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

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Chapter 7

The sequential approach evaluated

7.1 The decision-making mechanisms

Treating political parties as unitary actors is one of the most prevalent assumptions in both political theory and empirical political science, as well in practice. Party group unity in parliament is considered ‘normal’ (Olson, 2003, 165) or even ‘natural’ (Patzelt, 2003, 102), and as such is often taken for granted. However, as pointed out by Kam (2009, 16) party group unity “must be constructed one MP at a time”. We argue that party group unity is a collective phenomenon, that the degree to which party groups are unified is the result of the aggregation of individual MPs’ behavior, and that each individual MP’s behavior is brought about by his individual decision-making process consisting of a number of different stages that take place in a particular order. Although our decision-making model may not be exhaustive and represent somewhat of a simplification of MP decision making, it does include the most important pathways identified in the literature on party group unity.

Moreover, although previous studies on party group unity have found voting unity to co-vary with particular institutional configurations, the main argument forwarded in this book is that parliamentary party unity is not affected by institutions directly, but that these institutions affect the decision-making mechanisms that MPs apply in determining whether to toe the party group line or dissent from it. Indeed, this is often implicitly acknowledged in research that focuses on explaining party voting unity in the theoretical arguments used to underpin the hypotheses about the effects of institutions on party group unity. In our three empirical studies, we studied the occurrence and the relative contribution of these pathways, i.e., to what extent party groups in parliament can count on each of the mechanisms to get their MPs to fall in line, and whether and how these co-vary with different cross-country institutional settings (chapter 4), levels of government (chapter 5), and changes in the electoral arena over time (chapter 6).

7.1. The decision-making mechanisms

In most of the 15 national parliaments included in our first study (chapter 4), previous research shows party voting unity to be very high—in some cases close to perfect (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a; Carey, 2007, 2009; Carrubba et al., 2006, 2008; Depauw and Martin, 2009; Kam, 2001a,b, 2009; Lanfranchi and Lüthi, 1999; Sieberer, 2006). However, studies that focus on the ultimate dependent variable—party voting unity—do not tell us anything about *how* MPs come to vote with the party group, and whether the relative contribution of the different decision-making mechanisms that MPs apply is the same in all parliaments. In other words, the decision-making mechanisms applied by MPs that parties can generally count on for their MPs to toe the party group line,—cue-taking, agreement, loyalty and obedience—may differ per individual MP, and per parliament. In addition, and in line with what is mentioned above, we expected each of the decision-making mechanisms to be affected by institutional settings, and in the first study we focused on the influence of parliamentary government (and thus the difference between MPs whose parties partake in government and those in opposition), electoral institutions and MPs' parties' candidate selection procedures.

Although the number of studies on party group unity at the subnational level pales in comparison to those that deal with party group unity at the national level, party (voting) unity seems to be the rule in (European) parliamentary democracies at the subnational level as well (Copus, 1997a,b, 1999b; Cowley, 2001; Davidson-Schmich, 2000, 2001, 2003; Denters et al., 2013; Deschouwer, 2003; Dewan and Spirling, 2011; Patzelt, 2003; Stecker, 2013). However, because at the subnational level electoral districts, legislatures and party groups are smaller than at the national level, and the subnational levels' powers and jurisdiction are more limited than the national levels', we expected that the way in which party groups achieve unity, i.e., the relative contribution of the different decision-making mechanisms, is different at the subnational level than it is at the national level. In our second study (chapter 5), we first analyzed representatives' application of the decision-making mechanisms in the national and regional parliaments from the nine multilevel countries included in the PartiRep Survey. We then repeated the analysis of the four sequential decision-making mechanisms at the Dutch national, provincial and municipal level, as the case offered us more variation on the independent variable, and allowed us to keep the country context and institutional settings constant.

Our third and final study (chapter 6) dealt with the question whether the changes in the electoral arena over time, including increased electoral volatility and partisan dealignment, have affected MPs' behavior and parties' ability to maintain party group unity in the legislative arena (the 'two-arena model', Mayhew, 1974). We looked at behavioral party group unity in terms of the number of party defections (measured in terms of MPs who leave their party group but stay in parliament), party voting unity (Rice scores) and the frequency and depth of voting dissent over time in the Second Chamber of the Dutch national parliament. Our analysis showed that although party defections are infrequent, their occurrence has increased slightly over time. This is, however, mainly the result of the increase in the number of new party groups in parliament; the number of defections among established parties is limited to two or three over the entire period since the Second World War. Party voting unity is very high, and has even increased slightly over time. At first sight, this would seem to indicate that (established)

parties' ability to maintain party group unity is unaffected by changes in the electorate, and that parliament is indeed isolated from the electoral arena (the 'one-arena model', Bowler, 2000). However, we argue that this is unlikely, as relying solely on the institutions of parliament to maintain party group unity would be a risky strategy from the perspective of political parties. We therefore expected that while the changes in the electoral arena may have affected certain decision-making mechanisms, 'parties as organizations' have taken active measures to increase the relative contribution of other mechanisms to counteract, and thus minimize, the effects of the changes in the electorate.

In the subsections and tables below, we summarize our findings from the three studies, and draw comparisons between the studies for each of the decision-making mechanisms. As mentioned in the introduction of this book, because the studies involved numerous different parliaments at different levels of government at different points in time, and the survey questions used to measure the decision-making mechanisms sometimes differ across the three studies, comparison across the studies should be done carefully. This section is followed by with some suggestions of avenues for future research, with a specific focus on ways in which we can improve our measurement of the decision-making mechanisms in MP surveys. The chapter ends with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

7.1.1 Division of labor

According to the sequential decision-making model, when determining how to vote in parliament, an MP first gauges whether he has a personal opinion on the vote at hand. An MP may not have a personal opinion on all topics that are put to a vote, and may not have the time and resources to enable him to form a personal opinion. If this is the case, the MP votes according to the cues given to him by his fellow party group members who are specialized in, and/or who act as a spokesperson for the party group on the matter, or the party group leadership itself. Cue-taking as a decision-making mechanism is made both possible and necessary by the party group's application of a division of labor; in order to deal with the workload of parliament it is more efficient for party group members to each specialize in particular policy areas. As highlighted in chapter 3, cue-taking is an often (implicitly) acknowledged, but probably the most under-researched, pathway to party group unity.

We did not formulate any hypotheses concerning the influence of electoral and candidate selection institutions on cue-taking for our study of the 15 national parliaments, because we argued that this pathway is likely to be most affected by legislative institutions, such as parliamentary party group size, legislative workload and parliamentary (party group) rules. However, our descriptive statistics provide some evidence of parties' application of the division of labor in our 15 national parliaments, as 50 percent of MPs consider themselves specialists, and over 60 percent answer that it is (mostly) true that the parliamentary party spokesperson determines the party's position on his topic (see subsection 4.3.1, not shown in Table 7.1). From this we can infer that MPs are likely to engage in cue-taking when it comes to voting on issues outside of their arena of

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expertise for which they lack a personal opinion.

Although our expectation was that cue-taking would play a less important role at the subnational level than at the national level as the result of the relatively smaller size of parliaments and party groups which limits party groups' ability to apply a division of labor among their party members (see Table 7.1), we actually found very few differences between regional and national representatives in our nine multilevel countries (see subsection 5.3.1). It may be that the national and subnational legislatures in these countries are more similar than we assumed them to be. In the Dutch case, however, the percentage of representatives who consider themselves specialists is slightly higher at the national level than at the subnational levels, and we found that at the municipal level itself, the percentage of specialists decreases with municipal council size (the latter is not shown in Table 7.1). Moreover, the percentage of representatives who consider the statement that the party group spokesperson determines the position of the party group on his topic (mostly) true, as well as the percentage who identify the party group specialist or leadership as the main decision-making center in the parliamentary party group, also decrease as we move down the ladder of government levels (see subsection 5.4.1). It therefore seems, that at least in the Netherlands where we were able to include relatively small municipal councils which are likely to have very small party groups, that the division of labor and associated decision-making mechanism of cue-taking play a less important role at the subnational level than at the national level, as expected.

In our study on the Dutch national parliament over time, we argued that in order to deal with the increased workload of parliament, cue-taking as a decision-making mechanism would have increased in importance over time as party groups are expected to have increased the strength of the division of labor. There are indeed some indications that over time Dutch MPs have increased their reliance on the cues given to them by their party group spokesperson when it comes to voting on matters that MPs did not deal with themselves for the party group. Moreover, when it comes to the main decision-making center in the parliamentary party group, the percentage of Dutch MPs who identify the party specialist or the party leadership as the main decision-making center also increased over time, which points in the direction of the consolidation of a stricter division of labor and hierarchical decision making within the parliamentary party group (see subsection 6.5.1).

7.1.2 Party agreement

If an MP does have a personal opinion on the matter that is put to a vote, he moves on to the second decision-making stage, at which he assesses whether his opinion coincides with the position of his party group. If this is the case, an MP votes according to the party group line out of simple agreement. As opposed to the division of labor and its associated decision-making mechanism cue-taking, party group members' shared preferences as a pathway to party group unity is probably most widely acknowledged and theorized (Andeweg and Thomassen, 2011a; Bailer et al., 2011; Hazan, 2003; Kam, 2001a, 2009; Krehbiel, 1993; Norpoth, 1976). And all three of our studies do indeed confirm the importance of agreement as a decision-making mechanism in determining representatives'

Table 7.1: Division of labor: summary of expectations and findings

Expectation	Cases	Findings
Chapter 4: no expectations with regard to the influence of institutions on MPs' propensity to engage in cue-taking.	15 national parliaments	-
Chapter 5: subnational representatives are <i>less likely</i> to engage in cue-taking as a result of the division of labor than national MPs.	National and regional legislatures in 9 multilevel countries	No <i>difference</i> between national and regional representatives when it comes to considering themselves specialists (-), and regional representatives are slightly <i>more likely</i> to consider the statement that the parliamentary party spokesperson determines the party's position (mostly) true (-); patterns are not consistent between countries.
	Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils	Municipal councilors are <i>less likely</i> to consider themselves specialists than provincial councils and national MPs (+), <i>more likely</i> to consider the statement that the parliamentary party spokesperson determines the party's position (mostly) false (+), and <i>more likely</i> to consider the party meeting the main decision-making center (+).
Chapter 6: cue-taking as a result of the division of labor in the Dutch parliament has <i>increased</i> over time.	Dutch Second Chamber	The percentage of MPs who answer that they usually vote according to the advice of the parliamentary party spokesperson has <i>increased</i> over has time (+), and the percentage of MPs who identify the party specialist or party leadership as the main decision-making center has <i>increased</i> over time (+).

Note: (+) means that the findings are in line with our expectations; (-) means that this is not the case.

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voting behavior.

In order to gauge party agreement, we used a question included in the 2010 PartiRep Survey that asked respondents how often they disagree with the party's position on a vote in parliament. Of all MPs in our 15 national parliaments, 60 percent infrequently disagree with the party on a vote in parliament. And although there are some differences between parliaments, in all countries over half of MPs indicate that they disagree infrequently with the party line, entailing that in all parliaments party agreement is likely to be a relatively important pathway to party group unity. In terms of the influence of institutions, we argued that party selectorates are likely to select candidates whose policy preferences match their own, and thus expected MPs in parties with exclusive and centralized candidate selection procedures to be more likely to frequently agree with the party line than MPs in parties in which candidate selection is more inclusive and decentralized, because the latter is likely to encompass a larger selectorate (which is likely to have a broader range of preferences) and limits the national party's (leadership's) control over which candidates are selected to run for election (see Table 7.2). And indeed, in our 15 national parliaments, MPs from parties in which candidate selection is concentrated in the hands of the national party leaders or a national party agency are more likely to usually agree with the party than MPs who are selected by subnational party leaders or agencies, or party primaries at any level of the party organization (see subsection 4.3.2).

Building on this same line of argumentation, we hypothesized that MPs in party-oriented electoral systems (where voters are unable to cast a preference vote and/or there are few incentives for personal-vote seeking and intra-party competition) would be more likely to frequently agree with the party than MPs from more candidate-oriented electoral systems, because in the case of the former a party's selectorate's control over candidates extends into the electoral arena. Our results are somewhat mixed, however. Although on its own voters' inability to cast a personal vote for an individual candidate has a positive effect on party agreement, this effect actually decreases when district magnitude increases. This may be the result of our rather crude measure of the 'party-orientedness' of electoral systems, or the coding of particular countries.¹

We also find that government participation has a negative effect on MPs' propensity to frequently agree with the party in our 15 national parliaments. This is in line with our reasoning that domestic and international circumstances, and in the case of coalition government, the coalition agreement, may lead governments to take (*ad hoc*) measures that are not included in the party program or electoral manifesto, which their parliamentary counterparts are still expected to support, but individual MPs may not agree with.

The percentage of representatives who infrequently disagree with the party's position on a vote in parliament in the nine multilevel countries is higher at the regional level than at the national level, entailing that party agreement is a relatively stronger pathway to party group unity at the subnational level (see subsection 5.3.2). This is in line with our hypothesis, as we expected that party agreement would play a relatively

¹ As mentioned in footnote 17 in chapter 4, alternative classifications of the formal properties of electoral systems were also tested, yielding similar results.

Table 7.2: Party agreement: summary of expectations and findings

Expectation	Cases	Findings
Chapter 4: MPs in parties with exclusive and centralized candidate selection procedures are <i>more likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than MPs in parties with inclusive and decentralized candidate selection procedures.	15 national parliaments	Bivariate and multivariate: MPs in parties in which candidate selection is concentrated in the hands of national party leaders or a national party agency are <i>more likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than MPs in parties in which candidate selection takes place at the subnational level or through primaries at any level of government (+).
Chapter 4: MPs in party-oriented electoral systems are <i>more likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than MPs in candidate-oriented electoral systems.	15 national parliaments	Bivariate: MPs in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote are <i>more likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than MPs in electoral systems in which voters can cast a personal vote (+), and in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote, the odds of an MP frequently disagreeing with the party <i>decrease</i> as district magnitude increases (-). Multivariate: <i>No difference</i> between MPs in electoral systems in which voters can or not cast a personal vote (-) and in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote, the odds of an MP frequently disagreeing with the party <i>decrease</i> as district magnitude increases (-). Bivariate and multivariate: MPs in government parties are <i>less likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than MPs in opposition parties (+).
Chapter 4: MPs in governing parties are <i>less likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than MPs in opposition parties.	15 national parliaments	
Chapter 5: subnational representatives are <i>more likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than national MPs.	National and regional legislatures in 9 multilevel countries	Regional representatives are <i>more likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than national MPs (+), and when placed in our sequential decision-making model party agreement plays a <i>more important role</i> at the regional level than at the national level (+).
	Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils	Provincial and municipal councilors are <i>more likely</i> to frequently agree with the party than national MPs, but the differences are not statistically significant (+/-), when placed in our sequential decision-making model party agreement plays a (slightly) <i>more important role</i> at the provincial and municipal level than at the national level (+/-).
Chapter 6: party agreement in the Dutch national parliament has <i>increased</i> over time.	Dutch Second Chamber	Party group Left-Right ideological homogeneity has <i>remained high</i> over time (+/-); MPs have become <i>more likely</i> to perceive a <i>larger distance</i> between their own and their party's position on the Left-Right scale over time (-).

Note: (+) means that the findings are in line with our expectations; (-) means that this is not the case.

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more important role at the subnational level as a result of the smaller size of parliaments and party groups. Although party agreement is stronger at all levels of government in the Netherlands than in almost all of the nine multilevel countries in the PartiRep Survey, the percentage point difference between the national and the subnational levels of Dutch government is about the same as between the national and regional level in our nine multilevel countries. At the municipal level, the percentage of councilors who indicate to frequently agree with the party increases as council size decreases, thus supporting our argument that party agreement is easier to obtain in smaller party groups (see subsection 5.4.2).

In the Dutch case we also saw that whereas there is no relationship between national MPs' involvement in the party group and the frequency of disagreement, at the subnational level the more councilors feel involved in the decision making of their party group, the more likely they are to frequently agree with their party on a vote. Given that the percentage of representatives who completely agree that they feel involved in the decision making in their party group is much higher at the lower levels of government (especially the municipal level) than at the national level, the analysis of the Dutch case provides evidence for the notion that party agreement is not only determined by institutions external to the parliamentary arena (such as candidate selection), and that the mechanisms do not stand in isolation of each other; party agreement is also dependent on the way in which party group decision making is organized (i.e., whether party groups apply a division of labor and allow the party group spokesperson to determine the position of the party group, or party group decision making and position creation is organized in a more collective manner within the party group).

Although the Dutch Parliamentary Studies do not allow us to assess the frequency of disagreement in the Dutch parliament over time, we were able to ascertain both the ideological homogeneity among the party group member from the three largest parties, as well the distance all MPs perceive between their own and their party's position on the Left-Right ideological scale. Our expectation was that parties would have taken measures to counteract the effects of electoral dealignment by making party agreement a more important candidate selection criterion over time. Whereas parties have been able to maintain a high degree of ideological homogeneity among their MPs within their party group, the distance MPs perceive between their own and their party's position actually increased over time (see subsection 6.5.2). Given this increased distance, it is likely that Dutch MPs have over time become more likely to find themselves at odds with the position of their party.

7.1.3 Party loyalty

At the third stage of our decision-making sequence, at which an MP finds himself in the situation that his party group has one position on a vote in parliament, but he himself does not share that position, an MP must decide whether his subscription to the norm of party group loyalty is strong enough to move him to vote with the party line voluntarily despite his agreement. In our 15 national parliaments, 60 percent of all the MPs answer that an MP ought to vote according to the party's position in the case of conflict with the

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MP's own opinion, which means that on its own, party loyalty is also a powerful pathway to party group unity (see subsection 4.3.3). There are substantial differences between countries, however, ranging from 89 percent of Dutch MPs subscribing to the norm of party loyalty, to only 13 percent of Swiss MPs doing so. When placed in our sequential decision-making model, 20 percent of all MPs frequently disagree with the party, but still vote with the party out of a sense of loyalty, entailing that in comparison to party agreement, party loyalty is of less importance in getting MPs to toe the party line voluntarily (see subsection 4.3.5).² Thus on average the party groups in these parliaments can count on the two voluntary pathways of party agreement and party loyalty for almost 80 percent of their MPs. That in our sequential decision-making model party loyalty is less important than party agreement is, of course, the result of the order in which we place party agreement and party loyalty in our decision-making sequence. However, the order of mechanisms was extensively theorized, and is also matched by the formulation of the question used to measure party loyalty, which inquires specifically into the situation in which an MP's opinion and the party's position conflict (i.e., following the stage at which an MP gauges whether his own personal opinion matches the party's position).³

When it comes to the influence of institutions on MPs' propensity to subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty, we expected MPs from parties with exclusive and centralized candidate selection procedures to be more likely to subscribe to the norm than MPs from parties with inclusive and decentralized candidate selection methods. In the same vein, we hypothesized that MPs who are elected through party-oriented electoral systems would be more likely to indicate to remain loyal to the party than MPs in candidate-oriented electoral systems (see Table 7.3). The underlying argument of both these expectations is that the former institutional configurations minimize the extent to which MPs are confronted with competing principals (either in the form of a broader selectoral body or the voters in the electorate) who may diffuse MPs' loyalty to the party group in parliament. However, although on its own candidate selection does have the predicted effect on party loyalty, voters' inability to cast a personal vote does not, and both do not have the predicted effect on party loyalty in our multivariate model (see subsection 4.3.3).

As an alternative to the formal properties of electoral systems, we also added two variables to our model that gauge MPs' attitudes concerning (and the value they ascribe to) personal vote seeking and their choice when it comes to a conflict between their two main principals: the voters and their party. Our analysis revealed that MPs who prefer to run a party campaign as opposed to a personal campaign are also more likely to vote according to the party's position instead of their own opinion in the case

² As discussed in each of our empirical chapters, we are unable to include the first stage of our decision-making sequence, cue-taking, in our sequential decision-making model due to the formulation of the questions we used to gauge cue-taking. This is discussed in more detail in the suggestions for future research (see section 7.2).

³ The theorized order between party agreement and party loyalty was also matched in the 2010 PartiRep Survey, where the question used to measure party loyalty was a direct follow-up question to the questions which asks how often the respondent finds himself in disagreement with the party's position, which was used to gauge party agreement.

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of conflict, but the difference disappears in the full model. We also found that MPs who hold the opinion that an MP ought to vote according to voters' opinion instead of the party's position when the two conflict, are also more likely to opt for their own opinion over the party's position (this variable is statistically significant on its own as well in the multivariate model). In other words, whereas our formal institutional variables that are theorized to influence the degree to which MPs are confronted with competing principals to the party group do not have the predicted effect on MPs' propensity to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty, our attitudinal measure of the importance MPs ascribe to the voters versus the party as competing principals does.

Our third and final hypothesis for our 15 national parliaments was that MPs' from government parties would be more likely to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than opposition MPs because the added responsibility of supporting government initiatives and the threat of early elections would instill in government MPs a stronger feeling of loyalty. Although in the predicted direction, on its own government participation does not have a statistically significant effect on party loyalty. The variable is just shy of statistical significance in the full model, however.

Returning to the logic of the competing principals theory, one of the main differences between the national and subnational level of government is the relatively smaller size and closer proximity (in terms of both geography and population) of subnational representatives' constituencies, which we expected to lead subnational representatives to engage in a more direct relationship with voters who may diffuse representatives' party loyalty. We thus hypothesized subnational representatives to be less likely to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than national MPs, but our analysis of party loyalty on its own reveals the opposite (see subsection 5.3.3). However, when we only include representatives for whom party loyalty is a relevant decision-making mechanism, i.e. those who indicate to frequently disagree with the party line, party loyalty is, as expected, stronger among national MPs than among regional representatives (see subsection 5.3.5). When comparing the three levels of Dutch government, party loyalty is strongest at the national level when including all representatives, as well as in the sequential model when we only include those who frequently disagree with the party on a vote in parliament (see subsection 5.4.3 and subsection 5.4.5).

As was the case in our analysis of MPs in 15 national parliaments, in both the analyses in chapter 5, we looked more closely at the influence of MPs' choice when confronted with a conflict between voters' opinion and the party's position (not shown in Table 7.3). We found no difference between national and regional representatives; in both cases around 60 percent places the party's position above the voters' opinion. In the Dutch case, the percentage of representatives who answer that an MP ought to vote according to the voters' opinion instead of the party position does indeed increase as we move down the ladder of government levels, but with a maximum of 35 percent opting for voters' opinion at the municipal level, the influence of voters' as competing principals does not seem be very strong at any level of government in the Dutch case. However, at the Dutch provincial and municipal level, of the councilors who answer that an MP ought to stick to the voters' opinion instead of the party's position, two-thirds also answer that an MP ought to vote according to his own opinion instead of the party's position when the

Table 7.3: Party loyalty: summary of expectations and findings

Expectation	Cases	Findings
Chapter 4: MPs in parties with exclusive and centralized candidate selection procedures are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than MPs in parties with inclusive and decentralized candidate selection procedures.	15 national parliaments	Bivariate: MPs in parties in which candidate selection is concentrated in the hands of national party leaders or a national party agency are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than MPs in parties in which candidate selection takes place at the subnational level or through primaries at any level of government (+). Multivariate: <i>no difference</i> between MPs in parties in which candidate selection is concentrated in the hands of national party leaders or a national party agency and MPs in parties in which candidate selection takes place at the subnational level or through primaries at any level of government (-).
Chapter 4: MPs in party-oriented electoral systems are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than MPs in candidate-oriented electoral systems.	15 national parliaments	Bivariate: <i>No difference</i> between MPs in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote and MPs in electoral systems in which voters can cast a personal vote (-), but in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote, the odds of an MP subscribing to the norm of party loyalty <i>decrease</i> as district magnitude increases (-). MPs who prefer running a party campaign over a personal campaign are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty (+), and MPs who indicate that an MP ought to vote according to the party's position instead of voters' opinion are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty (+). Multivariate: <i>No difference</i> between MPs in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote and MPs in electoral systems in which voters can cast a personal vote (-), but in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote, the odds of an MP subscribing to the norm of party loyalty <i>decrease</i> as district magnitude increases (-). <i>No difference</i> between MPs who prefer to run a party campaign and those who prefer to run a personal campaign (-), but MPs who indicate that an MP ought to be vote according to the party's position instead of voters' opinion are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty (+). Multivariate: <i>No difference</i> between MPs in government parties and MPs in opposition parties (-). Multivariate: MPs in governing parties are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than MPs in opposition parties (+).
Chapter 4: MPs in governing parties are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than MPs in opposition parties.	15 national parliaments	Bivariate: <i>No difference</i> between MPs in government parties and MPs in opposition parties (-). Multivariate: MPs in governing parties are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than MPs in opposition parties (+).
Chapter 5: subnational representatives are <i>less likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than national MPs.	National and regional legislatures in 9 multilevel countries	Regional representatives are <i>more likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than national MPs (-), but when placed in the sequential decision-making model party loyalty plays a <i>less important</i> role at the regional level than at the national level (+).
	Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils	Municipal and provincial councilors are <i>less likely</i> to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty than national MPs (+), and when placed in our sequential decision-making model party loyalty plays a <i>less important</i> role at the subnational levels than at the national level (+).
Chapter 6: party group loyalty in the Dutch national parliament has <i>increased</i> over time.	Dutch Second Chamber	The percentage of MPs who subscribe to the norm of party group loyalty has <i>increased</i> over time (+). Note: (+) means that the findings are in line with our expectations; (-) means that this is not the case.

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two conflict. This can be interpreted as meaning that for most of those councilors who do not subscribe to the norm party loyalty and thus vote according to their own opinion, this decision may be influenced by their loyalty to the voters as competing principals to the party. In our nine multilevel countries, representatives who consider voters' opinion more important than the party's position are also more likely to opt for their own opinion when in conflict with the party's position, but the relationship is weaker at the regional level than at the national level.

Finally, in the Dutch national parliament, party loyalty increases in strength over time; the percentage of MPs who indicate that in the case of disagreement an MP ought to vote according to the party line increases over time, whereas the percentage of MPs who think that an MP ought to hold his ground and vote according to his own position, decreases over time (the percentage of MPs who answer that it depends remained relatively stable, see subsection 6.5.3). This is in line with our hypothesis, for which we argued that over time party loyalty as a candidate selection criterion would have increased in importance as parties tried to counteract the effects of partisan dealignment and electoral volatility.

As is clear from the summary above, our studies provide mixed results when it comes to party loyalty. Whereas in our analyses of the three levels of Dutch government and the Dutch national parliament over time, our findings with regard to party loyalty generally meet our expectations, this is not the case in the studies of the 15 national parliaments and the national and regional legislatures from the nine multilevel countries. In both of these analyses, we have variation in the percentage of representatives who subscribe to the norm of party loyalty, but this variation does not seem to correspond to the differences in institutional settings that are theorized to influence the extent to which representatives are confronted with competing principals to the party. It could be that even if electoral institutions provide the means to discriminate between candidates on the basis of their loyalty to different principals, candidates' subscription to certain norms is a less important selection criterion than party agreement seems to be, or that the electorate is unable to accurately gauge candidates' loyalty. Admittedly, the operationalization of the formal electoral institutions that are deemed to affect the extent to which representatives are confronted with competing principals is up for discussion, and thus our findings with regard to these formal institutions may not be very robust. Our attitudinal measures of the importance that representatives ascribe to voters' versus the party do have the predicted effect, however. Thus it could be that the theory of competing principals has merit, but not through formal institutions, but representatives' personal internalization of norms of party versus voter loyalty, which are likely to be the result of their (previous) experience as representatives of their party, or his legislative party group environment. The judging of the applicability of these norms is an individual MP's decision, and seems largely unaffected by his electoral institutional environment.

7.1.4 Party discipline

If an MP has an opinion on the matter that is put to a vote, but his opinion does not correspond to the party's position, and he does not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty,

Table 7.4: Party discipline: summary of expectations and findings

Expectation	Cases	Findings
Chapter 4: MPs in parties with exclusive and centralized candidate selection procedures are <i>more likely</i> to be disciplined than MPs in parties with inclusive and decentralized candidate selection procedures.	15 national parliaments	<p>Bivariate: <i>no difference</i> between MPs in parties in which candidate selection is concentrated in the hands of national party leaders or a national party agency and MPs in parties in which candidate selection takes place at the subnational level or through primaries at any level of government (-).</p> <p>Multivariate: <i>no difference</i> between MPs in parties in which candidate selection is concentrated in the hands of national party leaders or a national party agency and MPs in parties in which candidate selection takes place at the subnational level or through primaries at any level of government (-).</p>
Chapter 4: MPs in party-oriented electoral systems are <i>more likely</i> to be disciplined than MPs in candidate-oriented electoral systems.	15 national parliaments	<p>Bivariate: <i>No difference</i> between MPs in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote and MPs in electoral systems in which voters can cast a personal vote (-).</p> <p>Multivariate: <i>No difference</i> between MPs in electoral systems in which voters cannot cast a personal vote and MPs in electoral systems in which voters can cast a personal vote (-).</p>
Chapter 4: MPs in governing parties are <i>more likely</i> to be disciplined than MPs in opposition parties.	15 national parliaments	<p>Bivariate and multivariate: <i>no difference</i> between MPs in government parties and MPs in opposition parties (-).</p>
Chapter 5: subnational representatives are <i>less likely</i> to be disciplined than national MPs.	National and regional legislatures in 9 multilevel countries	<p><i>No difference</i> between regional and national representatives (-), but when placed in our sequential decision-making model, party discipline plays a <i>less important role</i> at the regional level than it does at the national level (+).</p>
	Dutch Second Chamber, provincial councils and municipal councils	<p>Municipal councilors are slightly <i>less likely</i> to prefer less strict party discipline than national MPs and provincial councilors (+), and are also <i>less likely</i> to consider negative sanctions (very) likely (+). When placed in our sequential decision-making model, party discipline plays a very small, but slightly <i>more important</i> role at the subnational levels than at the national level (-).</p>
Chapter 6: party discipline in the Dutch national parliament <i>increased</i> over time.	Dutch Second Chamber	<p>Unable to study over a long period of time; but the percentage of MPs who prefer less strict party discipline is <i>low</i> in Dutch parliament (based on the 2001 and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Study and 2010 PartiRep Survey).</p>

Note: (+) means that the findings are in line with our expectations; (-) means that this is not the case.

7.1. The decision-making mechanisms

or his conflict with the party's position is so intense that it supersedes party loyalty, an MP's party group (leadership) may still try to elicit the MP to toe the party line through sanctions. Our final pathway to party group unity is therefore party discipline, which entails that representatives vote with the party line involuntarily out of obedience in response to the anticipation, promise, threat or actual application of positive and negative sanctions by the party group (leadership). In all three of our studies, we measure party discipline by inquiring into representatives' opinions on whether party discipline ought to be less strict (which we take to be indicative of that representatives have experience being disciplined or operate under the threat of sanctions), more strict or remain as it is. And in all of our studies, representatives are overwhelmingly content with general party discipline as it is, as well as with most specific aspects of party discipline, including party discipline when it comes to sticking to the party line when voting in parliament. As discussed before in each of our three empirical chapters, our questions regarding representatives' satisfaction with party discipline required quite a bit of interpretation, which may have resulted in an underestimation of the importance of the pathway. On the other hand, in all of our studies the voluntary pathways of party agreement and party loyalty account for a very large percentage of representatives' voting behavior once the three mechanisms are placed in the sequential decision-making model, which does seem to indicate that party discipline is not as relevant a pathway to party group unity as is often (implicitly) assumed in the literature.

In our study of the 15 national parliaments, we expected candidate selection procedures that are exclusive and centralized to enhance the (parliamentary) party's leaders' ability to credibly (threaten or promise to) use candidate reselection as a disciplining mechanism, and that party-oriented electoral systems further extend this control into the electoral arena (see Table 7.4). We also hypothesized that the responsibility of government and threat of early elections would make governing parties more willing to (threaten or promise to) use discipline than opposition parties. MPs' satisfaction with party voting discipline is not affected by any of the formal institutions, however. But MPs who either frequently disagree with the party line, or do not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty, are more likely to want less strict party voting discipline, which is in line with our argument that discipline is only relevant when voluntary pathways fail to bring MPs to toe the party line on their own (see subsection 4.3.4). It therefore seems that it is not party leaders' access to institutions that can be used to credibly punish or reward MPs that determines whether they are disciplined, but MPs' decisions at the earlier stages of the decision-making sequence.

We expected party discipline to be less common at the subnational level than at the national level because subnational representatives are likely to be less dependent on their party for their (future) career and livelihood than national MPs are, rendering the use of discipline less credible and thus less effective. Although there are no differences between the regional and national level in our nine multilevel countries when it comes to their satisfaction with party discipline on its own, party voting discipline did play the expected stronger role at the national level than at the regional level once placed in our sequential decision-making model (see subsection 5.3.5). In the Dutch case the percentage of representatives who indicate that party discipline ought to be less strict is also in-

deed lower at the municipal level than at the national level (subsection 5.4.4). Given the high levels of satisfaction with party discipline at all three levels of Dutch government, it is a bit surprising that when asked about the likelihood of specific types of sanctions, in most cases over two-thirds considered the sanction (very) likely, which also indicates that our model may underestimate the role of party discipline. Lower level representatives are, however, also more prone to consider sanctions less likely, however.

Finally, we also expected the use of party discipline to have increased over time in the Dutch national parliament because MPs have become increasingly dependent on their party as a result of the demise of societal pillars, and the fact that the function of MP has become a full-time occupation. But because only the last three surveys (the 2001 and 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Studies and the 2010 PartiRep Survey) contain questions concerning party discipline, we were unable to assess whether there are any changes in party discipline over a longer period of time for the Dutch national parliament. However, the fact that in these three later surveys over three quarters of Dutch MPs are satisfied with the level of general party discipline in their party, and over 90 percent are satisfied with party discipline when it comes to voting in parliament, indicates that party discipline, when it is applied, is likely to be considered acceptable and voting unity fairly undisputed (see subsection 4.3.4).

Another final finding worth mentioning is the fact that in all three of our studies, representatives tend to be least satisfied with party discipline when it comes to keeping internal party discussions confidential. As mentioned before, the fact that many representatives would like to see stricter party discipline when it comes to this specific aspect of party life highlights that party group unity is not just about the final vote in parliament, but a much broader requirement that comprises the entire policy making process. MPs seem to be worried about the appearance of disunity, which serves as another indication that the legislative arena is not insulated from the electoral arena.

7.2 Suggestions for future research

Our studies reveal that institutions affect the decision-making mechanisms in different ways. Whereas MPs' frequency of agreement seems to be most strongly influenced by changes and institutions outside the parliamentary arena, this is less the case for MPs' propensity to subscribe to the norm of party loyalty. MPs' satisfaction with party discipline, which we interpret as indicative of MPs' experience with their party's application of party discipline, seems least affected by the institutional configurations in which MPs and parties are situated. In our analysis of 15 national parliaments, we use rather rough measures of candidate selection procedures and electoral institutions, which may account for some of the unexpected results. However, given that in our cases these institutions are quite party and country specific, a more precise classification may have led to high levels of multicollinearity with the countries and parties to which these MPs belong (which we already take into account by using a multilevel model). Furthermore, for our analysis of the regional and national parliaments in nine multilevel countries in chapter 5, we do not control for electoral and legislative institutions, and use the levels

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of government to which MPs belong as a proxy for constituency size, legislative authority, party size, and the extent to which MPs are dependent on their party for their livelihood and future career. In our study of the Dutch national parliament, we similarly use time as a variable to capture the potential effects of electoral volatility and partisan dealignment. Although using proxies was unavoidable as a result of data restrictions, future research could further explore these relationships using more precise measures.

Our studies also show that the relative contribution of the decision-making mechanisms differs between parliaments, levels of government, and over time, which research that focuses solely the outcome, MPs' voting behavior, is unable to provide insight into. All of the studies were based on (preexisting) elite surveys, however, and as such we were limited in our ability to accurately gauge the relative contribution of some of the decision-making mechanisms. Moreover, our analyses of representatives' responses sometimes required quite a bit of interpretation. Although repeating existing questions in future elite surveys certainly has its merits in terms of diachronic comparison, we do have some suggestions for prospective elite surveys that would be able to measure the (relative) role of decision-making mechanisms more precisely.

For our measures of cue-taking, for example, we argued that if an MP considers himself a specialist, it is reasonable to assume that he will not have an opinion on all matters that are put to a vote and thus need to engage in cue-taking. And we took MPs' agreement with the statement that the party specialist determines the position of the party in parliament as an indication of parties' application of the division of labor. But we did not have a question that inferred specifically into the role of cue-taking in MPs' decision-making process when it comes to voting in parliament. Moreover, the question we use in our first two studies to gauge party agreement, the frequency of disagreement, is unable to discriminate between MPs who indicate that they infrequently disagree because they almost always share the position of the party, or because they lack an opinion on the matter at hand (and thus *do not disagree*). For these reasons, we were unable to include cue-taking in our sequential decision-making model, and this limited our ability to assess its relative contribution, which might have led to an overestimation of the importance of the decision-making mechanisms in the stages that follow.

As outline in Figure 3.1 (see chapter 3), at the first stage of our decision-making model, an MP asks himself whether he has a personal opinion on the vote at hand. Thus, in order to include this stage in our decision-making sequence, a first question to introduce to future MP surveys could be 'When it comes to voting in parliament, how often are you faced with the situation that you do not have a personal opinion on a vote?'. We cannot expect, however, MPs to remember exactly how many times this occurred. As is the case with the answering categories to our question concerning the frequency of disagreement (i.e., our measure of party agreement in chapter 4 and chapter 5), we would probably then need to use broad frequency descriptions ('about once a month', 'about once every three months', 'about once a year' and '(almost) never') as answering categories. This question could then be followed by one that asks 'What do you (usually) do when you do not have a personal opinion on a vote in parliament?', with the following answering options:

1. I invest time and resources to form my own opinion.
2. I vote according to the party position as stipulated in the party program and/or electoral manifesto.
3. I vote according to the advice of the party group spokesperson on that topic.
4. I vote according to the advice of the party group leadership.

According to the sequential decision-making model, respondents who pick the first answer move on to the second stage of the decision-making process, which involves assessing whether their own opinion corresponds to the party's position. If a respondent selects one of the other three answers, this means that he engages in cue-taking. The inclusion of three alternative sources would give us more insight into the relative importance of these sources as potential voting cue-givers.⁴

The question used in our first two empirical studies to measure party agreement, the frequency of disagreement, is appropriate for the sequential decision-making model as it refers specifically to voting and specifies the actors (the MP and his party) and the situation at hand (a disagreement over a vote). It allowed us to move beyond the use of abstract Left-Right ideological and policy scales, and enabled us to place both party agreement as well as the stages that followed in the sequential decision-making model. The fact that it precedes our measure of party loyalty is also a positive characteristic, as we can safely assume that respondents were likely to interpret the question as inquiring into the frequency of disagreement before voting takes place (and thus that it does not measure behavioral party group unity).⁵

The question that we used to measure party loyalty is the same as the one developed by Eulau et al. (1959), later amended by Converse and Pierce (1979, 1986), to measure representational role orientation and style (the party delegate role).⁶ It was also used by

⁴ Alternatively, instead of asking respondents to select only one answer to the question about what they (usually) do in the situation in which they do not have a personal opinion on a vote, we could ask respondents to rate each of the answering categories on an ordinal scale in terms of their likelihood (as we did for the questions concerning the likelihood of negative sanctions in the Dutch version of the PartiRep Survey (see subsection 5.4.4 in chapter 5)). This would, however, make it more difficult to place the question in the sequential decision-making model.

⁵ The original answering categories ('about once a month', 'about once every three months', 'about once a year' and '(almost) never'), and especially their dichotomization into the two categories 'frequently disagree' and 'infrequently disagree' for the sequential decision-making model, is open to criticism, because the number of votes taken may differ across parliaments. Our argument is, however, that if disagreement occurs about once a year or (almost) never, an MP ought to be able to recall each of these infrequent occasions on which disagreement took place individually, whereas if it occurs about once a month or once every three months, the MP may not be able to recall each case individually and thus can be classified as disagreeing frequently.

⁶ We have assumed that an MP's adherence and thus loyalty to the opinions of other potential foci of representation, which may act as potentially competing principals to the political party, are subsumed in an MP's own opinion. In doing so, we do not differentiate MPs who take on a 'trustee' style of representation from those who could be labeled 'voter delegates' (Converse and Pierce, 1979, 1986). Furthermore, our study is far from exhaustive in terms of the influence of other potential competing principals and other actors who

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Andeweg and Thomassen (2011a) to gauge party loyalty in their earlier study of the pathways to party group unity in the Dutch parliament. As is the case with our measure of the frequency of disagreement, the question refers specifically to the two relevant actors (although in this case, it refers to 'an MP' in the abstract, and not the respondent himself) and a specific situation (a disagreement over a vote). We interpreted it as referring specifically to normative reasons to vote with the party line voluntarily, but must admit that we cannot be completely sure that all the representatives in the different surveys interpreted the question and answering categories in the same way. Some may have interpreted it as indeed referring to normative motivations exclusively (which is implied by the use of the term *should* in the answering categories), whereas other may also have taken rationalist calculations and the possible (threat of) party discipline into account in their answer. In order to avoid this confusion in future surveys, the question could be formulated more specifically: 'Disregarding any positive and negative consequences for the MP personally, how do you think an MP should vote in the case of disagreement between the MPs' opinion and the party position on a vote in parliament?'

Finally, when it comes to our measure of party discipline, we argue that MPs who answer that party discipline ought to be less strict are those who have experienced discipline in the past. It is unlikely that someone who has personally experienced discipline in the past would like to see discipline be applied more strictly, but one could argue that an MP who has been disciplined in the past could still be satisfied with party discipline as it is, as he accepts the need for discipline, and agrees with the way in which an MP's individual freedom and the collective benefits of party group unity are balanced within his party. Although we do use MPs' assessment of party discipline when it comes to voting according to the party line in parliament specifically in our sequential decision-making model, the question suffers from the same limitations as do our measures of the first decision-making mechanism, cue-taking (i.e., we are unable to specifically gauge an individual MP's personal responsiveness to positive and negative sanctions when it comes to voting). We thus may have underestimated the importance of party discipline throughout our analyses. However, including it in our model is less problematic than is the case for our cue-taking question because party discipline is the last stage in our decision-making model. As an alternative, future surveys could reformulate the question concerning party discipline when it comes to voting in parliament to 'How do you think your party group (leadership) will respond in the case of disagreement between an MPs' opinion and the party's position on a vote in parliament?', or more specifically, 'How do you think the party (group) leadership will respond when an MP expresses his intent to not vote according to the party line?', with the following answering categories:

1. The party (group) leadership will let the MP vote according to his own opinion.
2. The party (group) leadership will make the MP vote according to the party's position.

try to influence the behavior of parliamentary actors. Our argument is, however, is that this study focuses on the relationship between MPs vis-à-vis their parties specifically.

The first answer indicates that an MP would be allowed to dissent from the party line, whereas the second implies that the party (group) leadership will apply pressure in order to elicit obedience from the MP (although the former answering category admittedly does not exclude the possibility of the party (group) leadership applying negative sanctions in the long term). The question could be followed by a question that inquires into the likelihood of different negative sanctions, similar to the question that was included in the Dutch version of the PartiRep Survey (see subsection 5.4.4 in chapter 5).

These suggestions for future elite surveys would provide for a fuller understanding of the sequence, and enable us to measure the relative contribution of each of the decision-making mechanisms more precisely than we were able to do in our studies. Aggregated at the level of the parliaments, the use of elite surveys as the main source of data enables us to analyze MPs' application, and the relative contribution, of these mechanisms as general tendencies. However, as evidenced by the popularity of the answering category 'it depends' when it comes to the question whether in the case of disagreement an MP should vote according to his own opinion or the party's position in the Dutch Parliamentary studies (see subsection 6.5.3), an individual MP's decision-making process is likely to be affected by variables other than those included in these studies. If we want to go beyond the study of general trends and look more closely at the circumstances that may affect MP decision making, and further test and refine our sequential decision-making model, other data sources and research methods may be preferred.

As highlighted earlier (see the discussion of the simplification of the sequential model in subsection 3.3.3 in chapter 3), whether or not an MP has an opinion is likely to depend on the importance and substance of the vote at hand. An MP who lacks a personal opinion may usually follow the voting advice provided by the party spokesperson or party leadership, but if the vote is important to him personally, he may invest time and resources to form his own opinion. It may also be that the MP first had a personal opinion, but was convinced to alter his position based on substantive discussions in the party group meeting or with actors outside of parliament. Again, the fact that others were able to change the MP's opinion may be influenced by the substance of, and importance ascribed to, the vote (by either the MP himself or the actors with who he deliberates). As we have acknowledged, the substance and importance of the vote can also affect whether or not an MP votes with the party out of loyalty: even if an MP has internalized the norm of party loyalty, there may be some issues about which an MP (or those actors outside the party group who he considers his political principals) feels very strongly, and thus on which the conflict is so intense that it supersedes his loyalty to his party group.⁷ Finally, the importance of the vote may also influence the extent to which the party (group) leadership is willing to apply sanctions, and the MP is willing to incur them. Admittedly, the studies in this book have not been able to take this into account. One could argue, however, that the substance and importance of the vote do not change the questions MPs ask themselves in determining to vote with the party line or not, or the

⁷ Furthermore, an MP's subscription to party loyalty, as well as his responsiveness to sanctions, may not only depend on the substance and the importance of the matter put to vote, but also on the stage of an MP's career (Kam, 2009).

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order in which they do so.

In addition, we have not taken into account the fact that MPs are constantly involved in numerous different decision-making processes that take place simultaneously over an extended period of time. This means that the factors that play a role in one decision may affect a decision on a different vote. The parliamentary party group is not only a deliberative arena, but also a political arena. An MP may, for example, not form an opinion about a certain vote because he promised a colleague that he would vote with the party group, in exchange for his colleagues support on his own proposal. His lack of an opinion is therefore not only dependent on his lack of time and resources, or on the substantive content and importance of the vote, but also by his promise to colleague on a different vote. Or an MP may disagree with the party groups position, but may again toe the party line because he exchanged his support on the vote at hand for support from a colleague on other issue. As we saw in Table 5.26 in chapter 5, the majority of Dutch representatives at all levels of government answered that it is very likely that an MP who (repeatedly) does not vote according to the party group line will have trouble finding support among his fellow party group members for his own initiatives. It is therefore likely that the active mechanism here is an MP's fear of negative repercussions, and thus party discipline.

The fact MPs are involved in multiple simultaneous decision-making processes over an extended period of time means that MPs have repeated experience with the decision-making process. This may entail that, on a particular vote, MPs' decisions at earlier stages of the decision-making process may be influenced by their anticipated decisions at later stages in the sequence. Their anticipation being based on their own personal previous voting experience. The lack of a personal opinion, and resultant decision to vote with the party as a result of cue-taking, for example, could also arise from an MP's general subscription to the norm of party loyalty being so strong, that an MP decide that he need not even bother developing a personal opinion, as he is convinced that even if he disagrees, he will vote with the party's position out of loyalty anyway. The MP may also not form an opinion because he anticipates that if he disagrees with the party's position, sanctions will be applied to which the MP knows he will be responsive. Thus, if both MPs and party (group) leaders are aware of this order the decision-making mechanisms, and MPs' decisions at earlier stages of the model may indeed be influenced by their anticipation of their decision at the stages that follow, we may overestimate the relative importance of the first mechanisms in the model, especially that of cue-taking. In addition, the possibility of anticipation may blur the lines between the mechanisms, and thus may also lead MPs (and therefore also researchers) to muddle the decision-making mechanisms.

As mentioned in the introduction to this book (see page 7 in chapter 1), the ultimate dependent variable in a study of party group unity would be individual MPs' final behavioral outcome. Thus, the ultimate test of the sequential decision-making model would be to apply it to individual MPs (who are at different stages of their career) as they come to their voting decision (or other types of behavior) on different topics. In order to do so we would need to obtain access to individual MPs and, ideally, the party groups to which they belong. Access to individual MPs would enable us to study how MPs come to

their voting decisions on specific votes. This would require either a large research team of observers and interviewers, or limiting the study to a few specific MPs, comparable to Richard Fenno's (1978; 1990) study of US legislators in the 1970s. In order to take into account that MPs are constantly confronted with multiple votes from different issue areas to which they ascribe different degrees of importance, and to gain better insights into the role of the decision-making mechanisms, as well as the role of anticipation, we would need have multiple observations and interviews over time. All in all, accessing the individual MP and directly study their decision-making process in relation to specific votes would allow us to not only further test the model in its current form, but also refine it in order to deal with complicating factors such as the fact that MPs are involved in constantly involved in multiple decisions on different votes, and the associated possibility of anticipation by both the MP himself as well as others, including his political party (group) members and leadership.

Accessing the parliamentary party group,⁸ and specifically the interactions between group members behind the scenes and during the meetings of the parliamentary party group, would enable us to observe the processes of cue-taking and deliberation within the group, and get a glimpse of the application of party discipline in terms of both positive and negative sanctions, as well as the role of subtler forms of (group) pressure and persuasion. This could take on the form of a single-case study of one party group, although accessing multiple party groups would allow for comparison of groups of different ideologies, sizes, age, etc., that may have different styles of leadership and group decision-making. Although there are a few examples of journalists and researchers being allowed behind the closed doors of the parliamentary party group (for the Netherlands, see Van Westerloo (2003) for an example), it is likely that this will be a difficult research method to apply.⁹ As has become apparent in all three of our studies, representatives tend to worry about the appearance of party disunity, evidenced by the fact that many would prefer stricter party discipline when it comes to keeping internal party discussions confidential. One suggestion could be to start at the lower levels of government, as this allows researchers to tap into a large number of legislative assemblies, and thus party groups and individual representatives, who may be easier to gain access to than those are the national level. Keeping in mind the rather low response rates obtained through the 2010 PartiRep Survey, lower government levels could also serve as a source of data for future elite surveys on representation in general, and party group unity in particular. Our findings suggest that although the sequential decision-making model seems rele-

⁸ At the start of this research project, we approached all the parliamentary party groups in the Dutch Second Chamber with the request to allow us to observe their party group meetings. Unfortunately, not enough of the party groups were willing to participate to allow for variation of on key independent variables (government versus opposition, large versus small parties, etc.) that may influence the workings of the party group and the pathways to party group unity, and which would have enhanced our ability to guarantee anonymity. In the end, even the parties that had initially shown interest withdrew from the project.

⁹ One of the potential weaknesses of the observer method of data collection and analysis is that the presence of an observer may influence the behavior of the subjects of study (Gillespie and Michelson, 2011, 262). The fact that in our surveys MPs seem to worry about keeping internal party discussions confidential may increase the risk of altered behavior.

7.3. Implications

vant at all levels of government, the relative role of the decision-making mechanisms differs at the levels of government, however, which researchers who do follow up on this study of party group unity and MPs' decision-making should keep in mind.

7.3 Implications

By approaching party group unity from the perspective of individual MPs' decision making, this book makes an important contribution to our understanding of what party group unity actually consists of, and how it is brought about. All three of our studies reveal that the vast majority of representatives vote with the party out of simple agreement, and that when representatives disagree with the party's position, most can be counted on to still toe the party line out of a sense of loyalty despite their disagreement. In all of our studies, only a small percentage of representatives would prefer less strict party voting discipline, and the majority of MPs are actually quite satisfied with party voting discipline as it is. Moreover, when put in the sequential decision-making model, party voting discipline plays the least important role of the three mechanisms (cue-taking is not included in the decision-making sequence). Thus, party group unity mainly results from MPs' voluntarism, whereas party discipline plays a secondary role.

The analysis of the Dutch Second Chamber over time (chapter 6) showed that although the Left-Right ideological homogeneity of party groups in parliament has remained relative high, MPs have become more likely to perceive a larger distance between their own opinion and the party's position, entailing that, at least from the perspective of MPs themselves, party agreement seems to have suffered over time. For the Dutch case, we were unable to look at MPs' satisfaction with party discipline over a long period of time, but given the fact that in both the 2006 Dutch Parliamentary Study and the 2010 PartiRep Survey over 90 percent of respondents answers that they are satisfied with party voting discipline as it is, it is unlikely that parties nowadays rely much on discipline, or have increased its use over time in response to the decrease in party agreement. We do see, however, that the percentage of MPs who subscribe to the norm of party loyalty has increased over time. Thus, even in the face of decreasing party agreement, Dutch parties themselves are able to, and are likely to actually prefer to, count on MPs' voluntarily loyalty rather than apply party discipline for their MPs' voting behavior. Party discipline is costly both from the perspective of MPs, as well as political parties. An MP who needs to be (repeatedly) coaxed or threatened into voting according to the party group line is likely to suffer in terms of his standing in the party group as well as his future political career (see subsection 5.4.4 in chapter 5). And if parties apply too much discipline, or do so too often, this is likely to be counterproductive, as the constant threat and application of sanction is likely to affect MPs' solidarity with the party group leadership, and thus their loyalty to the political party.

Given the high levels of party group unity in (most) of the parliaments included in our three studies, however, party discipline is still relevant. In all three of our studies, the voluntary pathways to party group unity can account for most, but not all, of the MPs in the sequential decision-making models. Moreover, our analysis of the 15 national

parliaments (chapter 4) shows that at the individual level, MPs who do not agree with the party line or do not subscribe to the norm of party loyalty are most likely to prefer less strict party discipline. Our findings confirm the theoretical argument forwarded by Bowler et al. (1999a) and further specified by Hazan (2003), that “discipline starts where cohesion falters”. Describing party groups that act as unitary actors as disciplined, as is often done by both scholars and political commentators alike, does not paint a representative picture of the way in which parties achieve their unity. Depicting these parties groups as cohesive seems more accurate, but does not encompass the entire picture.

Now that we have a better insight into the way in which MPs come to the decision to vote with the party, what does this entail for our models of representation? According to Manin (1997, 196-197), “today’s alleged crisis in representation” involves a change from the predominance of party democracy to audience democracy, resulting from the desecularization and modernization of society (see chapter 2). Whereas party democracy is characterized by an electorate organized along relative stable social-economic cleavages whose votes express their identity in terms of class and religion, Manin (1997, 226-228) argues that audience democracy involves reactive voting based on ‘hazy images’ of parties’ electoral promises, but increasingly more the images projected by individual politicians, especially party leaders. Manin is clear on what party democracy entails for the relationship between MPs and their parties, but he remains rather vague in terms of what a shift towards audience democracy means for MPs and their parties in parliament.

When we base our answer to the question on what we know from previous studies about MPs’ voting behavior, the short answer seems to be ‘not much’. Party voting unity in the 1990s and 2000s is found to be high in (most) the parliamentary democracies. In other words, in terms of the relationship between MPs and their parties when it comes to voting in the legislative arena, the political party model seems to have held its ground, and audience democracy does not seem to be much different from party democracy. Most studies on parliamentary voting do not, however, allow us to look at changes in voting unity over time. Kam’s (2009) study of four Westminster systems is an exception. He finds that while in the United Kingdom and Canada voting dissent has become more frequent and extensive over time, this is not the case in Australia and New Zealand. He concludes that MP dissent and electoral dealignment ‘appear to travel together’, which would entail that the changes in the electorate have indeed affected the relationship between MPs and their parties in parliament. This does not seem to be the case in the Dutch Second Chamber, however, as our analysis shows that voting unity has remained high, and has even increased over time, in the face of electoral volatility and partisan dealignment.

As opposed to Kam (2009), however, we were able to assess changes in the different pathways to party voting unity over time for our case of the Dutch national parliament, where we find that party agreement in terms of the distance MPs perceive between their own and their party’s position has increased over time, but party Left-Right ideological homogeneity has not. This discrepancy between perceived distance and party ideological homogeneity may be the result of MPs suffering from the same ‘hazy image’ of their party as that Manin claims voters do as a part of audience democracy. Party loyalty,

7.3. Implications

however, has increased over time, meaning that it is likely that Dutch parties have taken action to curtail the effects of changes in the electorate by increasing the importance of party loyalty as a candidate selection criterion. Whether parties in other parliaments have faced comparable changes in party agreement, and have responded in similar ways is not known, but there is little reason to assume that they would have not at least tried. That Kam (2009) does find an increase in voting dissent in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, however, seems to indicate that not all parties have been equally successful in their attempts.

Our analysis of the 15 national parliaments showed that party agreement as a pathway to party group unity is most affected by formal institutional configurations, especially parties' candidate selection (our results regarding electoral institutions are somewhat mixed). Thus, if political reformers would like to see a change in the composition of parliament in terms of the constellation of individual representatives' preferences, appealing to parties to democratize and decentralize their candidate selection procedures could be a way forward. This does not guarantee, however, that MPs will forge a closer relationship with their voters in terms of loyalty, that parties will not increase their use of discipline, and thus that this will impact party voting unity. Representation is, of course, not limited to parliamentary voting, and it could be that the altering institutions would result (or has already resulted) in other types of behavioral personalization by individual MPs. In their studies of the Israeli Parliament, for example, both Rahat and Sheaffer (2007) and Balmas et al. (2012) conclude that there over time has been an increase in decentralized behavioral personalization (measure in terms of the number of submissions and adoptions of private member bills, the use of roll call votes, and self-references in parliamentary speeches), and that this is likely to have resulted from institutional personalization (see subsection 2.4.2 in chapter 2). Given the advantages of parliamentary party group unity, however, it seems likely that parties will resist, and otherwise curtail, any changes that may diminish their role in the political chain of delegation (especially when it comes the legislative voting), if they have not done so already.

As a final remark, it is paradoxical that party group unity is deemed necessary for political representation, and sometimes even considered virtuous, but also carries a negative connotation. In the Netherlands, for example, MPs are often characterized as voting cattle (*stemvee*) subjected to *kadaverdiscipline*, blindly obeying the party's demands. The finding that MPs generally vote with the party of their own accord out of agreement and/or loyalty, and that discipline is usually not necessary and thus only plays a marginal role in determining MPs' voting behavior, should be used to shed new light on the debate concerning the freedom of in the individual MP and party group unity, as the two do not seem to be mutually exclusive.