have been checked for correlations with response rates. Noteworthy findings are discussed in the text.

¹² See footnote 13 in chapter 4.

Table 5.1: 2010 PartRep MP survey response rates for national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies

Country	National			Regional					Response (% of survey)				
	Population Seats (N)	Response (n) (%)	Legislatures (N)	Population Seats (N)	Seats mean (n)	Self-rule legislatures (surveyed)	Shared rule	Legislatures (n)		Survey Seats (n)	Seats mean (n)		
Austria	183	55	30	9	448	50	12.0	6.0	9	448	50	172	38
Belgium	150	70	47	4	313	78	9.0-13.00	5.0-7.0	4	313	78	93	30
France	577	50	9	28	1721	61	8.0	0.0	2	141	71	40	28
Germany	622	134	22	16	1867	117	12.0	9.0	4	417	104	145	35
Italy	630	45	7	20	986	49	13.0	1.0-5.0	7	391	56	83	21
Portugal	230	76	33	2	104	52	12.0	3.5	2	104	52	42	40
Spain	350	104	30	17	1206	71	13.0	1.5	4	418	105	168	40
Switzerland	200	49	25	26	2688	103	15.0	4.5	25	2639	106	555	21
United Kingdom	650	62	10	2	189	95	8.0-13.0	3.5	2	189	95	45	27
Total / mean	3592	645	24	127	9522	75	11.8	4.1	59	5060	86	1343	27

Regional parliaments included in the PartRep Survey per country:

Austria (*Länder* or states): Burgenland (36 seats), Kärnten (Carinthia, 36 seats), Niederösterreich (Lower Austria, 56 seats), Oberösterreich (Upper Austria, 56 seats), Salzburg (36 seats), Steiermark (Styria, 56 seats), Tirol (36 seats), Vorarlberg (36 seats) and Wien (Vienna, 100 seats).

Belgium (*Gemeenschappen* or communities, including Brussels): Brussels (89 seats), Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft belgiens (German Speaking community, 25 seats), Vlaanderen (Flemish region, 124 seats) and Wallonië (Wallonia, 75 seats).

France (administrative regions, including Corsica): Aquitaine (85 seats) and Poitou-Charentes (56 seats).

Germany (*Bundesländer* or states, including Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen): Brandenburg (88 seats), Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony, 152 seats), Rheinland-Pfalz (101 seats) and Thüringen (88 seats).

Italy (regions): Calabria (50 seats), Campania (60 seats), Lazio (51 seats), Lombardia (80 seats), Toscana (55 seats), Valle d'Aosta (35 seats), and Veneto (60 seats).

Portugal (autonomous regions): Azores (57 seats) and Madeira (47 seats).

Spain (autonomous communities): Andalucía (109 seats), Catalunya (135 seats), Pais Vasco (Basque country, 75 seats), and Valencia (99 seats).

Switzerland (cantons): Aargau (140 seats), Appenzell Ausserrhoden (65 seats), Basel-Landschaft (90 seats), Basel-Stadt (100 seats), Bern (160 seats), Fribourg (110 seats), Genève (100 seats),

Glarus (80 seats), Graubünden (120 seats), Jura (60 seats), Luzern (120 seats), Neuchâtel (115 seats), Nidwalden (60 seats), Obwalden (55 seats), Sankt-Gallen (180 seats), Schaffhausen (60 seats), Schwyz (100 seats), Solothurn (100 seats), Thurgau (130 seats), Ticino (90 seats), Uri (64 seats), Valais (130 seats), Vaud (150 seats), Zug (80 seats) and Zürich (180 seats).

United Kingdom (devolved governments): Scotland (129 seats) and Wales (60 seats).

Note: The 2010 PartRep MP Survey was financed by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO). The codebook and instructions for obtaining the data can be found on the PartRep website (www.partrep.eu).

rules dimensions (Hooghe et al., 2008,?).¹³

5.3.1 Division of labor

Our first hypothesis is that, as a result of the smaller size of subnational legislature and their party groups, subnational party groups are less able to apply a division of labor and therefore also less likely to select policy specialists, and thus that subnational representatives are less likely to engage in the cue-taking than national MPs (H1). In terms of their size, the nine national parliaments included in our analysis consist of 399 seats on average (see Table 5.1), with the British House of Commons taking the lead (650 seats), followed by the Italian *Camera dei Deputati*, (630 seats), the Germany *Bundestag* (622 seats) and the French *Assemblée Nationale* (577 seats). The Belgian *Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers* has the fewest number of seats (150 seats), followed by the Austrian *Nationalrat* (183 seats). With an average of 86 seats, the regional legislatures selected for the survey are twice (in the case of Belgium and Switzerland) to 11 times (in the case of Italy) as small as their national counterparts. Given that in most of our nine multilevel countries the regional legislatures are considerably smaller than the parliaments at the national level, it is safe to assume that their party groups are generally smaller as well.

As a result of the smaller size of party groups, we expect there to be fewer policy specialists, and more generalists, at the regional level than at the national level. However, at the aggregate level, and in most individual countries, the differences between the levels of government when it comes to the percentage of representatives who indicate to specialize in one or two policy areas (referred to as specialists), or prefer to speak on a wide range of issues from different policy areas (referred to as generalists), is practically the same. At both levels of government slightly more than half of the respondents consider themselves specialists (57 and 55 percent respectively), and slightly less than half describe themselves as generalists (44 and 45 percent respectively, see Table 5.2). There are a few individual countries where the differences between the levels are larger, with Spain, Italy, and Portugal corroborating our hypothesis. Notably, in France the percentage of specialists is 17 percentage points higher at the regional level than it is at the national level. This is odd given the fact that the French administrative regions are among the smallest and they also have the lowest regional authority (RAI) score (see Table 5.1). There are also more specialists at the regional level than at the national level in Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany and Switzerland (although the differences in the latter countries are very small). The regional parliaments in these countries are

¹³ The RAI scores displayed are those for 2006. The self-rule score, which ranges between zero and 15 points, is calculated by adding the scores legislatures obtain on the items 'institutional depth' (0 to 3 points), 'policy scope' (0 to 4 points), 'fiscal autonomy' (0 to 4 points), 'assembly representation' (0 to 2 points) and 'executive representation' (0 to 2 points). The score for shared rule, which ranges from zero to 9 points, is calculated by adding the scores legislatures obtain on the items 'law making' (0 to 2 points), 'executive control' (0 to 2 points), 'fiscal control' (0 to 2 points) and 'constitutional reform' (0 to 3 points). The total RAI score ranges from zero to 24 points and is obtained by adding the scores for self-rule and shared rule (the total RAI score is not shown in Table 5.1) (Hooghe et al., 2008).

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among the largest, and all also have the highest RAI scores (with the exception of the United Kingdom).

Respondents were also asked whether they consider it true or false that the parliamentary party spokesperson determines the position of the party on his topic. As we predict that subnational representatives are less likely to engage in cue-taking than national MPs, we expect that regional representatives are more likely than national MPs to consider the statement false. Although the differences between the national and regional level are statistically significant, they are not very large: 23 percent of the total number of regional representatives consider the statement (mostly) false, which is only two percentage points more than at the national level (see Table 5.3).¹⁴ Moreover, the percentage of regional representatives who answer that it is (mostly) true that the parliamentary party spokesperson determines the position of the party (64 percent) is slightly higher than at the national level (60 percent). When looking at individual countries, regional representatives are more likely to consider the statement (mostly) false than national MPs in Spain, Austria, France and Germany. In Portugal, Belgium, Italy and United Kingdom, regional representatives are actually more likely to indicate that the parliamentary party spokesperson does indeed determine the party's position. All in all, when it comes to cue-taking the differences between the national and regional level in our nine multilevel countries are not very large, not in line with our expectations, and not consistent between countries.

5.3.2 Party agreement

We expect that subnational representatives are more likely to frequently agree with the party's position than national MPs (H2). The reasoning behind this is that, as a result of the smaller size of party groups at the subnational level, representatives are more likely to be involved in determining the party group position on a wider range of issues in the first place, and therefore more likely to agree with the position of the party group on issues that are put to a vote in parliament.

The issues that are relevant for the day-to-day decisions that are put to a vote in legislatures at the subnational level, however, differ from the national level in that they are less likely to be ideologically charged, and are more likely to be of a practical, technocratic-administrative nature (De Vries, 2000). Party agreement in terms of representatives' own position and their perception of their party's position on the Left-Right ideological scale, as is sometimes done in studies of party group homogeneity, is therefore too abstract a measure to gauge the true essence of party agreement at the subnational level (Copus and Erlingsson, 2012; Denters, 1993; De Vries, 2000; Kuiper, 1994). We therefore rely on the same measure of party agreement as used in chapter 4: the frequency of disagreement. In the PartiRep Survey, respondents were asked how often, in the last year, they found themselves in the position that their party had one opinion on a vote

¹⁴ For presentation purpose the extremes of answering categories of the question whether it is true or false that the parliamentary party spokesperson determines the position of the party are combined: 'mostly false' and 'false' are collapsed into one category, as are 'mostly true' and 'true'.

Table 5.2: Specialist or generalist in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National			Regional		
	Generalist	Specialist	Total	Generalist	Specialist	Total
Austria	56	44	100	56	44	100
Belgium	38	62	100	35	65	100
France	34	66	100	17	83	100
Germany	45	55	100	44	56	100
Italy	53	47	100	66	34	100
Portugal	36	64	100	43	58	101
Spain	36	64	100	52	49	101
Switzerland	54	46	100	53	47	100
United Kingdom	50	50	100	46	55	101
All	44	57	101	45	55	100
			629			1330

$\chi^2 (8) = 20.434, sig. = .009; \varphi c = .159, sig. = .009$ (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (8) = 59.282, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .264, sig. = .000$ (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (1) = .521, sig. = .471; \varphi = .018, sig. = .471$ (national versus regional level, all)

Table 5.3: 'The parliamentary party spokesperson gets to determine the party's position on his topic' in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National				Regional					
	(Mostly) false	Neither	(Mostly) true	Total	Total (n)	(Mostly) false	Neither	(Mostly) true	Total	Total (n)
Austria	8	8	84	100	47	17	17	66	100	163
Belgium	23	22	56	101	68	23	3	74	100	92
France	32	16	53	101	50	40	16	44	100	39
Germany	12	20	68	100	133	19	14	66	99	144
Italy	25	40	35	100	43	31	18	51	100	81
Portugal	30	10	60	100	75	7	13	80	100	42
Spain	9	10	81	100	103	23	8	69	100	168
Switzerland	19	14	66	99	49	25	10	65	100	548
United Kingdom	23	22	55	100	60	19	18	62	99	45
All	21	19	60	100	628	23	13	64	100	1322

$\chi^2 (16) = 79.589, sig. = .000; \phi c = .223, sig. = .000$ (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (16) = 58.020, sig. = .000; \phi c = .261, sig. = .000$ (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (2) = 9.821, sig. = .007; \phi c = .077, sig. = .007$ (national versus regional level; all)

Table 5.4: Party agreement (the frequency of disagreement with the party's position on a vote in parliament) in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National					Regional						
	Frequently disagree		Infrequently disagree		Total (n)	Frequently disagree		Infrequently disagree		Total		
	Once a month	Every three months	Once a year	(Almost) never		Once a month	Every three months	Once a year	(Almost) never			
Austria	0	21	58	21	100	46	3	19	54	25	101	168
Belgium	8	28	31	33	100	70	12	27	37	25	101	93
France	4	43	40	14	101	50	8	14	21	57	100	38
Germany	5	37	29	29	100	133	1	28	35	37	101	143
Italy	18	38	32	13	101	44	9	40	33	19	101	82
Portugal	15	35	25	24	99	76	3	23	15	58	99	42
Spain	4	16	27	53	100	104	3	10	19	67	99	167
Switzerland	11	31	50	8	100	48	8	40	33	19	100	552
United Kingdom	23	23	33	20	99	61	3	18	53	27	101	45
All	11	31	34	24	100	632	6	24	33	37	100	1330

$\chi^2 (24) = 127.445, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .229, sig. = .000$ (four answering categories, country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (24) = 165.033, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .254, sig. = .000$ (four answering categories, country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (3) = 45.581, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .166, sig. = .000$ (four answering categories, national versus regional level, all)

$\chi^2 (1) = 28.472, sig. = .000; \varphi = .131, sig. = .000$ (four answering categories collapsed into 'frequently disagree'

and 'infrequently disagree', national versus regional level, all)

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in parliament, and they personally had another. As already explained in chapter 4, this question goes further than abstract ideological and policy scales: the question specifies two actors (the individual MP and the party) and the event (a difference of opinion over an upcoming vote), and provides quantifiable answering categories (the frequency of disagreement over months and years).¹⁵

In line with our hypothesis, the percentage of representatives who infrequently disagree with their party's position on a vote in parliament is quite a bit higher in our regional legislatures (33 percent disagree with the party's position once a year, and 37 percent indicate do to so (almost) never) than in the national legislatures (34 percent disagree once a year, and 24 percent (almost) never do so) when all respondents from all countries are taken together (see Table 5.4).¹⁶ The differences between the regional and national level are greatest in Portugal, France, the United Kingdom and Germany. Belgium and Switzerland are the only countries where the percentage of respondents who infrequently disagree with their party's position is higher among national MPs than among regional representatives, but in both countries the differences between the levels are not very large. Thus, given the difference between the regional and national level in the aggregate, and the consistency between countries, it seems that party agreement, as a pathway to party group unity, plays a relatively more important role in bringing about party group unity at the regional level than it does at the national level.

5.3.3 Party loyalty

We hypothesized that subnational representatives are less likely to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than national MPs (H3) because they are likely to have less party experience through which socialization into norms takes place, and because subnational representatives are more likely to have their loyalty to the party group diffused by their loyalty to their voters. As a follow-up to the question about the frequency of disagreement, respondents were asked how an MP ought to vote in the situation that the party has one position on a vote in parliament, and they personally have a different opinion.¹⁷

¹⁵ In chapter 4, which deals with all of the 15 national parliaments included in the PartiRep Survey, the frequency of disagreement was compared to the absolute distance MPs perceive between their own and their party's position on the ideological Left-Right scale as a means of validation. There is a negative linear relationship between the two: the larger the absolute distance perceived by MPs, the more likely that they are to frequently disagree with their party. We can thus assume that the frequency of disagreement is also a good measure for party agreement at the national level, where ideology is likely to play a more important role than at the subnational level. At the regional level, the relationship between the two variables is substantially weaker (see Van Vonno et al., 2014).

¹⁶ At the regional level, the two countries with the highest percentage of representatives who frequently disagree with their party (Italy and Switzerland) are also the two countries with the lowest response rates. It could be that representatives who frequently disagree with their party are more likely to participate in the survey than representatives who usually agree. This relationship does not seem to hold, however, at the national level, as respondents from countries with low response rates are not systematically more likely to frequently disagree.

¹⁷ As mentioned before in chapter 4 (see footnote 24), in past parliamentary surveys held in the Dutch Second Chamber, the question as to how an MP ought to vote when his opinion conflicts with the position of the

Table 5.5: Party loyalty (own opinion versus party's position) in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National			Regional		
	Own opinion	Party's position	Total	Own opinion	Party's position	Total
Austria	50	50	100	28	72	100
Belgium	33	67	100	32	68	100
France	64	36	100	35	65	100
Germany	54	46	100	30	70	100
Italy	63	37	100	44	56	100
Portugal	46	55	101	37	63	100
Spain	18	83	101	16	84	100
Switzerland	88	12	100	75	25	100
United Kingdom	53	47	100	42	58	100
All	52	48	100	38	63	101
			611			1308

$\chi^2 (8) = 121.908$ sig. = .000; $\phi c = .394$, sig. = .000 (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (8) = 84.814$, sig. = .000; $\phi c = .318$, sig. = .000 (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (1) = 33.789$, sig. = .000; $\phi = .144$, sig. = .000 (national versus regional level, all)

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The answering category ‘an MP ought to vote according to his party’s position’ is taken to be indicative of a respondent’s subscription to the norm of party loyalty.

Surprisingly, the percentage of respondents who answer that an MP ought to vote according to the party’s position in the case of disagreement is actually higher at the regional level (63 percent) than at the national level (48 percent, see Table 5.5). Moreover, when looking at the differences between the levels of government in individual countries, there is not a single country where the percentage of regional representatives who indicate to vote according to the party’s position in the case of disagreement is lower than among national MPs.¹⁸

By using the choice between an MP’s own opinion and his party’s position we implicitly assume, however, that voters as a potential focus of representation are encompassed representatives’ answer to vote according to their own personal preferences. In other words, a representative who answers that an MP ought to vote according to his own opinion may do so because his own opinion is informed by the voters’ opinion; by voting according to his own opinion, he is loyal to voters’ who act as a competing principal to the party. As a more precise indicator of the influence of voters as competing principals of the political party, we can also look at respondents’ answer to the question how an MP ought to vote if his voters’ opinion conflicts with the party’s position. According to the theory of competing principals, we would expect that regional representatives are more likely to pick the voters’ opinion over their party’s position. There are hardly any differences between the levels of government, however, as the majority of all respondents at both the national (62 percent) and regional level (59 percent) answer that in the case of disagreement, an MP ought to vote according to his party’s position (see the columns labeled ‘All’ in Table 5.6). If we look at the individual countries, there does not appear to be a consistent pattern: in Spain, the United Kingdom and Belgium, and to a lesser extent in Portugal and France, national MPs are more likely to choose the voters’ opinion over the party’s position, whereas in Austria, Switzerland and Italy, regional representatives are more likely to do so (not shown in Table 5.6). In most countries, the differences between the levels of government are not very large, which seems to imply

party group included a middle answering category ‘it depends’, which was always the most popular among national MPs. The omission of this category in the 2010 PartiRep Survey was associated with almost 30 percent of respondents refusing to answer the question, and a very high percentage of respondents selecting the answering category ‘MP should vote according to his party’s opinion’ (see Table 6.18 in chapter 6). In the nine countries included in the analysis in this chapter, however, the omission of this category seems to have had a smaller effect on the response rate. For all nine countries combined, only 5 percent (34 respondents) of national MPs’ responses to the question are missing. Almost the same holds for the regional level (3 percent, 35 respondents missing). In comparison: 2 percent (13 respondents) of national MPs, and 1 percent (13 respondents) of regional representatives refused to answer the question that preceded this question in the survey (these percentages and number of respondents are not weighed).

¹⁸ The percentage of regional representatives who would answer that an MP ought to vote according to his own opinion in the case of disagreement is highest in Italy and Switzerland, where response rates were also the lowest. It could be that MPs who do not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty were more likely to participate in the survey than MPs who do subscribe to the norm. In both cases, however, the percentages of national MPs who answer that an MP ought to vote according to his own opinion are also among the highest when compared to the other countries.

Table 5.6: Party loyalty (own opinion versus party's position) and competing principals (voters' opinion versus party's position) in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National			Regional				
	All	Own opinion	Party's position	Total	Own opinion	Party's position	Total	Total (n)
Voters' opinion	38	74	26	100	62	38	100	540
Party's position	62	37	63	100	22	79	101	713
Total	100							
Total (n)	589			206	41	59	1263	

Competing principals (voter's opinion versus party's position)

$\chi^2(1) = 1.133, sig. = .287; \phi = .027, sig. = .287$ (national versus regional level, all)

Party loyalty (own opinion versus party's position) & competing principals (voter's opinion versus party's position)

$\chi^2(1) = 224.137, sig. = .000; \phi = .379, sig. = .000$ (national versus regional level, all)

Note: The number of respondents in the last column do not add up to the total number of respondents included in the first column ('All') because the last column only includes respondents who answered both questions.

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that the hypothesized greater influence of competing principals at the regional level is probably not as strong as we predicted.

Table 5.6 also shows that around three-quarters of national representatives who choose voters' opinion over the party's position, also indicate to vote according to their own opinion instead of the party's position when the two conflict. This entails that it is likely that their lack of subscription to the norm of party loyalty can, in part, be accounted for by their loyalty to voters as competing principals. Of the regional representatives who indicate to vote according to the opinion of the voters instead of the party's position, however, the percentage who would then also let their own opinion trump that of the party is lower than at the national level (62 percent). So, not only is party loyalty stronger at the regional level than at the national level, which is not in line with our expectations, the influence of voters as competing principals to party on those representatives who do not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty seems to be (slightly) weaker at the regional level than at the national level.

5.3.4 Party discipline

Because subnational representatives are less likely to depend on their political party for their livelihood and future careers, we expect disciplinary measures to be less effective at the subnational level, and therefore party discipline to play a less important role in determining party group unity at the subnational level than it does at the national level (H4). As was explained in chapter 4, the actual use of party discipline is difficult to observe, and thus we use the same question that inquires into representatives' satisfaction with party discipline in their party. Representatives who indicate that party discipline ought to be less strict are those who are likely to have been disciplined in the past and/or who value the freedom of an individual representative above the collective benefits of acting as a united front, whereas representatives who answer that it should be more strict consider the benefits of a united front more important than a representative's individual mandate, and would like to see their fellow party group members put on a tighter leash. Finally, those who answer that party discipline should remain as it is probably perceive a good balance between a representative's individual freedom and the collective benefits of party group unity, or at least agree with the way in which the two are balanced by the party (group) leadership.

At the aggregate level, the difference between national and regional representatives' satisfaction with general party discipline is practically non-existent: in both cases around 70 percent are content with general party discipline, around 20 percent think it should be applied more strictly, and 10 percent would like to see less strict general party discipline (see Table 5.7). Moreover, only Portugal and Spain seem to corroborate our hypothesis that party discipline is less strict at the regional level; in all other countries, the percentage of respondents who hold the opinion that party discipline should be less strict is either almost the same as at the national level, or actually higher (notably in Italy, the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, Belgium).

The answering patterns are not very different when we inquire into specific aspects of party discipline. When it comes to party discipline in sticking to the parliamentary

Table 5.7: Satisfaction with general parliamentary party discipline in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National				Regional					
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
Austria	41	59	0	100	50	22	77	1	100	167
Belgium	11	77	13	101	61	17	64	19	100	82
France	16	77	7	100	49	12	78	10	100	30
Germany	45	53	2	100	129	38	59	2	99	128
Italy	38	59	3	100	43	25	58	17	100	80
Portugal	4	73	22	99	71	7	80	13	100	36
Spain	6	71	24	101	93	12	80	8	100	163
Switzerland	27	68	6	101	44	24	75	1	100	463
United Kingdom	16	76	9	101	52	20	61	19	100	41
All	21	69	10	100	592	20	70	10	100	1190

$\chi^2 (16) = 126.652, sig. = .000; \phi c = .411, sig. = .000$ (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (16) = 76.392, sig. = .000; \phi c = .223, sig. = .000$ (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (2) = .585, sig. = .746; \phi c = .020, sig. = .020$ (national versus regional level, all)

Table 5.8: Satisfaction with parliamentary party discipline when it comes to sticking to the parliamentary party line in votes in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National					Regional				
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
Austria	8	85	8	101	48	4	91	5	100	167
Belgium	1	87	12	100	63	8	74	18	100	81
France	14	77	10	101	49	7	86	7	100	29
Germany	11	82	8	101	126	7	89	5	101	130
Italy	32	62	5	100	43	13	72	15	100	79
Portugal	6	71	23	100	72	7	82	12	101	36
Spain	9	80	11	100	93	3	91	6	100	165
Switzerland	12	80	8	100	45	18	75	8	101	465
United Kingdom	12	74	14	100	54	15	70	16	101	41
All	12	77	11	100	593	9	81	10	100	1193

$\chi^2(16) = 67.573, sig. = .000; \phi c = .212, sig. = .000$ (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2(16) = 42.923, sig. = .000; \phi c = .168, sig. = .000$ (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2(2) = 5.716, sig. = .057; \phi c = .061, sig. = .057$ (national versus regional level; all)

Table 5.9: Satisfaction with parliamentary party discipline when it comes to taking political initiatives only with the parliamentary party's authorization in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National				Regional					
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
Austria	28	60	12	100	48	14	80	6	100	167
Belgium	8	80	12	100	63	15	57	29	101	81
France	9	82	10	101	49	3	76	21	100	29
Germany	12	79	10	101	127	14	81	6	101	129
Italy	13	78	10	101	43	2	75	23	100	80
Portugal	1	81	18	100	71	7	80	13	100	36
Spain	9	64	26	99	92	3	90	7	100	163
Switzerland	9	84	8	101	45	13	78	10	101	462
United Kingdom	11	78	11	100	52	19	63	18	100	41
All	10	78	13	101	590	10	76	15	101	1188

$\chi^2 (16) = 41.244, sig. = .001, \varphi c = .166, sig. = .000$ (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (16) = 67.578, sig. = .000, \varphi c = .211, sig. = .000$ (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (2) = 1.110, sig. = .574; \varphi c = .027, sig. = .574$ (national versus regional level, all)

Table 5.10: Satisfaction with parliamentary party discipline when it comes to keeping internal party discussions confidential in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National					Regional				
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
Austria	36	64	0	100	48	39	61	0	100	167
Belgium	58	41	1	100	63	52	47	1	100	82
France	60	38	2	100	49	67	33	0	100	30
Germany	80	20	0	100	128	64	36	0	100	130
Italy	40	59	1	100	43	38	56	6	100	80
Portugal	56	43	1	100	71	53	44	3	100	36
Spain	66	33	1	100	94	56	43	1	100	165
Switzerland	46	52	2	100	45	24	77	0	101	466
United Kingdom	46	54	0	100	54	65	35	0	100	41
All	56	43	1	100	595	51	48	1	100	1197

$\chi^2 (16) = 53.073, sig. = .000; \phi c = .187, sig. = .000$ (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (16) = 79.596, sig. = .000; \phi c = .227, sig. = .000$ (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (2) = 4.258, sig. = .119; \phi c = .053, sig. = .119$ (national versus regional level; all)

Table 5.11: 'Confidential party discussions usually find their way to the media' in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National			Regional			Total (n)
	(Mostly) false	Neither	(Mostly) true	(Mostly) false	Neither	(Mostly) true	
Austria	60	20	20	66	8	26	162
Belgium	50	10	40	45	12	42	93
France	10	27	63	50	20	31	39
Germany	21	6	73	52	5	43	142
Italy	15	25	60	30	23	48	83
Portugal	21	3	76	48	13	39	41
Spain	10	12	78	33	11	56	168
Switzerland	27	11	62	77	6	17	551
United Kingdom	29	14	57	67	7	26	45
All	24	14	62	52	12	36	1324

$\chi^2 (16) = 120.709, sig. = .000; \phi c = .274, sig. = .000$ (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (16) = 90.716, sig. = .000; \phi c = .231, sig. = .000$ (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (2) = .142.809, sig. = .000; \phi c = .294, sig. = .000$ (national versus regional level, all)

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party line in votes, which is most relevant for the study at hand, there are again no significant differences between the national and regional level (see Table 5.8). The same holds for when it comes to seeking authorization from the parliamentary party before taking political initiatives (see Table 5.9). Moreover, in both cases there is not a consistent pattern when we look at the differences between national MPs and regional representatives in the individual countries; in some countries the percentage of representatives who would like to see party discipline applied less strictly is higher at the national than at the regional level, whereas in other countries it is the other way around.

There is one exception to this overwhelming satisfaction with party discipline, and that is when it comes to keeping internal party discussions confidential; at both levels of government over half of respondents answer that party discipline should be more strict, and only 1 percent think it should be less strict (see Table 5.10). However, when asked whether they agree with the statement that confidential party discussions usually find their way to the media, the answering patterns for the two levels of government are quite different: whereas at the national level 62 percent considers the statement (mostly) true, only 36 percent of regional representatives answer that this is the case (see Table 5.10).¹⁹ The majority of regional representatives actually consider the statement (mostly) false. Thus, while the majority of representatives at both levels of government are apparently concerned with keeping internal party discussion confidential, their concern seems most merited at the national level. It could be speculated that political parties are under more (media) scrutiny at the national level, and there is more pressure to present a united front.

5.3.5 The sequential decision-making process

The main argument of this study is that the decision-making mechanisms dealt with individually above are ordered in a particular sequence. If a representative does not have an opinion on a particular vote, he follows the voting advice given to him by his fellow party group's members and thus engages in cue-taking. Therefore, agreement, loyalty and discipline are not important for getting the representative to vote with the party's position and contribute to party group unity. Likewise, if a representative does have an opinion on a vote, and he is in agreement with his party group's position, whether he subscribes to the norm of party group loyalty is not relevant, and the party (group) leadership also does not have to coax him to follow the party line through (the promise of) positive and (the threat of) negative sanctions. A representative who has an opinion that conflicts with the position of the party group moves on to third decision-making stage. If his subscription to the norm of party group loyalty overrides the conflict, this drives him to toe the party group line on his own accord, and thus discipline is still unnecessary. Finally, if a representative has a conflicting opinion and his subscription to the norm of party group loyalty does not outweigh the intensity of the conflict, party

¹⁹ For presentation purpose the extremes of answering categories of the question as to whether it is true or false that confidential party discussions usually find their way to the media are combined: 'mostly false' and 'false' are collapsed into one category, as are 'mostly true' and 'true'.

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discipline becomes relevant as a means of getting the representative to fall in line, albeit involuntarily. If, at this final stage of the decision-making sequence, the party (group) leadership's disciplinary measures are not enough to elicit compliance, we expect that the representatives will vote according to his own opinion and thus dissent from the party group line.

As already discussed in chapter 4, such an explanatory model of decision making would ideally be tested by asking representatives what motivated their choice at each stage of their decision-making process on individual legislative votes. Unfortunately, the available data preclude us from doing so. We can, however, get a general idea of the relative importance that three of the decision-making mechanisms, party agreement, party loyalty and party discipline, play in determining party voting unity, since the three questions that we used to gauge these mechanisms all specifically refer to voting in parliament. (In order to gauge party discipline, we use the question that inquires into a respondent's satisfaction with party discipline specifically when it comes to sticking to the parliamentary party line in votes, see Table 5.8.) Including the relative contribution of the first stage, cue-taking, is problematic as the questions that we used to gauge it do not refer to voting, and do not specifically ask whether respondents have an opinion, or whether, in their opinion, MPs (should) vote according to the parliamentary party spokesperson's voting advice when a personal opinion is lacking. Moreover, the question used as an indicator of the second decision-making mechanism, party agreement, also does not allow us to exclude representatives who lack a personal opinion. In other words, we do not know for certain if representatives who indicate to infrequently disagree with the party do so because they actually share the opinion of the party, or because they have no personal opinion on the matter. For these two reasons the first stage of the decision-making process, cue-taking, is omitted from the model.

The first column in Table 5.12 includes the percentage of representatives who indicate to infrequently disagree with the party's position. For presentation purposes, the answering categories 'about once a month' and 'about once every three months' are combined into 'frequently disagree', and the categories 'about once a year' and '(almost) never' are collapsed into 'infrequently disagree'.²⁰ As we saw above, and in line with our hypothesis (H2), when all representatives are taken together, party agreement is higher, and thus plays a more important role in determining party group unity, at the regional level (71 percent) than it at the national level (58 percent). The pattern is also consistent in most individual countries, with the exception of Switzerland and to a lesser extent Belgium, where the percentage of representatives who infrequently disagree with the party is higher at the national level than at the regional level.

Next, party loyalty is only relevant for those representatives who indicated to frequently disagree with the party. The percentage of representatives who frequently disagree with their party's position, but still toe the party line out of a sense of loyalty, is slightly higher at the national level (17 percent) than at the regional level (14 percent). Thus, although we found above that party loyalty was stronger at the regional

²⁰ See footnote 22 in chapter 4 for a discussion of the dichotomization of the frequency of disagreement variable.

Table 5.12: The relative contribution of party agreement, party loyalty and party discipline when it comes to sticking to the parliamentary party line in votes in parliament in national and regional parliaments in nine European democracies (%)

	National					Regional						
	Voluntary Agreement	Voluntary Loyalty	Involuntary Discipline	Unaccounted	Total	Voluntary Agreement	Voluntary Loyalty	Involuntary Discipline	Unaccounted	Total		
Austria	78	13	4	4	99	42	79	13	2	6	100	161
Belgium	64	28	3	5	100	63	63	20	8	8	99	80
France	53	10	10	27	100	48	78	3	3	16	100	28
Germany	57	18	7	18	100	117	70	21	1	8	100	126
Italy	43	22	6	30	101	41	51	22	6	21	100	77
Portugal	52	28	14	7	101	71	72	16	4	8	100	36
Spain	78	20	1	1	100	92	88	8	2	2	100	160
Switzerland	59	2	8	31	100	44	53	9	4	35	101	456
United Kingdom	60	10	11	19	100	50	79	15	0	6	100	37
All	58	17	8	17	100	568	71	14	3	12	100	1161

$\chi^2 (24) = 112.589, sig. = .000; \phi c = .227, sig. = .000$ (country differences, national level)

$\chi^2 (24) = 102.948, sig. = .000; \phi c = .216, sig. = .000$ (country differences, regional level)

$\chi^2 (3) = 28.982, sig. = .000; \phi c = .141, sig. = .000$ (national versus regional level, all)

Note: These percentages may differ from previous tables in this chapter because they only include respondents who answered all three questions. Unfortunately, the questions about party discipline were located near the end of the survey.

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level when looking at all representatives regardless of whether they frequently or infrequently disagreed with their party's position (see Table 5.5), it seems that in the case of disagreement, a larger proportion of national MPs than regional representatives can be counted on to vote according to the party's position out of loyalty. In other words, the mechanism is more important at the national level than it is at the regional level. This is in line with our hypothesis (H3), albeit that the difference between the levels of government is small (only 3 percentage points). The exceptions to this pattern are the United Kingdom and Germany, where the percentage of representatives who frequently disagree but do vote according to the party line out of loyalty is higher at the regional than at the national level, and Austria and Italy, where the percentages are the same for both levels of government.

Finally, the sequential decision-making model also reveals that party discipline plays a more important role at the national level than at the regional level, which is as we expected (H4). At the national level, 8 percent of the total number of MPs frequently disagree with the party, do not hold the opinion that an MP should vote with the party in the case of disagreement, and would like to see party discipline be applied less strictly when it comes to voting in parliament (which, according to our interpretation, implies that they are more likely to have experienced discipline in the past than representatives who are satisfied with party discipline as it is or answer that party discipline ought to be stricter). At the regional level, 3 percent of representatives fall into this category, and there is slightly less variance between countries. The pattern is generally consistent between countries (with the exception of Belgium and to lesser extent Spain, where the percentage of regional representatives who indicate to frequently disagree, to not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty, and to like to see discipline applied less strictly is higher at the regional level than at the national level).

17 percent of national MPs and 12 percent of regional representatives are still unaccounted for: they frequently disagree with the party, do not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty in the case of disagreement, and do not seem to have been disciplined in the past, as they indicate that party discipline when it comes to voting in parliament can remain as it is, or should be even stricter. For some legislatures our findings are in line with previous studies on party group unity, such as in the case of the Swiss national parliament, where party voting unity has been found to be relatively lower than in other European national parliaments (see chapter 4). In general, however, our model would predict more dissent and less party group unity than is now the case in these parliaments (as far as we know). As explained before in chapter 4, party discipline may be underestimated by the model as a result of the formulation of the survey question, and we are unable to include cue-taking as a first decision-making stage for similar reasons. These two limitations of the model may, in part, explain the relatively high percentage of representatives who are currently unaccounted for.

In terms of our findings, we find few differences in terms of the number of generalists and specialists at the two levels of government, and regional representatives are unexpectedly more likely than national MPs to indicate that the parliamentary party spokesperson determines the position of the party. Moreover, with the exception of party agreement, the differences we do find between the two levels of government are

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not very large. One reason for this may be the fact that many of the regional legislatures included in our analysis are much more similar to their national counterparts than we assumed. Indeed, in terms of size, some of the regional parliaments included in the PartiRep Survey represent rather large districts, and also have around 100 seats, which means that party groups are still likely to be quite large. In addition, quite a few of the regional parliaments also have RAI scores close to 20 (out of a maximum of 24, see footnote 13), meaning that these parliaments are likely to have quite broad jurisdictions and political authority, which require a certain level of professionalization. Indeed, for some of these regional parliaments, we know that their representatives are employed full-time and receive a good salary, which means that they are still very much dependent on the party for their livelihood and future careers, thus living 'off' politics (see, for example, Gunlicks' (2003, 252-260) study of the German Lander parliaments).²¹ In addition, the comparison between the levels of government is confounded by the fact that in some countries, the subnational levels of government also have electoral and legislative institutions (which are held to influence MP decision making, and thus party group unity, see chapter 4) that are different from those at the national level.

Fortunately, we have data for one country, the Netherlands, where the electoral and legislative institutions at the national and subnational levels of government are very similar, and the questions from the PartiRep Survey were put to national, as well as both regional and local municipal councilors. By comparing these three levels, we increase the variation on the dependent variable, while keeping the institutional settings at the national and subnational levels of government relatively constant. The Netherlands is a decentralized unitary country, in which the decision-making powers at the subnational levels are much weaker than at the national level. The subnational parliaments, especially at the municipal level, are also much smaller than the regional parliaments studied above, entailing that party groups are also generally smaller as well. Moreover, we know that Dutch provincial and municipal councilors receive a fairly modest compensation for their council work, and that most engage in politics part-time, usually maintaining another job in order to sustain their livelihood (www.gemeenteraad.nl, 2014).

5.4 Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

As will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6, party voting unity is, and always has been, very high in the Dutch Second Chamber. Little to no research has been done, however, on the voting behavior of representatives at the subnational levels of government in the Netherlands. Most provincial and municipal councils provide the council minutes and voting results on their websites, and since 2008 a number of municipal councils have

²¹ Of the countries included in the PartiRep Survey, Swiss national MPs are not employed full-time (Power, 2012, 50).

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also started collectively publishing their voting records online on the website ‘how does my council vote?’ (*wat stemt mijn raad?*). On the basis of a general overview of the figures presented on these websites, one can conclude that party voting unity is probably very high at the subnational level as well. Another source for municipal party voting unity is Van der Meij’s (2013) analysis of municipal council voting in the city of Leiden. Van der Meij finds that in 99.59 percent of votes taken in the city council between 2006 and 2010, none of the councilors from the six largest parties dissented from (the majority of) their party group. Between 2010 and 2013 there was no dissent in 99.79 percent of votes. In a much older work dating back to the 1960s, Morlan (1964) highlights that even back then, party bloc voting was already the rule in Dutch municipalities.²² Thus, although we have limited data on the subnational levels, it seems safe to assume that party group unity is quite high at all levels of government in the Netherlands.

The fact that many of the formal institutions that are deemed to influence party group unity are very similar at all three levels makes the Netherlands an ideal case for cross-level comparison. First, representatives at all three levels of government are elected through direct elections every four years, and at all levels the electoral system is one of Proportional Representation. However, whereas at the national level the fall of government may result in the dissolution of the Second Chamber and early elections, the electoral cycles at the subnational levels are fixed. If confidence in the executive branch is lost, parties renegotiate their coalition agreement, or a new coalition is formed consisting of a different combination of parties.

There are a total of 150 seats in the Second Chamber, and the number of seats to be distributed at the subnational levels varies between 39 and 55 in the 12 provincial councils, and between 9 and 45 seats in the municipal councils.²³ Just like at the national level, in provincial and municipal elections voters are presented with a ballot displaying lists of candidates as ordered by the political parties, and cast their vote for an individual candidate. The number of seats obtained by a party is determined by the total number of votes for a party’s candidates in the entire province or municipality, and at the national level votes are pooled nation-wide. In order to obtain a seat on the basis of preference votes a candidate must cross the threshold of 25 percent of the electoral quota, or 50 percent at the municipal level if the number of seats in the council is less than 19 (as is the case in smaller municipalities). And even though they can only be elected via their political party’s list, once in the legislative arena representatives at all three levels of government formally vote without a binding mandate (Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, article 67.3 and article 129.6) and are also under no legal obligation to give up their seat to their party if they are expelled, or voluntarily defect, from their party group.

²² Morlan (1964, 323-324) mentions that sometimes formal council voting did not even take place because the outcome was already known, as councilors had detailed information (presumably about the positions of all the political parties) before the council meetings.

²³ The number of municipalities in the Netherlands is consistently decreasing. During the municipal elections in 2011 there were 418 municipalities. The number of seats in the councils at the subnational level is based on population size.

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Next, the implementation of the 2002 Local Government Act and 2003 Provincial Government Act led to the replacement of the old monistic system by one of strict dualism at the two subnational levels. This entails that at the municipal level the position of alderman (*wethouder*) cannot be combined with membership of the municipal council, and at the provincial level membership of the provincial government (*Gedeputeerde Staten*) is incompatible with that of the provincial council (Denters and Klok, 2005; De Groot, 2009, 431).²⁴ Thus, executive-legislative relations at the subnational levels of government today mirror those at the national level where the position of (junior) minister cannot be combined with that of MP. At all levels of government executive-legislative relations are dominated by political parties (see section 6.2 in chapter 6 for a discussion of the dominance of political parties in the Dutch Second Chamber). In her study on the implications of the Local Government Act, for example, De Groot (2009, 19-20) comments that one of the main complaints of the old monistic system was the application of party discipline by council aldermen. Denters (1993, 78) makes a similar observation, in that the monistic executive-legislative relations allowed for little debate in the municipal council because most policy had already been decided on beforehand by the coalition leadership. Although the new system of dualism could lead to a weakening of political parties' control over executive-legislative relations at the subnational levels, anecdotal evidence does not point in this direction (Korsten and Notten, 2005).

Finally, although formally a decentralized unitary system, the powers of the subnational levels of government are limited to such a degree that in the past the Netherlands was generally considered a unitary system (Toonen, 1990). According to the Dutch constitution, the provincial and municipal governments in the Netherlands can take on any competence as long as it does not violate national policy or constitutional bounds (article 124). In practice, the municipal, but especially the provincial level of government, has the power to act autonomously over only a relatively narrow set of policy areas and is to a large extent limited to the implementation and execution of legislation passed at the national level (this is referred to as co-administration or co-governance) (Korsten and Tops, 1998). The provincial level's jurisdiction mainly encompasses infrastructure and environmental policy. Municipalities share responsibility with the national and provincial governments for local land management, urban development, infrastructure, transportation, the economy, the environment, social affairs, welfare, employment and education (Andeweg and Irwin, 2014). The continuous processes of decentralization to the municipal level, of which the most recent include increased municipal responsibilities for certain social and welfare policy domains (such services for the disabled, youth policy, social assistance, and work and income), contribute to the debate as to whether the Netherlands ought to be considered a unitary system or a decentralized unitary system. What is important for our analysis, however, is that even when taking the processes of decentralization into account, the fact is that the jurisdictions and powers of the three levels of government vary considerable.²⁵

²⁴ Comparable changes also recently took place in the United Kingdom as well as a number of Scandinavian countries (Haus and Sweeting, 2006, 273).

²⁵ According to Hooghe et al. (2008, 271), in 2006 the Dutch provincial level obtains a RAI score of 8.0 on the

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Table 5.13: PartiRep MP Survey response rates for the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

	Population		Sample		Response				
	Legislatures	Seats			Started survey		Finished survey		
	N	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	
National	1	150			63	42	62	41	
Provincial*	12	564			139	25	112	20	
Municipal**	418	9538	2000	21	513	26	407	20	
					Municipal level national parties' local branch	397	77	306	75
					Municipal level local parties	116	23	101	25

* The provinces are Drenthe (41 seats), Flevoland (39 seats), Friesland (43 seats), Gelderland (55 seats), Groningen (43 seats), Limburg (47 seats), Noord-Brabant (55 seats), Noord-Holland (55 seats), Overijssel (47 seats), Utrecht (47 seats), Zeeland (39 seats) and Zuid Holland (55 seats).

** The municipalities selected for the sample are Graafstroom (13 seats), Oudewater (13 seats), Strijen (13 seats), Zoeterwoude (13 seats), Bedum (15 seats), Bernisse (15 seats), De Marne (15 seats), Hattem (15 seats), Littenseradiel (15 seats), Lopic (15 seats), Montfoort (15 seats), Opmeer (15 seats), Rijnwaarden, Simpelveld (15 seats), Texel (15 seats), Uitgeest (15 seats), Voerendaal (15 seats), Bladel (17 seats), Bodegraven (17 seats), Dantumadiel (17 seats), Enkhuizen (17 seats), Gennep (17 seats), Heeze-Leende (17 seats), Nuth (17 seats), Oirschot (17 seats), Slochteren (17 seats), Staphorst (17 seats), Vianen (17 seats), Weesp (17 seats), Zandvoort (17 seats), Dongeradeel (19 seats), Leerdam (19 seats), Maasdriel (19 seats), Aa en Hunze (21 seats), Borger-Odoorn (21 seats), Dalfsen (21 seats), Dinkelland (21 seats), Edam-Volendam (21 seats) Heemstede (21 seats), Kaag en Braasem (21 seats), Leusden (21 seats), Sint-Michiëlsgestel (21 seats), Stein (21 seats), Waddinxveen (21 seats), Winterswijk (21 seats), Boxtel (23 seats), Castricum (23 seats), Deurne (23 seats) Meppel (23 seats), Sneek (23 seats), Tytsjerksteradiel (23 seats), Gedrop-Mierlo (25 seats), Goes (25 seats), Heemskerk (25 seats), Hellendoorn (25 seats), Oud IJsselstreek (25 seats), Steenwijkerland (27 seats), Zuidplas (27 seats), Zwijndrecht (27 seats), Berkelland (29 seats), Overbetuwe (29 seats), Pijnacker-Nootdorp (29 seats), Rijswijk (29 seats), Waalwijk (29 seats), Kampen (31 seats), Roermond (31 seats), Assen (33 seats), Leidschendam-Voorburg (35 seats), Lelystad (35 seats), Amstelveen (37 seats), Deventer (37 seats), Hengelo (27 seats), Apeldoorn (39 seats), Arnhem (39 seats), Amsterdam (45 seats) and Utrecht (45 seats).

Note: The Dutch extension of the 2010 PartiRep MP Survey to the provincial and municipal levels was also financed by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO).

Our analysis of the decision-making mechanisms at the three levels government in the Netherlands relies on data that was also collected in the context of the PartiRep project.²⁶ As is shown in Table 5.13, 42 percent of representatives of the Dutch Second Chamber participated in face-to-face interviews in the spring of 2010. At the provincial and municipal level representatives were invited by e-mail to fill in a shorter internet

self-rule dimension (which ranges from zero to 15 points), and a 6.5 on the dimension of shared rule (which ranges from zero to nine points). The total RAI score obtained by the Dutch provinces is 14.5. The RAI score does not capture local government (Schakel, 2008, 149).

²⁶ Parts of the analyses in this section formed the basis for Van Vonno and Andeweg (2014).

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version of survey, which was available online in December 2010 and January 2011.²⁷ At the provincial level all 564 councilors were approached, resulting in a response rate of around 25 percent, with 20 percent completing the survey. At the municipal level, a stratified cluster sample based on council size was drawn. For the purpose of stratification, municipal councils were divided into four categories based on their size: small (17 seats or less), medium-small (19 to 29 seats), medium-large (31 to 37 seats) and large (39 seats or more).²⁸ This yielded a response rate of about 26 percent, and a completion rate of 20 percent. As is often the case with lengthy Internet surveys, the attrition rate among provincial and municipal respondents is quite high (Crawford et al., 2001), despite the efforts that were made to shorten the web-based version of the survey.

At both the provincial and municipal level the distribution of respondents across the various local branches of national parties is very similar to the distributions found in the population of council members (not shown in Table 5.13). Furthermore, of the municipal councilors who completed the survey, three-quarters are members of local branches of national parties and the remaining 25 percent are members of parties that are only active at the municipal level.²⁹ These distributions are roughly equal to those found in the population of municipal councilors (Hendriks and Schaap, 2011). Finally, 58 percent of municipal respondents, and 67 percent of those at the provincial level, are members of governing parties. At the national level, only 38 percent is coded as such. (Only members of the *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* (CDA) and *ChristenUnie* (CU) are considered governing parties. Members of the *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA) are coded as being in opposition, because the PvdA had dropped out of the government a few weeks before the survey was scheduled to take place.)

5.4.1 Division of labor

Returning again to our first hypothesis, we expect that subnational representatives are less likely to engage in cue-taking than national MPs (H1). The argument is that as a result of the smaller size of legislatures and party groups, subnational party groups are less likely to apply a strict division of labor which requires specialization, and are more likely to recruit policy generalists. Generalists are more likely than specialists to have an opinion on a wider range of topics, and therefore less dependent on the voting advice given

²⁷ The data collection process among the members of the Second Chamber took place in the months prior to elections in June 2010, which were held early as a result of the fall of the Balkenende IV government. The electoral cycle was also coming to an end at the provincial level at the time of the survey; the scheduled elections took place in March 2011, which was a few weeks after the survey was taken offline. Municipal council elections had taken place in March 2010, the same year the survey had been put online (December 2010).

²⁸ These categories are based on the size categories used by the Association of Dutch Municipalities (*Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten*, VNG). From each category 20 percent of municipalities were randomly selected. In the analyses below, differences at the municipal level that are related to council size are only mentioned if they are statistically significant.

²⁹ Of the 13 councilors representing provincial parties (i.e., parties that are only active at the provincial level) at the time of the survey, only 1 participated; this respondent is excluded from the analysis.

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Table 5.14: Specialist or generalist in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	Generalist	Specialist	Total	Total (n)
National	62	38	100	58
Provincial	62	39	101	136
Municipal	70	30	100	500

$$\chi^2 (2) = 5.281, sig. = .071; \phi c = .087, sig. = .071$$

Municipal councils only: council size

	Generalist	Specialist	Total	Total (n)
Large	56	44	100	77
Medium-large	68	32	100	78
Medium-small	73	27	100	227
Small	76	24	100	118

$$\chi^2 (3) = 10.816, sig. = .013; \phi c = .147, sig. = .013$$

to them by other party group members. As mentioned above, the Dutch Second Chamber consists of 150 seats, which is the same number as the smallest national parliament included in the international-comparative analysis above (Belgium). The size of the 12 Dutch provincial councils varies between 39 and 55 seats, and municipal councils in the Netherlands have between 9 to 45 seats, which means that the subnational councils are between 3 and 17 times as small as the national parliament. The number of seats in the Dutch provincial and municipal councils is also well below the average number of seats in the regional parliaments included in the international-comparative analysis (86 seats). Moreover, the policy-making jurisdictions of the two subnational levels of government in the Netherlands are quite narrow, especially when compared to the powers of the some of the regional parliaments included in the international-comparative analysis above.

In our international-comparative analysis of the nine national legislatures and their regional counterparts, there was hardly any difference between the levels of government in terms of the percentage of representatives who consider themselves specialists and those who conceive of themselves as generalists. In fact, specialists were in the majority at both levels of government (see Table 5.2). In the Netherlands, however, generalists are in the majority at all three levels of government, and at the municipal level the percentage of generalists is almost 10 percentage point higher than at the other two levels of government, which is in line with our hypothesis (see Table 5.14). If we focus on the municipal level only, the percentage of generalists increases as the number of seats in a municipal council decreases, reaching 76 percent in the smallest municipal

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Table 5.15: ‘The parliamentary party spokesperson gets to determine the party’s position on his topic’ in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	(Mostly) false	Neither	(Mostly) true	Total	Total (n)
National	19	21	60	100	63
Provincial	21	25	54	100	135
Municipal	32	20	48	100	499

$$\chi^2 (4) = 10.545, sig. = .032; \varphi c = .087, sig.=.032; gamma = -.185, sig. = .004$$

councils, which is 20 percentage points more than in the largest municipal councils (see the bottom half of Table 5.14). Thus even at the municipal level itself, the smaller the council, the more likely representatives are to consider themselves generalists.

When it comes to whether the party group spokesperson determines the party’s position on his topic, which is used as a means of gauging the division of labor which is likely to spur cue-taking, we found few differences between the national and regional legislatures in the nine countries analyzed above; the majority at both levels of government considered the statement (mostly) true, and contrary to our expectations, this percentage was slightly higher at the regional level than at the national level (see Table 5.3). In the Netherlands, most representatives at all levels also consider it to be (mostly) true that the party group spokesperson determines the position of the party on his topic (see Table 5.15). However, there percentage of representatives who consider the statement (mostly) true decreases with the level of government, and the percentage of representatives who answer (mostly) false increases as we move down the ladder of government levels: whereas 19 percent of national MPs consider the statement (mostly) false, 21 percent of provincial and 32 percent of municipal councils think so.³⁰ These results point in the direction that subnational representatives are less likely to engage in cue-taking than national MPs, thus corroborating our hypothesis.

The Dutch version of the PartiRep Survey also included an additional question that may help us further assess the importance of the party specialists, and thus the role of cue-taking, in determining party group unity at the three levels of government. We asked representatives what they consider to be the main decision-making center in their parliamentary party group (see Table 5.16).³¹ Whereas 61 percent of the respondents from

³⁰ At the municipal level, 61 percent of councilors from the largest municipalities (39 seats or more) consider the statement that the party group spokesperson determines the position of the party on his topic (mostly) true. The percentage of councilors from the smaller municipalities who considers the statement (mostly) true varies between 40 and 47 percent. The pattern is not perfectly linear and not statistically significant, however ($\chi^2 (6) = 16.136, sig. = .013; \varphi c = .127, sig.=.013; gamma = -.058, sig. = .313$).

³¹ The question that asks respondents to identify the main decision-making center in the parliamentary party group was taken from the earlier 1972, 1979, 1990, 2001 and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Studies.

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Table 5.16: The main decision-making center in the parliamentary party group in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	Meeting	Committee	Specialist	Leadership	Total	Total (n)
National	61	20	13	7	101	56
Provincial	73	11	12	5	101	112
Municipal	86	5	6	3	101	408

$$\chi^2 (6) = 29.590, sig. = .000; \phi c = .160, sig. = .000$$

the Second Chamber consider the party group's meeting to be the main decision-making center, this percentage is significantly higher at the two subnational level: respectively 74 percent at the provincial level and 86 percent at the municipal level.³² At the national level, 33 percent of MPs select either the party group committees or specialists as the party group's main decision-making center, as opposed to 23 percent of provincial councilors and only 11 percent of municipal councilors. This provides some evidence for the argument that party groups at the higher levels of government are likely to apply a stricter division of labor than at the lower levels of government.

5.4.2 Party agreement

As we expected (H2), our international-comparative analysis of nine multilevel countries revealed that although the majority of representatives at both the national and regional level indicate to infrequently disagree with the party's position, regional representatives are more likely to do so than national MPs (see Table 5.4). The pattern in the Netherlands is the same: the majority of respondents at all levels of government indicate to disagree infrequently with the party's position, and thus at all levels parties can to a great extent rely on party agreement for the unity of their party group. In line with our hypothesis, provincial and municipal councilors are more likely to disagree infrequently than national MPs (see Table 5.17). The difference between the Dutch levels of government is not very large and it is not statistically significant, however.

At all levels of Dutch government, the percentage of representatives who disagree infrequently with the party is higher than the aggregate percentages of national and regional representatives in the nine multilevel countries. Whereas in the Dutch case 71 percent of national MPs disagree infrequently (answering that they either disagree only

³² Although the percentage of councilors who consider the party group meeting the most important decision-making center increases as the size of the municipal council decreases, the differences between municipal councilors from different sized councils are not statistically significant ($\chi^2 (9) = 6.762, sig. = .662; \phi c = .074, sig. = .662$). Noteworthy, however, is that the percentage of representatives who consider the party group specialist the most important decision-making center is twice as high in largest municipal councils (12 percent) then it is in the smaller municipal councils (between 5 and 6 percent).

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

once a year or (almost) never), only 58 percent of all national respondents combined from the international-comparative analysis do so (a difference of 13 percentage points). At the subnational level in the Netherlands, 84 percent of provincial councilors, and 81 percent of municipal councilors infrequently disagree, in comparison to 70 percent of all regional representatives combined (a difference of 14 and 11 percentage points, respectively). Most of these percentage differences are owed to a higher percentage of Dutch representatives answering that they (almost) never disagree with the party's position, however. In other words, party agreement is generally higher at all levels of government in the Netherlands than it is in the international-comparative survey, but the relative difference between the levels of government is about the same in both analyses. Thus, it does not seem to be the case that increasing our variance on the independent variable (legislature size) has an effect on party agreement; the effect seems to be related to country context.

On the other hand, if we zoom in on the municipal level itself, we see that councilors from the largest municipalities (37 seats or more) are more likely to frequently disagree with the party's position (11 percent indicate that this occurs about once a month, and 24 percent answer that it occurs about once every three months) than councilors from the smaller municipalities (in the smallest municipalities with 17 seats or fewer, for example, 7 percent disagree with the party's position about once a month, and 8 percent do so about once every three months, see the bottom half of Table 5.17). Noteworthy is also the difference in the percentage of municipal councilors who (almost) never disagree: in the largest municipalities 28 percent indicate to do so, whereas in the smaller municipalities between 44 and 52 percent answers that they (almost) never disagree. Therefore, at the municipal level itself, council size seems to have an effect on party agreement.

We hypothesized in subsection 5.2.2 that party agreement would be stronger at the subnational level than at the national level because subnational representatives are more likely to be involved in determining the position of their party in the first place, as party groups are more likely to be smaller at the subnational level of government, and small groups are more likely to engage in consensus and unanimous decision making. The fact that the percentage of representatives who consider the party meeting the main decision-making center of the party group increases as we move down the ladder of government levels already provides some evidence for this expectation Table 5.16). In the Dutch version of the PartiRep Survey, we also asked respondents directly whether they feel involved in the decision making in the party group.³³ Although at all levels of government very few representations indicate to feel (completely) uninvolved in party group decision making, the percentage of representatives who select the extreme answering category 'completely involved' increases by over 20 percentage points as we move from the national to the provincial to the municipal level (see the figures in the

³³ The question that asks respondents whether they feel involved in the decisions in the party group, was inspired by the battery of questions included in the 2007 survey that Russell (2012) put to the British House of Lords for her analysis of party unity in what could be considered a discipline-free environment.

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

Table 5.17: Party agreement (the frequency of disagreement with the party's position on a vote in parliament) in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	Frequently disagree		Infrequently disagree		Total	Total (n)
	Once a month	Every three months	Once a year	(Almost) never		
National	7	22	33	38	100	60
Provincial	2	15	34	50	101	137
Municipal	5	14	36	45	100	498

$\chi^2 (6) = 7.798, sig. = .253; \phi c = .075, sig. = .253$ (four answering categories)

$\chi^2 (2) = 3.922, sig. = .141; \phi c = .075, sig. = .141$ (four answering categories collapsed into 'frequently disagree' and 'infrequently disagree')

Municipal councils only: council size

	Frequently disagree		Infrequently disagree		Total	Total (n)
	Once a month	Every three months	Once a year	(Almost) never		
Large	11	24	37	28	100	75
Medium-large	3	12	42	44	101	78
Medium-small	3	14	35	49	101	227
Small	7	8	34	52	101	118

$\chi^2 (6) = 25.206, sig. = .003; \phi c = .130, sig. = .003$ (four answering categories)

$\chi^2 (3) = 15.796, sig. = .001; \phi c = .178, sig. = .001$ (four answering categories collapsed into 'frequently disagree' and 'infrequently disagree')

column 'all' in Table 5.18).³⁴

Table 5.18 also shows the relationship between representatives' answers to the question about their involvement in party group decision making cross-tabulated with their

³⁴ For the previously presented tables that included 5-point ordinal scale answering categories, the extremes of the scales were collapsed for presentation purposes. However, because for the question whether representatives feel involved in the decision making in the party group the answering patterns are heavily skewed towards 'agree' and 'completely agree', the extremes 'completely disagree' and 'disagree' and combined with the middle category 'neither'. We assume that a respondent's agreement with the statement reflects the extent to which he indeed personally feels involved in the decision making in the party group. Therefore, for the sake of presentation, we renamed the answering categories to reflect the extent of involvement: the answering category 'completely agree' is labeled 'completely involved', 'agree' is renamed 'involved', and the combination category of '(completely) disagree / neither' is now '(completely) uninvolved / neutral' (see Table 5.18).

Table 5.18: Party agreement (the frequency of disagreement with the party's position on a vote in parliament) and 'I feel involved in the decision making in the party group' in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	All	Frequently disagree	Infrequently disagree	Total	Total (n)	
National	(Completely) uninvolved / neutral	3	50	50	100	2
	Mostly involved	48	32	68	100	28
	Completely involved	49	24	46	100	29
	Total	100				
Total (n)	61					

$$\chi^2 (2) = .898, sig. = .638; \varphi c = .123, sig. = .638$$

	All	Frequently disagree	Infrequently disagree	Total	Total (n)	
Provincial	(Completely) uninvolved / neutral	4	60	40	100	5
	Mostly involved	37	33	67	100	42
	Completely involved	58	6	94	100	66
	Total	99				
Total (n)	113					

$$\chi^2 (2) = 18.548, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .405, sig. = .000$$

	All	Frequently disagree	Infrequently disagree	Total	Total (n)	
Municipal	(Completely) uninvolved / neutral	2	67	33	100	6
	Mostly involved	27	28	72	100	109
	Completely involved	72	13	87	100	290
	Total	100				
Total (n)	407					

$$\chi^2 (2) = 21.476, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .230, sig. = .000$$

$$\chi^2 (2) = 38.145 sig. = .000; \varphi c = .257, sig. = .000$$

(Frequency of disagreement & I feel involved in the decision making in the party group & government level)

$$\chi^2 (4) = 18.402, sig. = .001; \varphi c = .178, sig. = .001; gamma = .327, sig. = .000$$

(I feel involved in the decision making in the party group & government level)

Note: The number of respondents in the last two columns may not add up to the total number of respondents included in the first column ('All') because the latter two columns only include respondents who answered both questions.

self-indicated frequency of disagreement.³⁵ At all levels of government, party agreement increases as representatives feel more involved in the decision-making process in the party group. The relationship is, however, much stronger at the two subnational levels of government than at the national level. Thus, it may indeed be the case that party agreement at the subnational level is more likely to result from councilors' involvement in determining the position of their party in the first place.

5.4.3 Party loyalty

Moving on to the next decision-making mechanism, we saw in our international-comparative analysis that regional representatives are actually more likely than national MPs to answer that in the case of disagreement with the party's position, an MP ought to vote according to the party's position (see Table 5.5), which was not in line with our hypothesis (H3). However, when in our sequential decision-making model we excluded representatives who indicate to frequently agree with the party, party loyalty was more important at the national level, albeit only slightly so (see Table 5.12).

In the Netherlands, however, the pattern is as we expected: whereas at the national level 86 percent of MPs indicate to vote according to the party's position in the case of disagreement,³⁶ this percentage drops to 57 percent at the provincial level, and only 40 percent at the municipal level (see Table 5.19).³⁷ The norm of party loyalty seems to have a much stronger footing among national MPs than among subnational councilors, especially those at the municipal level. At the municipal level, we see that councilors from the largest municipal councils (37 seats or more) are most likely to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty (see the bottom half of Table 5.19); this may be explained by the fact that the largest city councils in the Netherlands tend to be more strongly politicized along party lines than those in smaller municipalities.³⁸

³⁵ The answering categories are again dichotomized into 'frequently disagree' and 'infrequently disagree'.

³⁶ As already mentioned in footnote 17, almost 30 percent of Dutch national MPs refused to answer the question (also see Table 6.18 in chapter 6).

³⁷ Another finding worth mentioning is the difference between the levels of government when looking at representatives whose parties partake in government. First, at all levels of government the percentage of representatives who subscribe to the norm of party loyalty in the case of disagreement with their party is higher for government representatives than it is for those in opposition ($\chi^2(1) = 10.009$, *sig.* = .002; *φ_c* = .123, *sig.* = .002). However, whereas 80 percent of national MPs who belong to governing parties indicate to vote according to the party's position in the case of disagreement, only 46 percent of provincial, and 52 percent of municipal government representatives agree. This difference may be explained by the fact that while at the national level, disunity within governing parties carries the risk of the fall of the cabinet after which early elections (usually) take place, at the subnational levels this is not the case because the electoral cycles are set (although this does not exclude the possibility that a new coalition consisting of a different combination of parties can be formed). As mentioned before, however, the PvdA is coded as an opposition party because it had left the coalition at the time of the survey. We cannot be sure, however, if the members of the PvdA who participated in the survey answered the survey questions based on their then-current position in the opposition, or their experience as members of a governing party. If the latter is the case, this may influence the results.

³⁸ At the municipal level, councilors who belong to the local branch of a national party are more likely to vote

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

Table 5.19: Party loyalty (own opinion versus party's position) in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	Own opinion	Party's position	Total	Total (n)
National	14	86	100	43
Provincial	43	57	100	134
Municipal	60	40	100	492

$$\chi^2 (2) = 40.918, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .247, sig. = .000$$

Municipal councils only: council size

	Own opinion	Party's position	Total	Total (n)
Large	47	53	100	74
Medium-large	68	33	101	77
Medium-small	62	38	100	225
Small	79	41	100	116

$$\chi^2 (3) = 17.348, sig. = .062; \varphi c = .122, sig. = .062$$

Competing principals

According to the theory of competing principals, representatives' decision to vote according to their own opinion in the case of conflict with the party group's position may be the result of their loyalty to their voters. In other words, a representative may indicate to vote according to his own opinion instead of the position of the party because his own opinion is informed by the position of his voters (which is at odds with the position of the party group), and he wishes to remain loyal to his voters. In our international-comparative analysis, we looked more closely into the question of voters as competing principals, by including representatives' opinions on how an MP ought to vote in the case of disagreement between his voter's opinion and the party's position. At both levels of government around 60 percent of representatives indicate to vote according to the party's position instead of the voters' opinion, and there are no statistically significant differences between the levels (see Table 5.6), indicating that in general, and contrary to our expectations, regional representatives do not pay more heed to the voters than national MPs do. Moreover, although at both levels the majority of those who answer that the voters' opinion trumps the party's position also think that an MP ought to vote according to his own opinion when in conflict with the party's position (which is likely to mean that these representatives are indeed influenced by voters' as competing princi-

according to the party's opinion in the case of disagreement (43 percent) than councils who belong to parties that are only active at the municipal level (31 percent) ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.667, sig. = .031; \varphi = .097, sig. = .031$).

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pals), the percentage is (slightly) lower at the regional level.

In the Netherlands, however, we expect larger differences between the levels of government, especially between the municipal level and the two higher levels of government. In their study of the 2010 municipal elections, Boogers et al. (2010) find that the average percentage of preference votes cast for a candidate other than the party leader ranged from 35 to 63 percent,³⁹ which is much higher than the 16 percent cast in the Second Chamber elections in that same year (Van Holsteyn and Andeweg, 2012). The fact that voters are more likely to cast preference votes during municipal elections may mean that municipal councilors are more likely to be loyal to their voters who act as competing principals to the political party. Little is known about voters' use of preference votes during provincial elections, but considering that turnout for these elections is quite low,⁴⁰ and that one of the main complaints is the provincial level's disconnect from citizens, it is probable that voters are less likely to cast preference votes at provincial elections than they are at national and municipal elections. Provincial councilors are thus expected to experience less of a pull away from the party group by their voters than municipal councilors.

Indeed, the percentage of representatives at the municipal level (36 percent) who indicate to opt for their voters' opinion instead of the party's position is higher than at the provincial (22 percent) and national level (8 percent) (see the column labeled 'All' in Table 5.20).^{41, 42} Although the percentage differences between the levels are larger than those found in the international-comparative analysis (see Table 5.6), with the maximum of 36 percent at the municipal level, the influence of voters' as competing principals to the party does not seem to be very strong at any level of government in the Nether-

³⁹ One should keep in mind, however, that only seven municipalities were included in Boogers et al.'s (2010) study (Almere, Delfzijl, Den Haag, Maassluis, Deurne, Tilburg and Dinkelland).

⁴⁰ The turnout for the 2007 provincial elections was 46 percent. This is 8 percentage points lower than the turnout for the 2010 municipal elections (54 percent) and 29 percentage points lower than the turnout for the 2012 elections for the Second Chamber (75 percent). All three elections mentioned directly precede the data collection for the PartiRep Survey. Van Tilburg (1991, 164) ascribes the low turnout for the provincial elections to voters' lack of knowledge about the responsibilities and powers of the provincial government. This is in line with the findings by Van der Eijk and Schild (1992, 94-95), who show that voters generally consider institutions at the provincial level far less important than at the national level, and Hendriks and Tops (2003, 302), who contend that "[p]rovincial government, forming the other level of subnational government, is significantly less important than local government in terms of the citizen-government interface [...]. In comparison, provincial government is more abstractly government oriented, while local government, with its prominent role in policy-implementation and service provision, is more concretely citizen oriented".

⁴¹ At the municipal level, 31 percent of councilors from the largest municipalities (39 seats or more) answer that an MP ought to vote according to the voters' opinion in the case of conflict with the party's position, whereas 46 percent of councilors from the smallest municipalities answer that an MP ought to adhere to the voters' opinion. The pattern is not perfectly linear for councilors from medium-sized councils, however ($\chi^2(3) = 7.943$, *sig.* = .047; *pc* = .132, *sig.* = .047).

⁴² Of all Dutch respondents, 25 percent of government respondents, and 37 percent of those in opposition, indicate to choose the opinion their voters' over the position of their party ($\chi^2(1) = 11.347$, *sig.* = .001; *φ* = .135, *sig.* = .001). If we only look at representatives whose parties are in government, only 6 percent of national MPs opt for their voters' opinion, while 18 percent of provincial councilors do so, and 25 percent of municipal councilors do.

Table 5.20: Party loyalty (own opinion versus party's position) and competing principals (voters' opinion versus party's position) in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

		All	Own opinion	Party's position	Total	Total (n)
National	Voters' opinion	8	33	67	100	3
	Party's position	92	6	94	101	33
	Total	100				
	Total (n)	48				

$$\chi^2 (1) = 2.678, sig. = .102; \phi = .273, sig. = .102$$

		All	Own opinion	Party's position	Total	Total (n)
Provincial	Voters' opinion	22	74	26	100	27
	Party's position	78	34	66	100	100
	Total	100				
	Total (n)	129				

$$\chi^2 (1) = 13.969, sig. = .000; \phi = .332, sig. = .000$$

		All	Own opinion	Party's position	Total	Total (n)
Municipal	Voters' opinion	36	74	26	100	160
	Party's position	64	34	66	100	294
	Total	100				
	Total (n)	459				

$$\chi^2 (2) = 22.769, sig. = .000; \phi = .224, sig. = .000$$

$$\chi^2 (1) = 47.161 sig. = .000; \phi = .276, sig. = .000$$

Party loyalty (own opinion versus party's position) & competing principals (voter's opinion versus party's position) & government levels

$$\chi^2 (2) = 21.203, sig. = .000; \phi = .183, sig. = .000$$

Competing principals (voter's opinion versus party's position) & government levels

Note: The total number of respondents in the last column do not add up to the total number of respondents included in the first column ('All') because the total in the last column only include respondents who answered both questions.

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

lands. However, at both the provincial and municipal level of government, councilors who would vote according to voters' opinion in the case of conflict with the party's position, are also more likely to vote to follow their own opinion when in disagreement with the party (74 percent at both levels). In other words, there is some evidence that at the lower levels of government, councilors who vote according to their own opinion in the case of disagreement with the party's position, may do so because their own opinion is informed by the voters' opinion, and thus their loyalty to the party is diffused by voters' acting as competing principals.

Party group solidarity and representatives' internalization of norms of party unity

The sociological approach to party group unity and its determinants highlights parties' (leaders') efforts to create an environment which fosters party group solidarity and voluntary party-oriented behavior (Crowe, 1983; Hazan, 2003). Again, the Dutch version of the PartiRep Survey allows us to delve deeper into whether representatives actually experience a strong sense of solidarity in the party group.⁴³ The expectation is that national MPs are more likely to perceive a strong sense of solidarity in the party group than at the subnational councils are, as the higher level of intra-party competition at the national level allows parties to apply a stricter candidate selection procedure, of which previous party experience and the internalization of the norm of party group loyalty (often obtained through previous party experience) are likely to be important criteria. Moreover, the fact that the decision-making powers of the national level are much stronger than those of the subnational levels, also entails that there is more at stake, which could also contribute to party group members' voluntary subscription to the norm of party group loyalty, and thus MPs' perception of a stronger sense of solidarity in their party group.

Table 5.21 shows that the majority of representatives at all levels report such a sense of solidarity, but whereas almost 80 percent of representatives at both the national and municipal level (completely) agree that there is a strong sense of solidarity in their party group, only 60 percent of provincial councilors (complete) agree.⁴⁴ Noteworthy is also that the percentage of provincial councilors who (completely) disagree (16 percent) is quite a bit higher than at the other levels of government (respectively 5 and 6 percent). This may be caused by the fact that provincial party groups generally meet less often than groups at the other levels of government in the Netherlands, which to a certain extent may limit the party group leaders' ability to build and foster a strong feeling of solidarity. Also, the relatively small size of councils and party groups at the municipal level, and resultant high level of involvement of individual representatives in party group decision making (see Table 5.18), could explain why the percentage of municipal councilors who

⁴³ The Dutch formulation of the question is: *'Er heerst een sterk gevoel van saamhorigheid in de fractie'* (translation CvV). *Saamhorigheid* can be translated into solidarity or unity in English.

⁴⁴ For presentation purposes the extremes of answering categories of the question as to whether there is a strong feeling of party unity in the party group are combined: 'completely disagree' and 'disagree' are collapsed into one category, as are 'completely agree' and 'agree'.

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

Table 5.21: ‘There is a strong feeling of unity in the party group’ in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	(Completely) disagree	Neither	(Completely) agree	Total	Total (n)
National	5	16	79	100	61
Provincial	16	24	60	100	113
Municipal	6	16	79	101	405

$$\chi^2 (4) = 19.769, sig. = .001; \varphi c = .131, sig.= .001; gamma = .218, sig. = .011$$

Table 5.22: ‘An individual representative’s freedom or party unity’ in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	Individual’s freedom	←	↔	→	Party unity	Total	Total (n)
National	2	0	16	51	31	100	61
Provincial	3	15	16	44	21	99	117
Municipal	5	14	29	39	12	99	416

$$\chi^2 (8) = 35.689, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .245, sig.= .000; gamma = -.328, sig. = .000$$

agree with the statement is quite high.⁴⁵

Although representatives may observe a strong feeling of solidarity in their party group, in order for an individual representative’s behavior to actually be driven by norms of loyalty, these must be internalized. As indicator of this internalization, we use a question that was included in the Dutch version of the survey which asked representatives to indicate what they consider more important: an individual representative’s freedom or the unity of the party. At all levels of government the majority of representatives opt for party unity (see Table 5.22).⁴⁶ There are, however, significant differences between the government levels when it comes to the distribution of responses along the scale. Whereas 82 percent of national level MPs place a high value on party unity (selecting a 4 or a 5 on the 5-point scale), this figure drops to 65 percent among provincial, and 51 percent among municipal councilors. Although at all levels very few representatives place

⁴⁵ The difference between government and opposition MPs and their reactions to the statement that there is a strong sense of unity in the party group is only statistically significant at the national level, where 95 percent of MPs from governing parties (completely) agree, in comparison to only 68 percent of opposition MPs ($\chi^2 (2) = 7.032, sig. = .030; \varphi c = .340, sig.=.030$).

⁴⁶ Because collapsing the 5-point scale into a 3-point scale would hide some interesting differences between the levels of government, the original 5-point ordinal answering scale is kept intact for the choice between a representative’s individual freedom and the unity of the party.

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a high value on an individual representative's freedom, the relatively high percentage of subnational representatives who place themselves towards the middle of the scale indicates that these subnational councilors, especially at the municipal level, tend to opt for more of a balance between a representative's freedom and party unity. This implies that the internalization of the norms of party loyalty is indeed probably weaker at the subnational levels than it is at the national level in the Netherlands.

Party group decision-making rules

Besides a general feeling of party group solidarity, and an individual's internalization of the importance of party group unity, there may also be situations in which representatives consider voting with the party group in the case of disagreement with the party 'appropriate', depending on the origins of the party group's position and on how widely the position of the party is shared by the other members of the party group. In the Dutch version of the PartiRep Survey, we presented respondents with a number of these potential situations, and asked them whether an MP who disagrees with the party position on a vote in parliament still ought to vote according to the party's position.⁴⁷ As we found party loyalty to be stronger at the national level than at the subnational level, we also expect that subscription to these (informal) decision-making rules will be stronger among national MPs than subnational representatives.

First, majoritarian and consensus decision-making rules seem to be quite important at all levels of government (see Table 5.23). About half of national MPs agree that when the majority or all of the members of the party group (excluding the representative himself) share the opinion of the party, this constitutes a good reason to vote with the party despite disagreement. In line with our expectations, provincial and municipal councilors are less sensitive to majority and consensus decision-making rules, although still over a third of councilors at both levels do think these are good reasons to opt to vote with the party's position when in disagreement.

In our sequential decision-making model, we assume that in order to deal with the workload of parliament parties apply a division of labor, and that representatives engage in cue-taking when they do not have a personal opinion on a particular topic. One could argue, however, that it be considered appropriate behavior to follow the voting advice of the party group specialist and/or spokesperson not only when representatives lack an opinion, but also when they disagree with the party's position. Although the percentage of national MPs who consider following the voting advice of the party group specialist in the case of disagreement with the party's position appropriate behavior is not very high (16 percent), it is still twice as high as at both subnational levels. There are even larger differences between the levels when the party's position originated with the party group leadership: 19 percent of national MPs consider this a good reason to vote with

⁴⁷ The survey described four situations, and respondents were given the option to answer either yes or no. Respondents were also allowed to fill in other reasons that would lead one to vote according to the party line despite disagreement (open-ended question). At all levels, the party manifesto or the coalition agreement as the origin of the party's position were mentioned by many representatives as reasons to vote with the political party even when in disagreement.

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

Table 5.23: Situations in which an MP who disagrees with the party’s position on a vote in parliament still ought to vote according to the party’s position in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (% who answer affirmatively)

	National	Provincial	Municipal
When the entire party group (excluding the MP himself) shares the party’s position $\chi^2(2) = 2.146, sig. = .342; \varphi c = .056, sig. = .342$	45	39	36
When a majority of the party group shares the party’s position $\chi^2(2) = 9.960, sig. = .007; \varphi c = .121, sig. = .007$	50	37	31
When the party’s position originated with the party group committee or specialist $\chi^2(2) = 4.054, sig. = .132; \varphi c = .077, sig. = .132$	16	8	8
When the party’s position originated with the party group leadership $\chi^2(2) = 25.046, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .191, sig. = .000$	19	4	4

the party despite their disagreement, whereas only 4 percent of subnational councilors agree. In line with our expectations, party loyalty and other norms of party-oriented behavior do indeed seem to play a stronger role in the Dutch Second Chamber than in the subnational councils.

5.4.4 Party discipline

Satisfaction with party discipline

When it comes to party discipline, the initial results of the international-comparative analysis do not support our expectation that party discipline would be used less often at the subnational level (H4): at both the national and regional level, the vast majority of representatives are satisfied with general party discipline, and at both levels only 10 percent would like to see general discipline be applied less strictly (see Table 5.7). Once placed in our sequential decision-making model, however, party discipline does play a stronger role at the national level than at the regional level (see Table 5.12).

In the Netherlands, representatives at all level seem comparatively more content with how general party discipline is applied than the representatives in our international-comparative analysis, as at all levels of government the percentage of respondents who answer that party discipline should remain as it is, is higher. The differences between the levels are not very large either, but the percentage of municipal councilors who prefer less strict general party discipline (4 percent) is lower than at both the provincial (10 percent) and national level (8 percent) (see Table 5.24).⁴⁸ This is (in part) in line with

⁴⁸ At the municipal level, 14 percent of councilors from large councils (37 seats or more) hold the opinion that

Table 5.24: Satisfaction with general & specific aspects of parliamentary party discipline in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

General party discipline					
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
National	12	80	8	100	61
Provincial	11	80	10	100	113
Municipal	8	88	4	100	407

$$\chi^2 (4) = 8.621, sig. = .071; \varphi c = .086, sig.=.071; gamma = -.054, sig. = .635$$

Sticking to the parliamentary party line in votes					
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
National	0	95	5	100	61
Provincial	5	84	12	100	111
Municipal	2	92	5	100	409

$$\chi^2 (4) = 9.631, sig. = .047; \varphi c = .091, sig.=.047; gamma = -.154, sig. = .239$$

Taking political initiatives only with the parliamentary party's authorization					
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
National	7	87	7	100	61
Provincial	6	87	6	100	111
Municipal	8	87	5	100	408

$$\chi^2 (4) = .687, sig. = .953; \varphi c = .024, sig.=.953; gamma = -.097, sig. = .417$$

Keeping internal party discussions confidential					
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
National	25	75	0	100	61
Provincial	5	96	0	100	112
Municipal	6	94	1	100	409

$$\chi^2 (4) = 30.422, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .162, sig.=.000; gamma = .440, sig. = .007$$

Keeping position in committee in tune with party position					
	More strict	Remain as it is	Less strict	Total	Total (n)
National	12	84	5	100	61
Provincial	13	82	5	100	112
Municipal	10	88	2	100	403

$$\chi^2 (4) = 4.987, sig. = .289; \varphi c = .066, sig.=.289; gamma = -.043, sig. = .712$$

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

our hypothesis that sanctions are less effective, and therefore applied less often, at the lower levels of governments.

Dutch representatives are also overwhelmingly more satisfied with party discipline when it comes to more specific aspects of the party life than the representatives in our international-comparative analysis (see Table 5.24), but in most cases the differences between the levels are again not very large; for most of these specific aspects the percentage of representatives who would like to see discipline applied less strictly is only a few percentage points lower at the subnational levels than at the national level. There is a difference between the levels when it comes party discipline when voting in parliament: the percentage of provincial representatives who would like to see less strict party discipline is over twice as high as at the national and municipal level,⁴⁹ which seems to imply that voting disciplining occurs most often at the provincial level in the Netherlands.

Another aspect for which there is a noteworthy difference between the levels of government in representatives' evaluation of party discipline regards keeping internal party discussions confidential. A quarter of national MPs feel that party discipline ought to be more strict, in comparison to respectively only 4 percent of provincial councilors, and 6 percent of municipal councilors. Moreover, when asked whether confidential party discussions usually find their way to the media in the day-to-day practice of parliament (see Table 5.11), 13 percent of national Dutch MPs agree (see Table 5.25). The percentage of subnational councilors who consider the statement (mostly) true is much lower at (only 1 percent of provincial and 3 percent of municipal councilors). Thus, whereas the regional representatives in the international-comparative analysis appear unnecessarily concerned with party discipline when it comes to keeping internal party discussions confidential (see Table 5.10 and Table 5.11), this concern does not seem to be present at the Dutch subnational level.

Likelihood of negative sanctions

Although it is difficult to observe (the threat and/or application of) sanctions, in the Dutch version of the PartiRep Survey we did ask representatives how likely sanctions are when a representative repeatedly does not vote according to the party line. This may give us some insight into which types of negative sanctions are actually applied by party (group) leaders to get their representatives to fall in line. Sanctions can vary in terms of their severity, their visibility to those outside the party group, and the extent to which they can be applied immediately (see Table 5.26) or are delayed until the next elections (Table 5.27). As we hypothesize that discipline is less effective, and therefore used less often, at the subnational level than at the national level, we also expect that subnational

general party discipline ought to be less strict. In the smaller municipalities, the percentage ranges from 1 to 6 percent ($\chi^2 (6) = 22.600$, sig. = .001; $\phi c = .167$, sig. = .001; gamma = -.278, sig. = .028).

⁴⁹ There are no differences between differently sized councils for any of the specific aspects of party discipline, with the exception of when it comes to voting with the party in the council. 12 percent of councilors from the largest councils (37 seats or more) would like to see stricter party discipline. For the other councils this percentages ranges between 0 and 6 percent ($\chi^2 (6) = 11.603$, sig. = .071; $\phi c = .119$, sig. = .017; gamma = -.128, sig. = .071).

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

Table 5.25: ‘Confidential party discussions usually find their way to the media’ in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	(Mostly) false	Neither	(Mostly) true	Total	Total (n)
National	71	16	13	100	63
Provincial	93	5	2	100	137
Municipal	91	6	3	100	500

$$\chi^2 (4) = 30.163, sig. = .000; \varphi c = .147, sig.=.000; gamma = -.289, sig. = .029$$

representative will also consider the application of specific types of sanctions less likely than national MPs.

When it comes to punishing a representative who repeatedly does not toe the party line by removing him as a party group spokesperson (a reasonably severe, public sanction that can be applied by the party group leadership without much delay), the differences between the levels of government are as predicted.⁵⁰ The percentage of representatives who consider this a (very) likely consequence of voting dissent decreases as we move down the ladder of government levels, and the percentage of who consider this a (very) unlikely sanction increases.⁵¹ We also asked respondents whether a rebellious representative will have trouble finding support for his own political initiatives among the other members of his party group.⁵² This sanction can take place quite covertly within the boundaries of the party group, which minimizes the chance of negative con-

⁵⁰ Removing someone as a party group spokesperson or expelling him from the party (group), are not only, or even primarily, used as sanctions when a representative dissents from the party line in voting, but also if party group unity is breached in other ways. Recent examples from the Dutch national parliament include the removal of parliamentary party spokesperson Paul Tang (PvdA, finance), who leaked the budget figures (*Miljoenennota*) to the media in 2009. Rita Verdonk (VVD), who had received more preference votes than party leader Mark Rutte in the 2006 national election, was expelled from her party in 2007 for publicly criticizing both Rutte’s leadership as well the party’s policy position on specific issues. In 2013, Louis Bontes (PVV) was also expelled after publicly criticizing party leader Wilders. These sanctions may also be employed when a representative acts in a way that calls into question his integrity concerning a specific issue for which he is parliamentary party spokesperson, or fails to inform his party about certain issues from his past. This happened to Eric Lucassen (PVV, defense) in 2010, who had failed to inform his party that he had been found guilty of sexual misconduct when he was a petty officer in the army (for other examples, see Lucardie et al. 2006).

⁵¹ At the national level, the percentage of government MPs who consider it (very) likely that a representative will be removed as a party group spokesperson (67 percent) is over twice as high as it is among opposition MPs (32 percent) ($\chi^2 (2) = 7.567, sig. = .023; \varphi c = .349, sig.=.023$). At the other levels of government there are no statistically significant differences between government and opposition representatives.

⁵² 83 percent of national MPs from governing parties, and 55 percent of national MPs from opposition parties, consider it (very) likely that a representative who repeatedly dissents from the party could have trouble finding support for his own political initiatives among the other members of his party group ($\chi^2 (2) = 8.567, sig. = .014; \varphi c = .372, sig.=.014$). At the other levels of government there are no statistically significant differences between government and opposition representatives.

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

Table 5.26: The likelihood of immediate negative sanctions when a representative repeatedly does not vote with the party line in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

The representative will have trouble finding support for his own political initiatives among members of his party group

	(Very) unlikely	Neither	(Very) likely	Total	Total (n)
National	24	10	66	100	62
Provincial	17	14	69	100	134
Municipal	19	14	67	100	474

$$\chi^2 (4) = 2.049, sig. = .727; \varphi c = .039, sig.=.727; gamma = -.008, sig. = .915$$

The representative will be removed as a party group spokesperson

	(Very) unlikely	Neither	(Very) likely	Total	Total (n)
National	32	23	45	100	62
Provincial	31	30	39	100	130
Municipal	39	28	33	100	466

$$\chi^2 (4) = 6.049, sig. = .196; \varphi c = .068, sig.=.196; gamma = -.144, sig. = .028$$

The representative will be expelled from the party group

	(Very) unlikely	Neither	(Very) likely	Total	Total (n)
National	70	17	13	100	60
Provincial	54	36	11	100	132
Municipal	59	26	15	100	476

$$\chi^2 (4) = 9.640, sig. = .047; \varphi c = .085, sig.=.047; gamma = .049, sig. = .498$$

sequences for the image of the political party. There are, however, very few differences between the levels of government when it comes to the percentage of representatives who consider this a (very) likely sanction (around two-thirds at all levels).

There are also almost no differences between the levels when it comes to those who consider this a (very) likely sanction (although in this case, these percentages are very low, ranging from 11 to 15 percent), but national MPs are again more prone to consider the expulsion of an MP (very) unlikely (70 percent) than subnational representatives (54 percent at the provincial level, and 59 percent at the municipal level). By expelling a representative, a party runs the risk of losing the seat (as the representative can remain in parliament or the council as an independent member) and any control it might still have over the behavior of the representative. This is especially pressing for government

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

Table 5.27: The likelihood of delayed negative sanctions when a representative repeatedly does not vote with the party line in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

The representative will not be appointed to one of the important parliamentary committees after the upcoming elections

	(Very) unlikely	Neither	(Very) likely	Total	Total (n)
National	10	24	66	100	62
Provincial	11	24	64	100	132
Municipal	20	21	59	100	471

$$\chi^2 (4) = 8.236, sig. = .083; \varphi c = .079, sig.=.083; gamma = -.141, sig. = .045$$

The representative will be placed on an unelectable position on the political party electoral list

	(Very) unlikely	Neither	(Very) likely	Total	Total (n)
National	8	23	69	100	62
Provincial	9	19	72	100	134
Municipal	15	20	65	100	471

$$\chi^2 (4) = 4.751, sig. = .314; \varphi c = .060, sig.=.314; gamma = -.126, sig. = .095$$

The representative will not be placed on the political party electoral list

	(Very) unlikely	Neither	(Very) likely	Total	Total (n)
National	15	28	57	100	61
Provincial	12	28	60	100	134
Municipal	25	26	49	100	468

$$\chi^2 (4) = 12.901, sig. = .012; \varphi c = .139, sig.=.012; gamma = -.204, sig. = .002$$

(coalition) parties with a small majority.⁵³ This might explain why national MPs are more prone to consider this type of sanctions (very) unlikely than representatives at the sub-national level, where coalitions are more often oversized.

Party (group) leaders may prefer sanctions in the long-term because applying too much pressure in the short-term may result in dissenters leaving the party group—and taking their seats with them. When it comes to the likelihood of delayed sanctions, the differences between the levels are as expected. Not being appointed to the important committees after the next elections, for instance, is considered quite likely at all levels of

⁵³ The differences between government and opposition representatives are, however, not statistically significant at any of the three levels of government.

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

government, but the percentage of representatives who consider this a (very) unlikely sanction is twice as high at the municipal level (20 percent) as it is at the national and provincial level. This sanction still involves a representative actually being renominated (and reelected), however. Depending on a party's selectoral procedures, party (group) leaders can also punish a representative by placing him on an unelectable slot on the party electoral list for the next election, or excluding him from the electoral list completely, which in essence means ending the representative's political career.⁵⁴ The use of the party electoral candidacy lists, as well as committee appointments, can conceal the use of discipline, because it is difficult to distinguish the application of sanctions from other factors motivating parties and representatives' choices.⁵⁵

At all levels of government at least two-thirds of representatives consider it (very) likely that a representative will be placed in an unelectable slot if he repeatedly votes against the party's position. Being excluded from the party electoral list completely is also considered (very) likely by the majority of representatives at all levels. The percentage of representatives who consider these sanctions (very) likely is lowest at the municipal level, however, and one-fourth of municipal councilors even consider it (very) unlikely that a dissenting councilor will not be selected for the next elections. This could, in part, be explained by the recruitment problems that political parties at the subnational level have in the Netherlands, where competition for subnational positions is quite low in comparison to the national level given the large number of council seats at the provincial and municipal level (in 2011 there were 564 provincial councilors and around 10,000 municipal councilors). In combination with the decline in party membership that political parties have been experiencing over the past decades (Van Biezen et al., 2012), many parties have trouble finding sufficient candidates for the subnational level. Thus, threatening to exclude a councilor from the party electoral list is less likely to be interpreted as a realistic threat at the municipal level.

Added to this is the fact that subnational councilors are generally less dependent on their representative function for their livelihood than national MPs. Municipal councilors are officially non-salaried, but receive a financial compensation of between 235 and 2200 euros per month (depending on municipal population size, see www.overheid.nl,

⁵⁴ A representative could still create his own new political party to enter into the elections. At the national level, however only few of these new parties have been able to gain representation in parliament (see subsection 6.3.1 in chapter 6). It is unlikely that this would be very different at the subnational levels of government.

⁵⁵ In her comparative analysis of party discipline, based on interviews with party group leaders and experts five European parliamentary systems (Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the European Parliament), Bailer (2011) finds that candidate nomination as a means of exerting power over party group members is most powerful and commonly used in the Netherlands. Bailer (2011, 12) asked party group leaders and experts to rate the use of different tools as a disciplinary mechanisms on a scale ranging from never (0) to very often (4). The average score given by Dutch party group leaders was a 2.4 on the scale, which is very high when compared to the scores given by party group leaders in the other parliaments (for which the average score ranged between 0.4 and 1.0). Experts on the Netherlands scored the use of candidate selection as a means of exerting influence over individual MPs in the Netherlands a 3.0 on the scale, which is also higher than the average score given by experts on other countries (the expert average score ranged between 1.5 and 2.0).

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

2015a). The compensation received by provincial councilors is about 1100 euros per month (regardless of provincial population size, see www.overheid.nl, 2015b). According to a recent online survey conducted by Gemeenteraad.nl, over half (52 percent) of municipal councilors even have a full-time job. Councilors from small municipalities are most likely to combine their council work with a full-time job, whereas councilors from larger municipalities are more likely to work part-time (www.gemeenteraad.nl, 2014). National MPs, on the other hand, have a salary of over 7300 euros per month (Parlement & Politiek, 2015a). In other words, only at the national level, and in the largest municipal councils, are Dutch representatives likely to be able to live 'off' politics.

On a general note, taken together with their high satisfaction with party discipline, it seems that Dutch representatives are aware of these potential consequences, and for the most part accept them. However, given the fact that for most of these different sanctions, over half of the respondents at all levels of government considered them (very) likely, it may be that party discipline, or at least its threat, plays a more important role than the responses to the satisfaction with party discipline question would lead us to believe. In line with our hypothesis, these results seem to confirm that party discipline, and in particular the application of delayed sanctions through the use of party's candidate selection processes, is indeed less common at the subnational level than at the national level.

5.4.5 The sequential decision-making process

We now place the decision-making mechanisms in our sequential model, again excluding the first stage of cue-taking. In the first column in Table 5.28, we see that at all levels of Dutch government, party groups can to a great extent rely on their representatives to toe the party line out of simple agreement, but that as expected (H2) party agreement plays a slightly more important role at the provincial (81 percent) and municipal level (82 percent) than it does at the national level (77 percent). Note, however, that these percentages differ from those in Table 5.17 (where the percentage of representatives who disagree infrequently with their party was 71 percent at the national, 84 percent at the provincial level, and 81 percent at the municipal level) because Table 5.28 only includes representatives who answered all three questions included in the sequential decision-making model (i.e., the frequency of disagreement, how an MP ought to vote in the case of disagreement with the party's position, and satisfaction with party discipline when it comes to voting in parliament).⁵⁶

Representatives who frequently disagree with the party line move on to the next decision-making stage, which is to ascertain whether their subscription to the norm of party loyalty outweighs their resolve to vote according to their own opinion in the case of conflict. At the Dutch national level, parties can count on another 21 percent of their MPs to submit to the party line voluntarily despite their disagreement, and the percentage decreases as we move to the lower levels of government: 15 percent of

⁵⁶ Again, as mentioned in footnote 17 almost 30 percent of Dutch national MPs refused to answer the question we use to measure party loyalty (also see subsection 6.5.3 in chapter 6).

5.4. Analysis of the decision-making mechanisms in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils

Table 5.28: The relative contribution of party agreement, party loyalty and party discipline when it comes to sticking to the parliamentary party line in votes in the Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils (%)

	Voluntary		Involuntary	Unaccounted	Total	Total (n)
	Agreement	Loyalty	Discipline			
National	77	21	0	2	100	43
Provincial	81	15	3	3	102	109
Municipal	82	9	2	7	101	404

$$\chi^2 (6) = 15.342, sig. = .038; \varphi c = .110, sig. = .038$$

Municipal councils only: council size

	Voluntary		Involuntary	Unaccounted	Total	Total (n)
	Agreement	Loyalty	Discipline			
Large	63	19	7	11	99	57
Medium-large	87	3	0	10	100	62
Medium-small	83	9	2	6	101	189
Small	88	7	0	5	99	96

$$\chi^2 (9) = 25.102, sig. = .003; \varphi c = .249, sig. = .003$$

These percentages may differ from previous tables in this chapter because they only include respondents who answered all three questions. Unfortunately, the questions about party discipline were located near the end of the survey, and 20 national MPs refused to answer the question pertaining to party loyalty.

provincial councilors, and 9 percent of municipal councilors, thus confirming our expectation that the importance of party loyalty as a decision-making mechanism decreases with government level (H3). Together, these two voluntary pathways to party group unity—party agreement and party loyalty—account for 98 percent of national MPs, 94 percent of provincial councilors, and 91 percent of municipal councilors. It is therefore not shocking that very few representatives move on to the final decision-making stage. Party discipline seems to play a slightly more important role at the two subnational levels (3 percent of provincial councilors and 2 percent of municipal councilors) than at the national level (0 percent). Although absolute percentages at the subnational levels are not high, and percentage differences between the levels of government are not large, this is not in line with our hypothesis (H4), and it is also a bit surprising considering our findings concerning respondents' own indication of the likelihood of sanctions, especially those that involve candidate selection at the national level. Again, it could be that, as a result of the formulation of the question used to measure party discipline, our se-

quential decision-making model underestimates the importance of party discipline (see chapter 4). However, with 98 percent of national MPs already accounted for by the two voluntary pathways to party group unity, it is unlikely that a more precise formulation of the party discipline question would have yielded very different results.

At the Dutch municipal level, we see that the greatest differences can be found between councilors who belong to the largest municipalities (37 seats or more) and those who belong to the three categories of smaller municipalities (see the bottom half of Table 5.28). First, the percentage of councilors who can be counted on to disagree infrequently with the party, and thus contribute to party voting unity out of simple agreement, is quite a bit lower in the largest municipal councils (63 percent) than it is in the smaller ones (ranging between 83 and 88 percent). Party loyalty, however, is stronger among those who frequently disagree in the largest municipalities (19 percent) than it is in the smaller ones (ranging between 3 and 9 percent). Finally, 7 percent of councilors from the largest municipal councils frequently disagree, do not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty, and indicate that party discipline when it comes to voting in the council ought to be less strict. For the smaller municipal councils, this ranges between 0 and 2 percent. Even at the municipal level itself, we see that most of our expectations are met: party agreement increases as municipal council size decreases, whereas party loyalty and party discipline decrease in importance.

5.5 Conclusion

In general, we can conclude that although all four pathways to party group unity are present at both the national and subnational level of government, the relative importance of these pathways, and thus the way in which representatives come to decide to vote with the party and contribute to party group unity, differs at the different levels of government. In both the international-comparative analysis as well as in the Dutch case, party agreement played a stronger role at the subnational level, whereas party loyalty and party discipline, when placed in our decision-making sequence, decreased in importance as we moved down the ladder of government levels.

Contrary to the first analysis of national and regional parliaments in nine multilevel countries, our analysis of the Dutch case allowed us to control for the effects of country context, electoral institutions, executive-legislative relations and party system. It also enabled us to increase the variation in terms of district, parliament and party group size. Moreover, in the Dutch case there are certainly differences between the levels of government when it comes to their jurisdiction and political authority, as well as representatives' dependence on the political party for their livelihood and careers. For our indicators of cue-taking, as well as party loyalty, we found larger differences between the levels of government in the Netherlands than was the case in our international-comparative analysis. The results were also more consistent with our expectations.

The inclusion of additional questions in the Dutch version of the PartiRep dataset also allowed us to explore each of the mechanisms in more detail. Noteworthy, for example, is that subnational representatives are much more likely to identify the party group

5.5. Conclusion

meeting as the main decision-making center, and are likely to feel more involved in the decision making in their party group, than national MPs. The fact that there is a strong relationship between subnational representatives' feeling of involvement in party group decision making and their frequency of disagreement, entails that at these lower levels party agreement is not only owed to preexisting exogenously formed policy preferences (or the lack thereof), but also the result of collective decision making and debate within the parliamentary party group. At the national level there does not seem to be a relationship between MPs' feeling of involvement and their frequency of disagreement, but MPs are more likely to agree that the party group spokesperson determines the position of the party on his topic, and are more likely to identify the party group committee or specialist as the main decision-making center (although the majority also chooses the party group meeting). This, as expected, points in the direction of a stronger division of labor in party groups at the national level, and a greater tendency to engage in cue-taking.

Surprisingly, the regional representatives in our nine multilevel countries are more likely to answer that in the case of disagreement between an MP's opinion and the party's position, an MP should stick to the party line. In the Netherlands, however, we found that party loyalty is weaker among subnational representatives, who are also more likely to have their loyalty to the party diffused by voters (although the influence of voters as competing principals is likely to be limited, given that at even at the lowest level of government only about one-third of councilors would vote according to voters' opinion instead of remaining loyal to the party's position when the two conflict). At all levels of Dutch government, representatives report a strong feeling of solidarity in their party group (albeit slightly less so at the provincial level), but the internalization of the norm of party unity versus the freedom of an individual representative is much weaker at the subnational level. That there is a strong feeling of party solidarity at the municipal level may also be related to the different mode of collective party group decision making.

Finally, in both our analyses, party discipline seems to play the least important role in determining party (voting) unity. However, as mentioned before, our indicator of party discipline requires quite a bit of interpretation as to the underlying meaning of 'satisfaction with party discipline', and what representatives mean when they answer that it should be more or less strict. Our inquiry into the likelihood of different types of sanctions in the Dutch case seems to indicate that we may be underestimating the role that (the treat of) negative sanctions play, particularly those that can be kept hidden from the public, and those that involve candidate selection.

As mentioned before, one of the limitations of the international-comparative analysis of the nine multilevel countries is that we do not control for the formal electoral and legislative institutions that are deemed to influence the pathways to party unity. Moreover, we assume that government level captures a number of different variables, some of which we lack data for. These include those that have already been theorized and explored in other studies on party group unity, such as representatives' district size and the relationship representatives' have with their voters (i.e., the extent to which voters' act as competing principals, Carey, 2007, 2009). However, we also argue that government level captures a number of variables that may affect MPs' decision making

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that have been not been explored by previous research on party unity, such as the extent to which representatives are dependent on their party for their (future) livelihood (i.e., whether representatives are salaried or receive only a modest (financial) compensation, and whether they engage in their representative function full-time or they do so part-time and are also employed elsewhere, etc.). Future research on representatives' decision making and party group unity in general, and the differences between government levels specifically, could further explore these variables.

