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Abstract

This chapter examines the crucial role that political parties play in maintaining a unified voting bloc in parliament. This party-based approach sets it apart from most existing studies in this area. The focus of this chapter is on the factors that incentivize MPs to vote in a unified manner. The chapter tests three hypotheses: (1) whether party unity is improved by greater party organizational strength; (2) whether the greater threat of disciplinary sanctions increases party unity; and (3) whether greater access to resources by MPs reduces party unity. The authors use the Political Party Database (PPDB) dataset to test these hypotheses in thirteen of Europe's democracies, finding strong support for the third hypothesis, some support for the first hypothesis, but little support for the second hypothesis. This study adds an important new dimension to research on how institutions affect party unity by showing the distinct role party organizations can play in this regard.

Keywords

parliamentary cohesion, parliamentary discipline, party unity, party strength

Party Organization and Party Unity

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The coordinating role of parties in parliaments is at the heart of the ‘party government’ framework (Katz 1986). Political parties have a crucial role in maintaining a unified voting bloc in parliament. In the most recent book-length treatment of this subject Deschouwer and Depauw (2014: 29) observe that: ‘One of the very important rules of the game for party democracy is the unified action of party members in parliament.’ This is evident from the history of the development of the first wave of parties within parliaments (Duverger 1959; Scarrow 2015); it is also predicted by game theory (Laver and Shepsle 1999).¹

A high level of party unity matters for a number of reasons. It matters most of all for the parties themselves: indiscipline in parliamentary ranks—even if only involving a small number of recalcitrants—reduces a party’s effectiveness in parliament, invites media criticism and can cost votes (Carey 2007; Kam 2009; Tavits 2012b). Dissent ‘ignites a simmering collective action problem in the party (Docherty 1997: 169–70), one that undermines the electoral prospects of loyal MPs [...] and sends a sign of disunity and disorganization to voters’ (Kam 2009: 9). If the party is in government, this can have significant implications for policy outcomes and for governmental stability (Sieberer 2006: 171–2). A small number of dissenters can have a big effect on governments and policy, effectively increasing the majority a government needs to function and influencing coalition formation decisions. While democracy as such is not endangered by the individual acts of MPs voting against their party, frayed party voting unity undermines party-based

accountability, which is at the heart of the ‘responsible government’ model of democracy (Katz 1986). Party government over time clearly does depend on the aggregation of positions by parties and the stability provided by this (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999): perennial dissent may compromise a government, as witnessed in the dying days of the John Major government in Britain in the mid-1990s; it may also threaten democratic stability, particularly in new and consolidating democracies (Tavits 2012b; Field 2013).

This chapter examines the role of party organizations in affecting levels of party unity in parliament. We should start by clarifying terms, as there is a tendency to use the terms ‘unity’, ‘cohesion’, and ‘discipline’ interchangeably, something at least one of us has been guilty of in the past (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999). Following Sieberer (2006: 151), our primary interest is in party *unity*, by which we mean ‘the observable degree’ to which MPs in a parliamentary party ‘act in unison’. Unity is produced by two factors: (1) party discipline, which makes MPs vote in a certain way even if they may personally differ on the matter, and (2) party cohesion, which results from MPs sharing the same preference. Another way of expressing this is to talk of party unity as occurring in a sequential process (e.g., Hazan 2003; Andeweg and Thomassen 2011) in which to varying degrees—depending on individual circumstances—cohesion and discipline combine to produce some level of observable and thus measurable party unity.

The *party-based* approach adopted in this chapter sets it apart from much of the existing literature that has tended to focus to date on the impact of *national-level* institutions (and indeed the circumstances in which those institutions were developed: see Field 2013). From existing research we know that parliamentary systems tend to have a greater record in producing high levels of party unity than presidential systems (Huber 1996; Carey 2007,

2009). Electoral system design is also said to have a bearing on party unity. In his ‘competing principals’ framework, Carey uses cross-national evidence to show that voting unity is associated with the absence of intra-party competition (Carey 2007, 2009); though others find differently, suggesting perhaps a degree of uncertainty (or at least curvilinearity) about this relationship (e.g., Depauw and Martin 2009; Farrell et al. 2015).²

These studies have made important contributions to our understanding of how party unity can be influenced by national institutional features. But, of course, this only addresses part of the picture, a point noted by Depauw and Martin (2009: 103; see also Owens 2003: 26–7) who observe that the nearly-exclusive focus on system-level factors precludes an analysis of variation in party voting unity within the same system. Driven by the observation that party unity (and, more fundamentally, that MP behaviour) varies within institutional settings, some attention has been given to the effects of party organization on voting unity (Sieberer 2006; Depauw and Martin 2009; Tavits 2012b). But to date this line of research has faced a number of obstacles, not least over the lack of cross-national data on party organizations, requiring researchers to be inventive in the use of proxy measures. This is shown in Sieberer’s (2006) use of readily available party-level data such as incumbency, party size and the party’s ideological position. He sets out several hypotheses that refer to the power of the parliamentary party group leadership, and uses system-level data as a proxy for this control. Similarly, Coman (2015b) infers leadership strength and party finance from the electoral system and from system-level data on party financing, respectively. The relationship between concepts and indicators relating to party organizations seems strained at times: for example, Depauw and Martin (2009) argue that a large membership relative to the party’s electoral support indicates an inclusive candidate selection process.

Sieberer (2006: 164) observes that testing hypotheses concerning party organizational factors—specifically mechanisms of party discipline—is difficult because ‘no comparative data are available on the sort of sanctions the [parliamentary party group] leadership could use and, even less, the credibility of their use’ and concludes that ‘a more detailed analysis based on better data would be valuable’ (p. 165). Hazan (2003: 8) makes much the same point: ‘comparative knowledge of the tools that allow parties and parliaments to enforce obedience is lacking, which points to an urgent need for future research’. He observes that comparative data are ‘basically non-existent’ (p. 8). In her four-country study Tavits (2012b) too notes the difficulty in gathering basic organizational data such as on the numbers of members and party branches.

Nonetheless, researchers have made a number of findings—albeit several of them contradictory—concerning the effects of party attributes on party unity. First, there is the question of party size. Some studies have found that small parties are generally more unified than large parties, a finding that is attributed to their greater homogeneity (Lafranchi and Lüthi 1999; Raunio 1999), but more recent cross-national studies have found differing trends. For instance, Tavits (2012b; see also Sieberer 2006) finds that, if anything, it is the larger parties that manifest higher levels of unity.

Second, there is the governmental status of the party. Again, expectations and findings tend to vary. Sieberer (2006) highlights these contradictory expectations. On the one hand, the access to patronage, the need to survive votes of confidence and the very importance of unity for governing would lead to an assumption of greater unity (see also Carey 2009). However, against that the need to make unpopular decisions can affect levels of party unity. On the whole, Sieberer (2006: 169) finds that incumbency is associated with less voting

unity: ‘the need to take a position on divisive issues and possibly voting for tough compromises with coalition partners should be considered as important strains on party unity in legislative voting.’ In Tavits’ (2012b) study, on the other hand, governing parties are found to be more unified, although the statistical significance of the coefficients associated with incumbency is inconsistent across her models.

Third, and of central interest in this chapter, Tavits has made important findings relating to the extensiveness (or ‘strength’) of a party’s organization, delving deeper into party organizations for her data than most other cross-national studies. Her argument is that the stronger and more extensive a party’s organization on the ground, the greater is its electoral value to an MP: ‘the stronger the party organization, the more valuable the party is to the legislator, and the more credible and effective its threat to withdraw electoral benefits if a legislator undermines party unity’ (Tavits 2012b: 410). This is supported across three alternative indicators of party strength: membership, the coverage of local branches and the extensiveness of the party’s competition in local elections, though she does warn that the generalizability of her results is limited, given her focus on four countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Estonia). Further, the time periods within those countries (beginning in 1994 at the earliest and ending at the latest in 2010) may reflect quite different dynamics to more established democracies as those party systems and their constituent parties became increasingly institutionalized.

Fourth, there is some—albeit limited—evidence that the financial resources available to a party can matter. Tavits (2012b: 423–6) finds a small, marginally significant effect on levels of party unity relating to the size of a party’s budget. Her analysis also includes candidate selection mechanisms as a feature, although she finds no relationship between this

and party unity (Tavits 2012b: 424). This is at odds with research in Israel that shows how more ‘inclusive’ candidate selection processes can have significant effects on party unity within the Knesset (Rahat, Hazan, and Katz 2008).

Single-country research, too, points to a number of party attributes that influence party unity: party control of political finance, leadership control of candidate selection and other sanctions, and the division of labour within parties, as well as (and in conjunction with) national-level electoral and parliamentary institutions that influence unity (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011; Field 2013: 366–77).

The common reliance on system-level proxies and the contradictory findings associated with many of these relationships mean that we still know relatively little about the effects of party attributes—especially party organizational attributes—on voting unity. The Political Party Database (PPDB) presents an opportunity to develop these efforts further. In this chapter we use variables from the PPDB to investigate whether party organizational strength, disciplinary mechanisms and the internal distribution of organizational resources affect party cohesion. We start by outlining some problems and possible approaches to these questions.

EXPLAINING VOTING UNITY

Party unity is influenced by cohesiveness (similar preferences) and discipline (rewards and punishment).³ This chapter focuses on MPs’ positive incentives to cleave to the party line and the threat of punishment for not so doing. In this respect, we follow in the predominant rational-institutionalist tradition of party voting unity research (Sieberer 2006; Russell 2014). We do not claim to provide a full account of MPs’ voting behaviour, but rather we seek to examine the role of a specific set of factors, with our principal focus on formal, party-level

factors.⁴ In this section we set out a number of general and potentially complementary hypotheses that are each associated with several indicators.

Party Strength as an Incentive for Voting Unity

Tavits reasons—and indeed shows—that the greater a party’s organizational strength, the greater an electoral asset it is to its MPs, and the more that they will aim to avoid losing that asset (Tavits 2012a, 2012b; also Dudzinska et al. 2014: 34).⁵ Therefore, following Tavits, we hypothesize the following:

H1: The greater is party strength, the greater is party unity.

According to this account, a strong party organization is extensive and active beyond public office. A large party membership, for instance, indicates the number of strong party supporters and is a source of campaign resources, both of which can contribute to getting MPs re-elected. Just how party organizational strength may be measured and how broad the concept is, however, remains a matter to be discussed. Tavits (2012a: 84, 2012b: 412) acknowledges that party organizational strength has been conceptualized in a number of ways and, building on a plurality of existing literature, she opts for a definition that focuses on the ‘extensiveness and reach’ of party organization.

Party strength, in a form that can be an electoral asset for MPs, may come in other forms. They include the party’s monetary resources, which are arguably more important now than heretofore (not least in this modern-day ‘capital-intensive’ campaign age; Farrell and Webb 2000; see also Chapter 2 by Webb and Keith in this volume). While Tavits (2012b: 424) excludes financial resources from her measure of party strength, arguing that it ‘stretches’ the concept, she includes it in her analysis and acknowledges that ‘the

organizational strength of parties may simply reflect their financial situation'. Empirically, she finds that it has an independent causal role in determining voting unity, distinct from her measures of organizational extensiveness.

Party size and the resources with which this is associated within and beyond parliament may also be an asset. Larger parties are more likely to be able to support MPs in marginal seats: the rewards for loyalty can thus be greater. They can provide loyal legislators with safer positions on party lists or safe seats in single-member districts. Of course, party size may influence voting unity in other ways (for instance as an indicator of preference heterogeneity). Accordingly, findings concerning party size are mixed, although some recent cross-national studies indicate that larger party size is associated with higher levels of unity (Sieberer 2006; Tavits 2012b).

Another set of resources available to some parties is the gift of appointments to higher office (Martin 2014). Government parties, in particular, have access to these resources, such as the capacity to appoint ministers, and to patronage resources more generally. They may also have more power to shape the parliamentary agenda. However, as with party size, government membership is not only an indicator of greater resources; it may also raise the stakes of voting unity for the party (notably government survival), leading to greater efforts to mobilize and discipline MPs.

Party Discipline

A strong party organization is not sufficient for voting unity: MPs may be pulled in conflicting directions, on the one hand wanting to make use of the resources offered by their party organization, while on the other wanting to stand on their personal reputation (which

may be built on individualistic voting behaviour; Tavits 2012b: 413–14). While Tavits focuses on how the prospective *consequences* of sanctions vary with party organizational strength, she also mentions the *means* by which those sanctions can be applied—via candidate selection mechanisms and, potentially, through expulsion from the party. Control over these mechanisms makes the party leadership’s threat to withdraw electoral and other benefits from MPs credible, which leads to the following expectation:

H2: The greater the threat of disciplinary sanctions, the greater is party unity.

Previous studies have placed considerable emphasis on the centralization of candidate selection mechanisms as a disciplinary mechanism, but have come to different findings: Depauw and Martin (2009; also Sieberer 2006) find that it has a strong effect, while Tavits (2012b: 419) finds no significant effects.

MP Strength

MPs are not passive recipients of party benefits (provided by strong parties) and party discipline (administered by parties with the means to do so). Their resources as individual MPs—like parties’ resources—matter too, as they can use them to develop their own personal reputation, to initiate rebellions, and to sustain their careers, in some cases on the margins of their parliamentary party. These resources can help MPs to develop their own policy positions independent of the party, which over time may lead to conflict and dissenting votes. Ultimately, MPs’ resources and other institutions may contribute to the feasibility (or otherwise) of political life outside the parliamentary party. Thus:

H3: The greater the resources available to individual MPs, the lower is party unity.

Sieberer (2006), too, expects that MPs' resources will be negatively correlated with party unity. He examines MPs' strength in the form of policy-relevant resources (the strength of parliamentary committees, based on their right to rewrite bills and right to compel witnesses), as well as other resources (financial and staff resources, procedural privileges and the right to initiate bills), but neither are associated with statistically significant differences in voting unity.

PARTY UNITY AND RICE MEASURES

Our primary focus is on party voting unity in parliament, an over-arching indicator of the extent to which parliamentarians work together within a party. A parliamentary vote is arguably 'the ultimate test for the ability of a parliamentary party to act in unison' (Sieberer 2006: 158). While disunity in parliament does not capture all or even most forms of conflict within a parliamentary party (Field 2013), votes in parliament do reflect significant actions carried out by MPs on a regular basis.

The Rice index measures party unity using data on those voting yes and no ($\frac{\%Yes}{\%No}$). The dependent variable is calculated for parties over periods of a year or more. Many of the recent studies of voting unity have used the original Rice index, albeit acknowledging its limitations (e.g., Sieberer 2006; Depauw and Martin 2009). These limitations include its systematic overestimation of small parties' voting unity (Desposato 2005) and its failure to take into account non-votes and abstentions (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005). They also include—in common with alternative measures of voting unity—the Rice measure's reliance on roll-call votes. The circumstances in which roll-call votes are used vary between systems and in some prominent instances they are unlikely to be representative of the wider

population of votes (Saalfeld 1995; Carrubba et al. 2006). They may, for example, be used strategically to embarrass divided parties; they may or may not include free votes, which would be associated with lower levels of voting unity; or they may be used to discipline a party and therefore may be associated with higher voting unity. Further, the frequency with which they are used also varies widely (see Table 12.1). Where they are very frequent, they are more likely to be on relatively trivial issues and therefore are more likely to be associated with unified voting behaviour.

Some of these shortcomings can be at least partially addressed in the construction of the dependent variable. The impact of more trivial votes on a party's value can be limited by weighting close votes more heavily than unanimous votes (Carey 2007). Desposato's (2005) observation concerning the systematic over-estimation of small parties' unity values can be addressed by adjusting their scores according to the method proposed by Carey (2009). We both weight and adjust the Rice measure to derive an Adjusted Weighted Rice score for each party. We aim to control for other issues (such as the frequency of roll-call votes) in the multivariate analysis. However, we do not take account of non-voting or absences. They have uncertain significance: absences may indicate dissent, but they may also be authorized by the party (Field 2013); their exclusion simply acknowledges the fact that they are not accounted for by existing measures of voting unity (Tavits 2012b).

CASE SELECTION AND DATA

We examine parties' voting unity in twelve parliamentary democracies. Focusing on parliamentary democracies limits the diversity of the institutional contexts in which these parties operate. These systems are also similar in their relative stability, and this stability may

be necessary for identifying party organizational effects on voting unity (Sieberer 2006: 159). In other respects, however, these systems provide diverse contexts in which to examine the effects of party attributes on voting unity: they include Westminster (Ireland, UK), continental (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands), Scandinavian (Denmark, Sweden), Southern European (Italy) and Central European (Hungary, Poland) systems; a mix of established and new democracies; and a couple of semi-presidential systems (France, Poland). In this minimal respect they are more likely than more homogenous sets of countries to be representative of a wider selection of parliamentary democracies (Seawright and Gerring 2008), although we do not include some systems in which particularly low voting unity has been noted (e.g., New Zealand and Finland in the early and mid-1990s; see Sieberer 2006; Depauw and Martin 2009) due to data availability. Further, as the data refer to different time points, some parties do not appear in both data sets and therefore are not included in our analyses. This may bias the selection against those parties that were disintegrating while their roll-call data was being recorded (e.g., Volksunie in Belgium (Fitzmaurice 2004: 149)), perhaps providing a picture that is more stable and unified than was the case on average.

Our country selection is influenced by the availability of relatively recent parliamentary voting data for countries that are included in the PPDB. Emanuel Coman provided voting data for eleven of these countries (Coman 2015a, 2015b). These data include party- (and in many cases parliamentarian-) level data on parliamentary votes that occurred either over the course of a year or over the course of a parliamentary term. In addition, Lars Mäder (2015) provided data for the 17th (2009–2013) German *Bundestag*, scraped from its website.

Excluding parties with only one MP, 66 parties appear in both the PPDB and the available roll-call data. In most cases, the dependent variable precedes the party organizational independent variables from the PPDB. To minimize the time between the two measures, we select PPDB data for the earliest year available. Nonetheless, roll call data for the median observation (party) begins in June 2007 and ends in March 2009, while most observations have PPDB data for 2011. This means that the inferences to be made here are necessarily descriptive and exploratory. However, we know from the Katz and Mair (1992) analysis of party organizational change that parties are typically slow to change, so if we assume this to be the case, then the same relationships would hold where party organization data are available for earlier years. Moreover, there is little reason to suspect that the causal relationship runs in the opposite direction, from voting unity to party rules or resources.⁶ Finally, several variables included in the analysis are drawn from other sources and reflect the correct time-order in relation the dependent variable.

Voting unity is high in these parties, on average (see Table 12.1).⁷ Fifteen parties in three countries display perfect voting unity. These include four of the five Irish parties, eight of the ten Dutch parties and three of the seven Swedish parties. The mean Adjusted Weighted Rice score is 98.7 (std. dev. = 1.8). The least unified parties in the data set include Poland's Democratic Left Alliance (93.1), the Italian UDC (93.6), and the Conservatives and the Labour Party in the UK (93.6 and 94.6, respectively). The distribution of scores displays a strong negative skew and there is considerable variation in voting unity by country, which is statistically significant in a one-way ANOVA test ($F = 5.2, p < 0.001$). However, party unity clearly varies by party, not only by country, inviting party-level explanations. In Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the UK, the range of voting unity scores is particularly large. The

case of the Dutch Labour Party (95.8) stands out as a relatively fractious party in a system that displayed high (indeed, frequently perfect) levels of party voting unity during the late 2000s.

<COMP: INSERT TABLE 12.1 NEAR HERE>

To develop the analysis of the relationship between party strength, party disciplinary mechanisms, and MP strength, we select variables that correspond to each of the hypotheses. Many of these are measured at the level of individual parties, but some refer to system-level rules that provide additional information on the relationships between parties and their MPs.

We use a number of indicators of *party strength*. First, we use the Party Strength Index (PSI) developed by Webb and Keith (Chapter 2). The PSI draws on party membership and party income data in the PPDB, bringing together two party resources that Tavits's (2012b) study found were associated with higher party voting unity. However, it also reflects quite a different conceptualization of party strength than that suggested by Tavits. The PSI is an additive index created from the income per registered elector and the members per hundred registered electors (M/E), each of which is standardized before being combined (see Chapter 2 for details). For the cases examined here, PSI values range from the relative weakness of Plaid Cymru in the UK to the exceptional strength of the two main Austrian parties.

We also use size in parliament (the lower house) and incumbency as indicators of party strength in the legislative and governmental arenas, drawing on the *ParlGov* database (Döring and Manow, 2015). There is a wide range of party seat shares (from 0.5 per cent to 55 per cent), albeit with most parties holding less than a 12 per cent seat share. More than four in ten of the parties were in government.

The party's capacity to *discipline* its MPs is indicated by two variables. First, using information from the PPDB on candidate selection, we construct a binary variable that indicates whether or not the national party organization has a role in candidate selection. Where it does not (in approximately a quarter of cases), we can assume that it is lacking an important *ex post* mechanism for disciplining its MPs, as well as an *ex ante* mechanism for selecting a more cohesive or compliant set of MPs. Secondly, we take into account the parliamentary party group leader's membership *ex officio* on the party's national executive committee, which indicates a fusion of parliamentary and national leadership that may lay the basis for more unity of purpose within the leadership and coordinated action against dissenting MPs.⁸

MP strength is measured through variables that, for the most part, vary at the system level. We assume that MPs who receive a state subsidy directly (which occurs in 26 per cent of the cases here) are 'stronger' in relation to their party and, more specifically, are better equipped to bear the consequences of dissenting from the party's line in parliament. We also measure MPs' strength as the number of staff that they have available to them. The average number of full-time staff per MP varies from zero (in the Netherlands and in some Swedish parties) to more than four (in Germany, Denmark, Italy, Poland and some Swedish parties).⁹ The modal category, covering twenty-eight parties, is between one and three staff per MP. Finally, we assume that an MP's position with regard to their party is strengthened if the barriers to establishing a new parliamentary group with full rights are lower. We code this variable from the text entries in two PPDB variables, deducing the percentage of MPs required to gain full rights in parliament. This threshold varies from a single MP to over 5 per cent of the seats.¹⁰

In aiming to isolate the effects of party resources, party discipline and MP strength, there are a number of other factors that need to be taken into account. The first concerns *ideological diversity* within parties, which may directly influence voting unity. We use an indicator from the *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* on the ‘degree of dissent on European integration’ within the party at a time point prior to the period in which the roll-call votes were recorded.¹¹ While this is clearly a partial view of cohesion, it does provide some control for this potentially important factor.

At the system level, several researchers have suggested that larger *government majorities* ought to be associated with lower voting unity, as the stakes of dissenting voting behaviour become higher as the margin narrows. Tavits (2012b: 424) finds a large and significant effect, yet Sieberer (2006) does not find support for this hypothesis.¹² We measure the *candidate-orientation of the electoral system* using Farrell and McAllister’s (2006) index of candidate-orientation.¹³ This is a factor that operates through altering the balance of power between the party’s leadership and its candidates and, thus, incentives for MP voting behaviour (Carey 2007).¹⁴ Also at the system level, we control for the *frequency of roll-call votes*, in this case each month (see also Tavits 2012b; Coman 2015b).

<COMP: INSERT TABLE 12.2 NEAR HERE>

ANALYSIS

A preliminary analysis of voting unity by party family shows some inter-family variation, including some differences that are significant at the 0.1 level between the Social Democrats and both the Liberals and the Left Socialists (Figure 12.1). In particular, the lower mean

voting unity of parties that are typically larger and located near the centre of the political spectrum is notable, although these differences between party families are not statistically significant in a one-way ANOVA test ($F = 1.68, p = 0.15$). They are nonetheless surprising in some respects, as we might expect mainstream Social Democratic and Christian Democratic parties to be organizationally strong and to be relatively conventional—and therefore effective—in their disciplinary structures. On the other hand, the more clearly defined ideologies of the smaller party families may provide a focal point for cohesion that underlies higher voting unity, while managing fewer MPs may be an easier task for party leaderships.

<COMP: INSERT FIGURE 12.1 NEAR HERE>

A series of bivariate regressions (see Appendix, Table A12.1) shows that the coefficients of four of the seven variables tested (the Party Strength Index, government membership, the parliamentary party group leader being on the national executive, and the level of the threshold for party group recognition) have the expected sign. While they are not statistically significant, this nonetheless provides some preliminary support for each of the three hypotheses, taking into account the small sample size. One result is statistically significant at the conventional 0.05 level and it runs counter to prior expectations: greater seat share is associated with marginally *less* voting unity (coeff. = -0.03). Another is significant at the 0.1 level: parties in systems in which MPs receive subsidies are more unified, on average (coeff. = 0.89). Finally, parties in which the national party organization plays a role in candidate selection are marginally less unified than those in which it does not, although the coefficient is very small (-0.06).

The main analysis takes the form of a series of multivariate OLS regressions. Model 1 includes four control variables. Given the heavily skewed nature of the frequency of the roll-call votes variable and its marginal theoretical significance, we use its natural log in these analyses. This first model, which has an adjusted R^2 value of 0.18, provides a baseline against which subsequent models can be compared. Models 2 and 3 include variables associated with party strength. The former includes variables that have been tested in previous studies: seat share and incumbency. Models 3 to 7 involve the addition of variables derived from the PPDB. The Party Strength Index is added to Model 3. Models 4 and 5 address H2 by including, respectively, a variable indicating whether the national party has a role in candidate selection and whether the parliamentary party group leader sits, *ex officio*, on the party executive. Finally, Models 6 and 7 incorporate variables related to MPs' individual strength. Model 6 includes an institutional variable—the threshold that party groups need to meet in order to be recognized in parliament—and Model 7 includes two variables that indicate the nature and extent of resources available to individual MPs.

<COMP: INSERT TABLE 12.3 NEAR HERE>

It seems clear that some of the variables derived from the PPDB add considerable explanatory power to the models, although their impact is very uneven. The introduction of the Party Strength Index is associated with a marginal increase of approximately 0.02 in the adjusted R^2 value. The 'party discipline' variables appear to contribute little. The 'feasibility threshold' variable adds a little again, while the variables relating to MPs' resources are associated with a doubling of the adjusted R^2 in the final model.

H1 finds some support across the models. Incumbency is associated with a relatively large and positive coefficient across models and in all but one model it is significant at the

0.1 or 0.05 levels.¹⁵ Likewise, organizationally stronger parties (measured by the Party Strength Index) are associated with greater voting unity. The coefficients associated with the Party Strength Index are significant at the 0.1 level and at 0.05 in the final model. At the same time, party seat share has, if anything, the opposite effect to that expected: greater seat share is consistently associated with less voting unity.

H2, concerning the effect of mechanisms for party discipline on voting unity, is not supported by the models shown here, although each of the variables related to it is associated with positive (if non-significant) coefficients. Nor do the coefficients associated with the candidate-orientation of the electoral system—a control variable that could be associated with parties having stronger disciplinary powers—add support to this hypothesis.

The coefficients associated with H3 are particularly notable given their size and the extent to which they add to the variance explained. In substantive terms, they provide considerable, if not full support for H3. On the one hand, at the system level, the higher the threshold for the recognition of parliamentary groups, the greater is voting unity, as expected. This becomes statistically significant in Model 7. On the other hand, parties whose MPs are in receipt of a subsidy are considerably more unified (more than three points on the Adjusted Weighted Rice scale).¹⁶

The results in relation to MPs' staff resources provide considerable support for H3. As expected, parties whose MPs have several staff members (≥ 4 staff) are less unified than parties whose MPs have fewer staff (1–3 staff). However, parties whose MPs have zero staff are also less unified than parties whose MPs have few staff (1–3 staff). This latter result, which does not support H3, should however be treated with circumspection: only in the Netherlands and in some Swedish parties do MPs have zero staff, on average, and therefore

the result may reflect other country-specific idiosyncrasies. If Model 7 is run using a dichotomous variable (0–3 staff compared to ≥ 4 staff), the hypothesis is supported (coeff. = 1.3; $p=0.02$; model not shown).

Among the control variables included in each model, the control for cohesion (dissent on EU issues) is consistently associated with negative, sizeable, and statistically significant coefficients, as expected. The expected negative effect of a higher frequency of roll-call votes becomes insignificant as variables are added to the model. A larger government majority is consistently associated with small, negative coefficients and this becomes larger and statistically significant when MP resources are accounted for. Surprisingly, the extent to which the electoral system is candidate-orientated is not significant and the associated coefficients are very small.

Although the small number of observations presents some problems, the main results are robust to a number of alternative specifications. The results of Models 3, 6, and 7 (selected due to their significance for the results and interpretation) remain similar when run with robust standard errors to account for heteroscedasticity, although the effect of the Party Strength Index in the third and sixth model becomes non-significant and government membership becomes non-significant in the final model. We also re-ran these three models using robust regression with bi-square weighting to account for influential observations, which were revealed in diagnostic tests; again, they returned substantively similar results. Finally, these models were run without Belgian data, given the particularly large lag between the Belgian roll-call data and the PPDB data (see Table 12.1): these remain similar, but the party strength variables each become non-significant in Model 6 and government membership becomes non-significant in Model 7.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The PPDB dataset adds a considerable amount to the analysis of party voting unity. It has allowed us to examine the effects of variables that have not been examined heretofore, and in particular has enabled an examination at a party level of some variables that until now have only been measured at system level. While not all are associated with significant effects on party voting unity, this chapter has nonetheless demonstrated the potential importance of party organizational data to the study of party voting unity and has shed some light on the effects of party organization on this important outcome.

Clearly, voting unity is limited as an indicator of intra-party conflict. Unity (and disunity) may be apparent from party-switching (O'Brien and Shomer 2013) and splits, leadership challenges and other public conflicts. Voting is only one aspect of unity and unified voting can go side-by-side with disunity in other respects (Field 2013: 361). To take one example, Fianna Fáil, the main governing party in Ireland in the period 2007–2011, maintained a voting unity record of 1.0. Nonetheless, during this period, Fianna Fáil suffered multiple defections, internal conflicts and, towards the end of the period, two public leadership challenges. At the same time, Fine Gael (also credited with perfect voting unity) underwent major internal conflict, including a public leadership challenge. An important exercise for the future would be to develop better measures of the dependent variable: voting unity scores can only provide a partial picture.

Much of the analysis in this chapter has sought to add to Tavits's important work on the impact of party organizational strength on party outcomes. But it remains an open question how to measure the influence of party strength on MPs' incentives to act in a unified manner with their parties. Taking a different tack to Tavits we have found some limited evidence that

supports the idea that party strength (measured as an index of membership and financial strength) is associated with greater voting unity. Using the organizational data available in the PPDB, this concept may be developed further and perhaps differentiated depending on the arena (electoral, legislative, governmental, internal) in which its effects are being examined. The PPDB data offer an opportunity to do this, although the relevant aspects of party strength will necessarily differ depending on the outcome in question.

Undoubtedly, this chapter has opened up some questions. One of these relates to the behaviour of MPs in receipt of a public subsidy. Contrary to our expectations, they do not use their capacity as individual actors to deviate from their party; their parties are positively more unified than the parties of MPs not in receipt of a subsidy.

The chapter has also highlighted themes that we were unable to explore with the data available to us. One of these relates to measures of aspects of party discipline that are associated with MPs' voting behaviour, either through their operation, or the threat that they may be used. The suggestion that internal democracy is good for voting unity, perhaps grounded in the literature on social psychological explanations, might also be pursued empirically using PPDB data (Panebianco 1988; Maor 1998; Russell 2014). Another is MPs' ideas concerning their own roles and that of party ideology. Both the observed variation by party family and the coefficients associated with prior dissent on EU issues suggest that ideology plays an important role in binding these parties together. We can continue to expect that structures and resources—two of the dimensions highlighted in Chapter 1 and explored in this chapter—will play an important role in legislators' behaviour, and that their investigation will be facilitated by the accumulation of data in the PPDB over time, but this will need to be complemented by other data on MPs and on their parties.

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Appendix Table A12.1 Bivariate regressions with adjusted weighted Rice scores

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.
	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)
<i>(Intercept)</i>	98.6***	99.3***	98.4***	98.8***	98.6***	98.4***	98.2***
	(0.22)	(0.33)	(0.28)	(0.43)	(0.31)	(0.25)	(0.36)
<i>Party strength</i>							
Party Strength Index	0.13	.	.	.	.	.	.
	(0.11)						
Party size	.	-0.03**	.	.	.	.	.
		(0.01)					
In government	.	.	0.7	.	.	.	.
			(0.43)				
<i>Discipline</i>							
Candidate selection	.	.	.	-0.06	.	.	.
				(0.5)			
Leadership	.	.	.	.	0.16	.	.
					(0.44)		
<i>MP strength</i>							
MP subsidy	.	.	.	.	.	0.89*	.
						(0.49)	
Party group threshold	.	.	.	.	.	.	0.2

(0.13)

N	64	66	66	62	65	66	66
RMSE	1.77	1.7	1.74	1.67	1.78	1.73	1.74
R ²	0.02	0.08	0.04	0	0	0.05	0.04
Adj. R ²	0.01	0.07	0.02	-0.02	-0.01	0.03	0.02

* p =0.1** p =0.05*** p =0.01; see Table 12.2 for details of the variables used here.

Note: We ran an *ANOVA* test to examine differences between the categories in the ‘MP staff’ variable and party voting unity. While the differences in mean unity values accorded with expectations, they were not statistically significant ($p = 0.3$).

Table 12.1 Cases and data

Country	Roll-call vote data	No. of votes	PPDB data (Core module)	No. of parties	Adj. weighted Rice score		
					Min.	Med.	Max.
Austria	Oct. 2008—Apr. 2011	63	2013	5	98.8	99.5	99.9
Belgium	July 1999—July 2000	454	2011	9	99.5	99.7	99.8
Denmark	June 2006—June 2007	427	2011	7	98.9	99.6	99.7
France	Jan. 2009—Dec. 2009	394	2012	2	95.8	96.8	97.7
Germany	Dec. 2009—June 2013	234	2011	5	96.6	98.4	99.0
Hungary	Jan. 2008—Dec. 2008	2496	2011	2	95.8	97.5	99.2
Ireland	June 2007—Jan. 2011	612	2012	5	99.9	100.0	100.0
Italy	Jan. 2009—Dec. 2009	2906	2011	5	93.6	99.3	99.5
Netherlands	Dec. 2006—Mar. 2009	20	2011	10	95.4	100.0	100.0
Poland	Jan. 2009—Dec. 2009	1922	2012	4	93.1	96.7	97.9
Sweden	Sep. 2007—Aug. 2008	532	2011	7	97.5	100.0	100.0
UK	Jan. 2007—Dec. 2007	238	2011	5	93.6	97.5	98.2

* Throughout the chapter Rice index values are multiplied by 100.

Table 12.2 Descriptive statistics

Variable	Level ^a	N	Min.	Median	Mean	Std. dev.	Max.
Party voting unity: <i>adjusted weighted Rice index * 100</i>	P	66	93.1	99.5	98.7	1.8	100
Party strength							
Party size: <i>% seats, lower house</i>	P	66	0.5	11.8	17.5	14.8	55
In government (=1)	P	66	0	0	0.42	0.5	1
Party Strength Index (<i>membership and finances</i>)	P	64	-1.4	-0.4	0.16	2.0	12.27
Party discipline							
Candidate selection: <i>national party organization has a role</i> (=1)	P	62	0	1	0.76	0.43	1
Leadership: <i>PPG leader is ex officio on national executive</i> (=1)	P	65	0	0	0.49	0.5	1
Expulsion rules: <i>can expel members for political reasons</i> (=1)	P	65	0	1	0.92	0.27	1
MP strength							
Party group threshold:	S	66	0.16	2.4	2.19	1.6	5.1

*threshold for recognition of
legislative party groups, %
lower house seats*

MP subsidy: <i>MPs receive a subsidy (=1)</i>	S	66	0	0	0.26	0.44	1
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MP staff: <i>average number of full-time equivalent staff per MP (ordinal)</i>	P ^b	66	0	Mode = 1-3	NA	≥4
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Control variables

Roll call votes: <i>mean number of roll call votes per month</i>	S	64	0.74	35.6	55.2	80.1	264.8
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Government size: <i>% seats held by government parties, lower house</i>	S	66	39.1	53.3	53.2	6.2	62.7
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Cohesion: <i>internal dissent on EU issues (0-10)</i>	P	66	0.56	1.95	2.39	1.4	6.7
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Electoral system: <i>degree of candidate-orientation</i>	S	66	1.4	2.9	4.37	2.4	10
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^a Measurement level: System (S) or Party (P); ^b for the countries covered here, this variable varies between parties only in Sweden.

Table 12.3. Multivariate models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)	(S.E.)
	101.84*	101.82*	101.92*	102.22*	102.03*	102.44*	106.31**
(Intercept)	**	**	**	**	**	**	*
	(2.29)	(2.22)	(2.27)	(2.28)	(2.42)	(2.40)	(3.09)
Ln (Roll call	-0.31**	-0.30**	-0.25*	-0.15	-0.14	-0.13	0.08
votes)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Government	-0.02	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.05	-0.14***
size	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
-							
Cohesion	0.50***	-0.40***	-0.40***	-0.43***	-0.44***	-0.40**	-0.44***
	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.13)
Electoral	0.00	0.03	0.05	-0.01	-0.01	-0.05	-0.09
system	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Party							
strength							
Party size		-0.03	-0.03**	-0.04**	-0.03*	-0.03**	-0.03**
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
In		1.05**	0.92**	0.71*	0.69	0.74*	0.65*
government		(0.42)	(0.43)	(0.42)	(0.43)	(0.42)	(0.37)
Party			0.20*	0.20*	0.20*	0.18*	0.18**

Strength							
Index			(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Party							
discipline							
Candidate			0.04	0.06	0.39	0.41	
selection			(0.48)	(0.49)	(0.52)	(0.44)	
Leadership				0.11	0.35	0.48	
				(0.47)	(0.48)	(0.42)	
MP strength							
Party group					0.23	0.62***	
threshold					(0.14)	(0.14)	
MP subsidy						3.15***	
						(0.87)	
MP staff (0						-2.32**	
staff)						(0.99)	
MP staff (≥ 4						-2.04***	
staff)						(0.60)	
N	66	66	64	61	61	61	61
RMSE	1.61	1.54	1.54	1.44	1.45	1.43	1.19
R ²	0.22	0.30	0.33	0.35	0.35	0.39	0.60
Adj. R ²	0.17	0.23	0.25	0.25	0.24	0.26	0.49

* $p \leq 0.1$ ** $p \leq 0.05$ *** $p \leq 0.01$. The reference category for 'MP staff' is 1-3 staff per MP.

Notes

- ¹. The only exceptions to this rule are micro-states like Tuvalu or the Isle of Man that can manage their affairs in a more informal manner (Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister 2011).
- ². One other institutional feature that Carey (2007, 2009) draws attention to is the distinction between unitary and federal systems, the latter dissipating national party leadership control over their troops.
- ³. Arguably there are other factors (not considered here) that can also have an impact on party unity, such as agenda control and MPs' socialization (see Hazan 2003; Carey 2007; Kam 2009).
- ⁴. One angle we don't pursue in this chapter is the 'sequential approach' most closely associated with Andeweg and Thomassen (2011), and recently applied using PARTIREP data by van Vanno et al. (2014). Our party-centred approach ruled out the use of the PARTIREP data due to the relatively small number of responses per party, on average.
- ⁵. On the other hand, Depauw and Martin (2009: 111) find that party membership—specifically the proportion of party voters who claim to be party members—is associated with reduced party unity in a bivariate analysis. However, they note the strong relationship in one country (Finland) and this effect does not remain significant after country dummies have been included.
- ⁶. We thank the editors for this observation.
- ⁷. In measuring the Rice Score, we exclude votes in which only one member of the party voted yes or no (Carey 2007).
- ⁸. A third variable relating to discipline, indicating the party's capacity to expel members for political reasons is included in Table 12.2 for descriptive purposes, but is left out of the other analyses in the chapter due to the lack of variation among the parties in question (92 per cent can expel members for political reasons).

- ⁹. This variable is recoded from the PPDB data. This involves merging the top two categories (4–8 staff and >8 staff per MP, which represent five parties and nineteen parties, respectively, in our sample). We merge these categories because the former category is so populated sparsely and only by German parties.
- ¹⁰. In the German data, parliamentary votes by CDU and CSU deputies are recorded as ‘CDU/CSU’. We have aggregated the two parties’ values for seat share and for the components of the party strength index to capture their joint strength. The parties differ in their rules concerning the leader’s position on the executive; in this instance, we have simply used the larger party’s rule.
- ¹¹. The only exception in this regard is Belgium: in this instance, the cohesion data are drawn from the first year for which roll-call data are available (1999).
- ¹². In the case of Hungary, the roll-call data (January 2008—June 2008) covers a period of coalition government and, after the junior coalition partner left in April, single party government. We record the majority from the single-party period because this covers more of the period. In the Netherlands, the data do not take into account the last couple of months of the Balkenende III caretaker government.
- ¹³. The electoral systems are coded as follows: Austria, Ordered list, 2.9; Belgium, Ordered list, 2.9; Denmark, Open list, 7.1; Germany, MM with plurality, 3.6; Hungary, MM with runoff, 4.7; Ireland, STV, 10; Israel, Closed list, 1.4; Italy, Closed list, 1.4; Netherlands, Ordered list, 2.9; Norway, Ordered list, 2.9; Poland, Open list, 7.1; Portugal, Closed list, 1.4; Spain, Closed list, 1.4; Sweden, Ordered list, 2.9; UK, SMD, plurality, 4.3.
- ¹⁴. The significance of the electoral system might plausibly extend to encompass aspects of party discipline. However, the role of the party in candidate selection is partly accounted for by a

separate variable that correlates very weakly with the candidate-orientation of the electoral system ($r = 0.02, p = 0.86$).

- ¹⁵. Results that reach the 0.1 level of statistical significance are highlighted in Table 12.3 and are reported here due to the small number of observations.
- ¹⁶. The Irish case may offer one possible explanation for the contrary finding relating to the public subsidy. The allocation of state funding of parliamentary parties is determined on the basis of the election result, so that in the event that a parliamentarian leaves or is expelled from the party the funding stays with the party rather than follow the parliamentarian. This is likely to be one of the factors behind the Irish parliament's particularly high voter unity scores (see Farrell et al. 2015).