

Persuasion and Consensus: Dissent Management in
the European Parliament

By

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Abstract

What explains the variation of dissent levels among party groups in the European Parliament and why are party group cohesion levels on the whole so high? How do party group leaders manage dissent and how does this impact the form of dissent expression by individual MEPs? To provide answers to these questions, I conducted field research consisting of eighty-four elite-centered interviews, and observations of thirty-three party group meetings. The research was divided into two phases in the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012 in Brussels, Belgium and Strasbourg, France where the parliament holds its sessions. Dissent is more broadly defined in the study to encompass outlets for expression prior to plenary (party group meetings) and options in plenary such as voting to abstain. In addition, cohesion is defined more broadly to encompass members' attitudes toward group unity (See Brown 2000) as well as the extent to which the party group is unified in roll-call votes.

I find that an MEP's ideology at the individual level in conjunction with a whip structure and socialization processes at the group level explains variation in dissent levels among party groups. MEP ideology refers to the proximity of an MEP's views to those of the party group on a given subject (See Hix et al. 2007). However, ideology does not explain instances where a dissenting MEP changes their position or decides to express dissent in a less costly manner. Accordingly, party group leaders acting as legislative entrepreneurs develop strategies and construct forums to facilitate dissent management. Dissent management or whip structures function as an early alert system and consist of clearly assigned roles to group leaders (president, vice-presidents, etc.) and group forums within a communication network in which leaders (and staff) share information and collaborate to ensure maximum support for the group line. Socialization processes facilitate lobbying efforts and consist of norms governing dissent announcement by MEPs as well as a shared conceptualization of the (party) group identity. In this sense, MEPs adopt the group line or select a less costly form of dissent because it is the appropriate or norm of behavior.

Dedication

This dissertation and the work I put into it is dedicated to my father and mother, Robert and Edna Kroh. Thank you for watching over and inspiring me

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This project could not have been completed without the help of so many people on two continents. Identifying the necessary resources, booking both field research trips, conducting the interviews, and securing permission for meeting observations took the better part of three years and has been both the most challenging and rewarding experience of my life outside of teaching.

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The biggest challenge associated with this project has been to secure the necessary funding to ensure at least two phases of extensive field research in Brussels, Belgium and Strasbourg, France where the parliament holds session. While I had to contribute a substantial amount of personal funds, I did receive extensive financial support from other sources. For this, I am grateful to the KU political science department, the KU financial aid and study abroad offices, the European Union Studies Association, and the Peter Gilles Springer Scholarship for all of their assistance. I am also grateful to all of those who wrote letters or provided references on my behalf to a wide variety of potential financial sources. Thank you for your diligence.

The next biggest challenge was logistics. Getting access on a single day let alone on a regular basis into the European Parliament is to say the least no easy feat. For this, I am very grateful to Jesper Haglund from the EPP secretariat who with great patience and perseverance weeded through the bureaucratic jungle to secure a long-term pass for me with access to group meetings and other venues which with his reference ballooned into similar access to other party groups. I also wish to acknowledge the help I received from other members of various party group secretariats who provided assistance in securing access to their group forums and for facilitating interviews. In particular, I wish to acknowledge: Theresa Pereira (S & D), Silvia Pogliani (Greens/EFA), Alexander Beels (ALDE), and so many countless other staff, administrative assistants, and others who made the field research possible. I also wish to thank all of those MEPs who graciously consented and followed through with interviews. Their insight and those of the staff I interviewed provide the foundation for this project. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the support of Bill Newton Dunn (ALDE, and Stephen Hughes (S & D), who helped with access and provided much appreciated words of support and encouragement.

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CHAPTER ONE: MANAGING DISSENT IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

INTRODUCTION

What explains the variation of dissent levels among party groups in the European Parliament and why are party group cohesion levels on the whole so high? Given such patterns, how do party group leaders manage dissent and how does this impact the form of dissent expression by individual MEPs? To provide answers to these questions, I conducted field research consisting of elite-centered interviews, and observations of party group meetings. A field study is necessary because while surveys are useful for explaining individual motivations for behavior, other methods are better suited to identify group level processes and structures (Kitschelt, 1989, 305). In turn, explanations for dissent level variation are examined in this project through a data set of responses from eighty-four MEPs and staff interviews acting as informed experts on group level processes supplemented by observations of party group meetings and other forums.

While past studies (See Hix et al. 2007, Kreppel 2002) have provided important analyses of party group cohesion and broaden our understanding of how the European Parliament is organized and functions, we still know very little about how party groups achieve such relatively high group cohesion rates. In turn, the primary goal of this study is to uncover the hidden processes associated with dissent management in the European Parliament in terms of the organizational structures and tactics employed by party group leaders. To do so requires direct accounts of dissent management (or the lack thereof) and assessment of those accounts primarily from elites within party groups as well as observing the processes associated with and the behavior exhibited by members in party group meetings which are normally closed to the public.

The impetus for this study is primarily derived from the fact that we know very little about the role of particular party group leaders. While past studies have clarified the role of group rapporteurs and committee coordinators (See Ringe 2010, Lindberg 2008, and Hix et al. 2007),

we know very little about the role of and the dissent management tactics employed by party group presidents and vice-presidents. In turn, we know little in regards to how party groups manage dissent where roll-call votes are absent, as well as when plenary votes are roll-called. In other words, we lack an explanation for how party groups address dissent both prior to a roll-call vote, but also in particular to the majority of instances in plenary sessions and indeed in all party group or legislative committee meetings where votes by individual MEPs are not recorded.

Obtaining a better understanding of how party groups manage dissent is important because party groups are the driving force behind the passage of legislation in the European Parliament. As Bowler et al. (1999) note, legislative parties must ensure their members are unified or at a minimum nearly unified. “Majorities rule, and whoever can form and keep together a majority wins the legislative game, through shaping policies and programs in order to keep on winning in the future” (Bowler et al. 1999, 3). In turn, identifying both the full extent of dissent and the processes through which party groups manage dissent is necessary as decision-making increasingly shifts from the national to the supranational level and as the European Parliament secures increasing authority and influence.

With the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), the European Parliament now holds co-decision authority on nearly all policy areas and even prior to Lisbon its legislative impact was evident in that 60% of all legislation at the national level in the twenty-seven member-states originated at the EU level (Benoit and McElroy, 2007, 4-5). Now more than ever, it is imperative for group leaders to secure maximum levels of cohesion and minimal levels of dissent expression as the legislative stakes are much higher. As Hix and Hoyland (2011) note, “more at stake means more incentives to strengthen the division of labor inside the political groups to try and win votes to shift outcomes in a particular policy direction” (Hix and Hoyland, 2011, 143).

Higher legislative stakes have in turn incentivized party group leaders and staff to monitor roll-call votes and identify dissent prior to plenary votes. As a party group secretary-general below notes, while it is rare for party group leaders or staff to ‘call in’ a frequently dissenting member to ask them to account for their voting behavior, party groups are on the whole not passive bystanders but rather ‘legislative entrepreneurs’ (See Cox and McCubbins 2007) who utilize all the tools at their disposal to ensure adherence to the group line and minimal dissent.

“With roll call votes, and with independent monitors like VoteWatch, this has a disciplining effect on members, as all are aware that the strength of our group is our voting cohesion. By having a fully transparent way to see how members voted, there is an understanding that deviation from the group line must be limited to very special cases”. (July 11, 2012)

If managing dissent within party groups is crucial for EU policy-making, then how should dissent be defined? Ozbudun (1970) defines dissent as “when a party member acts against his or her party” (Ozbudun, 1970, 305). In this sense, dissent may be expressed in many forms and occur throughout the stages comprising the legislative process. However some expressions of dissent have a greater impact upon party unity and legislative outcomes than others with varying consequences depending in part upon the stage within the legislative process it is expressed. Dissent in this study is defined as opposing the party group position (or line) on legislation which is identified by party group leaders or attained through a majority vote in the group meeting. In turn, I measure dissent expression according to an eight level scale which is a modification of one proposed by Crowe (1983) which ranges from expressing dissent in group meetings to opposing the group line on an entire report in plenary (See Chapter Two for more details).

Upon the completion and review of field research, I find that the overall high group cohesion rates and the variation in party group dissent rates is a product of ideology at the individual level and of a dissent management or ‘whip’ structure in conjunction with socialization processes at the party group level.

MEP IDEOLOGY + WHIP STRUCTURE + SOCIALIZATION = LOW DISSENT LEVELS

Ideology in relation to this study is defined as MEP or staff beliefs according to the traditional left-right axis but also on the national sovereignty-European integration spectrum. My assumptions in regards to the individual level are based on the findings of Hix et al. (2007), in that as the beliefs of an individual MEP are closer to the group ideological mean, they are more likely to adopt the group position on a given report and as they are more distant from the group ideological mean, they are more likely to dissent (Hix et al. 2007, 101). However, individual ideology is insufficient in providing a complete explanation for successful dissent management practices, particularly in instances when an MEP has decided to move away from dissent and support the group line or to express dissent at a less costly level (voting to abstain, etc.).

Building upon shared ideological foundations, leaders across party groups (apart from the EFD) to various extents form whip structures and rely upon socialization processes to manage dissent. The contribution of leaders to party group cohesion was confirmed by Bailer et al. (2009) in that “Voting cohesion is not only a result of ideological homogeneity but also a result of party discipline imposed by the party group leaders. Cohesive party groups are desirable in the European Parliament because they facilitate consensual and collective decision-making within the group and in dealings in the European Parliament, as well as with outside actors” (Bailer et al. 356, 2009). However, past studies have not mapped the successful dissent management strategies pursued by party group leaders. In turn, interview responses obtained in this field study (corroborated by group meeting observations) find that the more cohesive party groups are those that employ and fully utilize a whip structure.

A whip structure functions as an early alert system and consists of clearly assigned dissent management roles to group leaders (president, vice-presidents, coordinators and rapporteurs) and

operates as a communication network in which leaders (and staff) share information and collaborate to ensure maximum support for the group line. For example, the more cohesive groups are led by elites who utilize party group meetings to identify and address dissent but also manage dissent prior to and following the group meeting through a variety of tactics. In some cases, dissent is addressed by particular group leaders at specific legislative stages such as by coordinators in committees. However, I find that dissent in the more cohesive groups is monitored and addressed throughout the legislative process by a team or network of group leaders communicating with and acting in concert with one another. The goal of these leaders is to ensure widespread compliance with the group line or to at the least ensure that dissent is expressed by individual MEPs or national delegations at a less costly level.

In this sense, I contend that leaders in the more cohesive party groups are legislative entrepreneurs who utilize the formal and informal processes at their disposal to ensure plenary success. This does not translate into a ‘Westminster’ model in that as Ringe (2010) noted, “party groups are not top-down enforcers of party discipline, but rather umbrellas for MEPs with similar preferences concerning the expected consequences of a law” (Ringe, 2010, 9). However, party groups are provided with legislative incentive through a series of treaties empowering the parliament with co-decision authority and with expanding European integration (in conjunction with individual and partisan preferences) to ensure minimal dissent through appeals and in compromises with dissenting or wavering members.

In turn, while leaders can and do lobby on the merits of legislation or make appeals centered on the politics of a particular vote, I find that group leaders often rely upon socialization which is defined by Kam (2002) as “the process of exposure or learning through which legislators acquire certain norms” (Kam, 2002, 194) to achieve their goals. In turn, Kam contends that norms

impose a sense of duty to support the leadership position and are re-enforced over time through experience with the legislative process and mimicking the similar behavior of colleagues. In this sense, socialization provides leaders with a less costly means of managing dissent in comparison to strictly disciplinary tactics (Kam, 2002, 194).

Norms may be classified as informal (customs, traditions, and practices) or formal which are practices codified into rules (Smith, 2004, 45). Informal norms within party groups may be utilized by leaders to minimize and signal dissent. For example, the more cohesive party groups informally require that MEPs announce voting intentions in party group meetings (Raunio, 1999, 193). Socialization processes raise the secondary goal for the study in that I broaden the definition of group cohesion from solely the rate of individual members supporting the group line reflected in roll-call votes to encompass the extent to which an MEP identifies with other members in the group and with the group's goals and values (See Brown 2000).

As Brown (2000) contends "Our sense of who we are and what we are worth is intimately bound up with our group memberships" (Brown, 2000, 28). For example, party group members may come to define their individual success or failure in terms of the success or failure of the group and accordingly make (voting) decisions based upon the likelihood their actions will contribute toward the group's success in achieving its goals. As a consequence, high group cohesion rates are in part attained through a series of socializing processes culminating in members seeing themselves as 'Greens', or 'Socialists', rather than solely as individuals or as members of particular delegations. In contrast, in the least cohesive group (EFD), while members share a conceptualization of their group's identity, it is one built on national sovereignty and opposition to everything 'European' and therefore not conducive to group unity as members (delegations) freely pursue separate agendas rather than identify and pursue a group agenda.

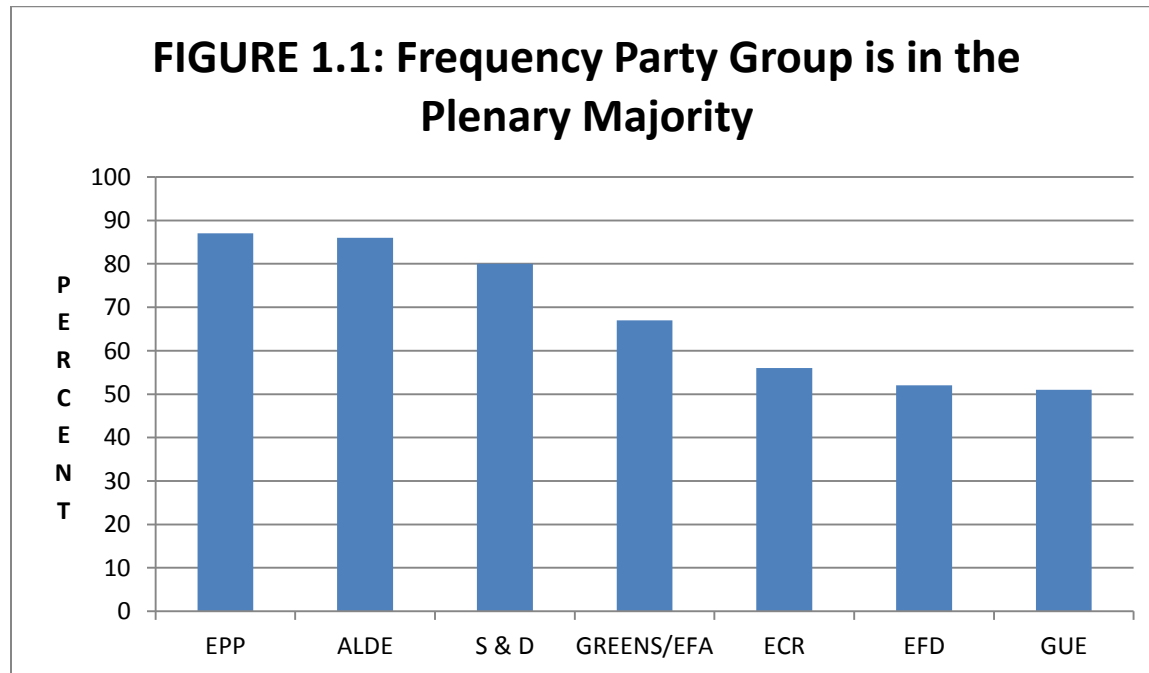
TABLE 1.1: PARTY GROUP COHESION/DISSENT RATES

PARTY GROUP	COHESION RATE	DISSENT RATE
GREENS/EFA	.947	0.053
EPP	.931	0.069
S & D	.928	0.072
ALDE	.898	0.102
ECR	.868	0.132
GUE	.816	0.184
EFD	.498	0.502

Note: Party group cohesion/dissent rates are listed in descending order and reflect plenary roll-call votes during the current parliament (July 2009-March 2013) prior to the accession of Croatia into the EU.

Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

In turn, I argue that the party groups with the highest dissent levels as depicted above in Table 1.1 are those who do not: have high degrees of ideological homogeneity, assign clear dissent management roles, fully utilize group forums to build consensus, and who lack a shared group identity supported by informal processes governing dissent and other behavior. The table provides the third motivation for field research in that it reveals anomalies in regards to the cohesion rates of specific groups in relation to their level of plenary influence defined as the percentage of times the group is in the majority in plenary voting (See Figure 1.1 below).



Note: Graph depicts percentage of times each party group has been in the plenary majority in the current parliament and is arranged from the most to least influential group. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

Specifically, why are the Greens/EFA the most cohesive group yet the fourth largest and influential and why is the ALDE the fourth most cohesive despite their standing as the second most influential group in the parliament? In other words, why do the cohesion (dissent) levels of particular groups not correspond to their level of plenary influence given that greater plenary influence should provide incentive for group leaders to secure high cohesion rates? The answers to both questions I find relate to the extent to which all components of the equation for low dissent levels are present within the respective party groups.

The Greens/EFA are largely ideologically homogeneous (See Farrell et al. 2011 and Hix et al. 2007), but they also have a whip structure with key roles assigned to the group co-presidents, vice-presidents, and the secretary-general, which identifies and manages dissent at every legislative stage through constant lobbying and socialization. In turn, members share a positive conceptualization of the group identity, and are invested in the group decision-making process (See Garner and Letki 2005). In contrast, I find that the ALDE, while achieving relatively high cohesion rates, have comparatively higher dissent than the three most cohesive groups because they are: more ideologically heterogeneous, fail to utilize group vice-presidents in dissent management, lack a group whip, and because members negatively view the role of the horizontal working groups (group members from committees with similar policy portfolios). In turn, the three least cohesive party groups are far more deficient in whip structure components and socialization processes, and are more ideologically heterogeneous.

Having presented my general findings and rationale for field research, the remainder of this initial chapter will proceed as follows. I will first present a review of the relevant literature addressing party group cohesion in the European Parliament in order to lay the groundwork for my research analysis in subsequent chapters. Next, I consider the European Parliament as a

unique institution in terms of its history and organization. This section will include a brief assessment of whether the parliament is a true legislature in light of the obvious democratic deficit and the supranational organization accompanying the EU decision-making process. Finally, I end with a cursory review of the subsequent chapters in order to provide the reader with an outline of the organization of the dissertation and its findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What we know about party groups largely derives from cohesion studies involving analysis of plenary roll-call votes. Such studies have provided a wealth of information regarding MEP voting behavior and valuable insight into how the European Parliament operates as highlighted by the work of Hix (2002), Hix et al. (2007) and Hix and Noury (2009). From these studies, we have learned that: (1) party groups have become increasingly cohesive since the first parliament elections in 1979, (2) cross-party cooperation between the two largest groups has declined within the same period and (3) left-right policy preferences of national parties predict the voting behavior of MEPs (Hix and Noury, 2009, 1256).

We have also learned from recent European Parliament studies that while MEPs retain strong attitudinal and ideological links to their national party, MEPs have stronger regulatory links to their party groups in daily work than to their national parties back home (See Rasmussen 2008). This is in part a reflection of party group influence over committee assignments, as well as control of speaking time in plenary, but also the extent and frequency of communication between party group leadership and MEPs in monitoring day-to-day behavior (Rasmussen, 2008, 1168). As Lindberg et al. (2008) note, “MEPs are torn between their loyalty towards the national party, which is important for their future careers, and the transnational party group, which can be instrumental for their policy goals” (Lindberg et al. 2008, 1121).

The divide in an MEP's loyalties is perhaps best evident in the debate associated with prominent reports such as the Services Directive (See Lindberg et al. 2008 and Hix et al. 2007) and was also evident during my field research when cohesion rates were lower for most groups on the "six-pack" and two-pack" votes (banking union and fiscal integration) when compared to the average group cohesion rates for the current parliament as a whole (See www.votewatch.edu). However, I find that the more cohesive party groups have on the whole mitigated the competing principals' dilemma (See Carey 2007) in that despite their origins as a collection of national parties (who control re-nomination) party groups on the whole have maintained consistently high cohesion levels through the development of whip structures and the promotion of socialization processes which in conjunction mitigate levels of dissent expression.

It is important at this point to stress that neither Rasmussen's nor my findings do not conflict with those of Hix (2002) in which national party positions trump those of party group positions in influencing MEP voting behavior when the two are in conflict. Rather, I contend that in the bulk of voting decisions, party groups have just as much if not more impact upon MEP voting behavior and that dissent management by group leaders mitigates the extent and form of dissent expression. In this sense, because MEPs need the support of their party group to ensure that their legislative goals are accomplished and because party group leaders understand the importance of constant dialogue, intra-group communication networks have facilitated low dissent levels. In addition, I contend that the more cohesive party groups have instilled particular norms governing MEP behavior through informal communication or socialization which leads MEPs to support the group line as it is perceived to be the appropriate action.

Similarly, Ladrech (2007) concluded that weak communicative links between national delegations in the European Parliament and domestic national party leaders facilitated party

group efforts to influence MEP voting behavior. “Yet the basis upon which most MEPs make most of their decisions, apart from clear national priority issues, are derived from the positions...of their respective EP party groups” (Ladrech, 2007, 957). Despite the enormous contributions of these studies, we know relatively little about party groups in terms of how group leaders secure voting cohesion. More precisely, past studies have neglected the stage of party group meetings in dissent management when examining group cohesion levels and in turn have failed to provide a framework for how particular party group leaders (presidents and vice-presidents.) coordinate efforts with national party delegations or appeal to individual MEPs within the group to ensure that dissent is both identified and minimized. As Lindberg et al. (2008) note, “Our understanding of the legislative interplay between national party delegations and fragmental party groups in the EP is still limited” (Lindberg et al. 2008, 1200).

This gap in the literature is in large part a product of institutional limitations in that roll-call votes constitute a small and unrepresentative sample of all plenary session votes (Kreppel 2002 and Carrubba et al. 2006). For example, when the period of July 1999-July 2000 is considered, Carrubba et al. found that: 1. Roll-call votes were not a random sample of the population of votes in that they were disproportionately representative of resolutions compared to other types of legislation. 2. The number of roll-call votes taken at second or third reading in the co-decision stage was under-measured as are votes on conciliation where differences with the Council may be resolved (Carrubba et al. 2006, 696).

The authors also found that roll-call votes in plenary sessions are not representative of legislation from all committees. “A majority of roll-call votes originate in just a few committees. Three committees accounted for 63.88% of RCVS, but only 28.35% of all votes” (Carrubba et al. 2006, 699). For example, legislation from the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

represented 15.69% of all roll-call votes, while no roll-call votes were ever requested during the investigated period for legislation from the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (Carrubba et al, 2006, Table 2, 699). While roll-call votes remain a useful tool for party group studies, the authors conclude that "The party groups are systematically hiding exactly the voting behavior we are interested in studying" (Carrubba et al. 2006, 699).

With an expanded legislative role for the European Parliament, the impetus for identifying and managing dissent at all levels and at every stage in the legislative process is greater than ever before. As Hix and Noury (2009) note, party groups have evolved into "powerful actors able to marshal their troops in support of the policy positions of the group leaders" (Hix and Noury 2009, 821). The question remains of how party groups accomplish this task. While MEP candidate selection is controlled by the national parties, party group leaders do exert extensive influence over the distribution of legislative and party group offices.

For example, rapporteur selection is completed by group leaders to various extents with consideration toward group loyalty in plenary voting (Lindberg, 2008, 1190). Above all, party groups ultimately determine legislative outcomes through their role as amendment gatekeepers in plenary and in oversight of the development of legislation and the group line prior to plenary. In turn, MEPs, while exercising relatively greater freedom in shaping the direction of legislation compared to most MPs at the national level (See Simon Hix et al. 2007), must work within party group organizational and social structures to secure favored plenary outcomes.

For example, while MEPs have wider discretion in shaping legislation at the committee level than in national parliaments, they can only obtain their individual legislative goals with the backing of their party group. In addition, leaders may influence the voting behavior of group members through control of information and through provision of forums where the group line

may be formulated and where leadership can secure maximum support. Ringe (2010) characterized this relationship within party groups in terms of rapporteurs, coordinators and other policy experts setting the group line with rank-and-file MEPs following the lead of these experts in most votes due largely to information constraints. “EP decision-making is founded on a division of labor and an exchange of information between expert and non-expert legislators based on perceived preference coherence. Legislators are often quite uninformed about the policies they exact because of very real external constraints on their ability to collect information” (Ringe, 2010, 209).

Each year, MEPs are confronted with the task of voting on numerous reports and resolutions with each often accompanied by hundreds of amendments. Knowing each amendment or report inside and out is a daunting challenge at the committee let alone at the plenary level. When lacking expertise on a given report or confronted with information overload, MEPs may conclude that the most optimal course of action to secure their policymaking preferences is to defer to policy experts who have invested their resources into more fully understanding the issue at hand (Ringe, 2010, 33). Given the influence of party group leaders, it is necessary at this stage of the chapter to identify both the historical foundation as well as the organizational structure of the European Parliament (and particularly that of the party groups).

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: A UNIQUE INSTITUTION

The European Parliament was the first supranational parliament in the world (there is now one in Latin America as well) and remains the only with legislative powers. Unlike the UN and other intergovernmental bodies, the European Parliament is not appointed by national governments and organized according to national delegations but rather since 1979 it has been directly elected by voters within EU member-states in a series of contests among national parties every five years during the month of June. Following the elections, MEPs from respective

national parties organize into (currently) seven ideological umbrella organizations or party groups across national lines or in some cases do not join party groups and remain non-attached (currently there are twenty-nine such MEPs). The road to political and legislative relevance has been a long and arduous one for the European Parliament.

The Treaty of Luxembourg in 1970 provided a new budgetary procedure where the European Parliament could reject the EU budget and amend certain budget lines excluding agriculture and regional spending (Hix et al. 2007, 14). Later, the Treaty of Maastricht (1993) placed constitutional limitations upon the Council of Ministers in that it cannot act unilaterally while the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) expanded the number of policy areas where the parliament enjoyed equal standing (co-decision) with other EU institutions (Hix et al. 2007, 14). The European Parliament later acquired co-decision in ninety-five percent of policy areas (including agriculture, immigration, and trade) through the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) which also removed the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditures thereby providing the parliament with greater flexibility to increase or cut EU spending levels across policy areas (Judge and Earnshaw, 2008, 65). As stated on the European Parliament's website, with the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon, "the Parliament now has a role to play in almost all lawmaking" (www.europarl.europa.eu).

This evolutionary process of expanded legislative authority for the European Parliament raises the question of whether it is a parliament in the fullest sense given the absence of a government-opposition structure and the limitations placed upon it by EU constitutional law. Despite the advances culminating in the Treaty of Lisbon, a democratic deficit remains in that a handful of policy areas (foreign policy for example) do not fall under the co-decision procedure, but particularly in light of the fact that the European Commission retains the exclusive right to

initiate legislation. However, in addition to having the constitutional authority to reject reports or to adopt amendments to reports, the European Parliament has largely circumvented the Commission's sole right of legislative initiative through a variety of legal, political, and social (in regards to inter-institutional relationships) tactics.

As Rasmussen (2007) contends, "In reality, the Commission exercises its right of initiative in an exclusive manner in a very small percentage of its proposals. Its own data reveals that merely 5 percent of the proposals in 1998 were new initiatives from the Commission whereas the rest were responses to requests from other EU bodies, to international obligations, adaptations of Community law to new conditions, and others" (Rasmussen, 2007, 248). While the bulk of Commission initiatives arise from a variety of sources, the European Parliament in particular since Maastricht (1993) has secured the right to send proposals to the Commission for prospective legislation which the Commission has often felt politically obligated to respond to (Rasmussen, 2007, 249). In turn, the combination of constitutional reform and increased socialization between the Parliament and the Commission has contributed to an evolving influence by the Parliament in regards to agenda-setting.

In addition, Rasmussen notes that, "The second development which has weakened the Commission's right of initiative has been the Council and the Parliament's tendency to ask the Commission to present proposals within a certain deadline through legislative acts" (Rasmussen, 2007, 249). The parliament may also grant 'discharge' in which it gives formal approval of the Commission's implementation of the budget. In the absence of discharge, the parliament can hold the implementation of the EU budget 'hostage' until the Commission takes-up the parliament's agenda in other areas (Judge and Earnshaw, 2008, 202).

In summary, while a democratic deficit admittedly exists in regards to the Commission’s exclusive right of legislative initiative, the European Parliament is a true legislature in that it is elected by the voters of Europe, has co-decision authority in most policy areas, and can through a variety of strategies ensure that its agenda is embodied within any initiative brought by the Commission. This raises the third aspect in which the European Parliament is unique: the absence of a government-opposition structure and its organization of MEPs into party groups. In 2007, the Lisbon Treaty mandated that any party group must be representative of twenty percent of member-states and subsequent action by the parliament also requires that any party group also contain at least twenty-five MEPs (Judge and Earnshaw, 2008, 115).

TABLE 1.2: PARTY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Group Name	Number/% of MEPs
EPP (European Peoples Party)	271/35.9%
S & D (Socialist and Democrats)	189/25.0%
ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats)	85/11.2%
Greens/EFA	58/7.7%
ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists)	56/7.4%
GUE (Union of European Left)	34/4.5%
EFD (Europeans for a Free Democracy)	34/4.5%
NA (Non-Attached Members)	29/3.9%
Total	756/100%

Note: Table depicts the number of members per party group and non-attached members in the current parliament prior to the accession of Croatia in 2013 as well as each group’s percentage of all MEPs.

Data Source: www.europarl.europa.eu

The EPP has evolved from a family grouping of Christian Democratic parties to include a number of other center-right parties (Judge and Earnshaw, 2008, 126). The Socialist group added ‘Democrats’ to its name prior to the 2009 elections in order to accommodate the former Italian Socialist party renaming itself the Democratic Party. ALDE is a center-right/center-left group that features differences between UK Liberal Democrats and German Liberals but also includes a Eurosceptic Nordic center (Judge and Earnshaw, 2008, 128). While the Greens/EFA and the GUE also have deep roots in the European Parliament’s history, the ECR and EFD are much

newer. Though various Eurosceptic party groups on the right have existed for decades, each have come and gone with successive elections. In 2009, this pattern continued with the formation of the EFD (Europeans for a Free Democracy) by UKIP and the Lega Nord.

Following the 2009 elections, the ECR was formed by UK and Czech conservative parties who abandoned the EPP due to disagreements concerning the extent of European integration, and by the Polish Law and Justice Party following the demise of the UEN party group. The interview response below from an ECR vice-president sheds further light on the group's evolution.

“From 2006 on, we moved forward on having our own distinctive group rather than being aligned as we were previously to the EPP. So that came about as you know after the last elections in 2009. Obviously, it's a smaller operation than we had in the alliance with the EPP, but I think by and large it serves its purpose. I think it's quite interesting to see how it has moved on; it's got a part to play in the parliament. It offers an alternative concentrating on its main theme of reform, but reform not only in terms of policy areas, but also in terms of procedures” (October 26, 2011).

Whether legislation passes or fails is the product of cross-party group support as no single group has ever held a majority in the European Parliament. Furthermore, legislation is not the purview of a single party group or particular coalition of party groups. Instead, legislative reports are distributed according to party group size and passage is dependent upon a range of outcomes from broad consensus among most party groups to ad hoc majorities of party groups. In turn, while a majority of legislation enjoys broad cross-party support, divisions do arise on prominent reports both among and within party groups. Prior to the further expansion of legislative powers in 1999 (Treaty of Amsterdam), the EPP and S & D normally worked together and this pattern continues into the present exemplified by the altering of the office of European Parliament President between the two groups (See Judge and Earnshaw 2008). However, with the extension of co-decision authority under the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), legislative cooperation between the two largest party groups has declined (See Hix et al. 2007 and Hix and Noury 2009).

For all the party groups, the degree to which they impact legislative outcomes is dependent upon two processes: securing maximum internal consensus and establishing plenary alliances with one or more party group. In other words, party groups are only successful in obtaining policymaking goals if they can maintain a unified or near-unified membership while securing cross-party group coalitions. Dissent management therefore is necessary in order to ensure minimal dissent and to maintain the group's institutional reputation for delivering votes. In this sense, cooperation and consensus have emerged as institutional norms.

Tables 1.3 below depicts coalition patterns for each party group encompassing the period in which the two phases of field research were conducted as well as the interim between phases. The table indicates that clear coalition patterns occur in the European Parliament but also that current events can influence coalition patterns. Therefore, while cooperation is the norm among most party groups, the table also illustrates that the European Parliament remains in many ways an institution containing groups bent upon pursuing partisan agendas and these agendas in turn incentivize group leaders to minimize dissent levels.

TABLE 1.3: PARTY GROUP PLENARY COALITION PATTERNS

Party Group	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS/EFA	GUE	S & D
ALDE	X	50.2	47.9	78.0	67.3	52.0	83.2
ECR	50.2	X	63.6	55.8	37.8	38.5	41.6
EFD	47.9	63.6	X	56.3	39.3	41.4	45.1
EPP	78	55.8	56.3	X	59.8	48.8	72.2
GREENS/EFA	67.3	37.8	39.3	59.8	X	72.6	71.3
GUE/NGL	52.0	38.5	41.4	48.8	72.6	X	57.8
S & D	83.2	41.6	45.1	72.2	71.3	57.8	X

Note: Table depicts the extent to which the group line matches other respective party groups (August 2011-July 2012) during and in-between each field research phase. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

For example, the frequency of cooperation between the EPP and S & D declined from seventy-six to seventy-two percent during the most recent session as the groups disagreed over how to resolve the economic crisis. The ideological divide between the two largest party groups

at the time is underscored by the statement below from S & D Vice President, Stephen Hughes, who when commenting on the “six-pack” votes on euro zone stabilization measures including financial integration said, “The deal concluded by the conservatives and the liberals will lead to more austerity. It is not the right medicine to cure the patient” (Posted on September 23, 2011, www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu).

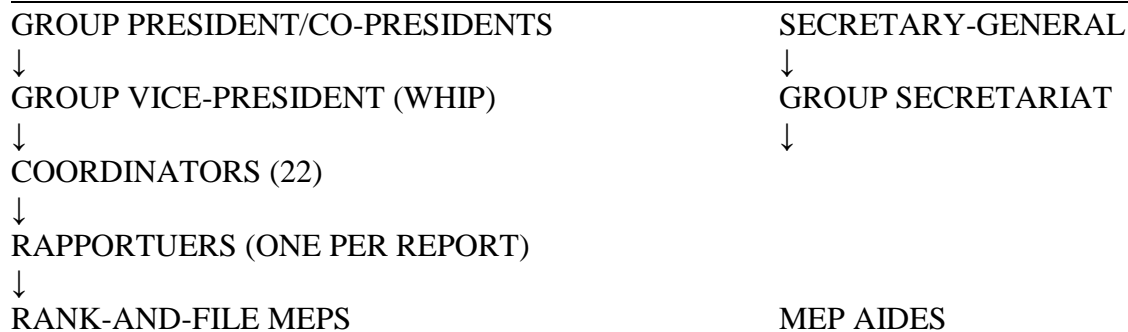
The debates surrounding the six-pack legislation further highlight the political reality within the European Parliament in that when the two largest groups (EPP and S & D) cannot agree on legislation both turn first to the ALDE. In previous parliaments, the ALDE have more often sided with the EPP than the S & D (See Hix and Noury 2009) though the table above indicates a slight shift toward the S & D. However, while EPP or S & D legislative objectives may be achieved with the support of a cohesive ALDE group, a third party group is necessary in that no two groups other than the EPP and S & D can provide a voting majority.

In turn, the table underscores clear coalition preferences for the medium-sized groups with the Greens/EFA preferring to vote with the S & D and the ECR voting more often with the EPP. The six-pack votes in the fall of 2011 highlights the key role the Greens/EFA may play at times such as in its decision to oppose most of the accompanying amendments offered by the EPP and the ALDE, but support two (September 23, 2011, www.europolitics.com). Opposition by the Greens/EFA required that the passage of particular amendments and ultimately the report as a whole through to a coalition consisting of the ALDE, ECR and the EPP.

As depicted below in Figure 1.1, each party group is led by a group president or in the case of the Greens/EFA and the EFD, co-presidents. The president is expected to preside over party group meetings, represent the group in the Conference of Presidents, and often articulate the group’s views to the media, in plenary, and the public. However, we know very little about the

dissent management role of group presidents. Interviews and observations of group meetings underscore that group presidents play a crucial role in ensuring group unity in the more cohesive groups when prominent reports are at-stake. Otherwise, presidents in the more cohesive groups normally defer to others within the group whip structure and insert themselves only to re-enforce the group message and its values.

FIGURE 1.2: PARTY GROUP LEADERSHIP AND SECRETARIAT ORGANIZATION



In contrast, group presidents in the least cohesive groups exercise a more symbolic role. However, there are times when the group is deadlocked or dissent is so prevalent that the president in the more cohesive groups will mediate between factions or even lobby members. The one exception I have identified from my research is the ALDE president, Guy Verhofstadt, who takes a much more hands-on approach to dissent management and is often the primary facilitator of consensus on reports regardless of their prominence.

Each group also elects a number of vice-presidents from ten in the EPP to six in the two smallest groups. As with the group president, we know very little about the dissent management role of group vice-presidents. The formal assignment of responsibilities to group vice-presidents varies among the respective groups. Three of the four largest groups have assigned a vice-president to serve as a parliamentary secretary or whip (ECR). The responsibilities of this position vary as well ranging from distributing voting lists to members prior to plenary with the

group line (or its absence) noted alongside each report or amendment, allocating plenary speaking time, to acting as an mediator or lobbyist prior to or during the group meeting.

Most often, group vice-presidents are assigned policy portfolios and administrative duties. Some are expected to sit in for the group president in party group meetings and other venues, while others act as public spokespersons for the group and represent the group in plenary debates, or in the case of the three largest party groups, chair horizontal working groups. In turn, I find that the three most cohesive groups have assigned clear dissent management roles for group vice-presidents whereas the remaining groups relegate these positions to administrative and policy-making duties. I also find that the most cohesive groups are those that have assigned a parliamentary secretary or whip or in the case of the Greens/EFA have empowered the group secretary-general to act as a parliamentary-secretary.

Each party group also has twenty-two coordinators which correspond to the number of European Parliament Committees. For the smaller groups who often have one to three members on each committee, this means that nearly all group members are coordinators. Coordinators are the group leaders in committees and are responsible for monitoring votes at the committee level of their fellow group members, assigning reports, and communicating the views of group leadership to the committee members (Hix et al. 2007, 135). Rapporteurs are responsible for carrying reports when their party has successfully bid for the report or serve as shadow rapporteurs who follow each report and represent their group in committee and in later stages. Group vice-presidents will often serve as the rapporteur or shadow on the more prominent reports. We know far more about the dissent management role of coordinators and rapporteurs. They are often regarded as experts and it is common in the more cohesive groups for members to

defer to these experts. As Ringe (2010) notes, “The two tend to work in tandem and jointly lead their party groups through the decision-making process” (Ringe, 2010, 59).

Finally, the group secretariat often plays an important role in terms of administration but also at times in dissent management. This is especially evident in the Greens/EFA where as noted above the secretary-general is assigned the parliamentary secretary role. Similarly, I found that the ALDE secretary-general is responsible for allocating plenary speaking time, while their five counterparts play an important role as behind-the-scenes advisors. Other members of the secretariat including policy advisors and those aides who work directly for MEPs also play an influential policymaking role as an EPP aide to a coordinator below accounts.

“We have a dossier x and you have an (group policy) advisor working on it, and the advisor would flag us, and tell us we have a problem here, this delegation doesn’t like the EPP proposal. They have some national concerns about this and they are not in line with us. At that point, we try and urge the rapporteur or the shadow rapporteur, and the advisor, to try and find a position which can address the interests of that delegation which has particularities, to see if you can find a compromise which is acceptable to us but also is acceptable to them. So, that’s our first option. The second option is if this fails, then the coordinator would step in and try to find common ground with the rapporteur or the shadow rapporteur. If this fails, then the third option would be to discuss the issue at the preparatory meeting before the vote”. (June 27, 2012)

FIGURE 1.3: THE LEGISLATIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

PLENARY

↓

PARTY GROUP MEETING

↓

HORIZONTAL WORKING GROUPS (Where Applicable)

↓

COMMITTEES

↓

VERTICAL (COMMITTEE) WORKING GROUPS

Each party group develops policy and/or its policy positions at each of the legislative stages noted above in Figure 1.3. In the more cohesive party groups, rapporteurs and coordinators work with staff to identify problems in the vertical working groups (consisting of the party group members of a respective committee) and in committee. From here, in the three largest party

groups, group members from committees with similar policy portfolios (Foreign Policy, International Trade, etc.) meet in horizontal working groups chaired by group vice-presidents who may become involved in dissent management at this stage (unless they are also the rapporteur). These range in number from three in the ALDE to four in the EPP and S & D.

In contrast, the Greens/EFA has three working groups which are organized according to policy areas rather than associative committees which results in much smaller membership of each as only a select number of members are invited to join. The ECR do not have working groups but they have established a Policy Development Group which identifies potential policy divides and in the future may evolve into working groups on the Greens/EFA model as the ECR grows in size and re-organizes after its second European Parliament election.

Each of these first three decision-making stages (where applicable) provides opportunities for group leaders (and staff) to identify and resolve differences prior to the group meeting or to at the least identify divisions and take them to the group meeting. As Ringe (2010) notes, “The communication network centered on committee and in some cases also working groups is designed to reduce and relieve the workload of a party group and to solidify a common position (Ringe, 2010, 60). Ringe also contends that due to information-overload or deficiencies in information at the MEP level, committees and (where applicable) horizontal working groups provide a valuable aide for MEPs to make voting decisions. “There is no time to discuss every report in detail in the party group meeting. Technical issues are addressed in the working group or committee with broader issues discussed in the group meeting” (Ringe, 2010, 63).

The party group meeting is an opportunity for the group to meet as a whole and this occurs normally prior to plenary. The meeting agenda typically consists of reports from members on national political developments and discussion of legislation led by the rapporteur, coordinators,

and other influential members. In some groups, the meeting is a forum for resolving disputes through (unrecorded) votes which set the official group line when one is not clearly identified prior to the meeting or when a deadlock exists prior to the meeting at the horizontal working group level or is perceived by leadership to exist among the entire the group.

One goal of my study has been to clarify how working group and party group meetings contribute to low group dissent rates. I find that the more cohesive party groups utilize horizontal working groups and party group meetings to identify and address dissent through lobbying and socialization. For example, a rapporteur or other leader may openly respond to the points raised by a dissenting MEP during the course of group discussions or lobby them privately as others address the group. Similarly, the presidents and other leaders in the more cohesive groups make appeals for group unity and link its importance to the group's shared identity and values.

In turn, the more cohesive party groups are those whose members highly value the role of group forums (See Garner and Letki 2005). For example, I find that the Greens/EFA are in part the most cohesive group because their members not only value group meetings but also participate at far higher rates than their counterparts in other groups, while Greens/EFA leaders use the meeting to re-enforce a shared identity, norms governing behavior, and the political/policy rationale for adhering to the group line. In contrast, while the ALDE do highly value the role of the party group meeting and utilize it to build consensus, they on the whole do not share a similar view of the horizontal working groups. Meanwhile, the three smaller and least cohesive party groups do not fully utilize party group meetings for dissent management and their members regard the meetings as consensus-building forums to comparatively lesser degrees.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Field research was conducted in two phases with one occurring from mid-September to mid-November 2011 and the second from mid-May to mid-July 2012 in Brussels, Belgium and

Strasbourg, France. The European Parliament meets for twelve four-day part-sessions in plenary each year in Strasbourg and six two-day part-sessions in plenary in Brussels with committee, working group and party group meetings making-up the bulk of the schedule over a three-week period each month in Brussels. However, working and party group meetings are also held in Strasbourg before and after plenary each day. In all, I interviewed eighty-four subjects and observed thirty-three party group forums. Observation not only provided greater insight into the role and function of party group meetings as well as committee and plenary sessions within the legislative process, but also helped to pinpoint the specific dissent management roles of particular party group leaders (group president, parliamentary secretary, etc.) as well as the contributions of the secretary-general and other staff. Meeting observations also served as corroboration or at times as challenges to assertions made by subjects during interviews.

Access to party group meetings varied in terms of location. For example, the EPP and S & D meeting rooms in Strasbourg cannot accommodate staff, so I sat with staff in another room listening to the meeting, whereas for EPP and S & D meetings in Brussels I was in the room with the MEPs and staff. Otherwise, I was always in the room with MEPs and staff in the other party groups at both sites. I was similarly always in the room with MEPs and staff in committee meetings and I was always in the public galleries when observing plenary sessions at both sites.

I did not bring recording devices into meetings per my agreement with each group, but I did take notes which were coded for reference to dissent management strategies, variations in dissent levels, or discussion of national politics, as well as for corroboration or challenges to the responses offered by interview subjects to various questions. Table 1.4 below depicts the number of observations of the respective party groups and horizontal working groups in each research phase. I will provide greater detail on meeting observations in the next chapter.

TABLE 1.4: OBSERVED PARTY GROUP FORUMS

	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS	GUE	S & D	TOTAL
PARTY GROUP	5	2	2	6	5	3	4	27
WORKING GROUP	2	NA	NA	2	0	NA	2	6

Note: Table depicts number of observations of party group and horizontal working group meetings during the two phases of field research (2011-2012). NA (Not Applicable) refers to groups who do not have horizontal working groups. N of Cases (Observations): 33

My approach to observation is influenced by Ross' 1995 study of the European Commission and heavily by Fenno's studies of the U.S. Congress. Observation according to Fenno (1990) entails the "practice of gathering data by watching and talking to people in their natural habitats" (Fenno, 1990, 6). The purpose of observing elected officials and other elites according to Fenno is exploratory-to produce ideas that might not otherwise occur without observing the subjects and/or processes-and requires an open mind and flexibility in approach in terms of the details of the research plan and in any presumptions about the subjects and processes to be studied (Fenno, 1990, 57).

TABLE 1.5: INTERVIEWS BY RESEARCH PHASE AND SUBJECT CATEGORY

RESEARCH STAGE	MEPS	STAFF	TOTAL
ONE	21	17	38
TWO	40	6	46

Note: Table depicts number of interviews by research phase and by subject category broadly defined here as MEPs or staff. N of Cases (Interviews): 84

In turn, interviews provide further insight that when combined with participant observation enables the researcher to consistently assess both data and the research plan in general. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), "through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 3). Goldstein (2002) identifies three basic goals when conducting interviews: (1) gathering information from a sample of officials in order to make generalizable claims about characteristics or decisions, (2) discovering a particular piece of information, and (3) informing or guiding work that uses other sources of data (Goldstein, 2002, 669).

Interviews primarily targeted elites in terms of party group leaders and within the group secretariat (please refer Figure 1.2 on Pg. 20) in order to assess the dissent management role and tactics of group leaders and to receive first-hand accounts from those responsible for dissent management. Additional interviews targeted frequently dissenting MEPs, new MEPs and other staff. For example, as we know little about the dissent management role of group presidents and vice-presidents, I contacted all of those holding these positions in all of the groups. Dissenting MEPs were identified through: roll-call votes, plenary speeches (explanations of vote), and information obtained during observations and other interviews. I will address the logistics associated with interviews and the degree to which the sample is representative of the broader population in more detail in the next chapter.

Explanations for party group unity based upon interview responses provide first-hand accounts of the processes and persons contributing to party group unity that cannot be obtained by roll-call vote studies. However, studies relying heavily on interviews as data sources must also take into account that responses are products of bias derived in part from individual characteristics and experiences, as well as from group or institutional memberships. Group membership may influence responses to interview questions in that a member of a group may not be able to maintain objectivity about the decisions taken by the group's leaders and by the group as a whole depending on the degree of closeness a member feels to a group (Russell, 2012, 6). For example, if an MEP strongly identifies with their party group, they may provide responses that place the group in the most positive light, whereas respondents with weak or negative associations with their party group may purposefully provide answers downplaying the influence of or criticizing certain persons or processes.

Consequently, collecting responses from those closest to the phenomenon in question carries both the reward of acquiring first-hand explanations from (potentially) informed experts as well as the risk of deferring to biased interpretations derived from memberships and experiences. With these considerations in mind, explanations of party group unity by respondents familiar with the internal processes of the European Parliament will help to shape conclusions concerning party group dissent level variation. However, respondent biases are taken into account when analyzing data collected from interviews and are then compared to findings drawn from field research and previous studies of the European Parliament in order to assess their reliability as explanations for party group unity. Finally, responses are often placed within the context of party group membership in order to more thoroughly examine both perceived and actual differences between party groups in regards to group level organizational and socialization processes.

Interview content was coded from transcripts of audio recordings or written notes (when consent for recording by the subject was not provided) and notated for reference to the dissent management process, examples of dissent, and for responses following the anticipated five-response scale developed for each question both prior to and during field research. The questions act as indicators of explanations for party group unity with the responses serving as dependent variables. In turn, a series of respondent characteristics (party group membership, position within the party group, length of service in the parliament, member-state background, gender, and previous profession) act as indicators of the likelihood of offering a given response.

For example, respondents were asked what role vice-presidents played in ensuring group unity. Responses to this question were organized into a five-scale set and analysis through Stata assessed the extent to which respondent characteristics indicated the likelihood of offering a given response (members of less cohesive groups were more likely to assign an administrative

role to vice-presidents, respondents with more service in the parliament were more likely to assign a dissent management role, etc.) In turn, as responses were of a categorical nature, Cramér's V scores were utilized as a measure of strength of association for each question between the likelihood of offering a given response and the response set as a whole with the statistical significance of each Cramér's V score determined by the accompanying p-value obtained through Stata. Finally, the discussion of responses to each question are framed in the respective chapters according to the overall response pattern as well as to which statistically significant characteristics (group membership, years of service, etc.) are the strongest predictors.

CHAPTER PREVIEWS

Chapter Two (Research Design) provides a rationale for utilizing qualitative methods followed by a review of the field research timeline (via the European Parliament Calendar) and the logistical challenges associated with booking interviews and gaining access to party group and other meetings. The chapter next addresses specific challenges associated with qualitative field research (subject anonymity, the recording of interviews and observations, etc.) followed by an evaluation of interview participant selection and venue selection for observation including a review of interview question sets which form the basis of hypotheses testing throughout the dissertation. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of coding schemes for data obtained through interviews and observation.

Chapter Three (Properties of Dissent) defines dissent and dissent management. The chapter first considers explanations from respondents for why they at times dissent from the group line. Responses in turn suggest particular rationale (individual opinion vs. differing national line) help to frame approaches to dissent management by party group leaders. Dissent expression is next defined according to a scale created by Crowe (1983) which I have modified to reflect voting procedures and options in the European Parliament. The chapter also includes analysis of roll-

call vote data collected during the two phases of field research highlighting dissent level variation in regards to particular forms of dissent expression (abstaining, not voting, etc.) and to specific stages in plenary (amendments, whole reports, etc.). The chapter concludes with a review of dissent management roles of particular group leaders and forums as well as possible dissent management tactics ranging from disciplinary measures to socialization processes.

Chapter Four (Explaining Party Group Unity) builds on the foundation set in the introduction and chapter three by identifying explanations for both the overall high group cohesion rates in the European Parliament as well as the variation in dissent levels among party groups. The chapter first considers explanations obtained through roll-call vote studies by Simon Hix and various co-authors, a model stressing the relationship between perceived preference by MEPs and voting behavior (Ringe 2010) and other models emphasizing shared conceptualizations of group identity (Brown 2000) and socialization through the diffusion of norms within groups (Garner and Letki 2005). The chapter next analyzes responses to the question of what explains why most of party group members vote the same way in plenary most of the time. Responses were organized into five categories: beliefs and values, communication, plenary coalitions, deferral to experts and group unity is not important, with respondents often offering multiple responses. The overall response pattern when considered within the context of group membership demonstrates that the more cohesive groups are those that build a shared group identity and engage in constant communication through a well-defined whip structure and decision-making forums (in particular party groups meetings) to identify and manage dissent.

Chapter Five (Discipline as a Dissent Management Tool) considers the extent to which party group leaders utilize disciplinary tools to ensure low dissent rates through responses to three questions, (1) Is dissent considered by leaders in your group when plenary speaking time is

allocated, (2) Is dissent considered when rapporteurs are assigned, and (3) What is the attitude by leaders in your group toward plenary amendments sponsored by members that are contrary to the group line? The more cohesive party groups consider dissent when assigning prominent reports but otherwise only consider expertise and committee work/attendance when assigning the bulk of reports. In turn, as groups have finite minutes, speaking time in plenary debates is first reserved for those who worked on the report with time normally allocated to dissenting members though in the more cohesive groups they are often assigned the last slot(s). Respondents also noted that MEPs have other outlets for expressing dissent such as explanations of vote which circumvent disciplinary efforts by leaders. Finally, respondents across party groups maintained that amendments tabled by individual MEPs were rare in plenary and often ignored by group leaders as they were almost certain to fail in the absence of group sponsorship.

Chapter Six (Leaders and Dissent Management) considers responses to four questions concerning the dissent management role of specific party group leaders. The chapter first considers responses to two questions concerning the role of group presidents (1) How does your group president(s) contribute to group unity and (2) When does your group president(s) become involved in ensuring group unity? Apart from ALDE respondents, those in most other groups were more likely to assign a consensus-building role for the group president only on prominent reports. In order to identify the dissent management role of group vice-presidents I asked two questions (1) How do vice-presidents contribute to group unity, and (2) What role does the group whip or parliamentary secretary play in ensuring group unity? Respondents from the most cohesive party groups assigned a prominent dissent management role to vice-presidents or secretary-generals. In contrast, respondents from the less cohesive party groups assign an

administrative or no role at all for vice-presidents or in the case of the ECR assign a clearly-defined dissent management role only to the group whip.

Chapter Seven (Party Group Forums and Dissent Management) considers the role of horizontal working groups (where applicable) and party group meetings. Respondents were asked how working groups and party group meetings contributed to the unity of their party group. Most respondents from the three most cohesive party groups believed that working groups contributed to high cohesion levels on all reports while ALDE respondents negatively viewed working group meetings. In turn, respondents from the more cohesive party groups were more likely to view group meetings as vital forums for building support for the group line primarily on prominent reports. In contrast, most respondents in the two least cohesive party groups regarded party group meetings primarily as forums to discuss national politics. In all, group meetings provide an opportunity for leaders to identify and manage dissent and for members to contribute to the development of the group line which in turn strengthens the cohesion of the group in that members who regard group meetings as vital forums are more likely to support the group line and view themselves as group members rather than solely as individuals or as part of a national delegation (See Garner and Letki 2005).

Chapter Eight (Socialization and Party Group Cohesion) begins with a review of literature defining socialization, shared identity, and norms of behavior. From here, the chapter considers evidence of socialization through responses to two questions in the extensive Farrell et al. (2011) survey asking MEPs to define their identities as well as the perceived importance of party group unity. MEPs from the most cohesive party group, the Greens/EFA, are the most likely to self-identify as Europeans. In contrast, MEPs from the least cohesive groups were more likely to view themselves according to their national origins. In turn, MEPs from the most cohesive party

groups were more likely to perceive that appearing unified is important for the group. As part of my field research, I asked when it was acceptable to dissent from the group line. Nearly all MEPs in the more cohesive groups maintained that there were norms in place governing dissent announcement. When asked to identify what help is provided to new MEPs, EPP and S & D respondents stated that new MEPs are primarily offered help in committees, ALDE respondents maintained that no help is provided for new MEPs, while ECR respondents noted that most help for new MEPs is provided by their delegations. In turn, though GUE and EFD respondents noted that extensive help was provided for new MEPs, there are no expectations for group unity.

Chapter Nine (Summary of Findings and Future Research) reviews the impetus for explaining variation in party group cohesion rates in the European Parliament and considers the next steps in examining the research question. After recounting the assertions made in the first chapter, chapter nine reviews the research design and definitions of dissent and cohesion before recounting the explanations for group unity offered in chapter four. From here, the chapter reviews the limitations associated with disciplinary tools available to party group leaders and re-examines the role of leaders and group forums as part of a whip structure which identifies and addresses dissent at every legislative stage. The chapter next recounts the contributions of socialization processes toward fostering a shared identity and aiding in dissent management efforts by group leaders before presenting a summary of explanations for dissent level variation among party groups. The chapter concludes with consideration of future research emphasizing the need following new elections in May 2014 for a mass survey of MEPs to fully gauge perceived roles of party group leaders and the extent of socialization within party groups. The survey will primarily consist of questions reflecting a modification of the Isolation Index, Whip Influence, and other measures utilized by Garner and Letki (2005).

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Note: Roll-call vote, party group cohesion, cross-party group coalition patterns, and other data was obtained from www.votewatch.eu while some information regarding the organization and legislative authority of the European Parliament was obtained through its website, www.europarl.europa.eu

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I provided the rationale for a field research study examining the relationship between dissent management and party group dissent levels in the European Parliament. I proposed that MEP ideology at the individual level in conjunction with a whip structure and socialization processes at the group level explains dissent level variation among party groups. In addition to foreshadowing upcoming chapters, I briefly reviewed the evolving legislative powers of the European Parliament and demonstrated that it is has become a nearly equal EU decision-making body. In turn, the organization of MEPs into ideological umbrella party groups, the absence of a government-opposition structure, and the parliament's increasingly influential role in European integration provides a unique setting in which to examine how legislative party leaders obtain relatively high cohesion rates.

Why are party group cohesion levels on the whole so high and what explains the variation in dissent levels among party groups? While past roll-call vote studies (See Hix et al. 2007) have provided invaluable information about party group cohesion patterns and have contributed to a greater understanding of the legislative processes in the European Parliament, some unanswered questions remain. In part, these gaps derive from the limitations associated with roll-call vote studies in that they are unrepresentative of all plenary votes (See Carrubba et al. 2006). In addition, roll-call vote studies fail to capture hidden processes associated with dissent management; particularly the behind-the-scenes role of leaders and socialization processes.

For example, we know very little about the dissent management roles of party group presidents or vice-presidents, as well as about how party group leaders collaborate to identify dissenting members in order to convince them to follow the group line or to dissent at less costly

levels (voting to abstain or opposing the group on an amendment but not an entire report). It is this focus on leaders in terms of assigned and perceived dissent management roles that in part distinguishes this research project from other European Parliament studies. If dissent level variation among party groups is to be fully explained, I contend that it is necessary to identify successful dissent management strategies and structures.

In turn, this project differs from past studies in its consideration of the contributions of a shared group identity and socialization processes to lower group dissent levels. While lobbying by group leaders on the policy or political merits can be an effective dissent management tactic, it is but only one tool available to group leaders. Accordingly, a more complete explanation for dissent level variation requires the inclusion of other dissent management strategies; particularly socialization processes in that those party groups with lower dissent levels are those that have successfully socialized members into following particular norms of behavior and have established a shared conceptualization of the group identity that is conducive to group unity. In this sense, this project also differs from past studies in that I propose that group cohesion should be more broadly defined to encompass members' attitudes toward group unity as well as cohesive plenary voting patterns (See Brown 2000).

In this chapter, I present the research design for examining party group dissent level variation. The chapter begins with a brief rationale for utilizing qualitative methods followed by a review of the field research timeline and the logistical challenges associated with data collection. The chapter next addresses specific challenges associated with qualitative field research followed by an evaluation of interview participant and venue selection for observation including a review of interview question sets which form the basis of hypotheses testing. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of interview and observation data coding schemes.

WHY USE QUALITATIVE METHODS?

I chose to primarily utilize qualitative methods when researching party groups in the European Parliament because of the limitations associated with studies relying solely upon quantitative data. As discussed in earlier chapters, only approximately thirty-five percent of votes in plenary sessions are roll-called (See Roland 2009 and Kreppel 2002) while the available roll-call votes are not representative of all plenary votes in that legislation from particular committees or in particular legislative stages are rarely roll-called (See Carrubba et al. 2006). In addition, votes taken in committees and in party group meetings are never roll-called. This means that we do not know the full extent of dissent in that dissent may be more common when votes are not roll-called or that particular forms of dissent expression (voting against the group line on an amendment, but not the group line on final action) may be more common as well.

Beyond limitations associated with data availability, there are also limitations associated with the available data. Roll-call votes do not tell the whole story of how particular levels of dissent in terms of extent and expression came about or conversely were averted (See Morgenstern, 2004). Accordingly, I contend that the most effective approach to identifying dissent management strategies by legislative party leaders and their impact upon dissent levels is to talk directly to the actors involved in party group decision-making and dissent management and to observe the venues in which MEP decision-making and socialization occurs

Previous field studies have provided valuable insight into EU institutions such as that by Ross (1995) into the activities of the European Commission. Ross observed the Commission for six months in 1991 after having gained access through staff contacts in meetings facilitated by his university. He focused primarily upon “hot dossiers” or important policy areas in his process-tracing efforts and was given access to cabinet officials, staff, and Commission President Jacques Delors on several occasions (Ross, 1995, vii). 150 interviews with Commission personnel were

concluded along with interviews of Delors and his cabinet which supplemented observations of these subjects in their daily interactions and in official meetings (Ross, 1995, viii). From interviews and observations, Ross determined the hierarchy and communication pathways among the staff and between the staff and Commission officials, in addition to the actual and presumed expectations of all actors involved (Ross, 1995, 62).

Within the European Parliament literature, interviews have helped to clarify institutional processes and decision-making such as the interview below that provides a glimpse into dissent management through the roles of the group coordinator and rapporteur.

“We have to clearly ensure that the political group is moving along the same track, so that we get a majority in plenary, because some rapporteurs just write a report the way they like. Of course as a coordinator one also has the responsibility to step back, but we have the responsibility for the group’s behavior and always have to be ready to step in” (Quoted in Settembri and Neuhold, 2009, 141-142).

While a few studies have utilized interviews to various degrees, they have not to my knowledge targeted party group elites en masse or considered a broad range of dissent management tactics to explain dissent level variation. In this sense, this study of the European Parliament that I have undertaken not only builds upon other past mixed method European Parliament studies but is also to my knowledge unique in regards to the targeting, subject area, and number of interviews, and also in that interviews are supplemented by observation of political party meetings normally closed to the public and other outside observers.

The research plan in the tradition of Fenno primarily targets party group elites in terms of leaders and within the group secretariats. Both leaders and key staff can reveal processes and strategies hidden in roll-call vote data with rank-and-file MEPs supplementing or disputing these findings. According to Crowe (1983), “Party leaders comprise the most important reference group about expectations about rules of the game” (Crowe, 1983, 913). Rules of the game in

relation to this study refer to the organizational and the tactical components of dissent management by group leaders who set or influence the development of and in turn pursue the widespread adoption of the group line. In this sense, a full explanation of dissent level variation among party groups requires an understanding of the assignment of particular leadership responsibilities and the adoption of particular dissent management strategies which in turn requires an elite-centered field study.

Though discussing the benefits of participant observation, Glaser's (1996) comments can also be applied to the use of interviews in that both provide a frame of reference for the actors in terms of a set of alternatives that are given consideration in the choice process in that they reveal how MEPs or staff reason, but also where the alternatives come from in the first place (Glaser, 1996, 533-534). In other words, interviews and observation together can not only test hypotheses in the wake of quantitative data limitations but also provide frames in which to explore possible explanations for group dissent level variation.

The primary goal of the preliminary research model was to interview as many party group leaders as possible as well as key staff in order to obtain a representative sample within and across party groups for hypotheses testing. Other forms of data collection such as surveys with pre-determined answer sets can test hypotheses across samples of targeted populations, but interviews go much further in revealing hidden processes or preferred strategies because the subject can provide examples and clarifications through individual experiences, as well as personal interpretations of group orientations and structures that survey data are less effective in identifying (Quinn, 2002, 17). While interviews are valuable tools for examining dissent management and the primary focus of this field study, there are limitations to what people can say in terms of time constraints, recollection, or due to sentence construction (Quinn, 2002, 21).

Therefore, interviews are at their most effective as methodological tools when accompanied by observation of the venues in which dissent management and dissent expression takes place and is shaped. Observation according to Fenno (1990) entails the practice of gathering data by watching and talking to people in their natural habitats (Fenno, 1990, 6). In turn, the purpose of observing elected officials and other elites is exploratory-to produce ideas that might not otherwise occur without observing the subjects and/or processes (Fenno, 1990, 57). Interviews and observations are interconnected in that each provides a frame of reference in terms of what to look for, who to talk to, what to ask, and how to evaluate data collected through both methods.

RESEARCH TIMELINE

Field research was conducted in two phases due to financial and time constraints. The first occurred from September 18-November 14 2011 and the second from May 28 to June 27 2012. The schedule below is taken from the European Parliament Website (www.europarl.europa.eu). The parliament meets three weeks each month in Brussels and one week monthly in Strasbourg with normally a summer recess from mid-July through the end of August except every five years when European Parliament elections are held in June.

PHASE ONE (2011)

September 6-8: Group Meetings
September 12-15: Plenary Week
September 19-22: Group Meetings
September 26-29: Plenary Week
October 3-6, 10-11: Committees
October 12-13: Plenary (Brussels)
October 17: Committees
October 18-20: Group Meetings
October 24-27: Plenary Week
October 31-November 4: Out of Session
November 7: Committees
November 8-10: Group Meetings

PHASE TWO (2012)

May 29-31, June 4: Committees
June 5-7: Group Meetings
June 11-14: Plenary Week
June 18-21, 25: Committees
June 26-28: Group Meetings

The parliament will occasionally hold day and a half plenary sessions in Brussels as listed under the first phase but otherwise plenary weeks are when the parliament sits from Monday

afternoon through Thursday afternoon for debates, speeches, and questioning of the members of other EU institutions (Commission, Ombudsman, etc.) with votes taken on Tuesday through Thursday. Except when votes are scheduled, the chamber is nearly empty with most MEPs either in their offices or in meetings, while group leaders and other key MEPs also schedule events such as press availability. Horizontal working group meetings are held throughout the day on Tuesday and Wednesday¹. Party group meetings are scheduled for one hour on Monday evening and for two hours each on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

Committees conduct most of their formal business on the assigned days though individual MEPs or delegations will sometimes schedule meetings with constituents or policy-themed events on these days as well. Group meeting days are in part reserved for party groups to meet just before Strasbourg with each group meeting once in that week. Horizontal and vertical working groups are also scheduled around the group meetings. This is also the time when national delegations within party groups hold their private meetings and some of the more vital committees (Budget) meet as well. Other formal meetings across party groups are held infrequently each week including: rapporteurs from each group on a given report, the presidents of each group (Conference of Presidents), and group secretary-generals.

TABLE 2.1: INTERVIEWS BY RESEARCH PHASE

RESEARCH STAGE	MEPS	STAFF	TOTAL
ONE	21	17	38
TWO	40	6	46

Note: N of Cases: 84

The first phase of field research occurred during the stage of parliament when the budget is being discussed and sent to the Council of Ministers. This complicated the booking of elite interviews and helps to explain as Table One above depicts why the first stage contained more

¹ Horizontal working groups are members from a party group across related committees like agriculture and environment meeting together while vertical working groups consist of members from a group in a single committee. As they are broader venues, I targeted horizontal working groups for observation.

staff than MEP interviews and fewer total interviews than the second stage. In addition to the complications brought on by the legislative process, the first stage also ran into an obstacle of an entire week in which the parliament was not in session and MEPs and staff were back in their member-states. Though I was able to book interviews with staff from the European parties during this downtime, it was on the whole a lost week for field research.

Having gone through the first phase, I determined that I should return in the summer rather than in the fall in part because there would be no weeks when the parliament was not in session. Table one verifies that both the overall number of interviews and specifically the number of MEP interviews increased in a shorter timeframe compared to the first phase of field research despite the schedule constraints associated with the economic crisis. When I scheduled interviews, I didn't draw from a random sample of group leaders or staff. Instead as the universe of leaders (as well as my time) was limited, I contacted every member of group leadership and every key member of the secretariat (secretary-generals, aides to group leaders, etc.) for an interview in order to meet with as many subjects as possible.

However as phase one progressed and as I prepared for phase two, I did ensure that I was achieving a balance in regards to group membership, leadership/staff position, as well as between leadership and staff. For example, in stage two, I contacted each of the twenty-two group coordinators in the five largest groups as well as some in the two smallest having focused on group presidents, vice-presidents, as well as rank-and-file MEPs and staff in the first phase.

In regards to scheduling observations, I attended more committee meetings and stayed longer to observe plenary debates in the first phase compared to the second. This was due in part to more interviews and more time spent on booking interviews, but also because I only obtained access to horizontal working group meetings just prior to or in the early stage of the second

phase. Once this access was obtained, I observed fewer committee meetings and plenary debates in the second phase as they were not the primary target of my research.

The parliamentary calendar had a further effect upon field research logistics in that group meeting weeks were the easiest to schedule interviews as much of the day was open for members that week, whereas I scheduled few interviews in Strasbourg with many often canceled at the last minute. Both phases coincided with the ongoing Euro crisis and the deepening of European integration which provided an informative setting for studying dissent management by leaders in party group meetings while also providing useful references when structuring interviews.

The parliamentary calendar at times complicated observation, in particular, the tendency of party groups to schedule their meetings largely at the same time on a particular day. For example, the larger party groups would each schedule as many as two horizontal working group meetings at the same time. At times, I would deal with this by leaving one meeting to view another, but on the whole I stayed for an entire meeting in order to observe its impact and process from start to finish. Luckily, there was usually one other meeting scheduled later in the day to view as well. Similarly, party group meetings in Strasbourg were all scheduled at the same time resulting in three complete or five partial observations that respective week.

One final note on scheduling is a reminder that the best research while efficiently structured and executed is also that which is flexible. In other words, the researcher should not be constrained by scheduling (Glaser, 1996, 534). For example, there were occasions in which I booked an interview over the phone and was told if I hurried up to the office now, the MEP would grant an interview. There were times when I couldn't accommodate these offers, but on the whole, I scheduled calling for interviews at times that left me available for such last minute

opportunities. Similarly, when an interview was re-scheduled or cancelled at the last minute, I either viewed some meeting or used the time to book more interviews or review media accounts.

DATA COLLECTION

Field research would not have been possible without the assistance of the European parliament staff as well as select staff among the party groups (please refer to acknowledgements). Just as Fenno (1990) utilized staff and elected official contacts to access events and schedule other interviews, I utilized relationships and applied the lessons learned from each phase toward obtaining interviews and securing access to particular meetings or events. I had first visited with senior members of most of the group secretariats in October of 2009 in order to gain access to party group meetings. After spending a year trying to obtain funding, I approached the remaining group secretariats through emails prior to the first phase and obtained access which in part was the result of references by key staff in other groups and my frequent presence in a variety of settings which lent further credence to my credentials.

In the initial request, I included the amount of time intended for the interview, the basic outlines of research goals, and the name of my advisor along with contact information. Per Goldstein (2002), the email requesting an interview included some ground rules for the interview, (language, anonymity, etc.), and how the information will be gathered (audio recording or by taking notes) and later released to the public (Goldstein, 2002, 671).

Interview booking in the first phase consisted of email requests during the first week followed by follow-up email requests in the second week and phone calls and additional emails from there. I learned three valuable lessons in regards to booking. First, MEPs and their staff on the whole rarely check the official MEP email account. They will often only do so after you call and then request that you send another email and then they normally respond. Second, the initial email (which I sent a month prior to my arrival before each phase) should be sent to the office

account (name-office) of the MEP which is checked frequently each day by staff. Finally and perhaps most importantly, persistent phone calls are required in order to obtain even consideration for interviews. As a result, the average interview was secured only after a minimum of two emails AND at least two phone calls, with some bookings requiring as many as twelve attempts at communication on my part.

This is in some ways similar to the experience of Britton (2005) in her study of women MPs in the South African Parliament at least in regards to booking persistence. Britton selected a sample of thirty percent of female MPs in each party in the parliament for a total of thirty-nine women. The targeted sample was determined by ethnic, geographical, and socio-economic background. Contacting thirty women MPs typically resulted in only three interviews. Britton would typically speak with ten, with five agreeing to an interview and three keeping the appointment. The number of interviews was expanded by “squatting” in MP offices, becoming acquainted with staff, and through assistance of initial interviewees (Britton, 2005, 161-162).

I learned similar lessons from my initial research phase. First, I found that when I “name-dropped” senior members of the group secretariat or particular MEPs it helped to secure additional interviews. Similarly, referencing certain MEPs in emails and phone calls to offices helped to secure additional interviews, particularly if they were from the same delegation or served on the same committee or horizontal working group. These tactics helped to transform my request from that of yet another graduate student wanting access to that of a person who had been recommended by a close friend or colleague.

Interviews also led to other interviews. This is sometimes referred to as “snowballing” in that an interview may bring up additional names or place emphasis on particular actors that was initially missing (Glaser, 1996, 534). Interviews at times also served to highlight the importance

of processes such as horizontal working groups that once I understood their importance within the dissent management structure led me to secure access to these meetings for the second phase and reference them in my interview question set.

Interviews were mostly recorded on a digital recorder and I always asked permission to record the interview. There were two occasions in the second phase in which the recorder was full and I had to take notes for the remainder of the interview. All interview transcripts were saved in three locations: a flash drive, on the laptop desktop and on a CD. Twelve of the eighty-four interviews were not recorded. Five were due to the subject not wanting to be recorded. Two were on the phone instead of in-person in order to accommodate MEPs when traveling. The other six were email responses to questions. For example, the interview of EPP President Daul was by email because he didn't speak English and due to his busy schedule found it easier to reply to my questions in French at his own leisure.

Sharing a transcript with the subject builds trust and ensures accuracy (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 98). I indicated in the email and when greeting the individual at the start of the interview that the purpose of the research was for my dissertation with the findings to be published and that a transcript would be provided upon request. Interview transcripts were sent to subjects for their own records and for them to provide additional information or clarification as needed. As I noted above, only a small number of interview subjects did not want their interviews recorded. In these cases, I submitted a copy of notes for their review which was often necessary for clarification purposes given the limitations of note-taking that I mention above.

Parliamentary buildings in some ways impacted data collection. The parliament in Brussels is situated in four buildings connected by skywalks. I had to take in consideration which building, wing of each building, and floor I would be at for an interview or observation when

planning my schedule. In Strasbourg, the parliament consists of three connected buildings with offices in one and meeting rooms in the others. On the whole, it was easy to navigate the building network once I acquired greater familiarity.

I observed party group meetings where they took place in Brussels and for all but the EPP group in Strasbourg. The meeting rooms in Strasbourg were smaller and so I had to arrive early and often name-drop (I am a guest of so-and-so) in order to get a seat, while I sat in a separate room with EPP staff for their group meeting.² Working group meetings were held in the same rooms as the party group meeting, while committees had reserved rooms elsewhere. Fenno always carried a notebook recording what he saw and heard and any observations he drew at or subsequently from the events with an overall chronological approach to organizing the notes (Fenno, 1990, 83). A diary is useful to describe what occurred, when it took place, and its duration, as well as are ongoing notes on emerging ideas or reflections upon past observations (Herbert and Irene Rubin, 2005, 77).

Interview transcripts and all field notes are organized chronologically. In addition to taking notes during interviews and when observing meetings, I would also jot down notes while walking in the parliament buildings and observing subjects in informal conditions. For example, I observed the Chief of Staff to EPP President Daul booking meetings and conducting negotiations in hallways whereas the secretary-general performed this same function in other groups. Either on the metro or walk back to the hotel, I assessed the day and kept a diary which helped in placing a particular observation or interview response in the proper context. Train trips to and from Strasbourg and Sundays in Brussels also provided time to reflect and review.

² The EPP were the only group to provide me with a letter for access. For the other six groups, I eventually became acquainted with parliamentary security and key actors, but even late into the second phase I had to resort at times to name-dropping in order to secure and maintain a seat, especially in Strasbourg.

Fenno rarely used tape-recorders because observations were fast moving events or made people uncomfortable and less spontaneous (Fenno, 1990, 81). I couldn't use a digital recorder in observations of party group or working group meetings for two reasons. First, I had promised in my request for access that I would not record these often sensitive meetings. Even if I had not offered this or had groups allowed me to record, the logistics of meetings make recording difficult if not impossible as I often had to listen to the proceedings through headphones. In addition, the meetings of the larger groups consist of over hundred or more MEPs plus party group staff and MEP personal assistants, not counting guests of MEPs and observers from other EU institutions or prospective EU member-states. Even in the smaller groups like GUE and the EFD (thirty-eight members plus others) the audience was too large to accommodate recording.

The discussion of logistics above has raised the constraints brought about by my very limited comprehension of French. Luckily, nearly all MEPs I interviewed had a basic if not full grasp of the English language. Only one interview was in French, which was that of EPP President Daul via email. A KU French graduate student translated my questions and later Daul's responses. A follow-up interview was conducted via email in the second phase and translated again by the KU student. There were also five occasions in which the MEP's aide sat in on the interview to help with certain questions or particular phrases and words in their native language. Language constraints were non-existent in observations as parliamentary translators were available in plenary, party group, and working group meetings to translate the twenty-three languages used in the parliament while I took notes and listened through headphones.

The final component of data collection is ensuring the anonymity of interview subjects and observation participants. Fenno promised to never quote a politician or staffer without permission (Fenno, 1990, 64). Ensuring anonymity is important not only in an ethical sense, but

also in that an interview subject will feel more at ease knowing that they are not going to be cited and will often proceed to reveal hidden processes or provide valuable examples that would not be given if they were cited. It is therefore important to clarify such terms as “off the record”. The use of this term should literally mean that no mention of a particular statement or conversation will be made written or verbally elsewhere in the research or afterwards. In contrast, “not for attribution” means that the comments or information can be used so long as the subject is not directly identified (Goldstein, 2002, 671). I utilize the latter approach in this study.

All interviews were not attributed, which is to say that I do not cite any subject by name unless I am referencing a media article or other public source. In my Stata database where I coded interview responses, I note the leadership position, party group membership, and other respondent attributes and I assign a number for each subject in order to ensure anonymity. Their name is only referenced in the transcripts and in my interview schedule, neither of which will accompany the dissertation. In regards to interview responses, I disguise respondents by referring to the member’s position (vice-president, coordinator, etc.) rather than their name and not citing their committees or other information that may reveal their identity.

I similarly disguise the participants and content of working group or party group meeting discussions in order to honor my agreement with the party groups not to reveal sensitive subjects. However, I do quote particular phrases used by the group president in order to illustrate their role as presiding officer of these meetings and at times as the focal point of dissent management. For example, I might note that EPP President Daul commented that “our unity will send a signal to the Council” without identifying the report or related information.

CHALLENGES IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Data collection and logistics aside, there are other challenges related to qualitative research that must be addressed. Perhaps the greatest challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making

sense of massive amounts of data (Patton, 2002, 472). I simply cannot place every response from the nearly three hundred pages of interview transcripts and cite every occurrence from over a hundred pages of observation notes in my dissertation. For example, I chose not to include notes from group presidents' press conferences in chapter six due to the enormous amount of material gathered on group leaders. Once the material has been narrowed down, its utilization must be determined in terms of which chapter to place it in and with what topic to associate it with in order to provide context, support an assertion, or offer contrasting examples.

Compiling data according to Patton (1999) raises a set of challenges in that, "studies that use only one method are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method than are studies in which different types of data provide cross-data validity checks" (Patton, 1999, 1192). I address this in part by interviewing rank-and-file MEPs in addition to the target population of elites and also by observations, media accounts, and plenary speeches that provide valuable cross-checks.

Another challenge is that elite systems do not remain stable over time (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002, 675). The group secretariats remained stable during each phase though some staff did change positions. There was though a high MEP turnover rate with members leaving during the five-year parliament to assume national or local offices, or depart for health and other reasons. From August 2011 through July 1, 2012, forty-five MEPs were replaced out of seven hundred thirty-eight (www.europa.europarl.eu), with membership expanded to seven hundred fifty-six in January 2012 to accommodate provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. However, turnover and expansion provided me with additional interview contacts for new MEPs and did not detract from my focus on elites who remained in the parliament during both phases of field research.

In addition, studies relying heavily on interviews as data sources must also take into account that responses are products of bias derived in part from individual characteristics and

experiences, as well as from group or institutional memberships. As Putnam noted in his study of British and Italian MPs, “Politicians differ in the way they analyze policy problems...Some concentrate on broad social and moral principles, while others emphasize specific structures and details” (Putnam, 1971, 656). In turn, some respondents may define party group unity by broadly assessing the extent to which fellow group members have adopted common beliefs or share common backgrounds. Others may define party group unity more narrowly by referring to the success or failure of specific leadership roles, decision-making venues (party group meetings), or group socialization processes (norms governing dissent).

Group membership may also influence responses to interview questions in that a member of a group may not be able to maintain objectivity about the decisions taken by the group’s leaders and by the group as a whole depending on the degree of closeness a member feels to a group (Russell, 2012, 6). For example, if an MEP strongly identifies with their party group, they may provide responses that place the group in the most positive light, whereas respondents with weak or negative associations with their party group may purposefully provide answers downplaying the influence of or criticizing certain persons or processes.

Consequently, collecting responses from those closest to the phenomenon in question carries both the reward of acquiring first-hand explanations from (potentially) informed experts as well as the risk of deferring to biased interpretations derived from memberships and experiences. With these considerations in mind, explanations of party group unity by respondents familiar with the internal processes of the European Parliament will help to shape conclusions concerning party group dissent level variation. However, respondent biases are taken into account when analyzing data collected from interviews and then compared to assessments drawn from field

research and previous studies of the European Parliament in order to assess their reliability as explanations for party group unity.

Other challenges can be placed in four categories: bias resulting from rapport or personal views, bias resulting from the presence of the researcher, issues relating to sampling including generalizing findings, and the competence of the researcher (Patton 1999, 1202). Spending a great deal of time in the same settings provides opportunities to facilitate relationships that can be beneficial to research as described above. On the other hand, if the researcher allows professional relationships to influence views of groups or individual actors, then the product of research and the approach to data collection will be compromised.

The key is to develop rapport while keeping intellectual distance (Glaser, 1996, 533). In all cases, just as I did not place a group in a bad light because a particular member or staffer was rude to me, I do not gloss over the challenges or deficiencies within a group just because someone was nice or helpful. Another source of bias may arise from the ideological beliefs of the researcher. I do not come to this research with any preferences for any of the party groups nor do I have any strong views on European integration. To ensure this bias was not assumed by the subjects of my research, I reiterated my academic status and never revealed my past experience in campaigns or state government except to a very small number of staffers when I thought collegiality might aid in gaining access to group meetings by offering reassurances that I understood firsthand the value of confidentiality.

A researcher can also impact those around them by their presence. This is many ways depends upon the form of observation research. In his Danish Parliament study, Damgaard (1980) noted that “Participant observation entails the researcher being an actor, while spectator observation relegates the researcher to onlooker status” (Damgaard, 1980, 107). Fenno’s

observational studies of Congressmen in their home districts exemplifies participant observation in that the researcher took part in campaign volunteer activities, traveled with congressmen, and interacted with voters and others at events. My research can be classified as spectator observation in that I did not participate in any activities and instead sat in meetings and took notes, and never met with subjects outside of the parliament.

Observational studies have advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, as Damgaard notes, “observational studies place the researcher close to the subjects and processes they are interested in examining and provide excellent opportunities for analyses of complex events and situations” (Damgaard, 1980, 107). However, the presence of the observer may contaminate the situation causing the people to be observed to behave differently than they otherwise might (Fenno, 1990, 77). The benefits though gained by extensive access outweigh the potential costs of subjects behaving differently and with time are reduced (Fenno, 1990, 71).

In the larger group meetings, I was in the back of a room with hundreds of people. Few, if any, MEPs noticed my presence. In the medium and smaller groups, I was more visible, but all groups have visitors and observers. I was never officially recognized by the president or singled out by others during a meeting. As far as I could tell it was business as usual and this was verified as the number of observations increased and I could compare proceedings. For example, in the smaller or medium groups (or in the horizontal working groups), particular MEPs would wave to me as they took their seats. Nonetheless, they went about their participation or non-participation as they had before they met me.

Just as with survey research, qualitative studies must identify target populations and these in turn incur challenges associated with sampling, such as when generalizing. Among other attributes, Patton (2002) notes that sample size depends on what you know, purpose of the

inquiry, what will have credibility, and what can be done with applicable time and resources (Patton, 2002, 244). Using past cases studies as a model for sampling, I chose a strategic and purposeful selection model rather than random sampling in order to provide information-rich results (Patton, 2002, 241). As stated above, in order to understand why dissent levels are lower in some groups than others and to identify the roles and tactics utilized within dissent management by group leaders, my study required that I primarily interviewed elites among MEPs and staff and that I contact every member of leadership in each of the party groups.

A random sample of all MEPs and staff would have not captured the targeted categories among leaders and others. Had I in turn drawn a random sample of elites, it would have prevented me from speaking to as many subjects as possible and in securing sufficient data for analysis. In other words, a “Big N”, within a targeted population was desired in order to not only corroborate findings from individual interviews but also to ensure that as much of the whole story associated with dissent management in party groups as possible was considered.

Fenno never had a sample in the strictest sense in his studies of Congressmen in their home districts. However, he never made a decision about traveling to a district without first assessing or reassessing how the characteristics of the district and of the Congressmen might add to the study. Over time, if for example, Fenno determined that for example too many lawyers were represented among the sample of Congressmen, he would target non-lawyers for future observations (Fenno, 1990, 59).

In some ways, this mirrors the approach I took to booking interviews and selecting meetings for observation. Unlike Fenno, I tried to talk to everyone in the targeted population and attend every party group meeting possible rather than spend quality time with a handful of legislators and attend only those events associated with them. However, like Fenno, as I collected data in

the field, I consciously made the effort to balance the number of interviews and observations according to group size. In other words, while I initially contacted and later followed up at least once with every member of leadership in each group, when I noticed that one group was lacking a representative number of interviews or a comparable number of meeting observations, I re-focused my scheduling of interviews and observations to address this imbalance.

The only sampling for interviews occurred when contacting MEPs who frequently dissented from the group line in roll-call votes. My hope was that in talking with frequently dissenting MEPs I could not only identify rationale for dissent but also gain some insight into the successes and failures of dissent management. I gathered these names from a review of votes taken in 2011 and 2012 and then randomly selected a number that was representative of the group sizes.

Given these sampling strategies, can I generalize my findings? Just as Patton (1999) recommends, I must return to the reasons for having made initial design decisions (Patton, 1999, 1197). The purpose of my research is case-driven that is to understand how particular processes work in the European Parliament and to ascertain their impact upon MEP behavior. Through case studies as these, we can know more about targeted populations and can hypothesize about larger populations in order to frame future research (Patton, 2002, 244).

If my research was based solely on observation, the goal of generalizing my findings to the current parliament in its full session (2009-2014) could not be attained in that while I can't observe every meeting, a larger sample of observations nonetheless would be needed to determine whether or not the observed processes and behavior are typical of such meetings. Instead, observations serve to corroborate or to offer exceptions to the data obtained through interviews. In all, my approach to field research mirrors Fenno in that he made a deliberate decision to sacrifice analytical range for analytical depth; that is to know more about a particular

phenomenon rather than to apply results to other settings (Fenno, 1990, 60). Therefore, the research model provides for an information-rich case study that not only helps to highlight particular processes in the European Parliament, but to also offer group level explanations for variation in dissent expression.

Finally, I should address whether or not I am competent to conduct the research. On one hand, no past experience can completely prepare a researcher for the challenges presented by particular settings and actors. As I was often told by MEPs, you understand this place and learn how to be most effective by simply going through and surviving the initial exposure to it. In other words, you “learn by doing”. Initial interviews and observations provided me with lessons on how not only to schedule similar efforts but also on how to conduct myself. On the other hand, I didn’t approach this effort as a complete novice. As a political field coordinator, I interviewed prospective state legislative candidates and as a legislative aide I had observed countless party and legislative meetings.³ Finally, I had visited the parliament before: as a student at the College of Europe and in my initial visit to acquire meeting access.

TARGETED POPULATIONS

As Table 2.2 below indicates, the complete set of interviews was representative across party groups and was similarly representative within each group in regards to leadership positions. There are often individual actors that a researcher wished had been included in the study. Such actors for me were the ECR Group President which was held by Jan Zahradil in 2011 who then gave way to Martin Callanan in January 2012 and the Co-Presidents of the Greens/EFA Group. However, I did interview five group presidents which is a representative sample of this specific leadership position and I further compensated by observing three of the four presidents I didn’t interview in group meetings on multiple occasions. Like the Greens, the EFD have co-presidents,

³ In fact, it was my experience in observing party caucus meetings that led me to this research topic as I understood the importance of legislative party leaders and meetings in dissent management.

one of whom I interviewed, while the ECR, the GUE and the Socialists elected new presidents halfway into the parliament. I interviewed the GUE replacement (Zimmer) in the second phase and both S & D presidents (Martin Schulz and Johannes Swoboda) in the first phase though Swoboda was the group parliamentary secretary or whip at the time.

TABLE 2.2: INTERVIEWS BY POSITION AND PARTY GROUP

PARTY GROUP	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS/EFA	GUE	S & D
PRESIDENT	1	0 (2)	1 (2)	1	0 (2)	1 (2)	1 (2)
GROUP VP	2 (8)	4 (4)	2 (6)	5 (10)	4 (7)	3 (6)	6 (9)
COORDINATOR	4/22	2/22	2/22	Staff Only	2/22	2/22	3/22
OTHER MEPS	8	2	0	3	3	0	3
GROUP STAFF	2	2	2	5	1	2	4
PARTY STAFF	1	0	0	1	1	1	1

Note: The first number in each cell is the number of interviews for each position per party group and the number in parentheses indicates the total number holding that position per party group. N of Cases: 84

In addition, I obtained an interview sample of group vice-presidents that was representative within and across party groups. Four of the seven groups designate a vice president as a whip/parliamentary-secretary and I was fortunate to interview three of the four whips, plus the new S & D whip (Enrique Guerrero) when Swoboda became group president. Group coordinators are the group leaders in the twenty-two committees. One of the many lessons learned in the first phase was the importance of this leadership position.

Accordingly, I contacted all twenty-two coordinators in the five largest groups. The GUE and EFD each have only has one or two members on the various committees resulting in nearly every member serving as a coordinator. Interviews of coordinators in these groups therefore were a lower priority and often a product of coincidence. With about fifteen rejections and seven no replies, the absence of EPP coordinator interviews is disappointing, but the data obtained from other EPP interviews including aides to coordinators and from observations assisted in assessing dissent management practices associated with this leadership position in this group. Although the sample is not as representative of this particular position as I would like, when combined with

those of group presidents and vice presidents, the leadership sample as a whole is representative and provides information-rich case study data.

The category of “Other MEPs” was never meant to be a large sample. It consists primarily of new MEPs and MEPs who frequently dissented from the group line as well as members of the ALDE Group Bureau who were national delegation chairs or committee chairs. New MEPs provide a fresh perspective on party group processes and roles and may provide contrastive responses to those from respondents with much more extensive service. I also included this subject category because I was interested in the socialization processes associated with new MEPs. I included frequently dissenting MEPs because I wanted to acquire greater understanding of the rationale for dissent and the selection of dissent expression as well as to provide examples of the failures or limitations associated with dissent management.

I also interviewed three of the seven group secretary-generals and the chief of staff to the EPP President. The remainder of group staff included aides to coordinators, deputy secretary-generals, aides to vice-presidents and whips, policy advisors, and communications staff. Party staff in Table 2.2 refers to European Party secretary-generals or staff in five of the seven European Parties which are organizations outside of the parliament. While my priority was to interview as many subjects within the targeted populations while maintaining a balance in the number of respondents across party groups, I also was cognizant of the need to ensure that the interview population was representative of respondents’ years of service (as MEPs and/or staff) in the parliament and member-state origins.

I assumed that members with more years of service would have a greater understanding of and more exposure to party group level processes and role assignment, while members with fewer years of service would provide to various degrees a fresh and perhaps contrastive

perception on various group level processes and role assignments. As depicted below in Table 2.3, the sample is fairly representative across years of service especially considering the elite focus of the study. I was particularly surprised to find so many of the group leaders were serving in their first parliament, which a study of most national parliaments would be unlikely to reveal. Throughout the study, I will organize respondents by years of service into three groups: 1-3 years of service (33 respondents), 4-10 years (30) and 11+ years (21).

TABLE 2.3: RESPONDENTS AND YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE PARLIAMENT

YEARS OF SERVICE	RESPONDENTS	YEARS OF SERVICE	RESPONDENTS
1	7	13	12
3	26	16	1
4	2	18	3
5	2	23	1
6	4	24	2
7	1	28	1
8	16	33	1
9	5		

Note: Table depicts the number of respondents for a given year of service as an MEP and/or staff in the European Parliament. N of Cases: 84

When considering the interview sample in terms of member-state origins, I faced limitations of ensuring representativeness as group leadership positions do not necessarily correspond to delegation size or regional distributions apart from the ECR who purposefully balance UK and non-UK representation in group leadership. However, I was concerned that the sample would be too concentrated among Northern Europeans as they would be more likely to speak English. Nonetheless, as Table 2.4 below depicts, the interview population includes several Spanish, Greek, Portuguese and other respondents from Southern Europe. I also interviewed nearly every Eastern European holding a group leadership position as well as staff and other MEPs from this region though I would have preferred to have interviewed more respondents from new member-states. Finally, I must acknowledge the inclusion of few French and Italians in the study despite my efforts to reach these respondents through an email in both French and English or to offer to

provide the questions by email in French and then translate their responses. I don't believe that the low number of French or Italian respondents detracts from the study but the study would have certainly benefitted from the inclusion of more respondents from these large delegations.

TABLE 2.4: RESPONDENTS AND MEMBER-STATE ORIGINS

MEMBER-STATE	RESPONDENTS	MEMBER-STATE	RESPONDENTS
AUSTRIA	4	LATVIA	0
BELGIUM	3	LITHUANIA	0
BULGARIA	0	LUXEMBOURG	0
CYPRUS	2	MALTA	1
CZECH REPUBLIC	3	NETHERLANDS	6
DENMARK	3	POLAND	1
ESTONIA	0	PORTUGAL	4
FINLAND	6	ROMANIA	1
FRANCE	4	SLOVAKIA	0
GERMANY	13	SLOVENIA	0
GREECE	3	SPAIN	3
HUNGARY	3	SWEDEN	7
IRELAND	1	UNITED KINGDOM	14
ITALY	2		

Note: Table depicts the number of respondents from each of the twenty-seven EU member-states. A zero indicates that no MEPs or staff from this member-state was interviewed. N of Cases: 84

In regards to meeting observations (please refer to Table 2.5 below), as the largest group in parliament with over forty percent of MEPs, it was essential that I viewed as many EPP party group meetings as possible as they often set the agenda and determine legislative outcomes. The next four largest groups were also targeted for as many observations as possible and apart from the ECR this goal was accomplished. As I noted earlier in the chapter, horizontal working group meetings were added on for the second phase of research as permission to view these was obtained by some groups late in the first phase or for others just prior to the second phase. The Greens do not have fixed working groups consisting of members across related committees, but rather issue-themed groups that are often temporary. As a result, these meet infrequently and on the one day where I could attend, I was denied access as the number of participants was going to be so small it was held in a conference room with a single table. I compensated by attending

another working group meeting. The EFD and GUE do not have working groups due to their small size, while the ECR have a Policy Development Group which was not accessible to me.

TABLE 2.5: OBSERVED PARTY GROUP AND WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

MEETINGS	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS/EFA	GUE/NGL	S & D
PARTY GROUP	5	2	2	6	5	3	4
WORKING GROUP	2	NA	NA	2	0	NA	2

Note: Table depicts the number of observed party group and horizontal working group meetings for each of the seven party groups in the two phases of field research. N of Cases: 33

INTERVIEW STRUCTURES AND TECHNIQUES

As Rubin and Rubin (2005) note, interviews are intended to hear the meaning of what the interviewees are saying and when that meaning cannot be ascertained follow-up questions are asked to gain clarity and precision (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 13). According to Goldstein (2002), there are three basic goals when conducting interviews: (1) gathering information from a sample of officials in order to make generalizable claims about characteristics or decisions, (2) discovering a particular piece of information, and (3) informing or guiding work that uses other sources of data (Goldstein, 2002, 669).

As Rubin and Rubin suggest, “one way to begin an interview is to ask for help from general informants who have already observed the scene” (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 65). Accordingly, I first met with key staff before interviewing MEPs in order to both frame and construct questions. Following Leech’s (2002) advice, I led off with a question that was non-threatening in order to build rapport and set a graduated pace in terms of question content and intensity (Leech, 2002, 666). I normally began my interviews with a question concerning responsibilities to staff and one asking an MEP’s view on why the group was united as it was in plenary votes. I stuck to this pattern for staff but occasionally saved the group cohesion question for last with MEPs and instead led off with a question pertaining to their responsibilities.

Leech categorizes interviews as structured or unstructured. The former is more of a conversation than an interview with even the topic open to change in the course of the discussion, while the latter is far more structured and centering upon the identification of particular information often through closed-ended questions. Unstructured interviews are often referred to as ‘soaking and poking’ experiences that are useful for initiating research (Leech, 2002, 665). My approach to interviewing was best categorized as structured due to the responses serving as indicators for hypotheses as I discuss below. However, this approach did not preclude me from asking probing or follow-up questions or to add to the question set when new material was brought to my attention best exemplified by the inclusion of the role of horizontal working groups and the group secretary-general after initial interviews identified the contributions of these forums and actors. Initial interviews also impacted subsequent wording such as by referring to the parliamentary secretary rather the whip when speaking to groups other than the ECR.

Leech suggests that main or initial questions may be organized into two categories. “Grand Tour questions ask subjects to walk through a problem or set of events or processes (sometimes within a prescribed timeframe) of which they are familiar and convey the intended complexity of the research (Leech, 2002, 667). I utilized grand tour questions by asking coordinators for example to walk me through how a legislative report or the person shadowing the report is assigned in committee or by asking an MEP to walk me through the process leading to dissenting from the group line or the reaction of a group leader to a dissenting MEP or national delegation.

Example questions are more specific in terms of content and placement within a given set of events (Leech, 2002, 667). On occasion, I referred to a specific report to frame dissent expression and management questions. The economic governance debate occurring during both phases of research provided such examples. I also utilized specific leaders or senior staff or at

times group processes as references in questions in order to put structured questions within context. For example, when asking about the role of horizontal working groups in dissent management, I might refer to the ECR Policy Development Group or offer the structure of another group as a contrast to stimulate discussion when meeting with MEPs from the smaller groups lacking working groups.

Rubin and Rubin further note that interviewers additionally utilize probes or follow-up questions to address over-simplifications, new ideas, missing information and stories introduced by the subjects (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 174). I utilized follow-up questions such as by asking the subject to provide a specific example of when the group president impacted voting outcomes as answers to the initial question of what makes the group president effective and how they help to build group unity. Another example of a probe or follow-up question in an interview was to ask if the issue is not resolved in the working group or if the member will not adhere to the group line, what happens next? Who in leadership will meet with the dissenting member or delegation?

In asking all questions, it is important to convey that there is no right or wrong answer as you are only interested in the facts and allow subjects to make corrections when your questions indicate you misunderstand something (they are the experts), which particularly occurs during probes (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 80 and 115). Regardless of whether the interview is recorded, writing notes during an interview helps to manage the flow and pace of the discussion. It also forces the interviewer to listen to the answers and encourages the formation of additional questions later in the interview or in a future interview (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 111).

One problem related to validity is whether or not to use the same questions for every interview. Though questions can be improved over time, Phillip Converse and others have recommended that the same questions should be used in later rounds thereby retaining any

original measurement error the original item introduced rather than comparing results from different questions (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002, 675). The structured questions remained largely the same for both research phases as the hypotheses to be tested remained constant though the wording and order might change to fit particular subjects or reflect new information, but the subject of the question remained the same. However, some questions arose late in the first phase and had to be submitted to early interview subjects via email where applicable.

Rubin and Rubin note that it is common practice to prepare no more than six questions and to expect time for answers to no more than four with depth being more important than breadth (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 135). In her study of South African female MPs, a typical interview for Britton lasted one and a half to hours with many interview subjects granting supplemental interviews or responding to further questions through phone calls or faxes (Britton, 2005, 163).

An average interview in my study lasted fifteen to twenty minutes for MEPs and nearly thirty minutes for staff. I prepared thirteen questions related to hypotheses testing with the goal of asking at least six to eight if the interview was cut short. Therefore, in some circumstances, any remaining key questions or follow-up questions were sent via email. Supplementary questions in general arose due to time constraints, after new information had been obtained in subsequent interviews or observations, or following transcript review, and were submitted by email. Supplemental interviews were not possible for MEPs given their schedules.

CODING OF INTERVIEW AND OBSERVATION DATA

Transcribing involves not only typing recorded interviews, or maintaining written notes from interviews and reflections (while preserving confidentiality), but also coding terms that may be identified in transcription that require defining or clarification by the interviewee or through other sources (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 184). Rubin and Rubin define the data unit in qualitative work as the exchange with a single subject containing a chain of follow-up questions

and their answers. Comments made during an interview are broken down into data units and blocks of information that are examined together. (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 202-203). In turn, the analysis proceeds in stages that often overlap beginning with recognition in which the concepts, themes, events, and topical markers in the interview are identified (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 207).

From here, the researcher systematically examines the different interviews to clarify specific concepts and themes and synthesize different versions of events to put together an understanding of the overall narrative (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, 207). Coding can also be placed within three schemes. Manifest coding items involve direct responses to direct questions, whereas latent coding items refer to responses that were not explicitly called for by the questions, while global coding items reflect judgments by the coders about general traits and styles concerning the subjects (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002, 675).

When conducting interviews, I employed all three categories. As my questions were on the whole structured and accompanied by probing, they were followed largely by direct responses. However, as subjects provided new information or chose at times to answer a question in a way that did not directly align with the purpose of the question, subsequent review resulted in latent coding, while global coding was largely associated with observational data in that I was making judgments about whether observed dialogue and behavior were critical rather than the subject providing that interpretation through an interview response.

Recording and accurate transcription (aided in its review by the subject) ensures the reliability of the interview. Interview transcripts are largely verbatim, except in that I removed hesitation words like “ah” and “um”, as well as personal exchanges such as when MEPs asked my opinion of particular issues or people or when they engaged in small talk about books or sports during the course of the recorded interview. When transcribing, I used American English

spelling except for names of organizations like the Labour Party. Finally, while most interview responses are provided in full across the chapters, some responses were so lengthy that I had to remove whole sentences or parts of sentences. I indicate either edits through a series of periods between cited words and/or sentences.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Each question addresses either a particular leadership position/group forum affiliated with the whip structure or dissent management tool (socialization or discipline) and frames the organization of the study in that each chapter considers a respective question or set of related questions. For example, a question about the role of group vice-presidents is one of five questions examining the dissent management role of group leaders in chapter six. In turn, five response categories are associated with each question with each response functioning as a dependent variable. Finally, respondent characteristics (See Table 4.4 below) will serve as predictors of the likelihood of offering each response to the question.

TABLE 4.4: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Party Group Membership
Party Group Position
Years of Service
Member-State
Gender
Previous Profession

In each chapter, I will provide hypotheses proposing relationships between respective respondent characteristics and the likelihood of offering a particular response to each question. Party group membership refers to affiliation with one of the seven party groups. The twenty-seven party group members who were not members of any group were not included in the study as they could not account for group level processes. I anticipate that the size, plenary influence, and culture of each group should influence the perceptions of respondents. For example, when assessing the role of group forums, members from smaller groups will not reference working

groups as they not applicable, members of influential groups should place greater emphasis on the dissent management role of group forums, while Greens/EFA members will be more invested in party group meetings as their group culture encourages participation.

Party group position refers to leadership offices (president, vice-president, and coordinator), rank-and-file MEPs, secretary-generals and staff. I expect that respondents holding leadership positions should adopt different attitudes on particular questions than rank-and-file MEPs and staff. For example, coordinators should be more likely to contend that dissent is considered when assigning rapporteurs as coordinators are responsible for assignment, whereas rank-and-file MEPs should be more likely to take an egalitarian view and maintain that expertise matters more than voting behavior.

Years of service encompasses time spent in the parliament and/or as a member of the secretariat. I expect respondents with more years of service to have a greater understanding of organizational processes and role assignment within the group as well as having more exposure to socialization processes and therefore more likely to adopt norms governing dissent and other behavior. For example, respondents with more years of service in the parliament will be more likely to contend that only the last slot(s) is reserved for dissenting members in plenary debates whereas respondents with fewer years of service will not be as acquainted with the decision-making associated with plenary speaking time allocation.

I included gender and previous profession as extraneous variables. Previous profession encompasses those with previous leadership experience (PM, ministers, national party leaders, or mayors), those having held elected office at the national, regional, or local level, those who had served previously as legislative or party staff, and those with other previous professions (private sector, education which includes academics and students) prior to service in the parliament.

All statistical analysis was conducted in Stata which contains all data in regards to interview responses or respondent characteristics. Because the dependent variable (interview responses) is nominal, Cramér's V serves as a measurement of strength of association for the relationship between each interview response and the respondent characteristics noted above. Per Stata, the substantive strength of Cramér's V scores is assessed according to the following scale: 0-0.19 (weak association), 0.20-0.49 (moderate association), and 0.50 and above (strong association) while the statistical significance of each response predictor is assessed through the accompanying p-value with values under 0.05 indicating statistical significance (Acock, 2012, 129). Accordingly, while a strong association may occur between two variables (Ex: respondent member-state and a given response), the relationship may be a product of chance and not occur in the broader population if a statistically significant relationship between the variables is absent.

In turn, each question is accompanied by a set of hypotheses anticipating what respondent characteristics will increase the likelihood of offering particular responses. If the relationship between any respondent characteristic(s) and the likelihood of offering a particular response to a question is statistically significant, then that characteristic(s) will frame the discussion in each chapter. Some questions sought to provide purely informational responses that would help to clarify processes within the parliament (Ex: why members vote abstain). However, most questions are associated with hypotheses testing and are found in the chapters noted below.

INTRODUCTORY/EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS

- Q. What are your responsibilities as a member of the group secretariat?
- Q. Why do MEPs vote abstain and how does your party group regard a vote of abstain?
- Q. When have you voted against the group line? Can you give an example?
- Q. How did your previous experience as a (X) help to prepare you for group leadership?

CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLAINING PARTY GROUP UNITY

- Q. What in your opinion explains why most MEPs in your group vote the same way most of the time? (When interviewing EFD members or staff, I used the term majority rather than most)

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCIPLINE MEASURES

- Q. Is speaking time in plenary debates denied in your group to those who oppose the group line?
- Q. Is voting behavior considered by your group when awarding rapporteurs or assigning members to be shadow rapporteurs?
- Q. Do group leaders lobby members to oppose plenary amendments offered by individual group members that are contrary to the group line?

CHAPTER SIX: ROLE OF LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES

- Q. What makes (X) an effective President?
- Q. When does your group president become involved in ensuring group unity?
- Q. How does the group vice-president contribute to group unity?
- Q. How does the group whip or parliamentary-secretary contribute to group unity?
- Q. What is the role of the Secretary-General in building group unity?

CHAPTER SEVEN: GROUP FORUMS

- Q. What is the role of horizontal working groups in building unity within your party group?
- Q. What is the role of party group meetings in building unity within your party group?

CHAPTER EIGHT: SOCIALIZATION PROCESSES

- Q. After an election or throughout the parliament, what is done in your group to help new MEPs understand how the group is organized and to communicate its values or beliefs?
- Q. When does your group consider it to be acceptable for an MEP to dissent from the official line and how must they go about announcing dissent?

After typing transcripts, I coded responses according to the informational reference if introductory or for the bulk of responses related to hypotheses testing for placement within the anticipated response set. For the latter, I encountered two types of responses: those that directly address the question and those responses that contain multiple indicators. A good example of the latter is the question asking what in your opinion explains why your group is unified most of the time in plenary. The entire response may only mention ideology or the role of particular leaders. Many responses though contain references to two or more explanations, and accordingly were coded to indicate every applicable response category. For example, an S & D MEP offered this explanation for group cohesion in plenary votes.

“Socialists and Social Democrats are normally disciplined at home, but I think it is also the strong leadership. We try to bring people together and make them not only work together but vote also together. Many of their voters want to have a strong voice, a common position, and as we are for a common Europe, a common foreign and security policy, we cannot always be

divided ourselves, but still I would like to have more common and cohesive voting behavior but still in our mind is this Pro-European attitude and therefore we more easily forget what is demanded from at home, because to be together is more important and of course we have many meetings where we bring people together and we say that we have to have a common position. This is done by leadership, by Mr. Schulz himself, or by the vice-president concerning for certain areas” (November 9, 2011).

This response contains references to leadership structure and strategy as well as to identity formation in that the respondent associates a conceptualization of the group identity defined as it being “European” as one that is conducive to group unity. In contrast, the response below by an EPP Vice President to the question of how the parliamentary secretary contributes to group unity assumes an administrative rather than a dissent management role for this particular leader.

“Mr. Szajers is responsible for... everything that is discussed in the working groups will go to the office of Mr. Szajers who is the chief whip who will make sure that there is a voting list for each and every subject that of course come from the rapporteurs and with the approval of the coordinators. Secondly, he has to put a sign whether it is first line whip, second line whip or third line whip, which again it is not like in the House of Commons in that these lines tell the members the importance to which the group attaches, it is not kind of a coercive measure, it is how strong the recommendation is. Then, Mr. Szajers must arrange for the speakers. He will ask the working groups who wishes to speak and we send him this list. Most of the time, there are more people who wish to speak than the allocated time and then he has to decide how much time he is going to give to members” (November 9, 2011).

Coding of observation notes mirrors the techniques employed for interview transcripts in that the observed dialogue and behavior are in turn coded for institutional information as well as indicators of particular leadership strategies, evidence of socialization or to the general contributions of group forums. Perhaps the key difference is that observation notes consistently provide multiple indicators and also include far more references to other phenomena such as inter-group or inter-institutional relations when compared to interview transcripts. Another key difference is again the conditions for note-taking in that the data was collected through handwritten notes often aided by translations through headphones.

For example, when coding party group meeting notes, I noted: the historical conditions in regards to the European political situation as referenced by members, references to other EU institutions such as the Commission or Council, the legislation or political matters under consideration, other party groups, the actors participating in discussion, the role of the group president and other leaders in the meeting, mention of dissent or uncertainty by members, and references to group socialization practices or the group identity.⁴

When coding observation notes, Fenno stressed that it requires an open mind and flexibility in approach in terms of the details of the research plan and in any presumptions about the subjects and processes to be studied (Fenno, 1990, 57). Fenno viewed observations as episodic and never continuous. This allowed for not only a focused approach to each subject, but also enabled the author to link each observation within a sequence over time with sequence referring to legislation, interviews, or surrounding events (Fenno, 1990, 116). An appreciation for context is gained by the researcher over time and is increasingly evident as you move from politician or venue to another (Fenno, 1990, 114). While observing meeting, I often linked a particular statement, processes, or action to those I observed in earlier meetings.

This was not only the case when reflecting upon party group or working group meetings for the same subjects, but also in terms of comparing and contrasting the meetings across party group lines. However, I took the advice of Fenno in that I recorded everything that I thought was relevant and tried to view each meeting as episodic before making generalizations and applying observational data to hypothesis testing. Using the Greens as an example, while noting each action taken by the secretary-general in the group meetings and linking these to a pre-determined indicator (based on earlier observations) of her role in dissent management, I also treated each

⁴ I cannot provide specific examples as this would violate my promise not to publish party group meeting notes.

observation of her role as episodic in that a particular presentation from her might reference the role of the Council of Presidents for example that had not been noted in previous observations.

Interviews can also impact observation data collection and later coding. For example, interviews of ALDE MEPs often revealed that horizontal working group meetings were poorly attended and largely inconsequential for dissent management. However, the Working Group C (Foreign Policy) meeting was very well attended, but before I could refute earlier assertions made by subjects, an observation of a joint meeting of Groups A/B verified these accounts as I was only one of about a dozen people in the room including staff and was further corroborated by additional interviews. The lesson being that each meeting had to be viewed as a unique phenomenon prior to being linked to broader conclusions.

Fenno stressed that the “proper attitude toward the results should be skepticism, leading to re-evaluation, and, whenever possible, crosschecking” (Fenno, 1990, 82). Both the information provided by interviews and the observations themselves had to be treated skeptically. Skepticism does not equate to rejection, but rather to cross-checking and verification. When doing so, the researcher should keep in mind that contrastive examples will occur and should be evaluated only after corroborating interviews and observations can be made in order to determine if the collected data reflects an outlying event or idea, or evidence refuting an earlier assessment.

Finally, I also incorporate media accounts and plenary speeches. Media accounts are not used for hypotheses testing, but rather only to put each research phase into historical context or exemplify particular institutional processes and structures. Plenary speeches will mostly consist of explanations of votes by members given toward the end of the day and after votes. MEP speeches in plenary often contain nuanced arguments not captured by votes of yes, no, or abstain and unlike plenary votes, all plenary speeches are recorded (Proksch and Slapin, 2008, 6).

The content of MEP speeches provided in debates and explanations of vote in plenary at times provide insight into the decision-making processes of MEPs and the extent to which institutional figures and structures impact this process and the broader effort of dissent management. For example, explanations of vote will help to explain why MEPs vote abstain or at times offer insight into committee proceedings which are not recorded.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I reviewed the methods by which I collected, coded, and analyzed data from interviews of MEPs and key staff and from observations of party group and other political or legislative meetings. I began by discussing the logistics associated with obtaining access to the parliament, followed by the booking process of interviews and the targeting of subjects for interviews and observations. In addition, I discussed the types of questions asked in interviews, the approach to observation and the process in which interview and observational data is analyzed and coded. I concluded with a review of hypotheses testing.

In the next chapter, I will consider the properties of dissent in regards to form of expression by MEPs, frequency across party groups, and dissent management strategies by group leaders and staff. The goal of the chapter is in part to demonstrate how dissent should be more broadly assessed rather than characterized solely as percentage of time a member votes the group line. In addition, the chapter also seeks to explain how party group leaders identify and address dissent at every legislative stage.

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CHAPTER THREE: PROPERTIES OF DISSENT

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I presented the research design for field data collection and analysis. In order to gain a greater understanding of the dissent management process and its impact upon party group cohesion levels in the European Parliament, I proposed that field research consisting of elite-centered interviews and observations of party group meetings was necessary to uncover hidden processes as well as the perceptions by the relevant actors toward dissent and dissent management. Accordingly, I presented a research timeline, rationale for interview subject and meeting observation selection, research techniques, data collection and coding, and a discussion of hypotheses testing and analysis.

In this chapter, I consider the properties of dissent which refer to both the level and management of dissent. Levels of dissent are defined both in terms of the overall extent of cohesion or agreement within legislative parties (or in this case party groups) as indicated in roll-call votes and in other forms of dissent expressed by legislators throughout the stages of the legislative process such as expressing opposition in a caucus meeting. In turn, dissent management consists of the strategies employed by party group leaders (and staff) to either prevent dissent from occurring or to ensure that dissent is held to a minimum both in terms of the overall numbers of party group members dissenting and in the form of expression selected by individual MEPs at various legislative stages.

The chapter first examines overall party group cohesion rates as determined by roll-call votes in order to frame the discussion of expressing and managing dissent within the context of more and less cohesive party groups. I next consider explanations of MEP voting behavior provided through interviews which offer cues to dissent management strategies employed by group leaders. Having considered MEP explanations for their dissent from the group line on

given reports or amendments, the chapter then proceeds with a review of the options for expressing dissent available to MEPs throughout the legislative process: committees to plenary. This section examines the frequency of dissent expression levels and proposes why some forms of dissent expression may be more prevalent or preferable than others within particular groups.

The chapter next considers three dissent management models: disciplinary tools, a whip structure (consisting of specific leadership roles and group forums), and socialization processes (group norms governing behavior and appeals to a shared conceptualization of the group identity). In turn, I propose that whip structures and socialization at the group level in conjunction with MEP ideology at the individual level explains party group dissent level variation. In doing so, I utilize a broader definition of cohesion which encompasses a cohesive group identity and members' views toward group unity (See Brown 2000) as well as cohesive voting patterns or shared legislative objectives (Carey, 2007, 93).

DISSENT AT THE PARTY GROUP LEVEL

Before considering dissent in terms of rationale for opposing the group line, the forms of expression dissent may take, and the strategies associated with managing dissent, it is first necessary to understand the extent of cohesion and thereby dissent at the party group level in the European Parliament. According to Owens (2003), "Levels of cohesiveness are important in part because they provide us with crucial information about how legislatures/parties function and how they interact with executives/governments" (Owens, 2003, 12). Group cohesion may be measured as the average percentage of MEPs within a party group who vote the same way on a given report or amendment. Utilizing this information raises two questions: why are some party groups more cohesive than others and why are party group cohesion levels on the whole so high?

The first row in Table 3.1 below lists party group cohesion rates for all roll-call plenary votes since the June 2009 European Parliament elections through the plenary ending in July 2012

coinciding with the end of field research. The second and third rows are cohesion rates for plenary votes during each research phase. Separating cohesion according to field research stages is essential to account not only for historical context, but also for potential leadership effects for those groups changing presidents, as well as for the inclusion of additional MEPs joining the parliament in December 2011 per the Lisbon Treaty which expanded or contracted the size of various national delegations.

TABLE 3.1: PARTY GROUP COHESION IN THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT

Timelines	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens/EFA	GUE	S & D
7/2009-7/2012	.90	.87	.50	.93	.95	.82	.93
9/18/2011-11/13/2011	.86	.78	.48	.96	.92	.79	.89
5/28/2011-6/28/2011	.87	.97	.47	.96	.95	.82	.90

Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

On one hand, each party group is unique both in terms of personalities of members and staff and in terms of group cultures. However, there are some shared characteristics that help to separate the more cohesive from the less cohesive groups. Field research has revealed that the Greens/EFA, EPP, and S & D, all share in common a whip structure consisting of proactive leaders and staff which identifies and addresses dissent throughout the legislative process in conjunction with socialization processes consisting of norms governing MEP behavior and group identities conducive to group cohesion. In contrast, the ALDE, ECR, and GUE are to various extents comparatively deficient in these dissent management components and in the case of the EFD, they are nearly absent. However, while the party groups of the European Parliament may be broadly categorized into the more and less cohesive, Table 3.1 raises further questions which highlight the unique aspects of particular groups. For example, if the ALDE are often the most pivotal group in terms of deciding the passage or failure of legislation, why are they less

cohesive than the Greens who less frequently impact plenary outcomes? In turn, how do the Greens ensure such high cohesion rates?

MEP IDEOLOGY + WHIP STRUCTURES + SOCIALIZATION = LOW DISSENT

The equation above encompasses my proposed explanation for variation in party group dissent levels in that ideology at the individual level measured as the distance between an MEP's position and the group position on a given issue provides the foundation for explaining party group cohesion (See Hix et al. 2007). In turn, group cohesion is in part a product of members approximating the ideological mean of the group on the left-right and European integration axes with the least cohesive groups more commonly containing members who hold views farther apart from the group ideological mean. However, ideology alone is insufficient for explaining group cohesion and fails to account for dissent management successes.

Field research suggests that dissent level variation may be further explained at the group level through the extent to which particular components of dissent management or whip structures as well as socialization processes are present within party groups. For example, one group may not utilize party group meetings to secure support for the group line while another group may lack a whip thereby creating a gap in dissent management. Similarly, while most groups are perceived by respondents to possess to varying degrees a group identity which helps to promote a sense of fellowship among members, one group may lack norms promoting deferral to horizontal working groups when making voting decisions and another may contain competing national identities which at times clash with the otherwise prevailing group identity.

In other words, group cohesion rates will increase and dissent levels will be held to a minimum when more components of a whip structure and socialization processes are present and fully utilized whereas dissent levels will increase as fewer of these components are present and

utilized to their fullest potential. In this sense, both strategy (in terms of lobbying and socialization) and structure (in terms of assigned offices and decision-making venues) are essential for successful dissent management.

Rows two and three of Table 3.1 provide further evidence of the relationship between dissent levels and dissent management strategies within the context of the two phases of field research. When the stakes were at their highest in the parliament with the consideration of the economic governance and bailout packages, the EPP during the first phase of field research enjoyed extraordinarily high cohesion rates. As I will describe in subsequent chapters, higher than average EPP cohesion rates were ensured by a proactive whip structure and successful socialization practices which were present before the crisis but were employed to their fullest extent during the crisis.

Having set the stage for exploring the properties of dissent by examining party group cohesion rates, I now turn to explanations for dissent from MEP and staff interviews. Understanding why MEPs dissent helps to explain not only why cohesion rates are higher in some groups than in others, but the explanations also underscore components of successful dissent management strategies employed by party group leaders in that a prevalent rationale for dissent within a group will lead to particular responses or tactics by party group leaders in addressing dissent.

EXPLAINING DISSENT

Dissent occurs in the European Parliament when an MEP votes or expresses opposition against the group line. The group line may be indicated by leadership and communicated to members in group meetings and later through a voting list passed out during plenary. The group line may also be the result of when a majority of MEPs advocate a particular position which becomes the group line. In some instances, this is done through votes in group meetings. In other

cases, no formal vote is taken and the group line is simply the ad hoc expression of a particular position by a majority of MEPs through voting and speeches. This is the norm for the EFD where it is rare for leaders or a majority of group members to advocate any position in the group meeting. As an interview with an EFD MEP began and I explained that I was examining how group leaders ensure members support the group line, he interjected that:

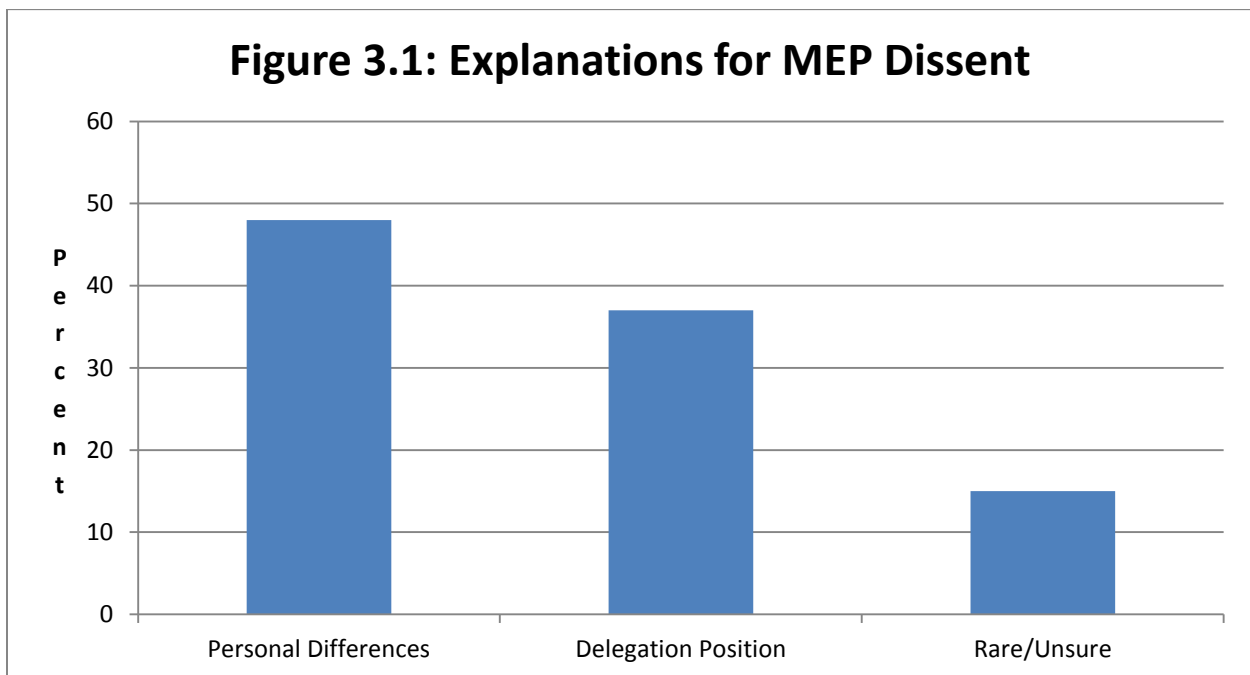
“Well, that’s easy we don’t have a group line. It goes like this, if we don’t decide on it, we don’t have a group line. It is up for every delegation for them to decide. I think it has happened three times since the election (2009) that there actually was a group line. In most cases that doesn’t relate to distribution of money where people tend to vote very nationally, in most other cases we seem to agree on most matters”. (October 13, 2011)

Observations provide insight into the development of the group line as voting lists distributed to members are not part of the public record. In my observations of group meetings, I found that in most instances, a group line was evident on votes whether it originated from party leadership or was the product of debate within the group. Usually, it was the former in that the group line originated from the committee, working group (where applicable), or the leadership bureau of the group with the secretariat playing a crucial role in its development. MEPs knew the group line on nearly every vote and were aware that a contrary vote of yes or no or a vote to abstain on a particular amendment or report was a vote against the group line. The few exceptions were normally social issues, some foreign policy questions or procedural matters.

When deciding whether or not to dissent, an MEP may consider many factors

“You shouldn’t forget as an MEP, or at least this is how I see it, that we have three hats. I am a German MEP, so I must ask myself the question is this in the interest of the German citizen? Second, I belong to a political group, so I have basic political beliefs...I ask myself the basic question is this in line with my beliefs? Does this ensure that we maintain a free European market, that we have competition, while not increasing unnecessary state involvement? Does it help the individual lead their life and do what they are capable of doing...The third is that I am a convinced European, so I do ask myself the question is this good for the development of the European Union. Now, the difficult part is that those three are not always in line with each other. In other words, it may be good for Europe, but it is not necessarily good for Germany or is not in line with my basic beliefs”. (June 20, 2012)

While many MEPs and staff indicated in interviews that they share this thought process to one degree or another, other respondents referred to a single rationale for deciding when to deviate from the group line. In my interviews, I asked the question, “Have you ever voted against the group line? Could you provide an example?” I also asked this question of staff who were MEP aides and who unlike party group or European Party staff could directly account for individual MEP voting behavior. In all, sixty-eight of the eighty-four interview subjects were asked and answered this question.



Note: Figure depicts percentages of applicable respondents offering each explanation for why they or their assigned MEP dissents from the group line. N of Cases: 68

Figure 3.1 above indicates the frequency of applicable respondents offering one of the three broad response categories: personal differences on issues, support for the contrary national party delegation position, and minimal or no dissent. Nearly half of respondents explained dissent from the group line as a result of personal differences with the group position which refers to taking a different perspective from the majority view or the official group line on specific issues like the financial transaction tax or a social issue like prostitution. When deciding whether to

dissent and how to express dissent from the group line, these MEPs primarily review their personal beliefs (do I agree with the group view on this issue, is the group solution the best for resolving this problem?) and then indicate their intent to dissent to group leadership. The responses below are typical of this mindset.

“For example, I am pro-life and when it comes to issues like abortion and euthanasia and homosexual marriage that are very important to (my group), but my background and my party have a different approach....Then, some issues concerning Eurobonds for example. Time to time, I vote a different way, but there is no problem”. (June 20, 2012)

“If it is something where the group is fundamentally wrong, but I would always tell them when I was going to vote against the group line. On a fairly big issue recently, I voted against the financial transaction tax...The idea of the tax wasn't to fund the EU budget, the idea of the tax was to actually fund the global development mechanism, and politically I don't think the tax will fly if the proceeds are seen as a way of paying the EU budget”. (June 6, 2012)

A little over a third of respondents maintained that their dissent from the group line was usually due to a contrary national party delegation position. These MEPs first look to the delegation line when deciding whether to dissent from the group line and in turn dissent is communicated by the delegation leadership to group leadership. The responses below are typical of MEPs who explain dissent from the group line as a clash with national (party) priorities.

“Yes, absolutely, many times. (My political party) have a number of issues where we don't agree with the European line. We have some specific issues regarding labor rights for example which is a huge issue for us because we have a different system than most other countries in Europe. For example, we always oppose the minimum wage because we don't want to legislate minimum wages”. (June 13, 2012)

“Yes, it was a dossier on nuclear energy because Austria assumed conditions because of our non-nuclear referendum. So, on certain issues I have not taken the group position. For example on EURATOM, the Austrian perspective is that is best just to let it die and Austria should also go out of EURATOM, because why should we pay for nuclear safety and security to keep nuclear plants in function another twenty years”. (June 20, 2012)

The final response category offered by about fifteen percent of respondents consists of those who said they never dissent or that they rarely dissented and couldn't think of an example of when they voted against the group line.

“Well, there are two different periods in my time here: when I was not vice president and when I was vice president. When I was not vice president, I voted several times with my delegation which was different for the group position. Since I have become vice president, I have never voted against the position of the group, if the position of the group has been clearly established in the group meeting. If there is a big confrontation with my national interests, I simply do not vote, but I only did that once”. (June 19, 2012)

As I asked each applicable respondent the question of when they dissented from the group line, I anticipated that certain respondent characteristics (party group membership, party group position, years of service in the parliament, and member-state) would influence the likelihood of offering one of the three response categories. In addition, I included a respondent’s gender and previous profession as extraneous variables.

H1: Respondents from the less cohesive party groups will be more likely to explain dissent as a result of contrary positions taken by their national delegation in the group.

Respondents from less cohesive party groups should be more likely to explain dissent from the group line as a result of a contrary position by their national party delegation due to weaker whip structure and socialization processes in these groups. For example, the absence of a shared concept of the group identity in the less cohesive groups should be reflected in more frequent national positions, while the absence of a coordinated effort by group leaders to ensure support for the group line should similarly leave MEPs in these groups to more readily defer to their national party delegation line.

H2: Respondents who hold elite positions in group leadership will be more likely to explain dissent as a reflection of personal differences or offer the third response category.

Respondents who are group presidents or vice-presidents should be more likely to adopt a group rather than a national party delegation line as their responsibilities presumably dictate more attention to promotion of the group line and its successful adoption by as many members as possible. In turn, elites should dissent only when they have moral objections to the position

adopted by a majority of the group or they should offer the third response because their dissent is so rare when group lines accompany reports or amendments.

H3: Respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to explain dissent as a product of personal differences with the group on issues.

With more years of service as staff and particularly as MEPs, respondents should acquire greater independence from their national delegation as they pursue personal goals in terms of legislation and parliament office (See Scully, 2005) and acquire greater familiarity with group level processes. In this sense, with more years of service, members, should become less reliant on national delegations for policy direction and grow more comfortable in their voting habits.

H4: Respondents from the new member-states and the UK will be more likely to explain dissent in relation to their respective national delegation positions on legislation

As recent studies have shown (See Hix and Noury 2009), MEPs from the new member-states (those gaining accession to the EU since 2004) are more likely to vote along national lines than with their party group compared to MEPs from the EU 15 states (those with membership prior to 2004) apart from the UK. In turn, respondents from new member-states should be more likely explain their dissent as a reflection of national rather than individual positions on issues. A respondent's gender and previous profession are included as extraneous variables.

TABLE 3.2: PREDICTORS OF DISSENT EXPLANATIONS

PARTY GROUP	0.3576*
POSITION	0.5171***
YEARS	0.5060*
MEMBER-STATE	0.5355
GENDER	0.3048*
PROFESSION	0.5150**

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels. N of Cases: 68

As depicted in Table 3.2 above, when comparing respondent characteristics to the likelihood of offering one of the three responses, all but member-state is influential. The smaller number of cases for this particular question and the limited number of potential responses likely contributed

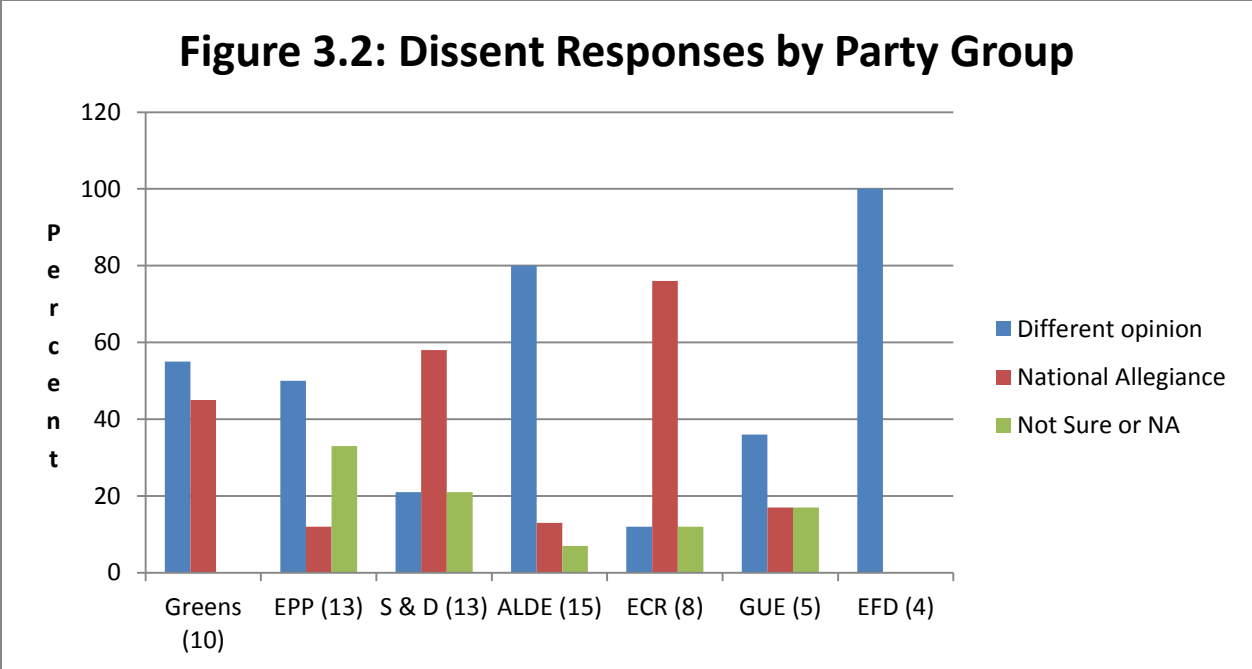
to the statistical significance of most variables. I believe the absence of significance for member-state origins is reflective of the impact of particular national parties and not whole delegations across groups. For example, UK MEPs from the S & D or ALDE groups are normally loyal to the group line whereas their Conservative counterparts as members of the EPP frequently dissented from the group line (See Hix et al. 2007) prior to forming the ECR group. Similarly, whereas Greek Communists frequently dissent from the majority line in the GUE, Greek MEPs in the EPP or S & D groups frequently adhere to the group line. In turn, I believe that the influence of dissent management structures and tactics may be more readily identified when responses are framed according to party group position and group membership.

TABLE 3.3: GROUP POSITION AND DISSENT EXPLANATIONS

RESPONSE	President	Vice-President	Coordinator	MEP	Staff	N
PERSONAL	0.60	0.42	0.45	0.58	0.43	33
DELEGATION	0	0.35	0.55	0.37	0.43	25
RARE/NOT SURE	0.40	0.23	0	0.05	0.14	10
(N of CASES)	(5)	(26)	(11)	(19)	(7)	68

Note: Table depicts percentage of respondents according to party group position offering each response with the last row depicting the number of respondents per party group position. N of Cases: 68

The third response as expected was offered almost exclusively by group presidents or vice-presidents, especially those serving as parliamentary secretaries or whips. These leaders (together with the rapporteur on a given report) have the most to lose in plenary outcomes and in turn should either never dissent from the group line or do so only when a group line is absent leading members to vote according to their conscience. In turn, rank-and-file MEPs are more likely than group leaders (apart from the presidents) to cite personal differences as explanations for dissent which runs contrary to expectations. In part, this reflects the inclusion of frequently dissenting MEPs in this category who are likely to defy the group line regardless often of their delegation's position. Coordinators are divided on their accounts for dissent.



Note: Graph depicts percentage of responses according to party group membership. Numbers in parentheses depict number of respondents per party group. N of Cases: 68.

In Figure 3.2 above, response frequencies are arranged according to party group membership from the most cohesive to the least cohesive group in terms of plenary votes in the current parliament. Apart from the S & D, respondents from the more cohesive party groups as expected are more likely to cite personal differences rather than national delegation positions as rationale for dissent. In turn, respondents from the least cohesive groups apart from the ECR similarly cite individual differences as rationale for dissent from the group line which runs counter to expectations. However, responses to additional interview questions reveal that in the case of the GUE ‘confederality’ encompasses the rights of individuals as well as delegations to adopt a separate line and in the case of the EFD reveal that a group line is absent on nearly all reports.

Explanations for dissenting from the group line offered in these interviews in turn reveal much not only about individual thought processes, but perhaps more importantly for this study, they foreshadow particular dissent management strategies at the group level. In other words, the ways in which group leaders go about identifying and addressing dissent are in many ways

reflective of whether members in a party group tend to place emphasis on personal beliefs and individual assessment of legislation or revert to the position of the national delegation as the focal point for their decision-making.

If individual beliefs are the dominant basis for deciding when and how to dissent from the group line, leaders in these groups will have to directly appeal to individual members. In such instances, group leaders will lobby individual MEPs in committees and (where applicable) working groups. When these efforts are unsuccessful or the dissenting MEPs are not members of these bodies, the group meetings will be formatted to accommodate debate in order to both identify and minimize dissent. The ALDE group meetings best epitomizes this approach in that I observed that the president oversaw debate among individual MEPs and then pursued a compromise reflecting the perceived consensus or a consensus reflecting his own preferences.

In contrast, when national delegation positions influence when and how to dissent from the group line, group leaders will appeal to or negotiate with delegation leaders rather than with individual members. In turn, discussion in working group and party group meetings is organized on the whole around the views of national delegations. When a vote is taken in group meetings, it is for the purpose of identifying which delegations support or oppose the group line and consequently any efforts to minimize dissent such as through a contrary vote on an amendment rather than on the full report consists of appeals to delegations. The ECR group meetings I observed exemplify such approaches in that the delegation leaders would announce their stance to the whole group with the debate largely structured around delegation positions.

EXPRESSING DISSENT

As MEPs or delegations decide whether or not to dissent, they also must consider when and how to dissent. Dissent may take many forms and occur at various stages throughout the legislative process. As in other legislatures, dissent in the European Parliament is often expressed

and at times addressed behind closed doors or even when in public view dissent may be unrecorded as are nearly two-thirds of plenary votes and indeed all votes in committee, working group, or party group meetings. Roll-call votes indicate the final venue for and the costliest form of dissent but disguise both the process that addressed dissent prior to the roll-call vote and the forms of dissent expressions occurring prior to the vote in plenary. As Morgenstern (2004) notes, “The degree of party unity revealed by voting may in fact conceal higher or lower levels of unity experienced prior to each vote or for that matter how the revealed degree of unity was obtained in the first place” (Morgenstern, 2004, 21).

Each level of dissent in turn incurs costs tied to the form of expression and the stage in the legislative process. These costs are borne not only by the member dissenting from the party line but also by the party as a whole. Costs range from the failure of an amendment or legislation in its entirety to the party’s reputation both within the institution and externally among supporters and the general public. As Indridason (2008) contends, when legislators express opposition to the policy preferences of their party’s leadership, they provide signals to audiences both within and outside the legislature indicating the degree of party unity. “Cross-voting is important, not just because it signals that the government lacks support among its own members, but also because it raises questions among voters about what policies the party stands for and the extent to which it is capable of delivering on its policy promises” (Indridason, 2008, 364).

In this sense, dissent within legislative parties results in confusion with potential consequences for party organization, legislative outcomes, and voter judgment in elections. For example, if a party group cannot maintain consistent and high levels of voting unity, not only will uncertainty accompany other legislative outcomes (whether particular legislation fails or succeeds), but the decision to dissent may also become more common among its membership.

Consequently, party leaders will face significant internal and external challenges to ensuring high levels of voting unity and minimizing the forms of dissent expression as indicated in the priorities stated by a group vice-president below.

“The first stage is to try and convince them of the group line, the second is to ask them to abstain, the next is to ask them not to vote, and the last is to accept that they are not going in line with the group”. (May 29, 2012)

In the European Parliament, the absence of a government and opposition structure removes some of the consequences associated with dissent normally experienced in legislatures. Nonetheless, as the passage of legislation requires cross-party group support, maintaining high levels of party group unity are crucial for legislative success defined by the leadership of each group as either the defeat or passage of legislation. In turn, just as in other legislatures, party group leaders and MEPs are presented and must contend with options for dissent expression at each stage of the legislative process.

However, dissent expression is not confined to voting against the preferences of legislative party leadership on the floor or plenary. Accordingly, the legislative process in the European Parliament offers opportunities for various forms of dissent which in turn influences dissent management strategy. Whether dissent is expressed in a working group, through a speech, or a vote against an entire report, particular actors and strategies associated with dissent management become involved in ensuring that dissent is not expressed or is done so in a manner that is less costly for the party group. Below, I have arranged the potential forms of dissent available to MEPs according to an eight-point scale with the first level on the scale indicating the form of dissent expression carrying the smallest degree of consequences for party group unity and leadership policy preferences and the eighth level signifying the most harmful form of dissent expression upon party group unity and leadership preferences. The scale is modeled upon the UK

House of Commons study by Crowe (1983) and has been modified to conform to the European Parliament in terms of institutional organization, legislative stages, and voting options for MEPs.

TABLE 3.4: LEVELS OF DISSENT EXPRESSION

1. Voice dissent in working group meetings
2. Voice dissent in party group meetings
3. Not voting (or not being in attendance)
4. Speak against the group line in plenary debates and speeches
5. Vote Abstain
6. Vote against the group line on amendments
7. Vote against the group line in early reading(s)
8. Vote against the group line in the final reading (following the conciliation committee)

The scale also contains an assumption that the selection of a particular level of dissent by MEPs is accompanied by a corresponding response from group leadership reflecting both hierarchy in regards to which leader(s) is responsible for managing dissent and variation in strategy appropriate to the level and timing of dissent. Leaders manage dissent through appeals based on the policy and/or political merits of legislation as well as references to the group's identity and to norms of behavior governing dissent announcement and expression. In this sense, dissent management occurs in specific circumstances in response to dissent announcement but is also ongoing through socialization efforts.

Accordingly, MEPs may express dissent in less costly forms without prodding from leadership because it is the rationale course of action or because they have been socialized into doing so. However, depending on the form of selected dissent expression and the significance of the given legislative report, proactive party group leaders will respond through direct appeals to either convince the MEP not to dissent at all or to do so at a less costly level. In turn, MEP dissent should be more commonly expressed at the lower end of the scale where dissent management (in all its forms) is at its most effective and more commonly at the higher end of the scale when dissent management is least effective or perhaps not present at all.

The efforts of dissent management in all groups should be centered upon the goal to achieve consensus and otherwise to produce a compromise with delegations or individual MEPs that results in dissent from the group line on portions of but not the report as a whole with dissent preferably expressed by not voting or by voting abstain. The preferred timing and form of dissent expression depends upon the strategy associated with securing the group line in plenary. For example, a group line might favor particular amendments but oppose others. The group line may also reflect contingencies such as when leadership call for a vote against the whole report if a particular amendment does not carry in plenary.

Before dissent is expressed in plenary votes, it is often indicated behind-the-scenes or in working group and party group meetings where the group line may be defined and where dissent from the group line may be signified by individual MEPs or national delegations. As discussed in chapter one, four of the seven party groups have horizontal working groups consisting of members across similar committees according to policy portfolio. Where they exist and more importantly where they are most effectively utilized, working groups provide outlets for dissent expression with dissent perhaps being resolved prior to voting recommendations being made to the entire group. In this sense, leaders should utilize such forums to identify and manage dissent to not only prevent it from extending to later venues such as party group meetings but also to secure compromises mitigating dissent to voting abstain or opposing an amendment.

FIGURE 3.3: WORKING GROUPS AND DISSENT MANAGEMENT

IDENTIFY DISSENT→RESOLVE DISSENT OR SECURE LESS COSTLY FORM

IDENTIFY DISSENT→REFER DISSENT TO LEADERSHIP FOR MEDIATION

IDENTIFY DISSENT→RESOLVE IN PARTY GROUP MEETING

I find that the party groups with lower dissent levels are those which both utilized working groups to identify and manage dissent AND practiced norms which re-enforced the importance of members deferring to working groups. In turn, dissent levels rise as group norms re-enforcing the

role of working groups are absent AND as efforts by leaders at the working group level fail to translate into consensus later at the group meeting. In part, these findings are a function of group size in that the smallest and least cohesive groups do not have working groups. However, the example of the ALDE indicates how group size alone cannot explain dissent level variation given that while its members highly value the role of party group meetings they do not positively view the role of working groups (please refer to chapters four and seven).

If dissent continues on to the party group meeting or if dissent arises initially at the meeting, an MEP may be persuaded to adopt the group line thereby ensuring dissent does not continue on to plenary. Party group meetings in this sense serve a function similar to congressional caucus meetings in the U.S. For example, Forgette (2004) found that a member's attendance at a strategically timed U.S. congressional conference meeting resulted in an 11% increase in the odds of voting the party position (Forgette, 2004, 425). This stems from conference meetings serving not only as forums to communicate shared policy and political goals, but also as an opportunity to identify divisions and raise concerns (Forgette, 2004, 410-411).

FIGURE 3.4: PARTY GROUP MEETINGS AND DISSENT MANAGEMENT
IDENTIFY DISSENT→SECURE MAXIMUM SUPPORT FOR GROUP LINE
IDENTIFY DISSENT→IDENTIFY GROUP LINE THROUGH MAJORITY VOTING
IDENTIFY DISSENT→VERIFY THAT NO GROUP LINE ACCOMPANIES VOTE

Party group meetings therefore provide a crucial stage for MEPs, (particularly those not members of responsible committees or working groups) to express dissent and for party group leaders to manage dissent. As with other legislative caucus meetings, party group meetings in the European Parliament serve as a sounding board for potential compromises within the group or perhaps for particular legislative priorities being abandoned (Sinclair, 1995, 107).

Raunio (1999) observed that especially in the larger groups, MEPs were expected to announce their intentions in group meetings before voting in plenary (Raunio, 1999, 193). My

observations of group meetings corroborated to various degrees both the role of group meetings in terms of pursuing consensus and the norm of announcing the intent and form of dissent in the meeting except for the EFD where its meetings served more as venues for communicating national political developments than building a group line.

If group leaders cannot secure unanimity in working group or party group meetings, they may achieve dissent levels in plenary which are less costly to the group line and potentially to the group's reputation. Dissent in plenary may take the form of publicly opposing the group line in a written or oral statement, not voting, voting abstain, proposing an amendment which is contrary to the group line, voting a contrary yes or no to the group line on an amendment, or opposing the report as a whole.

Opposing the group leadership position through speeches in a public forum draws attention to dissent in a direct manner that raises questions about group cohesiveness. Public objections to party policy puts at risk the party's reputation as a coherent and effective agent of government or in the case of the European Parliament the reputation of a party group to ensure preferred legislative outcomes by delivering necessary votes through cross-group coalitions (Indridason, 2008, 364). Though the long-term impact of public speeches may be as or perhaps even more damaging than voting against the group position, public expressions of dissent are assigned this level on the scale due to the variation in legislative outcomes following the speech.

After expressing dissent in plenary debates, an MEP's group leadership may secure a favorable voting outcome if not on a particular amendment then perhaps upon other amendments or the whole report. In turn, as dissent may be later expressed according to various voting selections (Yes, No, Abstain, or perhaps by not voting at all) and may concern individual or multiple amendments or final passage, each public speech should be considered within the

context of subsequent voting behavior and legislative timing. Likewise, an explanation of vote must also be considered within such a context as the consequences of an MEP publicly explaining a vote of abstain or of opposing the leadership position on an amendment differs from that of a vote directly opposing the leadership position on an amendment or final passage.

The intentions behind not voting or not being in attendance in plenary may encompass a wide range of motivations and circumstances, but as examinations of party discipline have shown, in some situations it carries the same impact as having voting against the leadership. As Crowe (1983) notes, “Absenteeism means more than poor attendance, it is nearly as good as a vote for the opposition” (Crowe, 1983, 912). For example, in second and third readings of legislation, or when censure of the Commission is considered, an absolute majority of all members is required for passage and not just a majority of those present (Scully, 2005, 32).

A non-vote by an MEP may be an expression of opposition or simply reflect absence, but nonetheless the impact of not-voting may be perceived by leadership as legislative dissent (Remington and Smith, 2001, 165). However, not voting is placed lower on the dissent scale due to the ambiguities associated with it and because not voting does not carry the same level of impact of publicly dissenting from the group leadership position expressed through voting or through public speeches. My interviews indicate that MEPs are incentivized to vote in most roll-call votes and a failure to vote is often due to the fast-paced nature of plenary voting.

“It does happen that people don’t vote accidentally, there is a very short voting time with lots of votes. They will rattle through it and sometimes there are electronic checks in a recorded but not a roll-call vote”. (October 5, 2011)

What the group staff person is referring to above is that an MEP often only has a few seconds to vote and that the number of votes on a given report may be in the hundreds due to the number of amendments. I observed this hectic process where a majority of votes are conducted

by hand which as the staffer indicates can be checked by a recorded (but not roll-called) vote. However, there are no re-dos for roll-call votes, as the presiding officer moves on to the next vote. The member can later request to have their vote counted citing perhaps a malfunctioned button, but this requires initiative on their part.

“It’s their right to not touch the button, not raise hands, not to be in the chamber. You know, MEPs only get their daily allowance if they are present for an x number of votes? They have to press the button on an x number of votes; they have to sign the registrar. So, they can maneuver themselves into a situation into where if they don’t press the button, they lose their income.” (October 13, 2011)

Consequently as another staff person indicates, MEPs have the incentive to vote in at least a particular number of roll-call votes or they do not receive their salary for that given day. Not voting in committee does not incur monetary costs for MEPs but it is much more visible in a smaller venue though one coordinator (below) was blunt in that he preferred that colleagues didn’t vote at all rather than oppose the group line and on the whole not voting was often viewed as more favorable than voting to oppose the group line, even when the vote is to abstain

“If they are going to vote against the group line, I try to see that they aren’t present for the vote. That’s quite a good way by talking them into doing that...The practice of a constructive abstention is very useful. If a colleague doesn’t agree with my line, then they often have the grace not to be there”. (June 25, 2012)

I assessed the prevalence of not-voting by examining plenary votes occurring in the two phases of field research. I anticipated that not-voting would be more common in the more cohesive party groups as it is a less costly form of dissent when compared to voting to abstain or to overtly oppose the group line by voting a contrary yes/no. In turn, I expected that percentages of group members not-voting would be higher on whole reports rather than on amendments as the legislative stakes are that their highest. I also anticipated that not-voting percentages would be higher in the more cohesive party groups on amendments sponsored or co-sponsored by the

party group when compared to all amendments as the group’s plenary reputation as well as its legislative priorities is more visible.

The first two rows in Table 3.5 below are the percentage of MEPs in each group who were present but did not vote in all roll-call votes with the first row providing data from the first phase of field research and the second providing data from the second phase of research. The subsequent rows depict percentages of non-voting within groups on amendments sponsored by the group, on all amendments, and on whole reports.⁵

TABLE 3.5: PERCENTAGE OF MEPS NOT VOTING BY PARTY GROUP

Legislation Type	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS/ EFA	GUE	S & D
All Votes-Phase 1	.09	.11	.16	.07	.04	.10	.08
All-Phase Two	.06	.09	.10	.05	.06	.08	.05
Sponsored Amends	.06	.10	NA	.09	.06	.08	.10
Sponsored-Phase Two	.03	.03	NA	.03	.06	.10	.05
All Amends-Phase 1	.10	.12	.17	.07	.05	.10	.08
All Amends-Phase Two	.06	.09	.09	.05	.06	.08	.05
Reports-Phase One	.08	.10	.14	.07	.04	.09	.08
Reports-Phase Two	.06	.08	.13	.05	.05	.08	.04

Note: Calculated by dividing the number of MEPs within a group who were present and did not vote by the number who were present and voted. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

In contrast to expectations, the three least cohesive party groups (EFD, GUE and ECR) have higher non-voting levels while the three most cohesive groups (Greens/EFA, EPP, and S & D) have the lowest non-voting levels. Only the ALDE in the middle perform as expected. This unexpected pattern may be the product of two phenomena: group size and attitudes toward voting within each group. With only thirty-four members, it takes only three non-voting MEPs for the EFD to have ten percent not voting if all are in attendance, while it would take twenty-seven for the EPP to reach ten percent not-voting given its two hundred seventy-one members

⁵ In all, 149 roll-call votes occurred during the first phase of research consisting of 94 votes on amendments and 53 on reports. 93 roll-call votes were taken during the second phase of research consisting of 68 votes on amendments and 25 on reports. Though the sample size is small, it is typical in terms of the higher frequency of votes on amendments than whole reports and of the policies considered by the parliament with the caveat of many EU budget votes having occurred during the first phase of field research.

and assuming all are in attendance. Non-voting may also be a product of the extent to which the group places importance on voting. In other words, some members may not view voting as an important activity (so long as they meet the quota to receive their pay). Such negative sentiments were evident in EFD and to an extent GUE group meetings which revealed the low regard for the institution as well as toward the group's ability to influence plenary outcomes held for example by UKIP in the EFD and the Greek Communists in GUE.

Not-voting levels decrease or stay the same for all of the groups on reports compared to amendments which is contrary to expectations given that not-voting levels should be higher on whole reports than on amendments since more is at stake. However, non-voting levels as expected decrease for the less cohesive groups (ECR and GUE) when they sponsor or co-sponsor amendments whereas the ALDE, Greens, EPP, and S & D follow the predicted direction of higher non-voting levels on group-sponsored amendments.

MEPs also have the option of voting abstain which does not signal dissent to the extent when compared to voting a contrary Yes or No. On the whole, MEPs vote abstain when they have mixed views about an amendment or an entire report, while in other cases a vote of abstain is a means to express disapproval toward legislation in its entirety without directly challenging the group line or threaten cross-group agreements. Explanations of vote in the plenary record provide rationale for voting to abstain.

“Under this Constitution, the uncontrolled European Court of Justice will apply judgments directly and unequivocally to all Community institutions...No constitutional lawyer has been able to show me where it is guaranteed that the Court will not infringe the various national competencies and policies”(Anna Zaborska, EPP Group, Slovakia, 1-12-05 on Report A6-00700/2004, www.europarl.europa.eu).

The MEP above chose to express dissent by voting to abstain which is a less costly form of dissent when compared to voting no. The decision to vote abstain reflects decision-making at the

individual level but also party group attitudes toward abstain. For some groups, a vote to abstain is a product of compromise in which an MEP or delegation dissents but does not directly challenge the group line by voting yes or no.

“It’s better than a vote against. If you have got a group line that will usually be part of the appeal that look that if you can’t vote for then at least abstain and don’t vote against. That quite often works. Of course, if we are in a procedure where we need an absolute majority, an abstention can hurt. In that instance, the strong urging would be to vote for rather than to vote abstain”. (October 18, 2011)

The group vice-president above raises the importance of stages in the legislative process and their relationship toward what group leaders and staff view as preferable forms of dissent. When a vote to abstain does not jeopardize passage and the group line is in favor of passage, a vote to abstain, while not the preference of leadership is a form of dissent that doesn’t present a threat to the group line. However, when an absolute majority is required for passage and the group line is in favor of passage, leaders will have to adapt dissent management strategies to dissuading members from voting abstain. For other respondents, a vote to abstain is not viewed as an acceptable form of dissent as a group secretary-general below indicates.

“Anything that is not according to the group line is not in favor. If you vote abstain, you are not following the group line. In general terms, we don’t like abstentions because either you are in favor or against something. We try to avoid abstentions. For me, group cohesion, is strictly following the voting list”. (May 30, 2012)

Table 3.6 below offers a glimpse into the impact of voting abstain as indicated from roll-call votes occurring in the two phases of field research both in terms of its prevalence as a form of dissent and in its use by group leadership in some circumstances as the adopted group line on amendments or entire reports. I anticipated that abstain as a proportion of dissent would be higher in the more cohesive groups as it is a less costly form of dissent and that abstain proportions would be higher on amendments than on whole reports though the proportions should be higher on group-sponsored amendments.

TABLE 3.6: ABSTAIN AS A PROPORTION OF DISSENT WITHIN PARTY GROUPS

Legislation Type	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS	GUE	S & D
All Votes-Phase 1	.48	.26	.27	.18	.29	.55	.23
All Votes-Phase 2	.24	.14	.46	.27	.37	.38	.38
Sponsored Amends	.36	.10	NA	.08	.57	.59	.42
Sponsored-Phase 2	.08	0	NA	0	.36	.21	.34
All Amends-Phase 1	.33	.18	.26	.13	.21	.43	.22
All Amends-Phase 2	.19	.07	.45	.22	.39	.30	.41
Reports-Phase 1	.57	.44	.28	.27	.41	.75	.25
All Reports-Phase 2	.36	.38	.48	.40	.32	.63	.29

Note: Calculated by dividing the number of MEPS within a group who voted abstain by the number of MEPs within the group who dissented. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

Rows one and two depict abstain as a proportion of dissent within the groups on all roll-call votes during the two stages of field research. Rows three and four indicate abstain as a proportion of dissent on group-sponsored amendments while the subsequent rows consider abstain as a proportion of dissent on amendments and on whole reports in each field research stage. To properly account for abstain as a proportion of dissent I excluded roll-call votes where the group position was to abstain which in these circumstances would not indicate dissent. Apart from the EPP, all party groups adopted abstain as a group line in each field research stage.

Although the Greens conformed to expectations regarding the more cohesive groups, the EPP had a much lower than expected percentage for abstain as a proportion of dissent, as did the S & D in specific research phases, while contrary to expectations the GUE had consistently high percentages for abstain as a proportion of dissent. My expectations though were met when comparing abstain as a proportion of dissent on whole reports to amendments. Every party group saw an increase in the predicted direction which was based on the assumption that groups would place a higher priority on securing votes to abstain on reports than on amendments because of higher legislative stakes. One exception would be when the amendment is sponsored by the group and in turn with the exception of the ECR and EPP, abstain as a proportion of dissent was lower on sponsored amendments.

TABLE 3.6: DISSENT EXPRESSION AND THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS IN PLENARY

Legislation Type	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S & D
Sponsored Amends-Phase 1	.91	.87	NA	.99	.98	.79	.97
Sponsored-Phase Two	.92	1.0	NA	.99	.98	.99	.96
All Amends-Phase One	.81	.84	.51	.96	.93	.80	.89
All Amends-Phase Two	.85	.98	.46	.96	.95	.85	.89
Reports-Phase One	.92	.66	.41	.96	.91	.79	.90
Reports-Phase Two	.93	.92	.47	.97	.94	.72	.91

Note: Table depicts group cohesion rates on amendments and reports for both phases of field research. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

Table 3.6 above depicts dissent patterns when portions of reports or whole reports are considered. Rows one and two depicts party group cohesion on amendments sponsored or co-sponsored by the group and is divided into roll-call votes occurring during each of the two phases of field research. Rows three and four indicate party group cohesion rates on all amendments, whereas the last two rows depict dissent within each party group on the report as a whole when modified following votes on amendments and on whole resolutions not accompanied by amendments.

When examining roll-call votes in the first half of the previous parliament Hix et al. (2007) found that party groups were less cohesive on whole reports than on amendments (Hix et al. 2007, 126). I expected that dissent should be lower for the more cohesive groups in the current parliament on whole reports and that dissent should also be lower on amendments sponsored/co-sponsored by the group when compared to votes on all amendments. I held these expectations because groups have had more time since the 2007 study to assimilate MEPs from new member-states and to develop dissent management strategies in light of expanded legislative influence.

Expectations were met regarding group cohesion rates on sponsored or co-sponsored amendments. In each phase, all groups secured higher cohesion (lower dissent levels) or the same cohesion rate on amendments sponsored by the group when compared to votes on all

amendments.⁶ As Table 3.6 further depicts, three of the four most cohesive groups (EPP, S & D, and ALDE) did obtain higher cohesion rates in both research phases on whole reports than on votes for select amendments. The exception is the Greens/EFA who had slightly less cohesion on whole reports than on amendments in both field research phases.

My observations of group meetings suggest that this discrepancy in part reflects the emphasis placed on discussing particular amendments within the group. At times, these discussions translated into a Greens/EFA group line opposing a whole report if particular amendments failed. However, it also at times resulted in a free vote on whole reports upon the failure of particular amendments thereby producing an ad hoc group line (a majority happened to vote one way) rather than one orchestrated by group leadership or indicative of a majority identified earlier through votes in the group meeting.

In turn, ECR group cohesion declined on whole reports when compared to amendments in both phases though the gap was significantly closed during the second phase. Similarly, ECR MEPs dissented in much higher numbers on sponsored or co-sponsored amendments during the first phase, whereas there was unanimity on ECR-sponsored amendments during the second phase. These patterns in part may be the result of budget votes in the first phase which typically divide British MEPs from their new member-state colleagues. Surprisingly, the GUE secured higher cohesion rates on whole reports than on amendments though the difference was small while dissent was much lower on GUE-sponsored amendments in the second phase than in the first phase of field research. I believe this is in part the result of leadership effects in terms of a change in group president (See Chapter Six).

MANAGING DISSENT

⁶ Sponsored or co-sponsored amendments in phase one: ALDE 6, ECR 7, EPP 15, Greens/EFA 7, GUE/NGL 9, and S & D 6. Phase Two: ALDE 7, ECR 3, EPP 1, Greens 17, GUE 14 and S & D 15.

With multiple options for dissent available to MEPs in terms of levels of expression and timing within the legislative process, party group leaders are provided with impetus for creating proactive and multi-faceted dissent management strategies to minimize the extent and form of dissent. In this sense, party group leaders are presumed to behave as legislative entrepreneurs who rely upon a variety of tools ranging from discipline to communicating the group line through a whip structure supported by socialization processes in order to manage dissent in all of its forms and at every legislative stage.

Cox and McCubbins (2007) define legislative entrepreneurs according to three essential features: (1) they bear the direct costs of monitoring; (2) they possess selective incentives with which to reward those whom they find cooperating or punish those whom they find defecting, and (3) they benefit in various ways from ensuring favorable legislative outcomes (Cox and McCubbins, 2007, 84). Party group leaders are motivated to act as legislative entrepreneurs in large part because since 1999 more is at stake as the European Parliament has gained nearly co-equal legislative authority and as the ongoing financial crisis has demonstrated, pressing issues confront the parliament.

Bailer et al. (2009) contend that party group cohesion is not only the result of ideological homogeneity, but also a result of party group discipline imposed by leaders (Bailer et al. 2009, 356). In part, this is due to a personal interest of group presidents that seek a positive institutional reputation in order to gain legislative influence and perhaps attain the presidency of the parliament or a Commission position (Bailer et al. 2009, 356). Whether motivated by personal or group interests, leaders cannot leave voting outcomes to chance as legislative priorities and potentially party group (or even institutional) reputation may be in jeopardy.

For example, the vote on the Services Directive (2006) witnessed higher than normal rates of dissent within party groups in which the additional dissent of only a handful of MEPs would have resulted in its defeat (See Hix et al. 2007). Similarly, during my field research, EPP group cohesion rates were higher than average on the “two-pack” and “six-pack” votes following extensive lobbying and appeals by group leadership as I describe in Chapter Six (www.votewatch.eu). Prominent reports as these illustrate that despite high cohesion rates on most votes, a need exists within party groups for a proactive and structured dissent management system in order to minimize dissent levels particularly on prominent reports.

Party groups have created various leadership positions with specific responsibilities tied to particular stages in the legislative process. Leadership positions may be considered as solutions to collective action problems in that they serve as agents charged by the party members with the facilitation of lawmaking in order to give certain members incentives to carry out tasks that otherwise might not be performed (Sinclair, 1995, 9). When managing dissent, leaders are not only punishing opposition and rewarding loyalty, they are also acting to prevent or at least minimize the levels of dissent at all legislative stages.

Dissent management consists of a relationship between leaders and rank-and-file in which decision-making by each influences the probable actions by the other often within the context of a group culture. In this sense, when legislators consider the form of dissent or to express dissent at all, they take into account the extent to which leaders can impact their re-election, secure offices (legislative and party) or influence the legislative agenda (particularly the impact of agenda control by leadership upon the legislator’s policy and political goals) and voting outcomes on respective reports or amendments. In this regard, legislators are rational actors making choices in which they weigh the pros and cons of supporting or opposing the party line.

However, they are also influenced by group norms governing when and how to dissent. Whether due to rationality, the influence of socialization processes, or both, MEPs are incentivized to follow the party group line and should they dissent to do so at less costly levels.

A traditional approach to dissent management is to impose disciplinary measures. Though party groups possess far more limited disciplinary tools than their counterparts in other legislatures, they do have some options. Party groups control who is elected European Parliament President, who will become a committee chair, which MEP writes which legislative report, who can speak in plenary debates and for how long (Hix et al. 2007, 22). The most extreme disciplinary tool is expulsion. In 2005, EPP President Hans-Gert Pottering, successfully had Roger Helmer of the UK voted out of the group for supporting a motion to censure Commission President Barroso (Bailer et al. 2009, 355). Legislative party leaders can also avoid or mitigate dissent through candidate selection, agenda control, speaking time in floor debates, and control over the distribution of legislative and party leadership offices (Cox and McCubbins, 2007, 115).

For example, the selection of rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs is often made by coordinators who are the group leaders in committees. While all MEPs on a committee may ultimately shadow a report if not carry a report, the frequency of these assignments and perhaps more importantly the extent to which they are assigned prominent reports is often left to the group coordinator to decide. Coordinators are given wide discretion in most groups when assigning reports but maintain communication with the rest of leadership and on occasion take voting behavior into consideration (Lindberg, 2008, 1190).

In addition, party groups control speaking time in plenary debates. Speaking time in plenary is very limited in a legislature consisting of seven hundred fifty-six MEPs are allocated

according to party group size. Interviews reveal that assigning plenary speaking time is more about trying to meet requests for speaking time rather than serving as a party discipline tool. Furthermore, MEPs can circumvent leaders by offering written or oral explanations of vote or through ‘catch-the-eye’ segments in plenary.

In such circumstances where party leaders have limited disciplinary tools, agenda control provides perhaps the most effective means for leaders to manage dissent (Cox and McCubbins, 2007, 135). For example, leaders may control or heavily influence what legislation will be considered, what committee it will be assigned to, and the degree of support within the party caucus. In this sense, agenda control acts as a preemptive tool for managing dissent in that leaders can identify the policy preferences of legislators in order to confront dissent at and in advance of every legislative stage (Kam, 2002, 27).

As discussed in chapter one, while legislative initiative rests formally with the Commission, the parliament does influence or at times even direct what legislation it considers and upon its review has the potential to shape it through amendments, or reject a report altogether. Agenda control has the potential to act as the most effective disciplinary tool available to party group leaders in that all amendments in plenary must be sponsored by groups unless they are accompanied by the signatures of forty MEPs.

As “carrot and stick” approaches have limited impact upon party group dissent rates, group leaders often also rely upon re-enforcing behavioral norms and party group identities through socialization to ensure voting unity or to minimize dissent. Socialization implies that logic of consequences has been replaced by logic of appropriateness learned through mimicking the behavior and adhering to the appeals of colleagues (Checkel, 2005, 804). In this sense, MEPs do

not dissent or express dissent at lower levels because they are socialized into doing so as it is the appropriate response given the prevalent norms practiced within the group.

Established norms of behavior within groups provide a framework of reference enabling socialization to be effective as a means of ensuring the attainment of group goals and preferences. As Brown (2000) remarks, “Norms specify... rules for how group members should behave and thus are the basis for mutual expectations among the group members” (Brown, 2000, 56). In turn, norms of behavior within groups may change over time as circumstances confronting groups change (Brown, 2000, 62).

In turn, as Hermann et al. (2004) noted, for a socializing effect to contribute toward ensuring party group unity, MEPs must develop a connection to the party group (and to some extent the parliament) on both a personal and professional level. “Individuals come to identify with an institution and the group that it represents to the extent that the institution is salient in their personal lives” (Hermann et al. 2004, 14). For example, in the British and Canadian House of Commons, the differences in cohesion levels was according to Garner and Letki (2005) partially explained by the degree to which MPs were socialized into norms and developed certain attitudes toward group unity. Party organizations in this sense provided the MP with a sense of efficacy through “opportunity channels” (caucus meetings, committees, etc.) which enabled the MP to feel that they had an effective voice (Garner and Letki, 2005, 466-468).

Similarly, an MEP is part of an organizational culture expressed at the institutional level as a member of the parliament, but also at the party group level where norms of behavior associated with socialization may enhance or maintain group identity and in turn influence voting behavior (Brown, 2000, 60). Socialization may be directed by party group leaders but it also re-enforced through daily interaction with colleagues and staff within the party group. Party groups in this

sense provide a context in which MEPs make decisions in part upon the basis of norms or expectations governing behavior.

When sufficiently fostered, such norms impose a sense of duty upon MEPs to support the group position which are re-enforced over time through experience with the legislative process and mimicking the behavior of group colleagues (Kam, 2002, 194 and 205). Socialization provides leaders with a less costly means of managing dissent in comparison to strictly disciplinary tactics. For example, with turnover common, and some MEPs reaching the limits of institutional promotion, socialization can ensure adherence to the group position just as it can for those in national legislatures (Kam, 2002, 194 and 205).

The impact of socialization is exemplified by the role of rapporteurs and coordinators in ensuring party group cohesion in voting at the committee level and to some degree in later legislative stages. While MEPs are presumed to possess policy preferences, they are nonetheless confronted by two informational constraints: they may not know the preferences of some of their colleagues and they may not possess a preference on every issue or on particular amendments due to lack of or even the overload of information. Facing these obstacles, MEPs may turn to rapporteurs and coordinators for cues on policy preferences which is re-enforced as a practice through socialization (See Ringe, 2010).

Field research and the Farrell et al. (2011) survey (See Chapter Eight) indicate that those party groups with well-developed norms governing dissent and a well-defined group identity conducive to unity are more likely to have lower levels of dissent whereas those groups who lack such norms and a well-defined group identity are more likely to experience higher dissent levels. However, field research also indicates that just as a whip structure is insufficient for managing dissent without the re-enforcement provided by socialization, socialization is only as effective in

the extent to which a proactive whip structure is in place for party group leaders to disseminate group norms and define a group identity.

Group leaders utilize each legislative stage to either act in concert (group presidents and whips during group meetings) or according to specialized roles (coordinators in the committees) to identify and manage dissent. If dissent is identified and addressed in the working group or at the group meeting stage, dissent may not be expressed or dissent may be expressed at a less costly level in plenary votes. On the other hand, if initial efforts are unsuccessful, dissent may be quite extensive in plenary votes resulting in the defeat of the group line on particular amendments or perhaps on the report as a whole.

Whether utilizing disciplinary tools or socialization process (or both), dissent management requires a whip structure in order to ensure communication which in the European Parliament occurs within party group leadership, between leadership and national delegations, and between leaders and rank-and-file MEPs. As the European Parliament expands in terms of both membership and legislative powers, party groups have re-evaluated existing leadership positions and dissent management strategies and in some instances created new offices and party bodies (horizontal working groups) to reflect changes within the group and in the parliament as a whole.

In this sense, a whip structure consists of a group president who presides over group meetings and in some cases serves as the focal point for building and securing the group line. A whip structure also consists of group vice-presidents, coordinators, and in five of the seven groups a whip/parliamentary secretary. National delegation leaders and rapporteurs (for each report) also play key roles within the whip structure, as does the group secretariat. The final component of a whip structure are the group meetings and in the four largest groups, horizontal working groups. A successful whip structure is one that achieves minimal dissent through

proactive leaders who communicate with one another and together with others within the group identify obstacles to group cohesion and resolve them through lobbying or through compromise to deter those who might otherwise dissent.

Field research reveals that each group president has his or her unique approach to dissent management and that no particular style is more effective than another. However, what all successful group presidents have in common are the ability to identify and achieve consensus and an understanding of the group's organization and culture. In other words, the more effective group presidents are those that understand what unites the group, what divides it, and how consensus can be formed in group forums, or if necessary in direct negotiations.

In turn, those groups with the highest cohesion rates are those who include the group vice-presidents in dissent management rather than relegating them to administrative roles or with no responsibilities at all. For some groups, this may mean chairing a working group and for others, it may be serving as the focal point for dissent management. Similarly, coordinators are the eyes and ears of group leadership at the committee level where they are responsible for managing dissent, while in some groups they continue their involvement in in other group forums.

Perhaps no position better exemplifies the development of a whip structure than the assignment of a group vice-president as the whip or as it is often referred to as, a parliamentary secretary. Five of the seven party groups have a vice-president (or in the case of the Greens the secretary-general) designated as a whip. In most legislatures, the whip system performs two primary functions: it serves as the central conduit for information between leaders and members, and it plays a key role in the vote mobilization process (Sinclair, 1995, 117).

Until more recent parliaments, the group whip consisted merely of a set of voting recommendations in the form of a list distributed to MEPs (Raunio, 1999, 193). Over time,

whips monitored how each MEP voted in roll-call votes and informed the party group leadership of major breeches in voting instructions and attendance issues (See Hix et al. 2007). The whip now consists of a person designated with the task of communicating and advocating for the group line. Where the whip office is absent (GUE and EFD) dissent levels are higher.

Variation in dissent levels is not solely due to the absence of the whip office but rather indicative that particular groups lack the components of a complete whip structure. A complete whip structure not only consists of particular offices and degrees of involvement by particular leaders or staff, but also the utilization of group forums to identify and address dissent. In this sense, the whip structure is a communications network, an alert system for group leadership to the extent and sources of dissent. As these components of a whip structure are in place and utilized to their fullest potential, group dissent levels decline and as field research attests, the variation in dissent levels among the party groups can be in part explained by the absence of or the poor utilization of particular offices and forums.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I examined the properties of dissent consisting of: explanations for dissent by MEPs and legislative aides, levels of dissent expression, and dissent management strategies by party group leaders. To understand the true nature of dissent in the European Parliament or in any legislative body, it is necessary to understand the relationship between deciding whether or not to dissent, and when and how to dissent with the efforts by leadership and key staff to achieve consensus or to ensure that the number of those dissenting are kept to a minimum and that dissent is expressed in outlets (not-voting or abstain) and in legislative stages (amendments) which are less costly for the group both in terms of its legislative goals and in the perception of the party group as a potential policymaker and coalition partner. Having considered dissent in all of its properties, chapter four will initiate hypotheses testing and will address the question

presented to MEPs and staff of: what explains why most members of your group vote the same way in plenary most of the time.

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Note: Roll-call vote, party group cohesion, cross-party group coalition patterns, and other data was obtained from www.votewatch.eu while some information regarding the organization and legislative authority of the European Parliament as well as MEP explanations of vote was obtained through its website, www.europarl.europa.eu. The quote from Simon Hughes was identified on the S & D party group's website which was posted on September 23, 2011, www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu

CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLAINING PARTY GROUP UNITY

INTRODUCTION

How do most party groups in the European Parliament achieve such high cohesion rates and what explains the variation in dissent rates among the party groups? Previous chapters have presented the case for pursuing this research topic, described the research design, and considered the properties of dissent. This chapter is the first of five to examine the research question through interviews of MEPs and staff conducted over two phases of field research as well as observations of party group and horizontal working group meetings normally closed to the public.

In the course of field research, I have identified a relationship between particular dissent management strategies and dissent variation patterns among party groups. Accordingly, I contend that the (largely) high party group cohesion rates are obtained at the individual level through an MEP's proximity to the group ideological mean in conjunction with processes at the group level consisting of the leaders and forums constituting the group's communication network or 'whip structure', and socialization processes contributing to a shared conceptualization of the group identity. In turn, I argue that the less cohesive groups are those who do not: assign clear dissent management roles to leaders, fail to fully utilize group forums to build consensus, and who lack informal processes governing dissent and other MEP behavior.

While ideology at the MEP level contributes to high cohesion rates for most party groups (See Hix et. al 2007), ideology alone cannot account for why most MEPs as members of groups in a supranational institution so regularly support the group line in plenary votes. In turn, with expanded co-decision authority since the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) and with decision-making increasingly shifting from the nation-state to the EU level, understanding how party groups achieve such high cohesion rates and why some groups are more cohesive than others has become imperative. As Hix and Hoyland (2011) assert, "more at stake means more incentives to

strengthen the division of labor inside the political groups, to try and win votes and shift outcomes in a particular policy direction” (Hix and Hoyland, 2011, 143).

In addition, we know very little about how particular party group leaders (Ex: Presidents and the Vice-Presidents), or forums such as party group meetings contribute to group cohesion in plenary voting, and what tools group leaders utilize when shared ideology and lobbying on the political and policy merits of legislation are insufficient to secure maximum support for the group line and minimal levels of dissent expression.

While past research has provided valuable insight into explanations for party group cohesion rates (See Hix et al. 2007), such studies also reflect the limitations associated with roll-call vote data in that roll-call votes constitute a small and to a degree an unrepresentative sample of all plenary session votes (Carrubba et al. 2006). While roll-call votes remain a useful tool, they nonetheless fail to capture either the full extent of dissent or the forms of dissent expressions prior to the plenary session. As Carrubba et al. (2006) note, “The party groups are systematically hiding exactly the voting behavior we are interested in studying” (Carrubba et al. 2006, 699).

As an initial step to explaining variation in dissent levels, it is important to first assess how the party groups are able to achieve their respective cohesion rates. To accomplish this, I first consider explanations for group unity offered by roll-call vote analysis (Hix et al. 2007, Hix and Noury 2009) and contributions offered by MEP decision-making models (Ringe 2010) and by social identity theory (Tajfel 1978, Brown 2000). Finally, the bulk of the chapter will consider explanations for party group unity obtained from interviews collected in this study.

LESSONS FROM ROLL-CALL VOTE STUDIES

Since the first direct elections in 1979 and as the European Parliament has acquired co-decision-making authority in nearly every policy area, party groups have become more cohesive in plenary voting with average party group cohesion scores rising from .82 in the first

parliament, 1979-1984 to .91 in the fifth parliament which sat from 1999-2004 (Hix et al. 2007, 93). Further examination of roll-votes from the fifth parliament also reveals that MEPs are likely to support the group line unless there is a conflict with the position of their national party. MEPs voted against their national parties less than five percent of the time and against their party group in nine percent of roll-call votes. In turn, MEPs voted with their national party and against their party group six percent of the time and against their national party but in support of the group line in less than two percent of roll-call votes in the fifth parliament (Hix et al. 2007, 138).

Another explanation for rising party group cohesion rates may be the increased legislative role for the parliament following the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999). With the extension of co-decision authority and an increasing shift in decision-making from the member-state to the EU level, group cohesion rates rose by eleven percent (Hix et al. 2007, 102). Party group size also influences the likelihood of higher cohesion rates with a five percent increase in a group's seat share corresponding to a 0.19 percent increase in group cohesion (Hix et al. 2007, 101). The authors speculate that larger groups have a greater incentive to specialize and divide tasks due to membership numbers and higher plenary stakes than smaller party groups (Hix et al. 2007, 101).

What role does ideology play in influencing party group cohesion rates? Putnam (1971) clarifies the role of ideology in a legislator's decision-making in that "a political actor may be perceived to be ideological when he or she conducts politics from the standpoint of a coherent, comprehensive set of beliefs" (Putnam, 1971, 655). The impact of an MEP's set of beliefs upon party group cohesion rates may be assessed on a Left-Right spectrum or in terms of support for existing or further EU integration. When an MEP clearly identifies a set of beliefs along either spectrum, he or she may compare the group line to their system of beliefs and determine whether support or dissent is the proper course of action.

Consequently, an MEP's decision of how and when to express dissent from the group line is related to their ideological proximity to the group mean, but also by the extent of ideological cohesion within the group. In other words, the likelihood and form of dissent expression is related to the extent to which an MEP shares the ideological views of the group and in turn the extent to which the group as a whole identifies a unifying ideology binding members to a common line and a shared identity.

Hix et al. (2007) concluded that the group's ideological position on the left-right spectrum or its proximity to the ideological mean of all party groups is not related to its cohesion level (Hix et al. 2007, 101). However, the authors did find that ideology at the individual (MEP) level helps to explain defection rates with thirty percent of the total variance in MEP defection from the group line explained by Left-Right politics. "The greater the distance between personal ideological position on the left-right dimension and the average left-right location of the party group, the more likely the MEP will vote against the party group, independent of the position of the national party" (Hix et al. 2007, 181). Similarly, when ideology is considered in terms of views on EU integration, the authors conclude that as the distance between an MEP's views and those of the group on the EU dimension decrease, the likelihood of defection from the party group line on related legislation decreases (Hix et al. 2007, 181).

Has EU enlargement impacted party group cohesion rates? Following the addition of ten new member-states Hix and Noury (2009) examined roll-call votes from the first half of the sixth parliament (2004-2006) and found that the gap between voting along national and party group lines increased, while overall group cohesion declined, but not significantly (Hix and Noury, 2009, 162). Despite the increase in membership and the inclusion of MEPs from mostly Central-

Eastern European member-states, party groups in the European Parliament remain highly cohesive and defection rates did not increase at a significant rate (Hix and Noury, 2009, 165).

MEP DECISION-MAKING AND PARTY GROUP UNITY

While roll-call vote studies provide a valuable tool for examining party group cohesion, they are limited in two key facets: only thirty-five percent of plenary votes are roll-called and reports from some committees are never or rarely roll-called thereby calling into question the representativeness of the sample (See Carrubba et al. 2006). One additional tool for examining variation in party group cohesion rates is to analyze the decision-making processes of individual MEPs. Assuming rationality at the individual level, party group unity may be a product of MEPs deferring to policy experts within the group unless a separate national party line arises.

As members of party groups, the likelihood of MEPs securing their preferences is tied to the extent to which other group members share their preferences and whether the official group line approximates their own. However, when preferences are not evident or information aiding in preference assessment is lacking (or is overwhelming), MEPs may look to party group leaders or policy experts in the group when making voting decisions.

Ringe (2010) characterized this relationship in terms of rapporteurs, coordinators and other policy experts setting the group line with rank-and-file MEPs following the lead of these experts in most votes due largely to information constraints. “EP decision-making is founded on a division of labor and an exchange of information between expert and non-expert legislators based on perceived preference coherence. Legislators are often quite uninformed about the policies they exact because of very real external constraints on their ability to collect information” (Ringe, 2010, 209).

Each year, MEPs are confronted with the task of voting on numerous reports and resolutions with each often accompanied by hundreds of amendments. Knowing each amendment or report

inside out is a vaunting challenge at the committee level let alone at the plenary level. When lacking expertise on a given report or confronted with information overload, MEPs will according to the perceived preference model conclude that the most optimal course of action to secure their policymaking preferences is to defer to policy experts who possess a particular expertise and have invested their resources into more fully understanding the issue at hand (Ringe, 2010, 33). In turn, the challenge for party groups is to ensure that MEPs defer solely to experts within the group and follow the group line.

In addition to understanding the policy consequences, group experts will also be in a more informed position to communicate the political consequences of a report or amendment (Ringe, 2010, 33). In such circumstances, the group rapporteur, president, or secretary-general may be in a unique position to provide insight on the fate of the report in the Council, the Commission's preferences, and how other party groups view the report. Consequently, party group cohesion rates are high when MEPs defer to policy experts on most votes, and where party groups have created leadership structures through which to communicate the group line formed from the expertise of select MEPs. In contrast, cohesion rates are lower in party groups where MEPs are less likely to identify a link between their preferences and those of group leadership and/or where leadership structures are not as effective in communicating the group line.

While perceived preferences and informational constraints help to explain party group unity, MEP decision-making may also be influenced by group membership. According to social identity theory (See Tajfel 1981, Tajfel and Turner, 1979), self-conceptualization based upon personal identity (individual characteristics and experiences), as well as social identity (group affiliations) frames decision-making. As Russell (2012) notes, "social identity is defined by the groups to which we belong and we maintain it by inter-group comparison in order to distinguish

ourselves from others” (Russell, 2012, 6). Furthermore, Brown (2000) contends that “Our sense of who we are and what we are worth is intimately bound up with our group memberships” (Brown, 2000, 28). For example, party group members may define their individual success or failure in terms of the success or failure of the group and accordingly make decisions based upon the likelihood their actions will contribute toward the group’s success in achieving its goals.

In turn, group leaders will encourage behavior that contributes to the group’s success while discouraging behavior that may place the group’s goals in jeopardy. These efforts consist of communicating acceptable norms of behavior and developing socialization processes promoting preferred behavior such as through the use of cues from group leaders and other influential members (Russell, 2012, 6). According to Brown, “Once a group develops a clearly defined goal inevitably norms encouraging goal-facilitative actions and discouraging inhibitory behaviors will emerge” (Brown, 2000, 60). Brown further clarifies the impact of norms at the group level in that “they specify certain rules for how members should behave and are the basis for mutual expectations among group members” (Brown, 2000, 56). In this sense, norms re-enforce a shared conceptualization of the group identity which facilitates group cohesion.

The development of a shared identity and the degree to which socialization process are successful requires that logic of appropriateness accompanies if not replaces logic of consequences at the individual level. In other words, MEPs follow norms governing dissent and other behavior because they believe it to be the appropriate action, rather than solely on the basis of presumed consequences derived from strategic assessment. Socialization may be defined as the process of exposure or learning through which legislators acquire certain norms (Kam, 2002, 194). Norms impose a sense of duty to support the leadership position and are re-enforced over time through exposure to group level decision-making processes and by mimicking the behavior

of colleagues. For example, an MEP's decision to dissent from or support the group line is framed in part by his or her group membership in that social interactions influence individual perceptions of group leadership roles and aid in the identification of appropriate norms of behavior including those governing dissent from the group line.

In turn, if party groups develop norms such as those promoting consensus, those governing when and how to dissent from the group line, and others encouraging deferral to group experts, then a party group's dissent rate should be lower when compared to groups who have not (successfully) fostered the development of such norms. For example, if an MEP belongs to a party group whose leaders effectively communicate the necessity for group unity, and the MEP observes other members deferring to group leaders, the MEP is likely to adopt a positive view of the party group and copy the observed behavior.

When the impact of decision-making processes upon party group unity is broadly assessed, both rational choice and social identity theory help to explain why some party groups are more cohesive than others. In this sense, respondents are assumed in this study to behave as rational actors pursuing individual preferences within information constraints yet who are also influenced by conceptions of group identity and socialization processes. In turn, the definition of group cohesion utilized in this study encompasses a collection of members with similar preferences (See Carey 2007) and the extent to which members share similar attitudes about and perceptions toward group unity (See Brown 2000).

PREDICTORS OF PARTY GROUP COHESION/DEFECTION RATES

Why are cohesion rates on the whole so high among party groups in the European Parliament and why do some groups have higher dissent rates than others? In order to explain largely high cohesion rates and variation in party group dissent levels (See Table 4.1 below), I

contend that the leadership roles, group decision-making forums, and tactics associated with dissent management must be more closely examined.

TABLE 4.1: PARTY GROUP COHESION/DISSENT RATES

PARTY GROUP	COHESION RATE	DISSENT RATE
GREENS/EFA	.947	0.053
EPP	.931	0.069
S & D	.928	0.072
ALDE	.898	0.102
ECR	.868	0.132
GUE	.816	0.184
EFD	.498	0.502

Note: Party group cohesion/dissent rates are listed in descending order and reflect plenary roll-call votes during the current parliament (July 2009-March 2013) prior to the accession of Croatia into the EU. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

Accordingly, I contend that lower party group dissent rates are a product of the extent to which individual MEPs are ideologically aligned with mean position of their party groups in conjunction with the degree to which party group leaders successfully utilize dissent management networks (whip structures) and socialize members into conforming to expected behavior and closely identifying with the group.

MEP IDEOLOGY + WHIP STRUCTURES + SOCIALIZATION = LOW DISSENT LEVELS

With the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (2007) granting even greater co-decision authority to the European Parliament and the accelerated process of integration (as evidenced by the response to the financial crisis), the legislative stakes are higher than ever for the party groups. With higher legislative stakes, party groups are incentivized to develop both formal and informal processes to facilitate the adoption of a common line as well as to identify and manage dissent on respective reports. Formal processes consist of assigned roles to party group leaders as well as decision-making forums such as party group meetings, while informal processes include the adoption of norms governing dissent and a shared conceptualization of the group identity.

As described in chapter three, successful dissent management networks or whip structures are defined not only by the presence of respective positions (Ex: presidents, and vice-presidents) but more importantly by the roles assigned to each position. The efforts of party group leaders within this whip structure are directed toward producing consensus and when necessary ensuring that members dissent at less costly levels such as by abstaining or opposing the group line on an amendment but not the entire report. In turn, party group leaders are expected to utilize a combination of lobbying (on the basis of the report's merits and the political consequences for defection) and socialization to achieve their goal ensuring widespread group cohesion.

In order to gauge the extent to which whip structures and socialization processes are evident within the party groups and the extent to which each contribute to high cohesion and low dissent rates, I began each interview with a broad and open-ended question concerning group unity. I asked eighty-four MEPs and staff: what explains why most (or in the case of the EFD a majority) of MEPs in your party group vote the same way in most plenary votes? The question was purposefully left open-ended in order to capture the full range of respondent perceptions regarding party group unity and in the hopes of acquiring a more complete understanding of group culture, leadership roles, and decision-making processes.

In turn, I anticipated that responses could be arranged according to five categories: shared beliefs, communication, plenary coalitions, deferral to group experts, and with some respondents saying that group unity was unimportant. Each response category was expected to capture the effects (or the absence) of both a whip structure and of socialization processes. I expected that shared beliefs would be the most common response ('We are unified because we think alike and because we value group membership') in that it entails not only the common ideology shared by most group members but also the extent to which respondents value group unity and perceive

that their colleagues share this assumption. The response of communication ('We are unified because we constantly communicate our goals and concerns to one another) should be the second most common response and encompass the contributions of group leaders and forums in constructing and building support for the group line but also the extent to which a respondent felt connected to that decision-making process. In this sense, group cohesion is in part a product of the efforts by group leaders to communicate with one another and with the rank-and-file but also the extent to which rank-and-file members participate in and value the processes and forums associated with group decision-making processes (See Garner and Letki 2005).

Responses stating that party group unity were a result of plenary coalitions (We are unified because members know that the group's legislative priorities and its legislative reputation require a unified group in plenary votes') should reflect consideration of not only the perceived legislative or political consequences of dissent but also the impact of dissent upon the group's plenary reputation. In this sense, the response citing coalitions encompasses the political consequences assessed by respondents as well as the extent to which respondents are socialized into adopting a shared sense of importance placed upon preserving the group's reputation derived from delivering a unified group as part of plenary coalitions.

Meanwhile, responses citing deferral to experts ('We are unified as a group because members don't have time to read all reports and/or because it is customary to defer to the experts within our group') were expected to capture the conclusions reached by Ringe (2010) and/or those assumed by social identity theory that deferral may be a product of either information constraints or a sense of closeness to the group and to its leaders in particular. Finally, responses maintaining that group unity is unimportant should capture the absence of socialization processes

as well as the limited or nonexistent contributions of group leaders and decision-making forums towards group cohesion.

In turn, I assume that the presence of certain party group characteristics should increase the likelihood of offering particular responses. Specifically, I assume that party group size (number of members) and the level of party group plenary influence (the percentage of times the group is in the plenary majority) should increase the likelihood of offering particular responses.

TABLE 4.2: PARTY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Group Name	Number/% of MEPs
EPP (European Peoples Party)	271/35.9%
S & D (Socialist and Democrats)	189/25.0%
ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats)	85/11.2%
Greens/EFA	58/7.7%
ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists)	56/7.4%
GUE (Union of European Left)	34/4.5%
EFD (Europeans for a Free Democracy)	34/4.5%
Total	756/100%

Note: Group Membership depicted in descending order from largest to smallest and reflecting totals prior to accession of Croatia. The 27 unaffiliated MEPs are not included. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

H1: Respondents from larger party groups will be more likely to reference shared identity derived from group membership in their response that shared beliefs explain party group unity.

Respondents from larger party groups should be more likely to refer to how group membership fosters a shared identity promoting group unity. Leaders in the larger groups have greater incentive to foster a sense of shared identity as they are unable to directly lobby every MEP. If members closely identify with the group and adopt norms setting expectations for behavior, socialization may help to overcome the logistical challenges associated with managing dissent in a large group. In contrast, leaders in smaller groups will have less incentive to develop socialization processes as they can more easily lobby individual members. In turn, respondents from smaller groups will be less likely to closely identify with the group and more likely to not reference shared identity in their discussion of shared beliefs.

H2: Respondents from larger party groups will be more likely to cite communication as an explanation for party group unity.

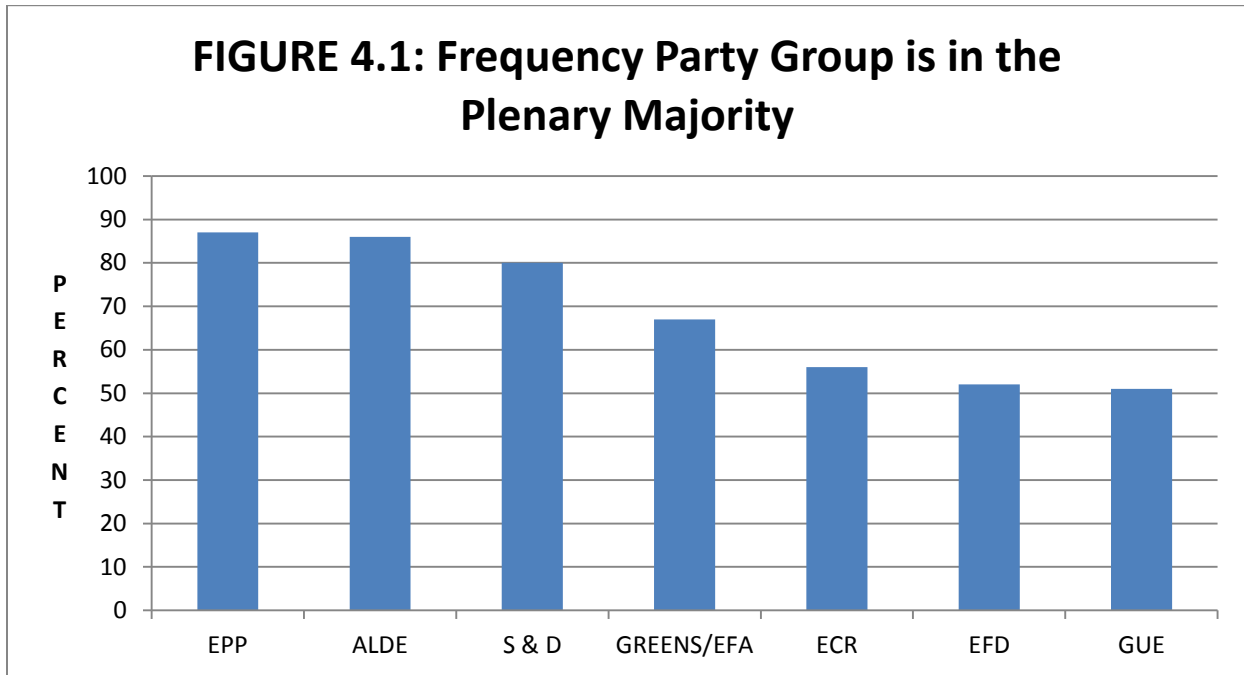
As membership size decreases, party groups will have less incentive to develop communication networks to form the group line and manage dissent. Large membership should encourage the development of specific leadership positions, assigned leadership roles, and decision-making forums. For example, the two largest party groups (EPP and S & D) have created horizontal working groups as an intermediary stage between committees and party group meetings, whereas the two smallest (GUE and EFD) have not. In turn, respondents from larger groups should refer to the group decision-making process as a whole as well as specific leaders and group forums in their explanations of group unity.

H3: Respondents from party groups with greater plenary influence will be more likely to cite plenary coalitions and deferral to group experts as explanations for party group unity.

Respondents from the more influential party groups will be more likely to believe that party group unity is due to the legislative and political consequences as well as the perceived impact upon the group identity associated with the failure to provide sufficient votes to support a plenary coalition. For example, ALDE respondents should be among the most likely to cite the importance of plenary coalitions as an explanation for party group unity in part reflecting the shared goal of securing the ALDE line but also shared concerns of jeopardizing the group's identity built in part upon its plenary reputation as a reliable coalition partner.

Respondents from the more influential party groups should also be more likely to explain party group unity as a result or in part due to members deferring to group experts. All MEPs regardless of group size face the same informational constraints in regards to individual expertise and the volume of legislation. However, respondents from more influential party groups will be more likely to consider the higher legislative stakes in their assessment of whether or not to defer

to experts. In addition, respondents from more influential party groups should have greater exposure to norms encouraging deferral to experts.



Note: Graph depicts the percentage of times each party group has been in the plenary majority in the current parliament as of March 2013. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

H4: Respondents from the least influential party groups will be the most likely to maintain that party group unity is unimportant.

Though smaller party groups may not influence the outcome of most votes, if they are unified, they may influence the outcome of votes on prominent reports which may incur more profound divisions among groups within parliament. However, the low level of plenary influence exhibited by the three smallest party groups indicates that a majority if not most members of these groups do not view unity important enough to justify consistent support for the group line or perhaps even advocate for the adoption of an official group line. In this sense, defection and plenary influence are inter-related in that the lack of plenary influence encourages dissent while a non-cohesive group measured along ideological lines or in shared views on unity (See Brown) may contribute to low plenary influence.

H5: Respondents who are coordinators, rapporteurs or staff will be more likely to state that communication explains party group unity than those holding other party group positions.

The effects of party group position should be most evident in offering the response that communication explains party group unity. In particular, coordinators and rapporteurs among group leaders should be the most likely to cite communication as these positions are the most responsible for forming the group line and managing dissent. Compared to other leaders, coordinators and rapporteurs communicate more with members from the committee to the party group meeting and at times prior to plenary. Staff should also be more likely to cite communication than rank-and-file MEPs or respondents who are group presidents and vice-presidents because as the secretary-general, group policy advisors, or aides to MEPs, they will be in constant communication with members while contributing to consensus-building.

H6: As the years of service in the European Parliament increases, the likelihood of stating that communication or deferral to group experts explains party group unity increases.

As respondents acquire greater acquaintance with the group level decision-making processes, they should be more likely to recognize that communication contributes to the unity of their party group. MEPs and staff to various degrees share common beliefs with their colleagues when first joining the party group, but it is only over time that they identify particular leadership roles and adopt particular norms. For example, members with more service in the parliament should more closely identify with the party group and (where applicable) working group meetings in terms of viewing them as vital decision-making forums where they can express their views and contribute to the development of the group line.

Similarly, information constraints confront all MEPs upon entry into the European Parliament, but socialization requires exposure over time to take full effect. In turn, I expect MEPs with more years of service to be more likely to explain party group unity in terms of

deferral to group experts because they will have had more exposure to socialization processes. I also expect that as staff becomes more acquainted with the procedures and the cultures of the group they should be more likely to cite deferral to experts in their explanation.

TABLE 4.3: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF EU MEMBERSHIP BY MEMBER-STATE

MEMBER-STATE	GOOD	BAD	NEITHER	DON'T KNOW
AUSTRIA	.37	.25	.36	.02
BELGIUM	.65	.11	.23	.01
BULGARIA	.48	.10	.38	.04
CYPRUS	.37	.25	.36	.02
CZECH REPUBLIC	.31	.19	.48	.02
DENMARK	.55	.16	.28	.01
ESTONIA	.49	.09	.40	.01
FINLAND	.47	.19	.33	.01
FRANCE	.46	.19	.33	.02
GERMANY	.54	.16	.26	.04
GREECE	.38	.33	.28	.01
HUNGARY	.32	.22	.44	.02
IRELAND	.63	.12	.18	.07
ITALY	.41	.17	.36	.06
LATVIA	.25	.21	.51	.03
LITHUANIA	.49	.16	.31	.04
LUXEMBOURG	.72	.13	.13	.02
MALTA	.42	.13	.37	.03
NETHERLANDS	.68	.12	.19	.01
POLAND	.53	.10	.33	.04
PORTUGAL	.39	.26	.30	.05
SLOVAKIA	.52	.10	.37	.01
SLOVENIA	.39	.21	.39	.01
SPAIN	.55	.17	.22	.06
SWEDEN	.56	.17	.25	.20
UNITED KINGDOM	.26	.32	.37	.05

Note: Table depicts proportions of respondents providing each answer to the question of in what terms they viewed their country's EU membership. Data Source: [EU Barometer \(May 2011\)](#)

H7: Respondents from member-states with a negative public perception of EU membership will be less likely to cite shared beliefs and more likely to contend that group unity is unimportant.

Given that MEPs with a stronger European identity (See Farrell et al. 2011) and who place themselves closer to the federalist position on the EU integration spectrum (See Hix et al. 2007) are more likely to value party group unity and take group positions into account when voting in plenary, I expect respondents from member-states with strong negative public perceptions of EU

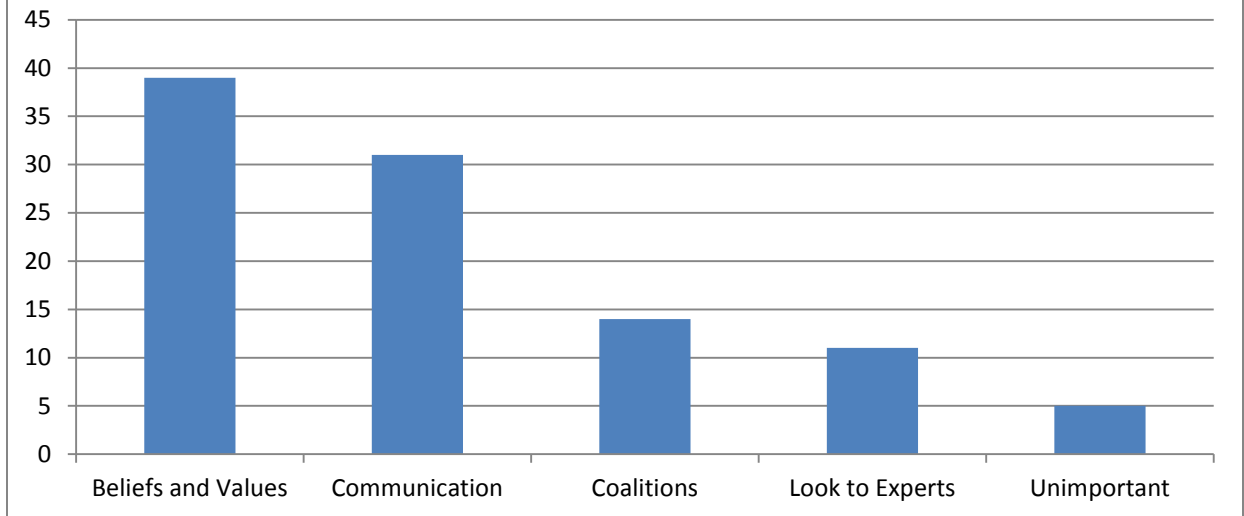
membership to not closely identify with their group and in turn not value group unity. To measure public perception, I rely on the most recent EU Barometer survey (May 2011) depicted above in Table 4.3. Among a series of questions, respondents were asked if in general they thought their country's EU membership was: a good thing, a bad thing or neither a good nor a bad thing. In part, I hope to capture expected differences between respondents from new and EU 15 member-states, but also those from individual member-states (particularly the UK and Greece) where the EU enjoys less support.

When public perceptions of EU membership are more negative, respondents from these member-states should be more likely to prioritize national interests over European or party group interests. For example, respondents from member-states with higher positive perceptions of EU membership will be more likely to reference the "community project" when they cite shared beliefs in that they believe that the group's 'European' identity is at stake in plenary outcomes. In contrast, respondents from countries with more negative attitudes toward EU membership will be less likely to cite shared beliefs in part because they have less incentive to adopt a European component of the group's identity and in turn will be more likely to view group unity as unimportant as national priorities will outweigh the group's priorities.

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

When asked to explain the level of unity within their party group, respondents often offered two or more explanations which is why the number of cases (117) depicted in Figure 4.2 below exceeds the number of respondents (84) interviewed. As expected, the most common explanation for why the party group was mostly unified on most votes in plenary was shared beliefs. Thirty-nine percent of responses maintained that the extent of party group unity could be best or in part explained by the extent to which group members share common beliefs on policy and to various degrees a shared conceptualization of group membership and the group identity.

Figure 4.2: Respondent Explanations for Party Group Unity



Note: Figure depicts the frequency for which each response was offered. Number of Cases: 117. Multiple responses were permitted

Thirty-one percent of responses stated that the level of group unity in plenary voting was a product of or was in part due to constant communication whether between members of a committee or working group, or between leaders and rank-and-file. Many of these respondents also positively viewed group forums as vital forums for identifying and securing support for the group line. Sixteen percent of responses noted that party group unity was due to plenary coalitions in that members perceived that the group had to be unified in order to influence plenary outcomes and secure its plenary reputation. Thirteen percent of responses maintained that party group unity was high (in part) because members mostly defer to group experts, while six percent of responses stated that party group unity was not important.

Table 4.4 below depicts measures of significance for each of the respondent characteristics hypothesized to influence the likelihood of offering each response category. Gender and a respondent's previous profession have been added as extraneous variables. As the data are nominal, Cramér's V values are utilized as measures of strength of association or of a

substantively significant relationship between responses and predictors. Values of 0 to 0.19 denote weak associations between variables, .20 to .49 indicate modest associations, while values of .50 and above signify strong associations between variables.

While all of the respondent characteristics apart from gender have a moderate or strong association with nearly every response category, a statistically significant relationship occurs only between party group membership and the response categories of plenary coalitions and party group unity is unimportant. However, significant relationships between variables do not indicate causality. For example, belonging to one party group or another did not cause a respondent to offer a particular response but the likelihood of offering a particular response and belonging to a specific party group is high.

TABLE 4.4: PREDICTORS OF EXPLANATION FOR PARTY GROUP UNITY

Variable	Shared Beliefs	Communication	Coalitions	Experts	Unimportant
Party Group	0.2930	0.3046	0.4712**	0.3075	0.4906**
Group Position	0.2192	0.0736	0.2188	0.2578	0.2448
Member-State	0.5574	0.3734	0.4496	0.4328	0.5680
Gender	-0.1736	0.1132	0.0565	0.0032	0.0680
Years of Service	0.3972	0.3699	0.3977	0.3740	0.3642
Profession	0.2968	0.3061	0.2802	0.3515	0.3409
(Number of Cases)	(46)	(36)	(16)	(13)	(6)

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels. The number of cases associated with each response appears in parentheses on the last line of the table. N of Cases: 117. Multiple responses were permitted

While association measures describe the substantive strength of the relationship between two variables, statistical significance indicates the likelihood that the same results would occur in the general population. In turn, whether a relationship between two variables is likely a product of chance may be ascertained from the p-value. The null hypothesis (no relationship occurs) may be rejected when p-values of below .05 occur. For example, a p-value of .049 indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between two variables and a less than one in twenty probability that the assumed relationship between the two variables occurred due to chance.

Therefore, while for example Cramér's V values indicate a moderate or high substantive association between a respondent's member-state origins and each of the response categories, the accompanying p-values indicate the absence of a statistically significant relationship and the high probability that the relationship between a respondent's member-state and given responses were a product of chance.

In particular, there is no pattern of respondents from member-states with negative public perceptions of EU membership being more or less likely to cite shared beliefs as I had hypothesized. In turn, throughout this study, a respondent's member-state often has a moderate or high association with responses to various questions but the relationship is never statistically significant. In part, I believe this is a product in part of an unrepresentative sample in that French, Italian, and Eastern European MEPs are somewhat underrepresented in this study. Overall, when the entire MEP population is considered, the same associations between a respondent's member-state and given responses would likely not occur.

I also contend that party group membership may negate some of the assumed effects of member-state origins. For example, because of high plenary stakes and large membership size, S & D group leaders are incentivized to socialize members from countries with higher negative perceptions of EU membership into supporting the group line. Consensus-building efforts are aided by a shared history of the socialist movement which may help to overcome national divisions within the group. In this sense, member-state effects are not statistically significant because respondents' perceptions are shaped by experiences linked to membership in a specific group rather than shared origins from a particular member-state.

In turn, it is important to note the pattern of moderate/high substantive associations and statistical significance between party group membership and responses to most questions (though

years of service and previous profession also are often statistically significant predictors of responses) throughout the study. I believe that given that each question is party group specific (explain why X happens in your party group or how X contributes to unity in your group), respondents are framing their responses according to their experiences as members of their party group. In turn, respondent perceptions are shaped by the size, plenary influence, and culture (in terms of shared attitudes and norms) of their respective party groups.

When responses to the question considered in this chapter are organized according to party group membership, those maintaining that plenary coalitions contribute to group unity were more frequently offered by ALDE respondents whereas those contending that party group unity was unimportant were more frequently provided by EFD respondents. However, I contend that valuable insight into particular dissent management roles and processes within each group is gained from organizing all five response categories according to group membership and by more closely examining their content.

PARTY GROUP MEMBERSHIP EFFECTS

The degree of cohesion obtained in plenary voting suggests that party groups to various extents have created or utilized existing leadership positions, decision-making forums, and socialization processes to ensure maximum support for the group line and minimal levels of dissent. For example, Hix et al. (2007) found that “high cohesion rates demonstrated an impressive ability by party group leaders to coordinate the legislative activity of members across national party lines indicating extensive compromise between group and national party delegation leaders” (Hix et al. 2007, 145). They similarly concluded that “We find in part that ideological closeness alone cannot explain cohesiveness, but that effectiveness of transnational party groups is a key determinant of their voting cohesion” (Hix et al. 2007, 210). When responses are arranged according to party group membership, a pattern emerges of respondents

from the more cohesive groups emphasizing the importance of communication and those from the less cohesive groups placing little or no emphasis on communication.

TABLE 4.5: GROUP UNITY RESPONSES BY PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D
Shared Beliefs	.39	.55	.80	.44	.55	.50	.76
Communication	.50	.33	0	.50	.64	.25	.41
Plenary Coalitions	.44	0	0	.13	0	0	.35
Defer to Experts	.17	.11	0	.31	.27	0	.06
Group Unity is Unimportant	0	.22	.20	0	0	.38	0
(N of Cases)	(18)	(9)	(5)	(16)	(11)	(8)	(17)

Note: Entries are percentage of respondents within each party group who offered each response with the last line depicting respondents per party group. N of Cases: 117. Multiple explanations were permitted.

This pattern further underscores that while party group size and plenary influence help to explain variation in group dissent levels, group organizational and cultural processes also contribute to explanations. The response pattern to this initial question when framed according to group membership further suggests that higher cohesion rates are in part the product of the efforts of group leaders to build support for the group line, but also the extent to which members are invested in the forums and adhere to the norms of behavior associated with the group's communication network.

The S & D to a degree depart from this trend with respondents placing much greater emphasis on shared beliefs though they do more frequently mention communication than those from the three least cohesive groups. Nonetheless, this raises a second trend which may be derived from the table above but also from the content of the responses in that the definition of shared beliefs varies between respondents from the more and less cohesive party groups.

Whereas respondents from the more cohesive groups were more likely to define shared beliefs in terms of a shared group identity as well as a common ideology, those from the less cohesive groups defined shared beliefs almost exclusively along ideological lines. In other words, any degree of unity according to respondents from the three least cohesive groups is the

product of a common ideology that led national parties to form the group and not a reflection of a shared conceptualization of the group identity or the product of efforts by group leaders.

The table also provides a reference for exploring the basis for ALDE group cohesion in that ALDE respondents were the primary source of those who cited plenary coalitions as an explanation for group unity which reflects the group's extensive plenary influence. Finally, EPP and Greens/EFA respondents were the most likely to cite deferral to group experts as an explanation for group unity which highlights the importance of working groups in the EPP and of constant dialogue between leaders/staff and members in the Greens/EFA.

BELIEFS

When respondents from the four largest groups cited shared beliefs, they defined cohesion not only in terms of unity in plenary votes but also in regards to the extent to which members perceived that their colleagues shared similar values or backgrounds and the degree to which membership shared the group's goals. In contrast, when respondents from the three smallest party groups cited shared beliefs, they were referring not only to the extent to which members at times shared policy positions, but also to the shared perception that group membership did not require consensus and that frequent dissent was acceptable. A shared identity may be derived from shared backgrounds or histories among party group members.

“We are a small group to begin with and we basically only come from the Northwest, so we have hardly any Eastern Europeans...and hardly any southern members. So, there's not much regional diversity in our group and that helps. We are a small group and homogenous, but there are certain issues that we will vote differently on. Those are specific national sensitivities like the Dutch and the Swedes will never vote the same on prostitution and there are a couple of those things that you already know beforehand”. (June 14, 2012)

When Greens/EFA group leaders pursue consensus on a given report, they can draw not only upon members' shared perceptions of what it means to belong to the Green movement, but also from the shared geographic origins of most members. Whereas the EPP, S & D, and particularly

the ECR must contend with East-West divisions among members on various reports, the Greens largely approach an issue from a North-Western European perspective. In this sense, a shared identity along with constant communication helps to bridge gaps among the Greens.

“I think the main reason we are more united than other groups is the main Green conviction, what Greens all over Europe share in their political thinking of how to restructure the economy towards sustainability and how to behave ecologically and how to fight climate change. So, we are very close on all of these Green issues....But I think these things where as Greens we come together to go for the Green message, that is the point why I think we are more united than other groups here in the house because we have a very clear Green narrative”. (June 5, 2012)

The Greens/EFA is the most cohesive group even though they do not have as much at stake in plenary outcomes as other groups. One explanation for the high level of cohesion is that members strongly identify with the group’s goals as explained above. Though the group as a whole pursues the same objectives, differences do emerge at times when debating the most optimal solutions. In turn, though party group meetings can become quite contentious, members strongly identify with the need for a common line once the discussions are concluded in order to as many respondents noted “make the report Greener”.

Perhaps no party group though has deeper historical roots than the S & D with its origins in the Pan-European Socialist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

“I think the reason is historical, the socialists and social democrats have been cooperating at the international and European level since the nineteenth century. We have a history of making political programs together...So we have coordinated our strategies and our policies for over a century. I think that is the basic thing, we feel more than the others as one movement, as one political tendency. So, we have a history of sticking together, trying to find compromises, because historically we have been in an underdog situation fighting for working class people, etc. I think those historical and ideological explanations are the most important. (June 13, 2012)

S & D group leaders draw upon this shared tradition when urging members to support the group line which in turn helps to overcome East-West and other divides among members. The response also makes the assumption that the S & D are united in most votes because unlike the Liberals and other groups, its members share common beliefs and values. Group members come

to view their group in positive terms as they more closely identify with it which often leads members to adopt negative views of other groups and in turn defining their group in contrastive terms with how they perceive other groups (See Tajfel, 1981). In contrast, many ALDE respondents while identifying a cohesive identity in relation to plenary reputation associated with coalitions did not extend the same presumption in regards to ideological cohesiveness.

“We have political groups, but within the political groups, we have members of political parties back home. They are all not necessarily identical, not even close to being identical. I mean, when I think of my colleagues in the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats, there are some who are what I would call a Liberal, Liberal in the sense of an open market, little government involvement, fair competition, human rights, and things like this, but there are others who are far more left or far more right. So, it is not as homogeneous a group as you might think”. (June 20, 2012)

While differences do occur for example among the UK Liberal Democrats and the German FDP, most ALDE group members share attitudes on matters concerning individual liberty and free trade policies as evidenced by the high cohesion rates in plenary votes on each (91.60 and 90.97 respectfully, www.votewatch.eu) which are higher than the group’s average cohesion rate in roll-call votes. In contrast, the group is more divided on reports concerning the environment (85.84) and gender equality (85.08). While the ALDE have ideological divisions on some issues, the group as a whole pursues a common line on most reports which I would argue is the product of a shared identity derived in part from its plenary reputation, and ‘European’ outlook in conjunction with consensus-building efforts by particular leaders (Verhofstadt).

“We are definitely a pro-European party and I think that we are a party that is very united...Some of the other groups are perhaps more ideological and I think the EPP is perhaps more pragmatic. We have many parties who are in national government, and this gives them a different perspective”. (October 13, 2012)

While ideological homogeneity helps to explain party group unity, cohesion is also a product in part of the extent to which an individual identifies with the group’s success or reputation to the point of placing group objectives before their own. Cohesion defined in these terms may be

facilitated through appeals by leaders to the European aspect of the group identity. For example, interview responses and speeches by EPP members often stressed the need to find a “community solution” to problems. This was especially evident during the six-pack and two-pack discussions in the EPP group meetings I observed. President Daul and other group leaders repeatedly appealed to the group’s identity as a European party rather than a collection of national parties while noting that the reputation of not only the group but the entire EU project was on the line.

In contrast, members of the three least cohesive groups are less likely to define themselves according to their group membership. For example, respondents from the three smallest groups were far less likely to identify ‘ECR or GUE interests’ but rather describe how national interests within the group at times coalesced into a line adopted by a majority of members.

“We can’t get agreement for instance on finance, because some of the components, the Polish are a good example, obviously have a different view to European budgets and they need to be in receipt of monies like the common agricultural policy funding. They don’t like the idea that we might, the British, view that we need to reform that radically and to try and reduce the overall budget of the European Union. So, there are some clear differences there”. (October 26, 2011)

The ECR are highly cohesive on reports concerning constitutional affairs (93.98) and trade (94.96) but are divided mostly along East-West lines on the EU budget (80.9) and agriculture (81.34) as the response above accentuates (www.votewatch.eu). In turn, the ECR line is often a product of negotiations between national delegations which may nonetheless incur separate national lines. In this sense, while the ECR at times influence plenary outcomes, group leaders cannot appeal to a shared identity in part because the group is new but also in some ways paradoxically in that ECR group membership is initially appealing to delegations because no one is bound to support a common line. Given that norms are adopted from observing the behavior of colleagues and by following the cues of leaders, the readiness to accept separate national lines

while in the short-run ensures the group's survival in the long-run inhibits the development of a shared (ECR) identity which may facilitate cohesive voting behavior and shared attitudes.

Similarly, while the GUE at times agree to support a common line, the group identity is defined largely on the basis that membership guarantees the right to dissent rather than on one facilitating consensus. Members emphasize consensus but in their responses they do not associate consensus with maximum support for the group line. Instead, consensus is associated with a dialogue that may or may not result in a common line and where a majority does not impose its will or what they refer to as the "confederal" nature of the group. This conceptualization of the group identity along confederal terms contributes to the absence of a group line on many reports and the perception that individual members may vote freely in plenary or that delegations may adopt a separate national line.

"Though we are a confederal group, which means we have discussions on the issues and everyone has the right to say his or her opinion freely, at the end a confederal group means that the given parties have a right to do whatever they want to do, but still we are all leftists. That means we have a common ground on the ideas, on what we have in front of us, the foundation which is more or less the same. So, that is why a majority vote the same way". (June 27, 2012)

Even in the least cohesive group, EFD members as the respondent below notes do perceive similarities with their colleagues in the group in that they share mistrust of the EU project and believe that national sovereignty is undermined through EU membership which they want to eliminate for their respective countries.

"I think you can see the EFD group as the opposition in the European Parliament. In any parliament, there has to be an opposition to control the government and to be posing the tough questions, the right questions. In this parliament, we are the opposition". (October 13, 2011)

If EFD members (with the direction of group leaders) translated shared objections to the EU into a unified effort or common line then the group might obtain higher cohesion levels. Instead, EFD MEPs split on nearly every report and when they vote differently, they do not view it as

dissent. In this sense, EFD members have failed to frame objectives within a group agenda, but rather pursue national objectives while coincidentally belonging to the same group.

“In principal, we don’t have group discipline. Most of the time, we can vote how we want. That has been the principal of the group since the formation of the group and I think that’s what keeps the group together, because we have different views on so many issues”. (October 20, 2011)

COMMUNICATION AND GROUP LEADERS

Communication is critical in order to ensure the realization of the party group’s legislative objectives and consists of dissent management as well as consensus-building efforts. Communication links occur between leadership and rank-and-file, between MEPs and staff, among group leaders, and among the group secretariat, for the purpose of exchanging ideas and negotiation culminating in support for the group line. ALDE and Greens/EFA members often stressed how their group ensured high cohesion through mass participation in group meetings and other forums which produced strong links between members and the final group line.

“I think two factors are important. One is size, so this means we have a small group. We have the time to discuss and get to a common position. Second is that we have a tradition for consensus. So, it’s not a very hierarchical group, it’s a group that loves to debate, to try and find the consensus, the balance. So, I think it is basically in the culture of the group that we are always looking towards some cohesion”. (June 4, 2012)

Though participation rates in group meeting discussions will be comparatively smaller in the larger groups, members in these groups can also positively view the role of group meetings and developed a shared concept of the group identity if leaders and other colleagues successfully socialize members into identifying with the group’s goals and its decision-making forums. In this sense, the task is the same in larger groups, it is only the logistical scale and perhaps the tactics associated with accomplishing it that differs. In turn, group size may help to explain why members in larger groups more often cited communication as their explanation for group unity in that logistics associated with dissent management in larger groups necessitates an emphasis upon

communication. In other words, large groups will be motivated by membership size to construct additional decision-making forums and assign more specific leadership roles.

“Membership in (my) group in the European Parliament implies from the outset, membership of the values and principles. Each new member agrees on these principles. In addition, our group is organized in such a way, whether in parliamentary committees, within the thematic working groups, or group meetings, to find compromises, consensus, on the largest numbers of subjects possible”. (June 2, 2012)

Sharing common beliefs may at times be insufficient in ensuring maximum support for the group line. In turn, party groups form networks containing specific leadership roles and decision-making forums to communicate policy preferences, secure compromises, and if necessary, to manage dissent. For example, MEPs in the S & D group may share the belief that the EU has an obligation to promote economic and social equality. However, differences may arise on how best to achieve this goal in the content of a report or in regards to a particular amendment.

In turn, the S & D and the other larger party groups have developed working groups to formulate policy and party group meetings to secure support for the consensus achieved in the working group or at times to resolve deadlock in the working group. The larger groups also assign specific consensus-building roles for the group rapporteur, coordinators and vice-presidents. The group line is in this sense a final product of shared beliefs and a communication network with consensus achieved through persuasion and information-sharing, rather than through disciplinary measures (Ringe, 2010, 62).

“Then you have spokesmen from these different subjects, those who become rapporteurs on a certain issue or report. Now, these people become influential. First of all, the rapporteur or the shadow knows the subject up or down. Then, the coordinator plus the person like me who is presiding over this working group. These are the members who influence the positions...They are influential, we listen to them”. (November 9, 2011)

Both group size and plenary influence shape efforts by leaders to construct communication networks and develop socialization process to aid in consensus-building and dissent

management. However, plenary influence in particular provides incentive to ensure that the networks are utilized to their fullest potential and in turn that members closely identify with the processes culminating in the group line. Here again, shared beliefs and communication overlap as explanations for variations in party group unity. Leaders appeal for support of the group line or secure compromises on the basis of shared beliefs but are also aided by a communication network that produces a group line encompassing the contributions of select rank-and-file members while ensuring the attainment of leadership objectives.

When an influential party group has large membership, it is motivated to construct horizontal working groups to allow leaders to more easily direct the adoption of particular policy goals while ensuring the participation of select members. However, working groups at times fail to produce a group line or their proposal is perceived to be controversial by those outside the working group. In either circumstance, EPP and S & D party group meetings provide a forum similar to the ALDE or Greens/EFA in that they facilitate consensus but without the extensive participation of group members.

“We have a big group with two hundred and sixty-five members. We have a number of forums and places where we try to merge a consensus. We have members within committees who meet regularly, and they have a consensus on the issues in their committee. Then, we have working groups that unites people in various committees like the economy working group, the budget working group, the foreign affairs working group, and that’s where members from different countries try to find a common solution. When there is a problem that has not found a solution in this context, then we go to the group meeting, and we have a discussion. We try to discuss for a long time when it is necessary because we usually find a compromise” (October 15, 2011)

As the largest party group, the EPP has more at stake than any other group in plenary outcomes whether securing the passage or defeat of reports. At 271 members, the EPP is confronted by logistical challenges reflective not only of its size, but also of a membership from twenty-six countries often with two or more parties from a single member-state. With such diversity and depth, communication is viewed by members as a key component of group unity.

However, unless the report addresses a contentious issue or if, the EPP group meeting normally serves as a forum for promotion of the group line and not as a forum for constructing the group line. However, when the communication lines break down prior to the group meeting- when dissent is not fully addressed or policy questions are raised in or following the working groups- the full group may decide to adopt some form of compromise or settle for a free vote.

Like the EPP, the S & D have built a hierarchical communication network which includes six horizontal working groups. Working groups play a similarly crucial role in developing policy and of identifying and often resolving disputes before the report is considered by the entire group at its meeting. However, the more frequent assertion that shared beliefs and not communication explains party group unity along with a more frequent reference to plenary coalitions suggests that members draw unity from a shared identity defined in part as the opposition to the EPP.

Nonetheless, S & D group leaders have constructed communication networks to on one hand ensure that the group line prevails in plenary when the group may be in the majority but also with future votes in mind in that group leaders will be in a stronger position to appeal to the group unity if the roles of leaders and members are clearly defined and if working groups and other forums are viewed positively by members. For example, when communication fails to ensure the support of all national delegations such as when the Dutch delegation dissented from the S & D line on the six-pack or fiscal union initiatives, socialization processes ensured that the delegation communicated its intent to dissent prior to plenary and to express dissent at a less costly level by abstaining (www.euractiv.com, September 26, 2011).

While the ECR has created a communication network with some assigned roles (group whip), subsequent chapters will demonstrate that most leadership roles remain undefined or underutilized while socialization processes promoting consensus and facilitating a shared group

identity also remain largely absent. In this sense, ECR members hear appeals from the whip in the group meeting at times to support a common line but they are more likely than members in the more influential groups to adopt a separate line from that advocated by the whip. Accordingly, while ECR members may defer to group experts on a majority of reports, they are more likely than their counterparts in the more influential groups to ignore the experts' positions.

“You have seen the breadth of work the parliament does, it is physically impossible for anyone to know everything. It is difficult to know even three committees, there is such a volume of work, especially on (my) committee where it's such a vast amount of work. So, you have to trust to a certain extent the judgement of your colleagues who have looked into it and have done the work. Are you going to read everything yourself? It's physically impossible to do that even for one committee”. (June 26, 2012)

The sheer volume of reports and accompanying amendments may lead members (especially newer MEPs) to defer to group experts on most votes. However, in the absence of socialization processes, more influential party groups may not wish to take consensus for granted, particularly on prominent reports where the likelihood of deferral to experts should decrease for most group members. In turn, party group leaders and those invested in policy-making will not only seek to persuade members to support the group line on the basis of policy content or perceived political consequences, but also on the basis of a shared identity. Consequently, members will be more likely to defer to experts and adopt the line produced from the communication network if they strongly identify with their group's goals and with its plenary influence/reputation.

COALITIONS

The response of plenary coalitions ties together the contributions of group leaders and socialization processes toward group unity and in turn low dissent levels. If the group's influence on plenary outcomes is at stake, leaders will raise the potential effects of dissenting from the group line. Leaders may also make appeals on the basis of the group's reputation as the governing party (EPP), dealmaker (ALDE) or at times opposition (S & D) in plenary. These

results verified the expectation that respondents from the most influential party groups would be more likely to cite coalitions as an explanation for group unity, and in particular, ALDE respondents provided the bulk of all responses citing coalitions as an explanation for group unity.

In turn, not a single Greens/EFA respondent nor any from the three least influential party groups cited coalitions as an explanation. Perhaps more interestingly is the low response rate of EPP members on coalitions as only nine percent of EPP respondents cited coalitions. I suspect that this may derive from the position of the EPP as in many ways the governing party of the EU in that both the President of the Commission and the EU Council are from parties within the EPP group and the EPP are by far the largest group in the parliament. While they must secure plenary coalitions with other groups to pass or defeat reports, EPP members may take their group's status for granted whereas the ALDE and S & D leaders know that their group may not be on the winning side. In other words, EPP respondents know that other groups have to work with them and this contributes to shared beliefs and/or communication as their explanations for group unity.

Respondents citing the importance of plenary coalitions as explanations for party group unity often stressed the importance of upholding the group's plenary reputation. Party group leaders may secure support for the group line through appeals on the basis of the group's goals and its plenary reputation in the sense that if maximum support for the group line cannot be obtained, the group's plenary agenda and reputation may be placed in jeopardy. For example, the ALDE are the pivotal group as its legislative position often determines plenary outcomes in the absence of an EPP/S & D grand coalition which has been increasingly in decline (See Hix et al. 2007, Hix and Noury 2009). In turn, despite policy reservations or political concerns over a particular report or amendment, an ALDE MEP out of a sense of loyalty may support the group line or choose to abstain so as not to jeopardize the group's plenary reputation.

“We know that if the EPP and the Socialists agree, it doesn’t make any difference what the rest of the parliament thinks. But if they don’t agree, and one is on the left, one is on the right, and the next big group is us. If we and one of the bigger groups agree we are pretty likely to win. If we as Liberals are divided, we throw away our effectiveness...It is just a theme of that we want to be effective and broadly we are most effective when we are united. We get a better result in the votes”. (October 26, 2011)

Perhaps the link between the group’s plenary role and group cohesion is best exhibited by the defection of the Irish delegation from the group line when they abstained on a resolution criticizing the lack of press freedom in Berlusconi’s Italy was met with such a robust response by group members? Not only did the delegation’s defection ensure the defeat of a group legislative objective (the resolution failed by three votes) but it also put the group’s plenary reputation at risk (www.euractive.com, October 23, 2009).

In this sense, group cohesion is a product in part not only of members closely identifying with the group’s goals but also the extent to which members adopt norms promoting particular behavior, in this case how and when to dissent. In turn, when a group like the ALDE is influential, members have an added rational incentive as well as an added social impetus to support the group’s agenda or at the least to dissent in a manner which is less harmful to the group’s agenda and/or reputation.

To ensure preferred plenary outcomes, leaders in the more influential groups must deliver a cohesive group with minimal levels of dissent both in terms of numbers of members dissenting and in the forms of dissent expression, which may be ensured in part through appeals on the basis of the group’s plenary reputation. As the respondent below notes, if the S & D cannot deliver the whole group, the Liberals may pursue a deal with the EPP and the Greens may choose to abstain rather than join a coalition with the S & D at the lead.

“It’s quite clear that if the Socialists and Social Democrats can play a role in the European Parliament, we have to stick together. We are not the biggest group, we are not certainly a part of any majority, and if we should ever be able to have an influence on decision-making we must

stick together in order to make deals...But if we should be able to challenge the EPP and find other solutions, we have to be able to deliver the whole Social Democratic group; we have to be able to say to the Liberals and the Greens, yes, we can deliver the votes of the whole Social Democratic group, not just a majority". (June 13, 2012)

In this sense, leaders in the more influential groups understand that their group cannot act alone and that if dissent exceeds a particular level, the group line will fail. For example, the S & D may tolerate dissent from a single national delegation when it announces that the group line faces strong opposition among constituents, particularly if they know that the delegation will consistently support the group line in the future. However, if dissent levels rise to the point the plenary success of the group line is jeopardized, leaders may make appeals to delegations on the basis of plenary coalitions and perhaps secure their dissent on a less costly level such as through abstaining. In turn, S & D members are encouraged to adopt a shared group identity through socialization which leads to support for the group line or to abstain despite strong objections.

In my observations of party group meetings, I heard appeals from GUE, Greens/EFA and ECR presidents to members to support the group line or majority position on the basis that plenary coalitions were at-stake. Leaders of less influential party groups make such appeals because in part their group can on occasion influence plenary outcomes but also because any effort to build group unity in the present may contribute to group unity in the future. Overall, I contend that the lack of any Greens/EFA respondents citing coalitions as an explanation for group unity suggests that its members value group unity for reasons deriving more from shared perceptions of group membership while its omission in the case of respondents from the three least cohesive (and influential) groups underscores the absence of dissent management.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

What explains the high cohesion rates among party groups? Why do some party groups have lower dissent levels than others? One explanation can be found in roll-call vote studies which

identified that thirty percent of the variance in MEP defection levels from the group line can be explained by the closeness of MEPs to the group's ideological mean. However, decision-making models and interview responses suggest that socialization processes associated with a shared conceptualization with the group identity in conjunction with a communication network consisting of group leaders and decision-making forums contribute to lower dissent levels.

When I asked the open-ended question of what explains the level of unity in plenary voting within their party group, respondents provided answers that can be placed within five response categories which when arranged according to frequency are: shared beliefs, communication, coalitions, deferring to experts, and with a few maintaining that party group unity was not important. Of all the predictors, only the relationship between party group membership and the likelihood of offering any of the response categories was statistically significant. In particular, significance associated with group membership occurred only for the responses of plenary coalitions or that group unity was unimportant. However, when responses are framed according to party group membership, party group effects (size, influence, and culture) help to explain why some groups have lower dissent levels than others.

When considering decision-making models, MEPs may defer to group leaders and other experts due to lack of policy expertise and information overload. So long as group preferences at the least approximate MEP preferences and no competing national party line emerges, members will support the group line because they cannot assess all of the information and in turn defer to those invested in the report. Social identity theory also helps to interpret responses in that respondents often attributed party group unity to the extent to which members identify with their party group. For example, communication involves not only the dissemination of information

and the securing of compromise but also according to this perspective the belief by group members that group meetings and other forums contribute to the development of the group line.

In turn, field research reveals that cohesion should be measured in attitudes toward unity as well as in terms of plenary voting patterns. Members develop a sense of loyalty but also a sense of investment in the group line through their participation in the decision-making process as well as by leaders' appeals to shared perceptions of group identity. The impact of shared identity upon MEP decision-making may be further assessed when responses are framed according to party group affiliation. For example, ALDE respondents were more likely to cite the importance of plenary coalitions as an explanation for party group unity, while S & D respondents and those from the least cohesive party groups were more likely to contend that shared beliefs best explained party group unity when it occurred.

However, key differences arose in the interpretation of shared beliefs offered by respondents from the four most cohesive groups compared to those from the three least cohesive groups. When respondents from the four most cohesive groups offered the explanation of shared beliefs, they referenced not only the extent to which members shared policy priorities but also the extent to which members identified with their colleagues and with the group as a whole. Cohesion in this sense was defined not only by plenary voting but also the extent to which members perceived that their colleagues shared the group's goals and values. This suggests the influence of socialization processes positively contributing to a shared conceptualization of the group identity and the mass adoption of norms governing behavior, particularly dissent.

In contrast, members from the three least cohesive groups defined shared beliefs in terms that are not conducive to group unity. For example, while ECR group leaders may pursue consensus, these efforts are not accompanied by the expectation that all national delegations will

(in most cases) work to ensure adoption of a common line. In turn, the perceived rationale for the group's creation is to ensure award of particular privileges and not to promote a group agenda. When members do not strongly identify with the group, they are less likely to support the adoption of a common line or meet expectations governing acceptable behavior. For some groups, like the EFD, these socialization processes are absent altogether.

The effects of party group membership may in turn be assessed according to group size and extent of plenary influence. The larger party groups are more likely to develop communication networks and promote a shared identity to help overcome the logistics associated with dissent management. In turn, the more influential party groups will make appeals to members on the basis of plenary coalitions in order to ensure successful adoption of the group's agenda but also to secure its plenary reputation. For example, when shared beliefs are insufficient to ensure maximum support for a common line, the larger and more influential groups employ communication networks to convey the group line and manage dissent at all legislative stages in part through appeals to a shared conceptualization of the group identity. In this sense, group size and plenary influence help to explain why the EPP and S & D are among the most cohesive groups and the three least influential and smallest groups are the least cohesive.

However, the examples of the ALDE and the Greens/EFA in many ways defy expectations raised in this chapter. The ALDE are the second most influential party group yet have the fourth highest dissent levels among the seven party groups. In part, lower cohesion derives from ALDE members not being as closely ideologically aligned compared to those from the three more cohesive groups. In addition, the ALDE communication network may not be as full developed in terms of leadership roles and decision-making forums as those in the more cohesive groups which will be addressed in chapters six and seven.

Perhaps as equally perplexing is the fact that the Greens/EFA has the lowest dissent rate but is also the fourth largest group and the fourth most influential group. One explanation may be the emphasis by its respondents on the importance of party group meetings. Cohesion may be pursued because members want to ensure that the official line is a product of contributions from discussions in the party group meeting. This sense of investment in the common line then translates into unity in plenary voting because members want to demonstrate to the outside world as well as to each other that they strongly identify with the group's agenda. These assumptions will be tested in chapter seven where respondents evaluate party and working group meetings.

In turn, when the chapter's findings are considered on the whole, the attainment of lower dissent levels may be identified as the product of ideological proximity of members to the group mean in conjunction with dissent management processes encompassing specific leadership roles and promotion of a shared identity conducive to group unity. Nonetheless, many questions remain concerning the roles and tactics of specific group leaders and the explanations for why some norms of behavior are adopted more prevalently within particular party groups.

In this sense, the task of the remaining chapters, with the aid of responses to more specific questions and observation notes, is to explore in greater detail how party group leaders utilize shared beliefs, communication networks, and appeals to support plenary coalitions as facets of dissent management strategies. Chapter five will lead off this discussion by considering the impact of disciplinary tools available to party group leaders through responses to questions discussing the allocation of plenary speaking time, rapporteur assignment, and individually-sponsored plenary amendments that are contrary to the group line.

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MEDIA ACCOUNTS

- “Parliament to adopt ‘six-pack’ EU budget rules”, www.euractive.com, September 26, 2011.
- “Parliament votes down EU moves on press freedom”, www.euractive.com, October 23, 2009.

Note: References to roll-call votes, group cohesion rates frequency of plenary majority in the current parliament are drawn from data obtained on the website, www.votewacth.eu. [Data on public perceptions of EU membership was obtained from the May 2011 Euro Barometer Survey available at www.ec.europa.eu/publicopinion](http://www.ec.europa.eu/publicopinion)

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCIPLINE AS A DISSENT MANAGEMENT TOOL

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I considered explanations for why party group cohesion rates in the European Parliament (on the whole) are high and why some party groups are more cohesive than others. Analysis of roll-call votes finds that ideology at the MEP level explains thirty percent of the variance in dissent levels among party groups. “The greater the distance between personal ideological position on the left-right dimension and the average left-right location of the party group, the more likely the MEP will vote against the party group” (Hix et al. 2007, 181). Legislator decision-making models also provide insight into party group dissent rates. When confronted with information overload or a lack of information MEPs defer to leaders and policy experts, so long as their preferences approximately align with the group line (See Ringe 2010).

Social identity theory also contributes to the understanding of MEP voting behavior. As members come to more closely identify with their party group, they tie their personal level of success to the success of the group. “Our sense of who we are and what we are worth is intimately bound up with our group memberships (Brown, 2000, 28). The development of a shared group identity is in turn aided by the extent to which members adopt particular norms of behavior (such as those governing dissent) and follow the appeals and cues of group leaders (See Russell 2012 and Brown 2000). In this sense, group cohesion is a product of a shared conceptualization of the group identity fostering norms of behavior conducive to group unity.

Given that the European Parliament now has co-decision authority in most policy areas and that decision-making has increasingly shifted from the member-state to the EU level, I contend that party group leaders are incentivized to secure high levels of support for the group line and ensure that when dissent is expressed it is done so at less costly levels (for example voting to abstain). Accordingly, I conclude that high cohesion and variation in dissent levels among party

groups is a product of: ideology at the MEP level, a whip or communication structure consisting of party group leaders and decision-making forums, as well as socialization processes accompanying a shared group identity.

When asked what explains party group unity, the most common explanation offered by respondents was shared beliefs. Shared beliefs referred not only to ideology, but also the extent to which members identified with the party group. The second most frequent response was communication which encompassed not only the role of decision-making forums and leaders in disseminating information and building consensus, but also the perception that participation in group forums re-enforced a sense of loyalty to the group (See Garner and Letki 2005).

In this chapter, I contend that the extent to which group leaders successfully utilize available disciplinary tools to ensure low dissent levels are dependent upon: (1) the extent to which members are socialized into adopting shared attitudes toward unity and dissent and (2) the extent to which the group whip structure identifies and manages dissent. For example, members who place a greater value on group unity will elect to express dissent through explanations of vote rather than in plenary debates. Similarly, leaders will utilize the whip structure to communicate and secure group goals when assigning rapporteurs, particularly on prominent reports.

In turn, this chapter considers responses to three questions concerning the effectiveness of disciplinary tools available to group leaders: the allocation of plenary speaking time, the assignment of rapporteur or shadow rapporteur positions (those responsible for carrying or shadowing a report) and the role of group leaders as amendment gate-keepers in plenary. When asking these questions, I assumed that disciplinary tools available to group leaders would have limited impact (if any) upon group cohesion rates in part because members have other outlets to express dissent (explanations of vote, etc.) and because past studies have found that expertise is

the primary attribute influencing the assignment of rapporteurs (See Yashinaka et al. 2010). However, the perceptions of MEPs and staff may reveal that more consideration is given to voting behavior at least in particular instances such as allocating speaking time and rapporteurs on prominent reports and I also hoped to learn more about the roles of specific group leaders and in particular how the leaders of more cohesive party groups utilize disciplinary tools.

SPEAKING TIME IN PLENARY DEBATES

Speaking time in plenary debates is allocated to party groups on the basis of membership size. For example, the EPP as the largest party group is allotted roughly thirty-six percent of plenary debate speaking time while the smallest party group, the GUE, is allocated about four percent of speaking time. Each group then distributes the allotted minutes to members. This responsibility is held in four groups by the secretary-general (ALDE, EFD, Greens/EFA, and GUE) though group leaders may become involved if conflicts over speaking time allocation arise. In the ECR, assigning speaking time is the responsibility of the group whip while EPP and S & D speaking lists are approved in the horizontal working groups which are reviewed and possibly revised by the group vice-president holding the position of parliamentary secretary.

Plenary debates typically begin with either the group presidents or the rapporteur from each group speaking for up to five minutes followed by the members of the applicable committee and others who are given less time. From this point, speakers proceed according to group size with a member of the EPP speaking first followed by a speaker from the S & D and so on. This order continues until each group has used all of its allotted speaking time.

Those responsible for constructing the lists are confronted with the challenge of allocating finite time, while striving to ensure that the bulk of plenary speakers reflect the group line when one is present. They also face the further challenge of dealing with members who request time and then do not show up in plenary. This not only causes potential embarrassment to the group,

but it is also unfair to those who were denied the opportunity to participate in plenary debates and are committed to following the rules as the response from a group whip below stresses.

“We had a situation where some members were accepting speaking time and they were not using it. So, a change that I brought in was to say that if members missed speaking time, I would not allocate any more speaking time for a certain period. If you can’t speak, then you need to hand the speaking time back to me and I can re-allocate it to somebody else, rather than it just being wasted”. (November 9, 2011)

I asked the open-ended question of whether plenary speaking time is denied to members who dissent from the group line. When taking the challenges and rules associated with the allocation of plenary speaking time into account, I anticipated five potential responses: speaking time is never denied on the basis of opposition to the group line, only a few dissenting MEPs are given speaking time and always at the end of the debate, only dissenting members from the applicable committee or working group are allocated time, only members of a dissenting delegation are given time, and plenary speaking time is always denied to dissenting members.

H1: Respondents from the more influential party groups will be more likely to contend that plenary speaking time is always denied to dissenting members or that dissenting members are assigned the last speaking slot(s).

Greater plenary influence incentivizes party group leaders to deny plenary speaking time to dissenting members in that the group line may be jeopardized by dissenting speeches from group members and possibly encourage future dissent. In these groups, dissenting members should be encouraged to express dissent through explanations of vote rather than through finite time for articulating the group line. Influential groups may also permit a limited number of dissenting speeches on a given report in order to secure future support for the group line (See Kam 2002) but limit the number and assign these members to the last remaining slot(s) in order to not influence the debate. In contrast, respondents from less influential groups should maintain that plenary speaking time is never denied on the basis of dissent because unity is less important.

H2: Respondents who hold elite positions in group leadership and the secretariat will be more likely to maintain that dissenting members are always denied plenary speaking time or are assigned the last few slot(s) .

Respondents who are in group leadership or who are secretary-generals should be more likely to maintain that dissenting group members are always denied speaking time because they are primarily responsible for allocating speaking time and ensuring group unity. In contrast, rank-and-file MEPs and staff should be more likely to maintain that plenary speaking time is never denied to dissenting members as they likely presume that work ethic plays a more influential role in determining who speaks because they lack experience in allocating time.

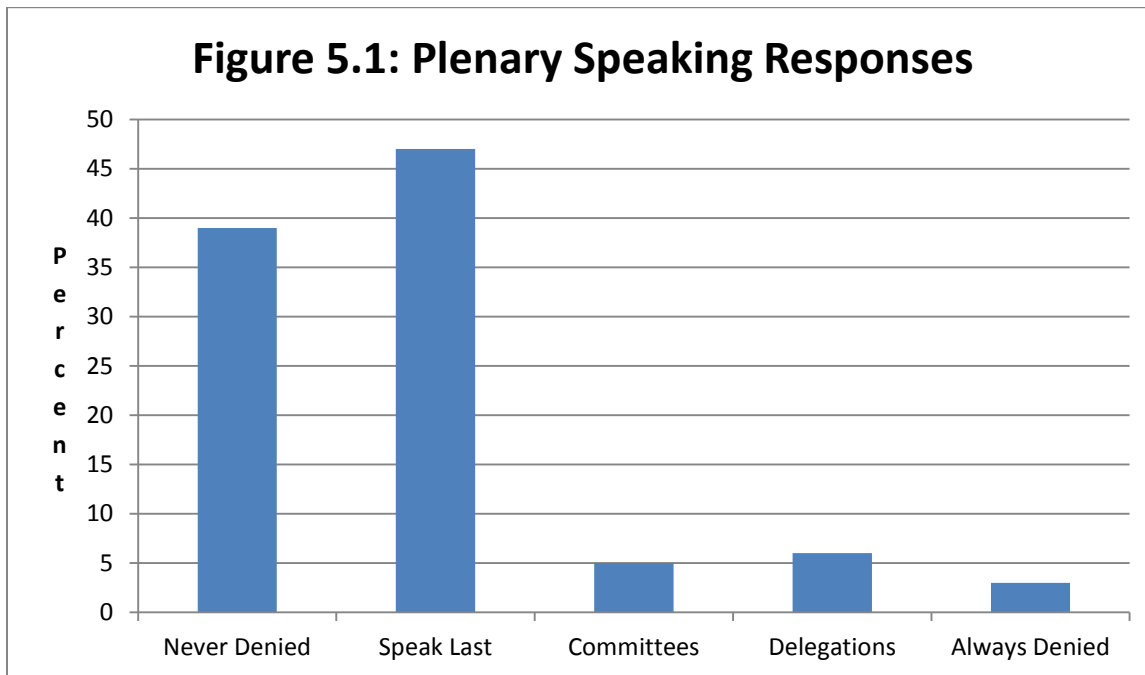
H3: Respondents with more years of service in the parliament will be more likely to state that dissenting members are always denied plenary speaking time or speak last.

As the years of service increase, respondents will have had more time to gain greater awareness of the group's decision-making processes, but also become more socialized into the party group culture (See Hix et al, 2007, Norris 1999). For example, not only will members have had more experience (or in the case of staff greater familiarity) in requesting and being denied speaking time, but they may also acquire leadership positions responsible for speaking time allocation. In addition, respondents with more years of service will have had greater exposure to group norms governing when and how to dissent which may influence perceptions on speaking time allocation in that dissent should for example be expressed through explanations of vote.

H4: Respondents from larger delegations will be more likely to state that only members from dissenting delegations are permitted to participate in plenary debates.

With greater influence, respondents from the larger delegations should be more likely to cite the role of delegation membership when addressing whether dissenting members are denied plenary speaking time. In turn, group leaders will be more likely to accommodate dissent from the larger delegations by allocating plenary speaking time especially if the ultimate form of

dissent expression is abstaining or relegated to a vote on a particular amendment and because they will need the support of the delegation on future reports.



Note: Figure depicts percentages of respondents who offered each response. N of Cases: 77.

Seven of the eighty-four respondents did not answer the question and no multiple responses were offered. As depicted in Figure 5.1 above, an overwhelming number of respondents (nearly eighty-six percent) believed that members who dissent from the group line are either not excluded from plenary debates or are given time to speak (if possible) toward the end of the particular debate. In turn, only two respondents maintained that dissenting members are always denied plenary speaking time while few respondents identified any link between delegation and committee/working group membership and speaking time allocation.

To what extent do respondent characteristics influence the likelihood of offering one of the five response categories? Table 5.1 below illustrates that party group position, previous professional experience, and years of service in the parliament influence perceptions toward a relationship between dissent from the group line and the allocation of plenary speaking time.

TABLE 5.1: PREDICTORS OF PLENARY SPEAKING TIME RESPONSES

Party Group	0.3165
Group Position	0.3281**
Member-State	0.4170
Gender	0.2810
Years of Service	0.5001**
<u>Previous Profession</u>	<u>0.4496*</u>

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores denoting substantive significance. *, ** and ***, denote statistical significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 77

Contrary to my expectations, a statistically significant relationship did not occur between a respondent's party group affiliation and the likelihood of offering a particular response. Though there is a moderate substantive association between group membership and plenary speaking time responses, within the general population of MEPs and staff the relationship between party group membership and each of the response categories is unlikely to occur. In contrast, as MEPs and staff acquire greater familiarity with decision-making associated with plenary speaking time allocation as a result of previous and/or current leadership experience, they are more likely to assert that plenary speaking time is allocated sparingly to dissenting members. In other words, a respondent's attitude toward the relationship between plenary speaking time allocation and dissent is influenced more by individual experiences than by party group membership.

Table 5.2 below depicts the percentage of responses according to a respondent's previous profession. The category of leadership contains respondents who previously served as a president, prime minister, minister, mayor, or as national party leaders. Elected office includes respondents who served in national or regional parliaments or on local councils. Staff includes respondents who previously served as national parliament or party staff, Euro Party or party group staff, Commission staff, or MEP aides. Those respondents who previously held leadership positions or elected office are more likely to maintain that if sufficient time remains, dissenting members are given the last speaking slot(s), while those who previously served as staff are more likely to state that dissenting members are never denied plenary speaking time.

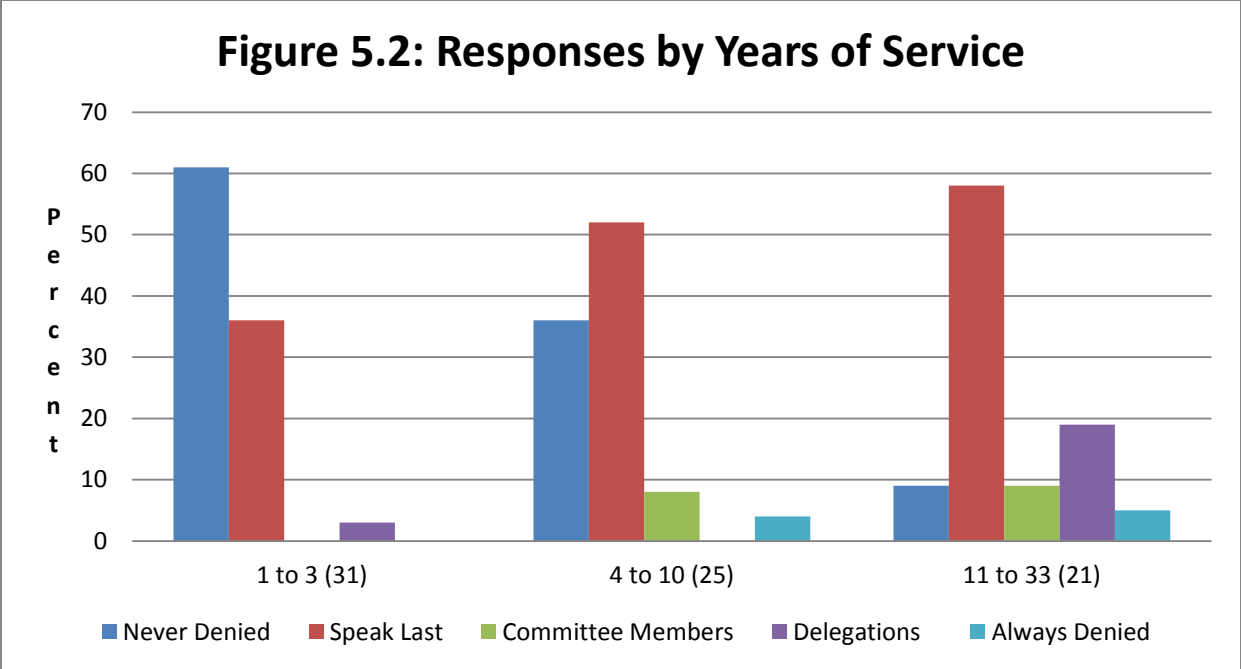
TABLE 5.2 PLENARY SPEAKING RESPONSES AND PREVIOUS PROFESSION

Professions	Never Denied	Speak Last	Comms/WG	Delgs. Only	Always Denied	N
Leadership	0.36	0.56	0	0.04	0.04	22
Elected Office	0.32	0.59	0	0.09	0	22
Staff	0.52	0.26	0.05	0.11	0.05	19
Private Sector	0.50	0.50	0	0	0	4
Education/Student	0.20	0.40	0.40	0	0	5
Unknown	0.40	0.40	0.20	0	0	5
(N of Cases)	(30)	(36)	(4)	(5)	(2)	77

Note: Entries are percentages of respondents who offered each response category according to their profession prior to service in the parliament. N of Cases: 77. Cramér's V Score: 0.4496*

Fifty-six percent of respondents who previously held leadership positions and fifty-nine percent of respondents who previously held elected office said that dissenting members are allotted time but speak last. In contrast, fifty-three percent of respondents who previously served as staff maintained that dissenting members were always given speaking time. This may in part reflect increased familiarity with party caucus communication networks where decisions are taken on the allocation of speaking time as well as more exposure to group socialization processes that lead respondents to link plenary speaking time allocation with group discipline whereas respondents with a staff or other backgrounds lack such experiences and thereby do not perceive that voting behavior and speaking time allocation are linked.

Figure 5.2 below on the whole confirms the hypothesized relationship in that respondents with more years of service are more likely to state that dissenting members will be relegated to the last slot(s), while those with fewer years of service maintain that dissenting members are never denied speaking time. In addition, the few respondents who maintained that dissenting members are always denied plenary speaking time are mostly those with more years of service. In turn, as years of service in the European Parliament increase, the likelihood of maintaining that only dissenting members who serve on the applicable committee or working group or are part of dissenting national delegations will be allocated speaking time increases.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents according to years of service who offered each response. Numbers in parentheses indicate respondents by years of service. N of Cases: 77, Cramér's V: 0.5001**

Increased years of service provide more opportunities to request plenary speaking time, and to observe how speaking time is allocated across party groups. In this sense, as a respondent's years of service increases, they are more likely to observe that loyalty to the group line (when one is in place) along with individual expertise influences both the probability of being assigned plenary speaking time as well as the placement on the speakers' list. Similarly, increased years of service provides more opportunities to be exposed to socialization processes at the group level that encourage unity and in turn lead members to not request speaking time if they dissent or to express dissent in less costly forums such as explanations of vote.

The hypothesized relationship between party group position and offering each of the response categories is verified in Table 5.3 below to the extent that rank-and-file MEPs and staff are more likely to maintain that dissenting members are never denied speaking time but the expected relationship in regards to elites did not occur to the full extent in that few respondents

claimed that dissenting members are always denied speaking time. However, elites were more likely than rank-and-file group or staff to state that dissenting members always speak last.

TABLE 5.3: PLENARY SPEAKING RESPONSES BY PARTY GROUP POSITION

Response	President	VP	Coordinator	MEP	SG	Staff	N
Never Denied	0.20	0.34	0.27	0.53	0.33	0.38	30
Dissenting MEPs Speak Last	0.60	0.58	0.46	0.37	0.67	0.38	36
Committees/Working Groups	0	0.04	0	0.05	0	0.16	4
Speak if Delegation Dissents	0	0.04	0.27	0.05	0	0	5
Always Denied	0.20	0	0	0	0	0.08	2
(N of Cases)	(5)	(26)	(11)	(19)	(3)	(13)	77

Note: Table depicts percentages of respondents according to party group position who offered each response. N of Cases: 77, Cramér's V: 0.3281**

Elite respondents including the group vice-president below often noted that a finite amount of time and a potentially large number of members requesting speaking time may lead occasionally to the opportunity for only one or two dissenting members at the end of the list. The nearly fifty percent who gave this response believed this to both be fair and necessary in that while dissenting MEPs should not be denied speaking time, every request cannot be met and those who support the group line should be given first priority.

“If there is a strong dissenting view, there will usually be an attempt to accommodate that and at least one person would get to express that view. Speaking time is so tight now that the person who’s got the counterview would be lucky to get a minute or a minute and a half to express this counterview. That’s not because of an attempt to suppress that point of view but simply a lack of speaking time”. (October 18, 2011)

Group vice-presidents in the larger groups have enormous influence in the assignment of speaking time as working group chairs, parliamentary secretaries, and on the more prominent reports often as the group rapporteur or shadow. Accordingly, group vice-presidents should be among the most informed respondents as they work with coordinators and those invested in the report. In turn, many vice-presidents believe that the first speakers should be those in the best position to articulate the group line and the immediate successive speakers should re-enforce that line. Then, if time permits, dissenting delegations and members may be assigned time.

"Our policy is major speaking time is given to the people who represent the group position and then of course a small amount is given towards the end of the debate to others, but of course formally only the first speaker is speaking for the group. It is important for the public to know the group line, so I think we are stricter on having a majority of the speakers to support the group line and then a minority of the speakers to represent the minority line". (November 9, 2011)

As another vice-president below explains, dissenting members in the larger groups may be denied speaking time if they do not attend the working groups unless the parliamentary secretary later adds them to the list.

"First of all, you have to be present in the working group to ask to speak, if you are not present, you cannot get speaking time. Second, you should have worked that report. You are the rapporteur, shadow rapporteur, you have a lot of amendments (to propose in the working group), or you work in that committee on it. You have to have a connection with that report. Of course, then if you have a member who stated that he will vote against, he can speak and there will be no problem". (November 9, 2011)

Following proper procedures as the coordinator below not only refers to written rules, but also widely practiced norms such as those governing when and how to dissent. According to social identity theory, members observe how colleagues approach dissent and copy the observed behavior (See Brown 2000). For example, most groups insist that when a delegation or member intends to dissent from the group line it is expressed in group meetings and/or that leaders are privately notified in advance. If a member in most party groups does not provide advance notice and expresses dissent in plenary speeches, they may not be allotted time for their next request.

"We make sure that the person is speaking on behalf of the group which is the first two speakers. If we have time, and usually as a big group we have time, then we will have no objection to somebody saying I don't agree. It's ok, we accept that, but what we don't accept is that the person should accept a slot and then not said they would oppose the group position. So, it should be known before and if we know before and we have time we will give the floor to someone who has an opinion that is contrary to the one the group supports". (October 13, 2011)

On rare occasions, some group presidents field complaints from delegations or members who have not been included in speaking lists, especially in the smaller groups where there is not a parliamentary secretary. In this sense, the perceptions of group presidents on this question may

be shaped by their communications with others in leadership and senior staff. Most group presidents can also draw upon years of experience in the European Parliament and/or at the national level when assessing speaking time allocation.

“We are a small group and that means we do not have much speaking time...We have to look and say ok in the afternoon we have eight minutes and we have three issues on the agenda. On the three issues, we have nine persons who want to speak. We have eight minutes, nine people, and this is not possible that all people can speak. So, we ask who was the rapporteur or the shadow. Who was included in the discussions, and who has a special development in their own country? Then, we decide and often I get one to two and half minutes to speak”. (June 19, 2012)

The response above from a group president describes the challenges confronting the smaller groups when allocating speaking time. If the group only has nine slots, then priority has to be given to those who worked on the report on the rare occasion the group is assigned the responsibility for carrying it. Otherwise, on most reports, the group president and the rapporteur are given priority with the limited remainder of the group’s time divided among those interested in speaking on the report regardless of their voting intentions.

Secretary-generals in four of the seven party groups hold or share the primary responsibility of allocating speaking time. In particular, the decisions of secretary-generals in the ALDE or Greens/EFA face even higher levels of scrutiny compared to their GUE and EFD counterparts not only because of a larger number of speaking requests than allotted slots, but because they believe they must also ensure that the speaking list reflects the group line when one is present.

“It depends in part on how much time we have. In general terms, the first speaker of the group according to the general rules of the parliament speaks on behalf of the group. In my view, the second speaker should never contradict the first speaker. So, if there is a minority position in the group, and we have time for more than three speakers, then they can get time to express their views. However, if we only have time for three speakers, there is not such time and then you have the possibility of an explanation of vote”. (May 30, 2012)

The first response category encompasses the perception among thirty-nine percent of respondents that no MEP is denied speaking time in plenary debates because they oppose the

group position. These largely rank-and-file respondents believe that anyone who wants to participate in plenary debates can request time and the group always balances the allocation of plenary speaking time between those supporting the group line or reflecting the majority in a free vote and those members who oppose the group line or are in the minority on a free vote.

“Normally, we discuss the important issues in the plenary of our group before the plenary of the parliament. So, we know who is in favor and who is against and if it is controversial inside of the group, it is wise to give speaking time for both positions in order to avoid a confrontation inside of the group”. (June 19, 2012)

Following discussion in the party group meeting, clear divides may arise on reports, particularly those associated with social issues and at times foreign policy. In these situations, a free vote is often called by leadership and the allocation of plenary speaking time reflects the overall divide within the group. In contrast, the MEP above notes that when a group line accompanies a report, a much greater share of speaking time is reserved for those supporting the group position yet the group ensures that dissenting voices are proportionately included.

“Yeah, it’s a fundamental position that it’s the members right to speak. It covers itself to some degree, because if you look at the minutes, the first speaker always speaks for the group, usually the shadow rapporteur or the coordinator, and then you go down to the other members. We, in this office, would never say well that member takes a different view, that’s not our job”. (October 5, 2011)

The response above is from an aide to a parliamentary secretary responsible for allocating speaking time. In his experience, once members associated with the report have been allocated minutes then any remaining time is not distributed on the basis of who supports the group line. Instead, he contends that a dissenting member may be given speaking time if any is available and he does not interpret his role (or that of the group vice-president) to single out dissenting members by denying them speaking time.

The third response category reflects both the potential influence of national delegations in influencing speaking time allocation but also potential hurdles for dissenting members wishing to

participate in plenary debates. According to these respondents, dissenting MEPs will only be allocated time if they are part of a national delegation opposing the group line. In other words, individual members dissenting from the group line are not allocated time; rather only those who are part of delegations who have notified the group in advance of their objections to the group line and who have reached an accommodation to receive plenary speaking time.

“Let’s say it was an agricultural debate ... The coordinator on agriculture happens to be British so he would speak first and then we would probably ensure that the second speaker was Polish. We do try and alternate like that and although we don’t have a rule on allocating times according to size of national delegations, we keep an eye on that. So, that if the British who make up just over forty percent of the group is massively more or massively less than forty percent of the time, then we would adjust that”. (November 9, 2011)

The example above is from an ECR staff person whose group often accommodates separate national lines and who often make decisions such as plenary speaking time allocation at least in part on the basis of national party membership. In turn, the practice by the group whip is to allocate speaking time proportionally among the three largest delegations (British, Polish, and Czech) while ensuring that members invested in the report are also assigned time.

“We had that issue yesterday because we made the speakers’ list for today’s debate on the European Council for the end of June including negotiations on the financial network...I think we had thirty-eight applications for a total of seventeen minutes speaking time, so we had to tell a lot of colleagues sorry you cannot get in, but of course one member of the British Labour Party delegation got speaking time even though we know that they would vote against or possible abstain on the resolution because this includes difficult issues for them like the financial transactions tax and also the level of the budget, but they still get speaking time. So, if it is an established position, and we know that they (delegations) have another perspective, they still get time to speak, so long as they follow the rules”. (July 5, 2012)

As the response above from an S & D coordinator describes, allocating speaking time largely on the basis of national delegations does not solely reflect a delegation’s size but at times also domestic politics. Group leaders may in turn ensure that at least one member from a delegation encountering domestic opposition to a report is included on the speakers’ list. In this sense, the group balances short-term goals of securing maximum support for the group line on a given

report with long-term goals of aiding a national party in winning seats in the next elections while knowing that they can rely in the future on support from the delegation.

A mere four percent of respondents stated that only those MEPs who were on the committee responsible for the report and who had opposed the group line in committee were allocated time in plenary. For example, the MEP below maintained that members who opposed the group line and served on the applicable working group were typically allocated plenary speaking time, whereas those members not serving on the applicable committee or working group were either excluded from the speakers' list (and expected to express dissent in explanations of vote) or were only given the last slots on the list.

"The group gives both pro and con the floor, but debate speaking time in plenary is reserved largely for members of the committee responsible for the dossier, so MEPs opposed to the group who are not part of the applicable committee have the right to explain their vote outside of the group allotted time". (October 11, 2011)

Finally, very few respondents indicated that members who opposed the group line were never allocated speaking time in plenary debates. The response below from a staff person maintains that participation in plenary debates entails the responsibility of representing the group position and not an opportunity for individual expression. Doing otherwise undermines the group position and signals disunity not only to members but also to other party groups. The response also underscores that dissenting members have other options for expressing their position and that speaking time in plenary debates should be reserved for those supporting the group line.

"Yes, if someone has a dissenting point of view, I don't think in your right mind you would want to grant speaking time to that person to make it clear to the outside world that there are divisions inside your group. You do want to show uniformity and strength. These MEPs, they can make use of the catch the eye part of the debate before the rapporteurs, Council, and Commission round out the debate or they can use the explanation of vote". (October 13, 2011)

Those offering this response do raise a vital point in that members have a variety of outlets for presenting their views. First and foremost, MEPs can provide an oral explanation of vote

following the conclusion of voting on all reports. In addition, MEPs have the opportunity to speak on the floor during “catch the eye” segments at the conclusion of plenary business. In this sense, the denial of speaking time in plenary debate is a limited tool for group leaders to ensure group unity as other outlets of plenary speaking are available to MEPs.

The consensus among most respondents is that group leaders and staff do not use the allocation of plenary speaking time as a means to punish dissenting members. A major contributing factor to perceptions of plenary speaking time allocation is whether or not a group line accompanies a report. If a free vote is called for, then the allocation of minutes is likely to reflect the extent of divisions within the group. If however a group line is present, the more influential groups appear to be more reluctant to provide speaking time for dissenting members and in turn place dissenting speakers (if at all) at the end of the list.

AWARDING RAPPORTEUR AND SHADOW RAPPORTEUR POSITIONS

When compared to the allocation of plenary speaking time, the awarding of rapporteur and shadow rapporteur positions may offer more opportunities and more incentive for party group leaders to manage dissent. As with speaking time, reports are allocated on the basis of party group size. “Rapporteurships are assigned through an auction system, where each political group gets a quota of points in proportion to its number of MEPs. The coordinators decide how many points a dossier is worth and then make bids on behalf of the groups” (Hix et al. 2007, 113).

The rapporteur is the MEP responsible for carrying the report through committee and plenary and is also the lead negotiator with the Commission and Council. The shadow rapporteur represents his or her party group in negotiations on the report at all levels. The EPP and the S & D as the largest groups outbid the others on a majority of reports as well as on the more prominent reports. Recent studies have concluded that the assignment of rapporteurs is positively

ted to both expertise associated with the policy area of the respective committee and to the ideological distance of the MEP from the party group median (See Yashinaka et al. 2010).

Bailer (2011) similarly concluded that rapporteurs were assigned with loyalty to the group line and policy expertise in mind. “EP party group leaders use the additional rewarding instrument of distributing rapporteurships for loyal members. Receiving a rapport means that reliable group members are responsible for presenting and taking care of a special legislation dossier which gives them attractive opportunities to appear in public and to show their professional qualities as MEPs. But again, loyalty is not the only factor determining whether MEPs receive a dossier; national quota, expertise, and experience are additional factors contributing to receiving an important rapport” (Bailer, 2011, 15). In other words, most party group leaders want the rapporteur to be both knowledgeable about the subject matter and reflect the mainstream opinion within the group on the subject.

Higher stakes are associated with assigning rapporteurs compared to the allocation of plenary speaking time. Those carrying or shadowing the report represent the group throughout every stage of the legislative process whereas only the first few rounds of speakers in plenary debates are regarded typically as conveying the official group line. In addition, the actions and comments of the group rapporteur are more likely to impact levels of support for the group line and the group’s plenary success than a single or even a series of plenary speeches. For example, rapporteurs present the group line and answer questions in party group meetings thereby serving as a leading expert on the report for members to defer to on voting (See Ringe 2010).

To determine whether or not party group members and staff believe that rapporteurs and shadows are assigned on the basis of party group loyalty, I asked an open-ended question: Do party group leaders consider voting history when assigning rapporteurs or shadow rapporteurs?

Based on the literature, I anticipated five response categories: the question is not applicable to my party group because we are small, rapporteurs are assigned according to an MEP's expertise and work in committee, rapporteurs are assigned on the basis of national delegation membership, only prominent reports are denied to members who frequently dissent from the group line, and all reports are denied to frequently dissenting members.

H1: Respondents from the more influential party groups will be more likely to maintain that frequently dissenting members will always be denied reports or will be denied prominent reports.

More influential party groups will have more opportunities as larger groups to carry prominent reports and thereby more opportunities to consider dissent when assigning rapporteurs. Higher plenary stakes will provide added incentive for influential groups to deny prominent reports to frequently dissenting members as they will want loyal members to represent the group in negotiations and in appeals to members to support the group line. In turn, respondents from less influential party groups should be more likely to contend that rapporteur assignments are made on the basis of a member's policy expertise and work ethic in committee.

H2: Respondents from the medium and smaller party groups will be more likely to maintain that the question is not applicable because they often only have one to three committee members.

Respondents from the EFD and the GUE should be the most likely to provide this response as they only have one to three members on each committee. Greens/EFA and ECR respondents should be the next most common to offer this response as they often have only two to five members on each committee. Otherwise, I expect respondents from these groups to contend that expertise and work and not voting record impact rapporteur assignment.

H3: Respondents who are in leadership or who are the secretary-general should be more likely to maintain that all reports or prominent reports are denied to frequently dissenting members.

Those with decision-making authority should be more likely to state that all or prominent reports are denied to frequently dissenting members. Group coordinators are primarily

responsible for rapporteur assignment though secretary-generals and vice-presidents who preside over working groups or serve as the parliamentary secretary/whip also influence rapporteur assignment. The group president bears the ultimate responsibility for ensuring group unity but is rarely involved in rapporteur assignment. Rank-and-file MEPs and staff meanwhile should be more likely to state that expertise and not voting behavior influence rapporteur selection.

H4: Respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to maintain that all or prominent reports are denied to frequently dissenting members.

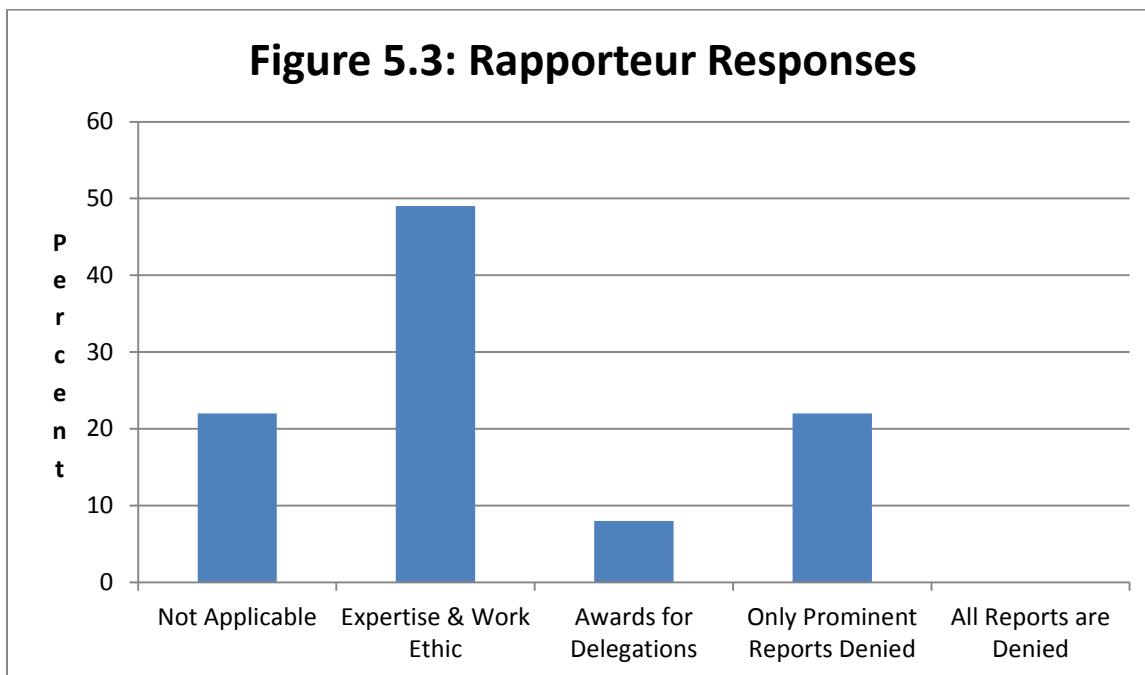
With more years of service in the European Parliament, respondents should acquire a greater understanding of the rapporteur selection process. More years of service will be accompanied by a greater appreciation for unity given the greater prominence for the parliament as well as more opportunities to observe that frequently dissenting members are denied all rapporteur positions or more likely that the most prominent reports are awarded to those with seniority and who are loyal to the group line. Those with fewer years of service should be more likely to assume that expertise and work ethic are the primary attributes influencing rapporteur selection.

H5: Respondents from the smaller member-states will be more likely to maintain that rapporteur assignments are made largely or solely on the basis of national delegation influence.

Most groups have one-member delegations as well as members from countries with small delegations. Whether due to envy or their observation of the selection process, these members should be more likely to state that rapporteurs are selected largely or even solely on the basis of national delegation membership in that they believe that the larger and more influential delegations have first choice of all reports and are awarded the most prominent reports.

All but six respondents answered the question and no multiple responses were offered. As depicted below in Figure 5.3, nearly half of respondents maintained that expertise and committee work are the leading factors for assigning rapporteurs and that past opposition to the group line is

either not considered or is secondary to policy expertise and committee work. Respondents defined committee work in terms of attendance, participation, as well as work ethic. About a fifth of respondents noted that the question was not applicable because their group had so few members on committees while a similar number contended that prominent reports were denied to frequently dissenting members. Meanwhile, less than ten percent of respondents believed that delegation membership was the primary determinant of rapporteur assignment.



Note: Figure depicts percentages of respondents who offered each response. N of Cases: 78.

The most unexpected result was that not a single respondent said that a member who frequently dissented from the group line would be denied all opportunities to carry or shadow a report. Instead, respondents maintained that although a frequently dissenting member may not be assigned many reports and possibly no prominent reports, they would nonetheless be assigned some reports either as a result of the group’s size, the individual’s expertise in a particular policy area, or the level of collegiality within a committee.

As depicted below in Table 5.4, party group membership was found to have the strongest statistically significant relationship with the likelihood of offering a particular response to the question of whether party group leaders consider a member's voting history when assigning rapporteurs. Statistically significant relationships also occurred for a respondent's years of service in the European Parliament and a respondent's previous profession.

TABLE 5.4: PREDICTORS OF RAPPORTEUR ASSIGNMENT RESPONSES

Party Group	0.4665***
Group Position	0.2978
Member-State	0.4024
Gender	0.2785
Years of Service	0.4806*
<u>Previous Profession</u>	<u>0.4577*</u>

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores providing measures of strength of association. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 78

When considering the data presented below in Table 5.5, while expertise and work were the most common responses across professional categories, those respondents having served in elected or party leadership positions or who had held elected office prior to parliamentary service are more likely to have stated that prominent reports are denied to frequently dissenting members than those who previously were employed as staff or from other professions who instead maintained in greater proportions that expertise and work ethic influence rapporteur selection.

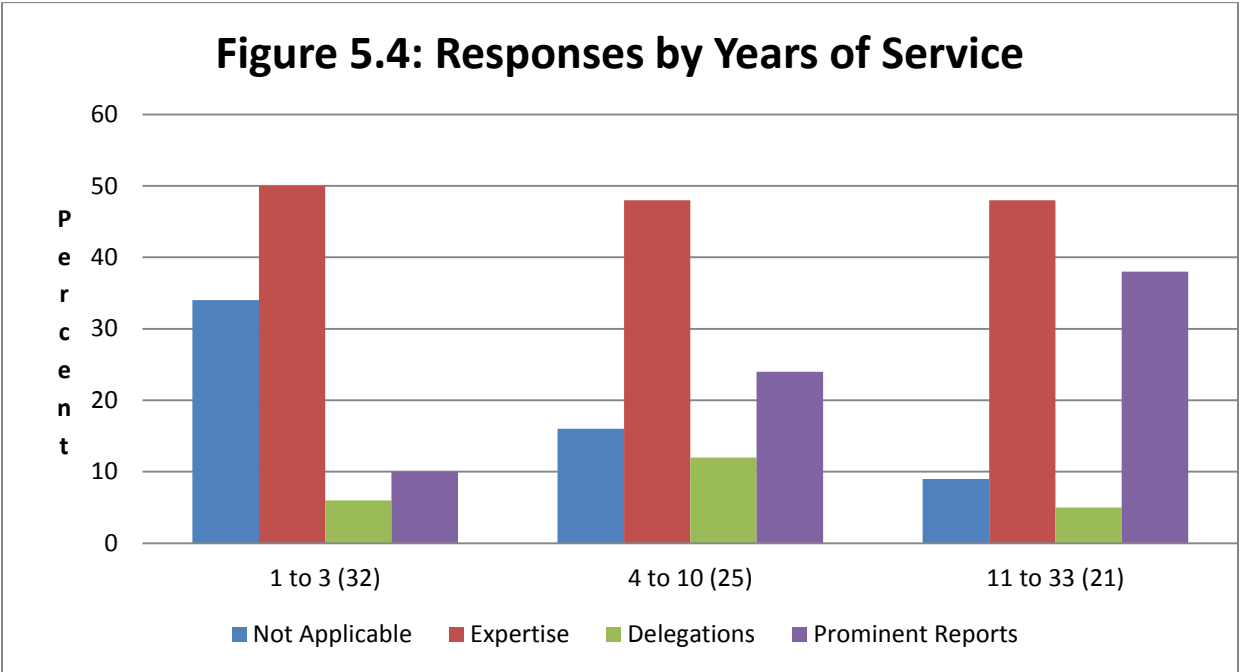
TABLE 5.5 RAPPORTEUR ALLOCATION RESPONSES AND PREVIOUS PROFESSION

<u>Professions</u>	<u>Not Applicable</u>	<u>Expertise/Work</u>	<u>Dissenting Delgs.</u>	<u>Prominent Reports</u>	<u>N</u>
Leadership	0.23	0.41	0.04	0.32	22
Elected Office	0.32	0.45	0.09	0.14	22
Staff	0.16	0.63	0	0.21	19
Private Sector	0.25	0.50	0	0.25	4
Education/Student	0	0.67	0.20	0.20	6
Unknown	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.40	5
<u>(N of Cases)</u>	<u>(17)</u>	<u>(38)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(17)</u>	<u>78</u>

Note: Entries are percentages of respondents according to previous profession prior to parliament service who offered each response. N of Cases: 78, Cramér's V: 0.4577*

This in part reflects greater experience with decision-making associated with prominent reports. For example, past leadership experience at the national government level provides the

respondent with the knowledge that the assignment of prominent reports requires closer scrutiny of past voting behaviour. Similarly, past experience in elected office provides greater familiarity with group level socialization processes and in turn a greater likelihood that the respondent will presume that similar norms governing the assignment of prominent reports are in place and are valued within the party group. In contrast, previous staff and other professions will have less or no familiarity with group norms and processes governing the assignment of prominent reports and otherwise assume that expertise or national delegation membership dictates assignment.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents according to years of service who offered each response. Numbers in parentheses indicate respondents by years of service. N of Cases: 78, Cramér's V = 0.5001**

Figure 5.4 above indicates that as years of service in the European Parliament increases, the likelihood of contending that prominent reports are denied to dissenting members increases, particularly for those with eleven or more years of service. Similarly, the likelihood of maintaining that expertise and work ethic are the main determinants for rapporteur assignment slightly decreases with years of service in the parliament. In turn, the proportion of those who

said that the question wasn't applicable due to party group size is higher for those who served three years or less in the European Parliament.

I believe in part this reflects that service in a full parliament (five years) is necessary before fully understanding and being able to accurately interpret group and parliamentary decision-making processes. For example, respondents with more years of service are more likely to have carried or shadowed more reports, especially prominent reports. As members are assigned more responsibility, they should in turn recognize the higher legislative stakes leading them to presume that prominent reports are denied to dissenting members. In contrast, members with fewer years of service are unlikely to have carried prominent reports.

TABLE 5.6: RAPPORTEUR RESPONSES ACCORDING TO PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D	N
NA-My Group is Small	0	0.33	0.80	0	0.40	0.86	0	17
Expertise & Work	0.76	0.22	0.20	0.57	0.40	0.14	0.56	38
Awarded by Delegation	0	0.45	0	0.14	0	0	0	6
Prominent Reports Denied	0.24	0	0	0.29	0.20	0	0.44	17
(N of Cases)	(17)	(9)	(5)	(14)	(10)	(7)	(16)	78

Note: Entries are percentages of respondents according to party group membership who offered each response. N of Cases: 78. Cramér's V: 0.4665***

As depicted above in Table 5.6, respondents from the smaller party groups as expected tended to state that the question of whether voting history was considered in the assignment of rapporteurs was not applicable to their group because the single or few group members on a given committee hold the responsibility of shadowing all reports assigned to committees and carrying those few reports allocated to the group through the bidding system.

Most of the respondents who said that delegation membership influences rapporteur selection were predictably from the ECR. Surprisingly, a majority of respondents in the more influential party groups noted that expertise and work ethic were the primary determinants for assigning rapporteurs. However, most of the responses contending that prominent reports were denied to frequently dissenting members were from the three most influential party groups. This

suggests that when the stakes are high, such as budget votes, leaders in influential groups may consider voting history when allocating these reports whereas reports are normally allocated at the committee level based upon expertise and work. In this sense, group leaders do have a tool to a certain extent in managing dissent, at least in the larger and more influential groups.

In turn, respondents often commented that any ideological discrepancies between members and leaders should be addressed through committee assignments. For example, assuming that unity is important to a group, a member who disagrees with the group line on trade will be assigned to another committee in order to avoid rapporteur selection controversies unless the dispute is in an area (social policy) where the group does not adopt a common line or the member's delegation insists that they be assigned to that committee in which case they are unlikely to be assigned prominent reports.

“Yes, if somebody's voting record and their position on key areas of our work was outside the norm of the group, I would be reluctant to give them a major report, because you need somebody who can hold the group together and if you have a rapporteur who has got a particular view which is not the mainstream then it is very difficult to hold group unity”. (June 6, 2012)

Because the rapporteur not only represents the group position but is expected to build support for the group position, party group leaders (especially in the influential groups) may be reluctant to assign a prominent report to a member who frequently dissents from the group line. For example, while the working group is likely to follow the lead of the coordinator from the committee responsible for the report, objections may arise from members outside the committee, including the presiding group vice-president. According to most respondents in the influential groups, every member is assured of being assigned as the group rapporteur at some point, but those members who display the strongest work ethic, highest policy expertise, and consistently support the group line are most often the lead rapporteur or shadow on prominent reports.

“I have to take many things into account. Just as I would not assign a Greek to be the rapporteur on Macedonian membership to the European Union, I would not hand a report on something as vital as the six-pack to someone who frequently votes against the group. In either instance, the member would still be given the responsibility to shadow or perhaps even carry a report, but not one in which they could frustrate the group’s interests or raise questions about its leaders’ judgment”. (November 14, 2012)

The response above expands on the differences surrounding the assignment of prominent or even controversial reports compared to most other reports. The EPP as the largest group not only carry more reports but they also successfully bid on a larger number of prominent reports. In turn, even shadow rapporteurs from the EPP have to in some ways be even more mindful of the group position as the group’s support usually ensures the success or failure of the report.

“If you know that somebody is not going to be exemplary for the group and has a very specific national interest in doing a file or wants to make a point, you will strive to make sure that they can make their point in some way but not as the rapporteur, because as the rapporteur you are not only expected to represent the group in writing the report, but even in the whole of parliament ...For shadows, it depends greatly on the file. Sometimes, if it is a high profile dossier then we will keep account of that, but if you think there is a point to be made for a specific country and nobody else really cares, then we will definitely give it to them”. (June 14, 2012)

There are occasions as highlighted in the response above where the group will call for a free vote or does not intend to pursue a common line at all. On these occasions, readiness to assume the rapporteur responsibility is equally weighed with expertise and competence. However, if the group does intend to pursue a common line, then as the respondent notes, loyalty to the group line will be considered along with expertise.

“There is a point system for which group gets the report and then it is distributed mostly according to participation in the work of the committee. People don’t normally look at the voting behavior, but of course if it is known that someone is always voting differently from the group line, they will not get important reports, they will get less important reports. I think then that basically it’s voting behavior, activity and leadership at the lower level”. (November 9, 2011)

Similar arguments are made by respondents in other influential groups. The response above notes that while committee votes are not roll-called, coordinators can observe voting behavior in voice votes and recall remarks made by the member in committee working groups as well as

committee debates. This information may also be shared through communication networks to other leaders and to other staff such as policy advisors and the secretary-general and together with an assessment of the member's overall voting behavior may lead to the denial of prominent reports. Nonetheless, the bulk of reports appear to be assigned in the influential groups on the basis of expertise and work ethic.

“Usually at first when I have something on the table, I let my staff write an email to all of the members asking who is interested in what. If it is of a certain importance...I decide to do it myself or I ask somebody in my group who I think is the best one to do this very important subject, because it's not only a question of good will and interests, but of political importance in some ways....So, I always have to think about what kind of experience does this person have, how important is this dossier...So, I try to be as fair as possible”. (June 25, 2012)

As a coordinator comes to know committee members, they acquire a better understanding of how to approach rapporteur assignments. If the report is determined by leadership to be a key component of the group's plenary agenda, then the role of rapporteur may be assumed by the vice-president or assigned on the basis of expertise on the subject. However, on most reports, the coordinator is likely according to this response, to consider not only the policy expertise of each colleague but also the national interests and personal background of each colleague.

“The only conditions we take into account are that the member of the committee who is going to be rapporteur or shadow rapporteur is always in the committee meetings and is involved in the work of the working group. If there is an important report, we do not give it to a member who goes from time to time to the committee and very seldom goes to the working group and so on. But honestly....no one will accept being a rapporteur if they know that the position of the group is contrary to their position, because that is like a torture for the rapporteur to have your group against you”. (June 19, 2012)

The respondent above not only believes that voting behavior either in the committee or in plenary is not considered when assigning rapporteurs but also that a member would not accept or pursue a prominent report if their views conflict with the group. The response suggests that socialization processes in the committee as well as at the group level may lead a member to place the group line above personal preferences when pursuing rapporteur assignments. However, the

member may also be acting rationally in that they know they will damage their chances of being assigned future prominent reports if they do not indicate their conflicting views in advance.

“The choice of rapporteurs, that’s done at the committee level...So, this is the coordinator in each committee who decides who is given the rapporteurship of a certain report. Most of the time, they will ask if there is somebody who is interested, but it’s their final decision on who will be the rapporteur. Also, on the shadow rapporteur, what usually happens is that someone becomes the shadow, not necessarily related to their voting behavior, because as I told you we really don’t have that problem, so basically the allocation of reports is related mainly with attendance and work at the committee level”. (May 30, 2012)

Since the EFD and GUE (and often the ECR and Greens/EFA) only have one to three committee members, either the single member will shadow all of the reports or all the group members would rotate as shadows. The response below sheds further light on how rapporteur assignments are perceived to be handled by these party groups.

“On the Budget Committee, we are normally only two colleagues working there...I am the coordinator, so when there is the coordinators’ meeting to distribute the reports, I am the responsible person and I always try and have a very fair division of reports among the colleagues and it’s not that about whether they were on the right line because I think all of the people on the budget committee really work hard and they indicate their interests. If there is a conflict, we try to figure out how we can solve it, but normally it’s not so tricky to find the possibility and to share the points with the people who want to have it. It’s more complicated for example in Foreign Affairs or in other committees when you have more colleagues”. (June 5, 2012)

On the whole, respondents from the Greens/EFA group were split between those from committees with smaller membership contending that the question was not applicable to their group, while those from committees with larger membership more often stated that expertise and committee work and not voting history determined whether a member was assigned as the group rapporteur. This is interesting given that the group is the most cohesive in parliament in that the responses suggest that voting behaviour is not considered even on prominent reports.

“I don’t know of any case where that has affected whether they get that or not. It depends on your own committee to be honest. Within (my) committee, there is always a very high demand for shadow rapporteurships and what we often find is that there are two of us following one report. We don’t get that many reports through the group. For instance, three years ago, I was offered quite a major report...They said to me, you are always there, you always come to

committee and you always vote, and it's obvious you know what you are doing, so I was offered the report. If it's somebody who has worked a lot in committee, then obviously they offer reports to them but not on voting records in my experience". (June 9, 2012)

The size of the Greens/EFA committee contingents reflects the group's policy priorities. While they may have more than three members on the environment committee, they have fewer members on the agricultural committee. When committee membership is small, Greens/EFA members often share shadow responsibilities. However, when the group successfully bids on a report, leadership and staff according to the response pay close attention to who receives the rapporteur assignment. In these circumstances, closeness to the group's ideological mainstream is equally considered with the member's policy expertise and committee work.

The response below underlines the political realities associated with the allocation of reports in that as the Greens/EFA can successfully bid only on a few reports, group leaders and staff will work to ensure that the selection of the rapporteur or the responsibility of shadowing reports identified by leadership as key to the group's plenary agenda will reflect the group's core beliefs. In contrast, the assignment of most rapporteurs is normally a challenge of convincing members already shadowing multiple reports to take on additional responsibilities.

"In general, the Greens are so far back in the hierarchy of the parliament that by the time our group bids on reports, there is not much disagreement left to be had, so everyone knows where they want to be...For the shadow rapporteurships, I don't see a problem with this because normally as a small group it is more of a problem finding someone who is willing to take the shadow rapporteurship at all". (June 25, 2012)

An overwhelming number of respondents who stated that the question of considering dissent when distributing rapporteurs was not applicable to their group were from the two smallest groups, the EFD and the GUE. The response below underscores this sentiment in that as the only group member or one of two to three on the committee, GUE members will have to serve as shadow rapporteurs on all or multiple reports in a given parliament.

“In the GUE/NGL, we never fight about reports, because we are a small group, so it’s more like, do I really have to be a shadow on this? So, that’s not the problem for us, it’s more like we now have three reports amongst ourselves, who will take what? I have only recognized a couple of times that I see that in the group there are two people wanting the same report. So, even if you don’t get a rapporteurship, you can be a shadow rapporteur”. (June 22, 2012)

While GUE shadow rapporteurs may propose that the group adopt a particular stance on a report, there is not a group line on a majority of reports and individual members or delegations frequently adopt a separate line. In contrast, when the group successfully bids on rapporteur assignments for carrying a report, a competition between the members on a committee may arise for the responsibility of carrying the report which in this circumstance is likely be accompanied by a group line or at least the pursuit of a group line.

Finally, only eight percent responded that rapporteurs are allocated largely on the basis of national delegation membership. These respondents believed that members of large national delegations were awarded the more prominent and largest number of reports irrespective of their policy expertise or voting history. This contrasts with the largest block of respondents who acknowledged the role of national delegation membership but believe that expertise and committee work are more important determinants for the assignment of reports.

While acknowledging the importance of work at the committee level, the respondent below believes that reports are assigned first on the basis of national delegation membership and then according to work ethic and policy expertise. This may depend on the distribution of delegations within a party group. For example, the ECR may assign reports to members from the UK, Polish, and then Czech delegations with the rest assigned to the multiple one-member delegations.

“Delegations are the underlying factor in this group when you consider any award, whether it be leadership positions or rapporteurships. If you are from the British delegation you have a leg up so to speak on everyone and then the Brits compromise with the Poles and Czechs to hand out the other positions or reports. Of course if you are one of two (ECR members) on a given committee you will be a shadow on nearly every report but the responsibility of being a

rapporteur will be decided on the basis of which delegation you belong to as the group will spend its points on rapporteurships accordingly.” (November 1, 2011)

PLENARY AMENDMENTS AND PARTY GROUP DISCIPLINE

Dissent from the group line either does not impact the allocation of plenary speaking time or results only in the placement of dissenting speakers at the end of lists. MEPs may otherwise utilize explanations of votes and other opportunities to voice dissent in plenary. Voting history is not the sole determinative factor in the assignment of rapporteurs though on occasion leaders in the more influential party groups may deny prominent reports to members who frequently dissent from the group line or do not agree with the line on the particular report. This leaves the remaining potential disciplinary tool of party groups as amendment gatekeepers to block or lobby against plenary amendments tabled by individual MEPs that are contrary to the group line.

At the committee level, individual MEPs may table amendments without party group sponsorship. However, in plenary, all amendments must be sponsored by a party group unless an individual MEP can attain at least forty signatures. The twenty-seven non-attached MEPs must rely on this tool to propose amendments in plenary. When an individual MEP from a party group tables an amendment, it rarely passes in plenary. From my observations and the interviews, it appears that when group leaders in the more cohesive groups identify contrary amendments they normally resolve the dispute in one of the group decision-making forums prior to plenary.

Otherwise, the group does not take a position on the amendment or simply notes on the voting list to members that the particular amendment is not group-sponsored. Accordingly, I asked respondents if group leaders actively lobby members to vote against amendments offered by individuals in the group that contradict the group line and I anticipated a response set similar to the question on rapporteurs: the question isn't applicable to our group because individual-sponsored amendments are rare, leaders take no position, leaders note their opposition on the

voting list but do not lobby members to change their intended vote, leaders will lobby members to change their voting intent unless the amendment has delegation backing, or leaders lobby against all plenary amendments from group members that oppose the group line.

H1: Respondents from influential party groups will be more likely to maintain that leaders actively lobby against contradictory individually-sponsored amendments.

Higher plenary stakes should provide incentive for leaders in more influential party groups to lobby against amendments from individual members in their group that contradict the group line or at the least to note their opposition in voting lists provided to members. Otherwise, the group's plenary agenda and reputation may be put at risk and in the absence of opposition by group leaders members may become more likely to pursue other forms of dissent expression.

H2: Respondents from less influential party groups will be more likely to maintain that individually-sponsored amendments are rare or that leaders take no position on them.

Less influential party groups are more likely to either not pursue a common line or to ignore amendments that contradict the group line because they do not manage dissent or lack the necessary tools (see chapter four) to manage dissent. If there is no group line, the group should agree to sponsor all amendments or in the event that an ad hoc majority within the group opposes an amendment offered by a member, leadership should not take a position against it because they lack the incentive and thereby the communication network and socialization to address it.

H3: Respondents who are leaders or secretary-generals will be more likely to maintain that leaders actively lobby against contradictory individually-sponsored amendments

While I do not anticipate a high number of responses maintaining that group leaders actively lobby against individually-sponsored amendments from members, I would expect that any such argument would be made by respondents who are in senior leadership positions or are the secretary-general as these positions are associated with dissent management responsibilities

whereas rank-and-file members and staff should be more likely to maintain that leaders do not lobby at all against such amendments.

H4: Respondents from large delegations will be more likely to maintain that leaders do not lobby against contradictory amendments if they are supported by national delegations within the group.

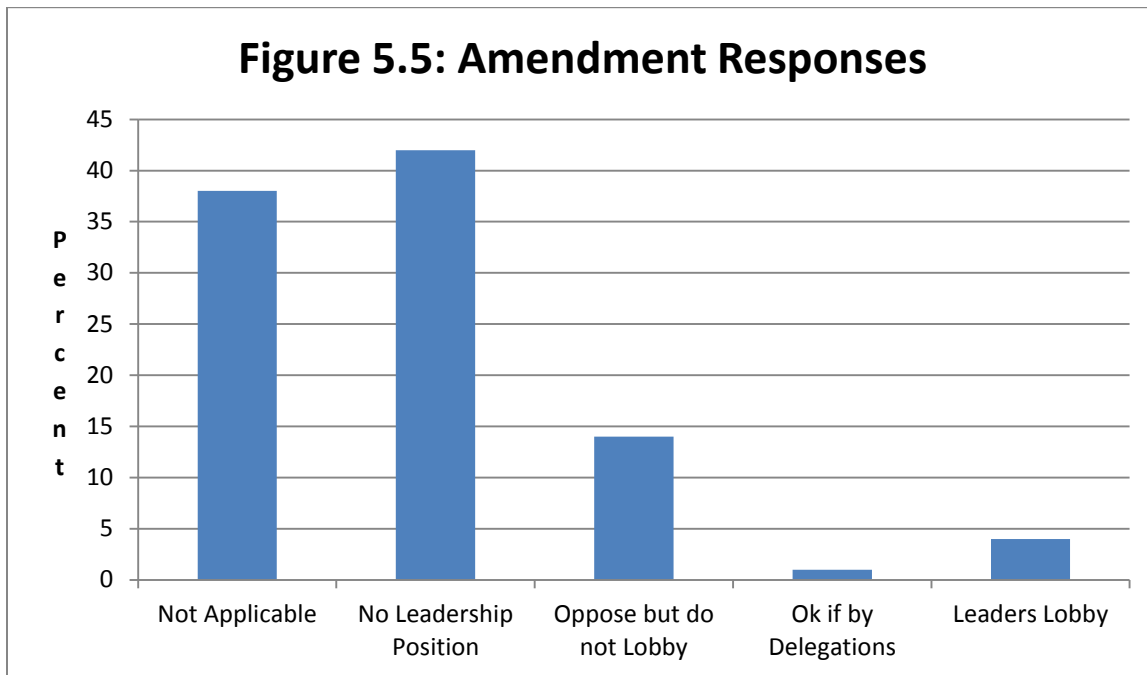
Leaders may choose not to lobby against individually-sponsored amendments that contradict the group line particularly if the delegation is a considerable portion of the group. My observations and interviews suggest that group leaders will try to reach a compromise with the delegation in such circumstances (such as to abstain) but otherwise will simply not the absence of group sponsorship on the voting list or take no action at all because the group will need the delegation's support on future and may understand the national political rationale for the delegation sponsoring the particular amendment.

H5: Respondents with more years of service will be more likely to maintain that group leaders do not take any position or that individually-sponsored amendments are rare.

With more years of exposure to the decision-making processes within the group and to the parliamentary procedures and patterns, respondents with more years of service should conclude that individually-sponsored amendments (outside the non-attached members) are so rare that the question is not applicable or they will conclude that because such amendments normally fail in plenary, group leaders will not take any position on them at all.

Thirteen of the eight-four respondents were either not asked the question or did not respond and no multiple explanations were offered. As indicated below in Figure 5.5, a little over forty percent of respondents stated that party group leadership never took a position on such amendments at least in the plenary stage. The group coordinator might lobby against the amendment in committee, but group leaders would not reference it in the party group meeting because plenary amendments without group sponsorship are expected to fail. A slightly smaller

percentage of respondents noted that the question was not applicable because such amendments were so rarely authored by their colleagues in the party group.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents offering each response. N of Cases: 71

Fourteen percent noted that group leaders might state their opposition to the amendments in working groups and party group meetings and perhaps even notate it on the voting lists handed to members just prior to plenary, but not lobby members to oppose the amendment because it was assured to fail. Opposition was noted for the sake of maintaining communication with members and to ensure that further expressions of dissent were not encouraged. Only three respondents cited any lobbying by party group leaders on individually-sponsored amendments contrary to the group line. One MEP stated that if the amendment was endorsed by a delegation, no lobbying would occur, but if an MEP acted alone, leaders would work to ensure its defeat.

While the response pattern is as I expected, I am surprised that the last two categories received such low response rates. This suggests that the communication network in the more cohesive groups addresses such divisions prior to plenary, and otherwise that group leaders in

most circumstances are not concerned with such amendments. Group coordinators and the rapporteur will often try to reach compromises or lobby against contrary amendments. These efforts by coordinators might not only deny contrary amendments from moving beyond the committee stage, they may also deter other MEPs from tabling contrary amendments at the working group or group meeting as the account by an EPP aide to a coordinator below explains.

“First we try and have the rapporteur deal with it, and by deal with it I mean that the amendments are not submitted or that that the rapporteur or shadow rapporteur addresses this issue in a compromise amendment that would not prejudice the position of the group. Now, obviously, some amendments might be totally contrary to the group line and there is a certain amount of flexibility you can have to find compromises. In that case, we might speak to the person offering the amendment or to their delegation, and tell them there might not be a majority on this and why don't you withdraw it and pursue it through other means”. (June 27, 2012)

The account from the coordinator's aide helps to clarify why so many respondents either did not believe the question was applicable to their group or that group leaders did not take positions on plenary amendments contrary to the group line. Above all, they are rare and when they do occur, they are addressed at the committee or working group stage through lobbying by leaders or by compromise obtained through the re-wording of a sponsored amendment or by splitting an amendment in two and having a split vote in plenary. This is further evidence of dissent management at every legislative stage in the more influential groups.

In my observations of EPP working groups, the presiding vice-president averted contrary amendments through such compromises. With the matter resolved in the working group or at times in the group meeting, an individually-tabled amendment from MEPs at the plenary stage is either not necessary or is ensured to fail due to the lack of group support. Similarly, other influential groups like the ALDE will utilize the group meeting to resolve the differences over amendment or group leaders will ignore the amendment altogether.

As depicted below in Table 5.8, a respondent's party group membership and the likelihood of offering a particular response was found to be statistically significant as was the relationship with a

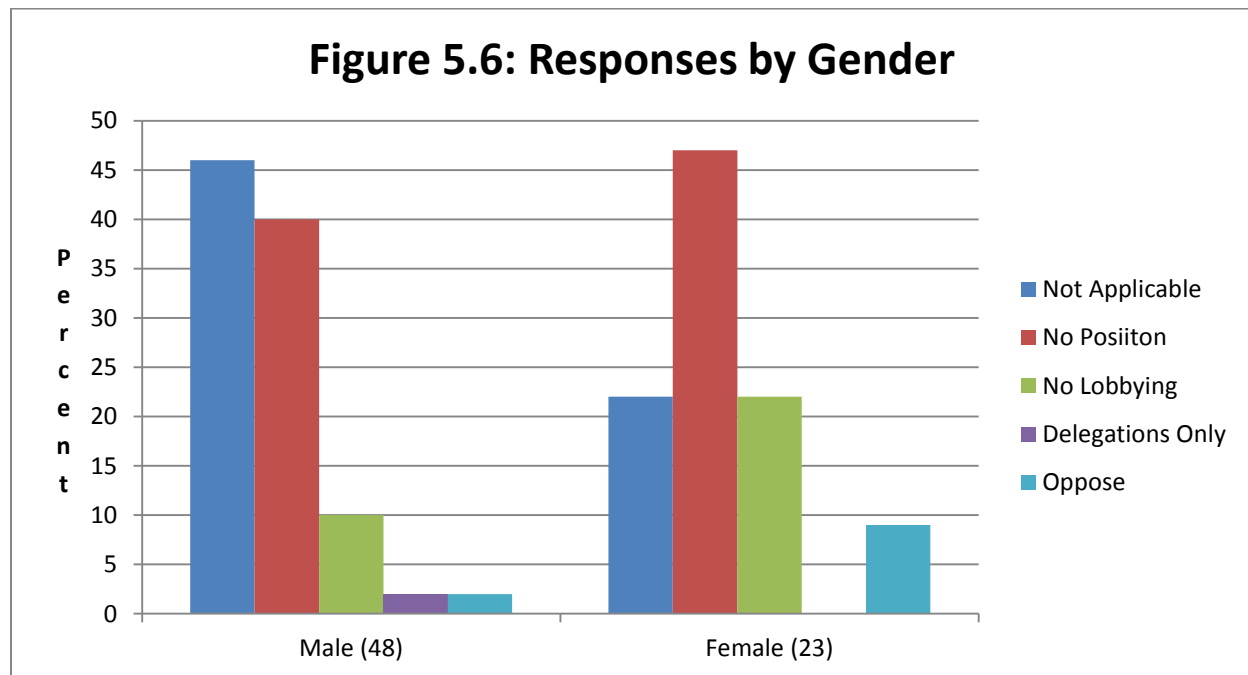
respondent's gender. In contrast, the association between a respondent's member-state or previous profession and the likelihood of providing any of the responses was likely the product of chance.

TABLE 5.8: PREDICTORS OF INDIVIDUAL AMENDMENT RESPONSES

Party Group	0.3476**
Group Position	0.2187
Member-State	0.4752
Gender	0.3782*
Years of Service	0.3847
<u>Previous Profession</u>	<u>0.4170</u>

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, **, and *** denote statistical significance on the .05, .01, and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 71.

As Figure 5.6 below indicates, female respondents are more likely to state that group leaders do not take a position on individually-tabled contrary plenary amendments or that leaders would note opposition on a voting list but not lobby or appeal to members to adhere to the group line, while male respondents are more likely to maintain that the question was not applicable since such amendments are so rare and were also the sole source of those contending that contrary plenary amendments supported by national delegations within the group were acceptable.



Note: Figure depicts percentages of amendment responses by respondent's gender. Number in parentheses depicts number of respondents by gender. N of Cases: 71

As depicted in Table 5.9 below, the trend of offering one of the first two response categories cuts across all party groups though respondents from the two least influential and smallest party groups (EFD and GUE) were unanimous in offering the second response category.

TABLE 5.9: RESPONSES ACCORDING TO PARTY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D	N
NA-Amendments are Rare	0.60	0.44	0	0.50	0.30	0	0.40	27
Leadership Has No Position	0.36	0.44	1.0	0.30	0.40	1.0	0.13	30
Oppose but No Lobbying	0	0.14	0	0.20	0.20	0	0.39	10
No Lobbying if Delegation	0	0	0	0	0.10	0	0	1
Lobby against All	0.04	0	0	0	0	0	0.09	4
(N of Cases)	(15)	(9)	(5)	(10)	(10)	(7)	(15)	71

Note: Table depicts percentages of respondents according to party group membership who offered each response with last row depicting number of respondents. N of Cases: 71, Cramér's V: 0.3476*

In addition, S & D respondents were the most likely to maintain that leaders will oppose but not lobby against individually-sponsored amendments from group members that contradict the group line and are the source of two of the three responses contending that group leaders lobby against all such amendments. While more respondents maintained that the group largely ignored contrary plenary amendments, some such as the S & D coordinator below noted that while leaders wouldn't lobby members they would state their opposition in the group meeting and notate the amendment in the voting list as one not sponsored by the group. Though this response indicates that there is not an active effort to defeat the amendment, the group position is clearly stated as the amendment might attain sizable support or encourage other forms of dissent.

“Plenary amendments are tabled by the political groups, meaning that they correspond to the group line (validated by the coordinator and the VP in charge); otherwise, you need at least 40 members to table an amendment. This usually happens regarding cross-party issues. If such an amendment does not correspond to the group line our voting list in plenary will have a negative vote indication. In particularly sensitive issues, the group might give a free vote” (June 6, 2012).

Broad support within the group is necessary to ensure passage as it not only provides a block of votes but also attracts cross-party group support as an amendment sponsored by a cohesive group is more likely to pass. In turn, respondents perceive that if their party group is to be

influential in plenary, individually-sponsored amendments are not effective. This view is expressed by an ALDE MEP below.

“It doesn’t happen that often, it’s odd really. Generally, if you have got a good cause and a case that is argued well, the group will support the tabling of the amendment, and especially in order to get anything through in co-decision procedures we need cross-party agreement, you can’t get anything through if you only have one group, then the effort to build up that cross-party consensus is quite serious. It’s only by going outside the group that you can achieve things and I suspect that is the position of the EPP group also”. (June 25, 2012)

The split among ECR respondents might reflect the tendency to accommodate national delegations within the group as the response below indicates. The group for the sake of unity may decide to sponsor an amendment which incurs majority or significant opposition among members. In such circumstances, individually-sponsored amendments are either not necessary as the group liberally sponsors amendments or leadership does not comment on such amendments as they often have a base of support within the group from one of the larger delegations.

“At times, perhaps you have for the sake of argument the Czech delegation which feels strongly different from the group, from the position taken by the coordinator or the rapporteur and for the sake of unity, the amendments of the delegation will be offered in plenary though most of the group will vote against them”. (October 5, 2011)

In the EFD, respondents commented that individually-tabled amendments were not only common, but also did not encounter opposition from leaders. This stems from the fact that there is rarely any formal group line but rather ad hoc voting majorities. In addition, the group is not viewed by some members as a necessary legislative vehicle, as the response below underscores.

“There are some dossiers on which I might go to the group and ask for their support on an amendment. On other occasions, my colleagues in the ECR or among the non-inscrits or perhaps even among my fellow countrymen might support my amendment and I won’t bother to formally take it up with the group. In either case, the group leadership may not take a position in support but they certainly wouldn’t oppose the amendment since it is the right of each individual MEP to table the amendment....assuming they can get the necessary signatures”. (October 28, 2011)

The response below by a member of the EPP secretariat maintains that while amendments opposing the group line are rarely pursued by members, they do not incur opposition from

leaders because they are likely to fail in plenary. On other occasions, such as on social issues, an amendment may be contrary to the majority position, but because the issue is so divisive, leaders withhold sponsorship and do not lobby against it or they may not adopt a group line at all.

“Any member can put forward an amendment or co-sign an amendment. That’s the right of any member and we cannot and would not do anything about that, it’s their right to express their opinion. We would not accept though that any member would sign on to any amendment on behalf of the group. So, if it happens that on certain issues we can’t agree, we can’t find a compromise, there is no group line and there is a free vote”. (October 15, 2011)

Respondents from the Greens/EFA group were again divided on the use of a disciplinary tool in dissent management. For some, the question wasn’t applicable because they believed that such amendments were rare because members knew that group support was crucial for plenary passage and that party group meetings provided the vehicle for ensuring unity by arranging compromises on amendments or discussion leading to the amendment’s withdrawal. However, other respondents such as the group vice-president below noted that when an individual MEP from the group proposed an amendment in plenary contrary to the group line it normally had the backing of a national delegation or from EFA members.

“Yes, it happens. Sometimes, we also have the regionalists, EFA, and they have some things very specific on language and minority rights though sometimes it’s something the group can support anyway, but it’s not something we want to raise as a topic, but they will raise it as EFA members and collect forty signatures. So, sometimes it is not a group priority, but it doesn’t conflict, and then it is not mentioned as the group line”. (June 4, 2012)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

When asked to assess the extent to which an MEP’s voting history impacted the allocation of plenary speaking time or assignment of rapporteurs, most respondents believed that neither was awarded solely according to voting history, but rather on primarily on the basis of policy expertise along with work and attendance at the committee or (where applicable) working group level. Similarly, most respondents maintained that party group leaders tended to ignore rather

than lobby against individually-sponsored plenary amendments that were contrary to the group line, because they were so rare and almost certain to fail.

However, the responses also confirm that leaders in the more influential groups often weigh support for the group line when assigning rapporteurs/shadows for prominent reports or allocating plenary speaking time on reports accompanied by a group line. Years of service in the European Parliament also appears to have some influence in that respondents with more years of service were more likely to state that dissenting members spoke last and that prominent reports were withheld from frequently dissenting members. As MEPs and staff become more acquainted with legislative and party group decision-making processes, they should be more likely to link voting behavior with speaking time allocation or rapporteur assignment.

In addition, previous professional experience also appears to have influenced responses in that those with previous leadership experience or who served in elected office were more likely to contend that dissenting members speak last and that prominent reports are denied to dissenting members. In this sense, previous experience with group level decision-making and socialization processes provides a reference point for respondents to assess the distribution of speaking time allocation or rapporteur assignment.

The responses considered in this chapter demonstrate that the more influential groups link assignment of prominent speaking slots and reports to support of the group line. Nonetheless, respondents overwhelmingly emphasized alternate outlets for addressing the plenary and the practice of most coordinators assessing policy expertise and committee work rather than voting behavior when assigning rapporteurs. These sentiments are shared by respondents from the least as well as the most cohesive groups. This suggests that disciplinary tactics while employed to an

extent by the more influential groups do not significantly (if at all) contribute to high cohesion levels or explain dissent variation among the groups.

If not through disciplinary tools, how then do group leaders and staff ensure maximum support for the group line? Chapter six will consider the role of members of the leadership team: group presidents, vice-presidents, coordinators, rapporteurs, as well as the secretariat. The chapter will consider how each party group has come to define specific leadership roles and the degree to which particular dissent management strategies employed by party group leaders are successful in minimizing dissent levels.

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CHAPTER SIX: LEADERS AND DISSENT MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I examined the relationship between dissent and discipline when allocating plenary speaking, assigning rapporteurs, or when members tabled plenary amendments contrary to the group line. Most respondents maintained that policy expertise and work ethic rather than voting behavior were key determinants for awarding rapporteurs or plenary speaking time. However, responses also indicate that dissent is considered in some instances.

For example, respondents with more years of service in the parliament and those holding party group leadership positions were likely to maintain that dissenting members will either speak last or are not assigned time at all unless they are members of the relevant committee. In contrast, respondents who were rank-and-file MEPs or staff and who had fewer years of service were more likely to contend that dissenting members are never denied plenary speaking time.

In addition, respondents from the smaller party groups often noted that as the group had only one to three members on any given committee, the extent to which an MEP dissented from the group line did not influence the assignment of rapporteurs. In contrast, respondents with more years of service and those from the more influential party groups were more likely to contend that leaders would not assign prominent reports to frequently dissenting members but that dissenting members would still have opportunities to serve as the rapporteur on other reports.

Finally, an overwhelming majority of respondents noted that party group leaders rarely lobbied against amendments tabled by individual MEPs in plenary that opposed the group line. In the absence of group sponsorship, these amendments nearly always fail. Knowing this likely outcome, respondents maintained that group leaders ignore the amendment or merely note the absence of group sponsorship in voting lists passed out to members prior to plenary.

These findings suggest that the more influential party groups consider dissent in regards to allocating plenary speaking time and rapporteur responsibilities when the plenary stakes are high. However, dissenting MEPs have alternate outlets to address the parliament and will be assigned reports throughout the parliament. In turn, limited disciplinary tools should encourage the more influential party groups to rely on communication networks and socialization processes to ensure maximum support for the group line and minimal levels of dissent expression.

How do leaders contribute to party group unity and what dissent management roles are assigned to specific leadership positions? Party groups are hypothesized to have lower levels of dissent if they fully utilize group leadership positions as part of a whip structure. A fully-utilized whip structure assigns clear dissent management roles to group leaders (president, vice-presidents, coordinators and rapporteurs) while functioning as a communication network in which group leaders share information and collaborate to ensure maximum support for the group line and attain minimal levels of dissent expression (voting to abstain, etc.).

In this chapter, I consider how party group leaders contribute to lower dissent levels while also identifying the specific contributions of party group presidents and vice-presidents whose roles are left largely undefined in the literature. To examine the role of the group president, I asked MEPs and staff what attribute makes group presidents effective leaders and at what point does the group president become involved in building unity. Next, the chapter considers how group vice-presidents contribute to group unity and then assesses the role of vice-presidents (or secretary-general) serving as the group whip or parliamentary secretary where applicable.

LEGISLATIVE PARTY LEADERS AND DISSENT MANAGEMENT

How do dissent management challenges confronted by party group leaders differ from leaders in other legislatures? Above all, the ‘competing principals’ dilemma (See Carey 2007) confronting legislators in federal democracies is much more present as nomination and election

resources are controlled by the parties at the national level. Unlike their counterparts in national parliaments, party group leaders also do not operate under a government-opposition structure, but rather must build cross-party group coalitions on respective reports. However, like their national counterparts, party group leaders encounter dissent in various forms. Above all, party group leaders solve collective action problems such as by identifying the voting intentions of colleagues and in some instances lobbying to ensure that the number of those disagreeing with the majority line (as formed or as endorsed by leaders) is kept to a minimum.

Party group leaders in the seventh parliament (elected in 2009) face higher legislative stakes and have more influence upon the path of European integration than any previous parliament. With the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (2007), the European Parliament has co-decision authority in nearly every policy area at a time when decision-making is increasingly shifting from the nation-state to the EU level. The six-pack (October 2011) and two-pack (June 2012) votes on economic governance, and the 2006 Services Directive (See Hix et al. 2007), highlight the necessity for group leaders to identify and manage dissent on prominent reports.

As Brown (2000) notes, the assignment of specific roles (leader or member) brings order to a group's existence and implies expectations about behavior. In this sense, role assignment helps an individual to define a sense of who they are and how they may contribute to group unity (Brown, 2000, 72). In turn, the best leader may be someone who can organize the group's activities while remaining responsive to the views and feelings of its members (Brown, 2000, 96). However, while MEPs may often defer to leaders and other policy experts, there is no guarantee that in the absence of constant communication by group leaders that a sufficient majority will support the group line on every report. Even in the most cohesive group, the slightest number of dissenting MEPs can contribute to the defeat of the group's plenary agenda

and possibly jeopardize its plenary reputation. In this sense, the difference between eighty-five and ninety percent cohesion may determine the fate of the group line and impact the group's plenary reputation. Accordingly, party group leadership positions should be assigned specific responsibilities and develop a wide array of dissent management tactics.

For example, group coordinators and rapporteurs in most groups build support for the group line at every legislative stage and group members often look to these leadership positions for voting guidance particularly when a report originates from a committee outside of their purview. As Ringe (2010) noted, "the official party line of a given proposal is the end result of this information distribution process, acting as a series of information filters" and "the two (coordinators and rapporteurs) tend to work in tandem and jointly lead their party groups through the decision-making process" (Ringe, 2010, 58-59).

The response below from a coordinator further underscores the variety of dissent management tactics employed but also emphasizes the collaborative aspect of leadership in that if support for the group line is to be secured, the coordinator must not only appeal to members but also work with the rapporteur and other leaders to resolve disputes before advancing the group line to the next stage in the decision-making process. This is particularly evident in the larger groups at the working group level where the vice-president becomes involved.

"Of course, I try to convince them to follow the group line...In some cases, when there are really possibilities that maybe a shadow rapporteur has a certain view and the others don't follow this view, then I ask for votes (among our group members on the committees) and if the shadow rapporteur is over-ruled I say that the majority line should be another view...In some cases, I even allow free votes, but I try to keep free votes very low because free votes mean you don't know how everyone is going to vote". (June 25, 2012)

ATTRIBUTES OF AN EFFECTIVE GROUP PRESIDENT

The contributions by coordinators and rapporteurs to group unity are well-documented in the literature (See Ringe 2010, Yashinaka et al. 2010). In contrast, we know very little about the

roles of group presidents and vice-presidents. However, we do have insight into their general responsibilities. Party group presidents represent the group in key plenary debates, media availability, and preside over party group meetings. In addition, the Conference of Presidents serves as an important weekly forum for group presidents to air concerns, bridge differences, and for some, to plan how best to protect the institutional integrity of the European Parliament⁷.

Whether in the Conference of Presidents, in plenary, or press availability, group presidents wear many hats: from group spokesperson to defender of institutional interests, from partisan advocate to consensus-builder. To better understand the role of the group president, MEPs and staff were asked the open-ended question of what made their group president(s) an effective leader. Presidents (or Co-Presidents) were identified by name in order to ascertain perceptions about individual presidents and to determine whether the perceived attributes of an effective president could be identified across groups. I also identified presidents by name because three groups (ECR, GUE and S & D) changed presidents between the two phases of research.

Given the literature and my interpretation of what constitutes effective dissent management skills (See Chapter Four), I anticipated that respondents would cite four qualities when evaluating their president's effectiveness: previous experience in the European Parliament, previous national leadership experience, ability to convey and re-enforce shared group beliefs, skill in forging consensus or otherwise state that their president was not an effective leader.

H1: ALDE respondents will be more likely to refer to the group president's experience at the national government/political level than those from other party groups.

Before observing ALDE group meetings or conducting interviews, I assumed that ALDE respondents would reference Guy Verhofstadt's experience as a former Belgian Prime Minister

⁷ Formally, the Conference of Presidents consists of the seven group presidents and the President of the European Parliament and is responsible for drafting the parliamentary agenda and submitting proposals to the parliamentary bureau concerning administration and other matters (Judge and Earnshaw, 2008, 164).

which I believed contributed to his election as group president upon his first day of service in the parliament in August 2009. However, I also hoped that interview responses and observations would identify specific attributes of this service in other group presidents thereby indicating how national governmental experience contributed to the effectiveness of all group presidents.

H2: Respondents from more influential party groups will be more likely to reference the previous European Parliament experience of group presidents in their assessment of effectiveness.

High plenary influence should encourage group members to elect presidents whom they believe are the best prepared to maintain that level of influence. In turn, previous experience as a group vice-president or as a coordinator/rapporteur should be viewed as a positive and necessary attribute of an effective group president. Influential party groups will have incentive to ensure that their leader can not only help to attain low dissent levels (vice-president or coordinator) but also have the experience of building cross-party group coalitions (rapporteur).

H3: Respondents from more influential groups will be more likely to cite consensus-building skills when assessing the effectiveness of a group president.

A highly cohesive group is necessary to secure the group's goals in plenary and in turn respondents from influential party groups should also equate consensus-building skills with an effective group president. For example, if the working group or party group meeting is unable to identify a common line, then the group president may need to offer mediation or act as an arbiter. Presidents may differ in their approaches, but presidents in influential party groups should be skilled in finding common ground or ensuring minimal levels of dissent expression.

H4: Respondents from less influential party groups will be more likely to contend that their group president is not an effective leader.

With lower plenary stakes, group presidents will have less incentive to become involved in building consensus or in managing dissent. The lack of presidential engagement in consensus-building does not necessarily equate with higher dissent levels, but members from less influential

groups should be more likely to view their group presidents as ineffective as they assess both the group's plenary influence and their perception of little importance for group unity.

H5: Respondents from larger and more influential party groups will be more likely to identify an ability to convey shared beliefs as an attribute of an effective group president.

Leaders of larger and influential party groups have more incentive to encourage the adoption of shared beliefs through socialization in order to help alleviate the logistical challenges associated with ensuring maximum support for the group line (See Kam 2002). Presidents of influential groups will similarly refer to shared beliefs and in particular the shared group identity in group forums and plenary debates in order to re-enforce a sense among members that everyone has a stake in developing the group line and in the group's plenary success.

H6: Respondents who hold elite positions will be more likely than respondents from other group positions to cite a president's consensus-building skills.

The combination of greater responsibility and familiarity with consensus-building should be reflected in the responses of those who are elites among group leadership and staff. In turn, those who hold responsibility for pursuing consensus on reports should be more likely to cite consensus-building as an attribute of an effective group president. In contrast respondents not responsible for negotiations with national delegations or with dissenting members should be less likely to view consensus-building as an important attribute of an effective group president.

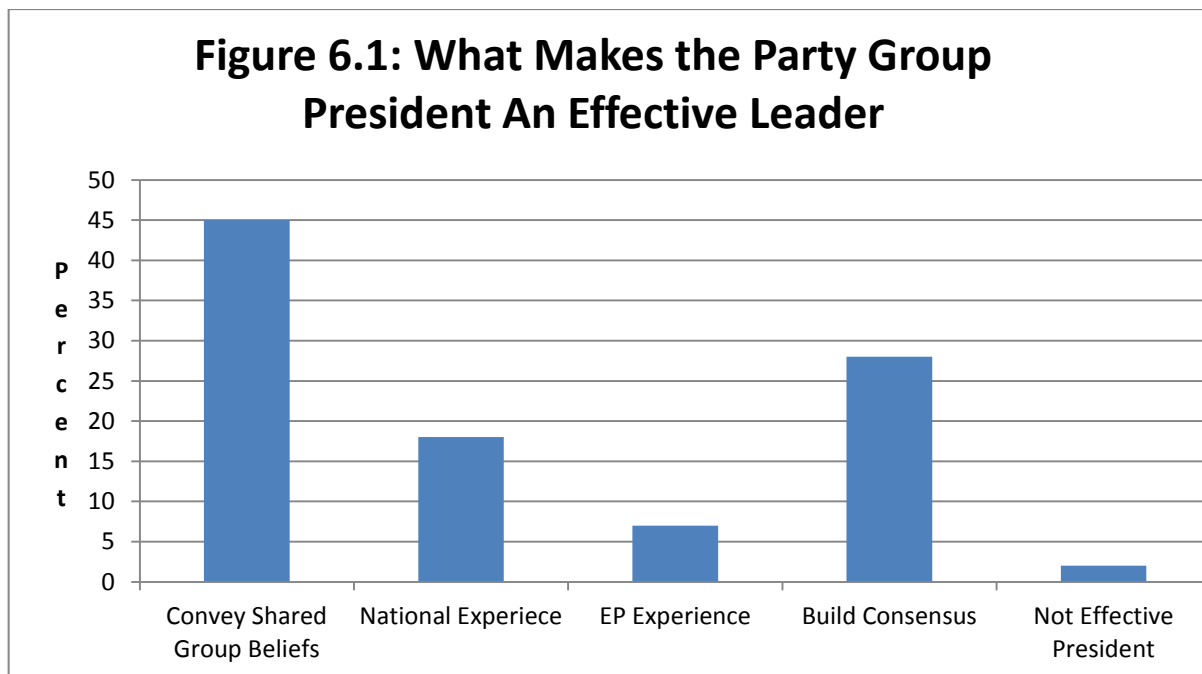
H7: Respondents from countries with higher positive perceptions of EU membership will be more likely to cite shared beliefs as an attribute of an effective group president.

If respondents represent countries with higher public positive perceptions of EU membership they should be more likely to view party group membership as a vehicle for accomplishing shared goals and in turn will be more likely to elect a group president who will be effective in articulating shared group beliefs and in turn a shared group identity. In contrast, those

respondents from countries with higher negative perceptions of EU membership will be less likely to cite shared beliefs as they will have less incentive to identify with the group.

H8: Respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to cite shared beliefs and consensus-building as attributes of an effective group president.

With more years of service in the European Parliament, respondents will have had more exposure to group level socialization processes and acquired greater familiarity with the group's decision-making process. In turn, they will be more likely to closely identify with the group and draw from greater experience when evaluating the effectiveness of the group president. In contrast, respondents with fewer years of service in the parliament will be less likely to closely identify with the group and will have less familiarity with the role of the group president.



Note: Figure depicts the frequency for which each response was offered. Number of Cases: 120. Multiple Responses were permitted.

All eighty-four respondents answered the question with some offering multiple explanations for why their group president was an effective leader. As depicted above in Figure 6.1, forty-five percent of responses cited the president's ability to convey and re-enforce shared group beliefs. In this sense, the president re-enforces a shared conceptualization of the group identity and

articulates the group's shared vision in group meetings. Nearly thirty percent of responses noted the ability to forge consensus within the group made the president an effective leader. Consensus-building efforts consist of the group president identifying a common line when one is lacking but more often building support for the existing group line. Less than twenty percent of responses cited national political experience as the explanation for why the group president was effective while fewer than ten percent cited previous European Parliament experience.

According to Bailer et al. (2009), national and European leadership experience instills skills such as identifying and securing compromises or influencing colleagues' voting behavior (Bailer et al. 2009, 359). Most ALDE respondents cited such skills when referencing Verhofstadt's experience as Prime Minister of Belgium. Nonetheless, most responses appear to suggest that members expect that the group president will understand and have experience with the legislative process and in turn identify other attributes of an effective group president.

Finally, fewer than five percent of respondents did not believe their party group president was an effective leader. The elite-heavy nature of the field study may partly explain the rarity of this response and the small number of responses is insufficient to indicate what contributes to the perception of ineffectiveness. Moreover, many of these responses reflect strong personal misgivings about individual leaders and accordingly are not cited otherwise respondent anonymity may be placed in jeopardy despite the lack of attribution.

Table 6.1 below depicts Cramér's V scores as a measure of strength of association between respondent characteristics and the likelihood of offering each response. Statistical significant relationships occurred at the .001 and .05 levels respectfully between a respondent's party group membership and the likelihood of offering a response that national political experience or the ability to achieve consensus within the group defines the effectiveness of a group president.

TABLE 6.1: PREDICTORS OF EFFECTIVE PARTY GROUP PRESIDENT RESPONSES

Variable	Group Beliefs	National Experience	EP Experience	Build Consensus	Not Effective
Party Group	0.3404	0.6844***	0.2953	0.4214*	0.2720
Group Position	0.2450	0.3584	0.2195	0.2794	0.1342
Member-State	0.4543	0.5848	0.3823	0.5468	0.3727
Gender	-0.0804	0.1132	0.0795	-0.1291	0.0548
Years in EP	0.3860	0.3949	0.4882	0.3311	0.3875
Profession	0.4077	0.4398	0.3438	0.4460	0.4867
(N of Cases)	(54)	(21)	(8)	(33)	(4)

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, **, *** denote statistical significance on the .05, .01, and .001 levels respectfully. Number of cases associated with each response appears in parentheses on the last line of the table. N of Cases: 120. Multiple explanations were permitted.

I believe conveying shared beliefs is the most common response yet does not incur a statistically significant relationship with any respondent characteristic because the response category is broadly defined. For example, conveying shared beliefs encompasses the efforts of presidents in the more cohesive groups to urge all members to support the group line yet also the practice of reminding members in less cohesive groups of shared views yet within an understanding that frequent dissent is acceptable. When responses are framed according to party group membership in Table 6.2 below, contrary to expectations, conveying shared beliefs was the most frequently cited trait of an effective group president by respondents from the three smallest party groups though this response was also offered by a majority of respondents in the three of the four largest party groups.

TABLE 6.2: RESPONSES ACCORDING TO PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

RESPONSES	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS	GUE	S & D
Group Beliefs	.44	.89	1.0	.69	.64	.75	.53
National Experience	.67	.11	0	.06	.64	0	0
EP Experience	0	.11	0	.13	.09	0	.24
Build Consensus	.44	.11	0	.38	.18	.63	.65
Not Effective	.11	0	0	.13	0	0	0
(N of Cases)	(18)	(9)	(5)	(16)	(11)	(8)	(17)

Note: Entries are percentage of respondents within each party group who offered each response. Last row depicts number of respondents per party group. N of Cases: 120. Multiple responses were permitted.

Previous national political experience was most commonly offered by ALDE respondents noting Verhofstadt's previous service as Belgian prime minister and by Greens/EFA respondents

who frequently noted Cohn-Bendit's leadership of the student movement in France in 1968 or Harms' experience in regional government in Germany. In turn, a closer inspection of responses reveals that respondents from the more cohesive party groups tend to broadly define shared beliefs to include a shared group identity, whereas those from less cohesive groups tend to more strictly define the response in terms of the degree to which members share policy preferences.

These contrasting approaches in turn underscore differently perceived roles for group presidents. Whereas respondents from the more cohesive groups tend to expect their presidents to emphasize the individual's connection with group membership in their appeals for support of the group line, those from less cohesive groups tend to expect their presidents to reiterate the agreement reached by a majority of members while emphasizing that the group line need not be adopted by all in the group. This suggests that group cohesion should be more broadly defined to encompass a cohesive group identity as well as cohesive voting patterns (See Brown 2000).

"I think he is strong in the way he explains the reasons why we should be united...that doesn't make him the leader that everybody loves, because if you have to be strong and tough, members feel they don't have the freedom to vote as they want, according to national positions, but of course that's precisely the idea. You work in a European group and not in a national party, so you have to forget about your national party line and have a group line and that what he always tries to do. So, I think in this respect he is an effective leader". (October 5, 2011)

Presidents from the more cohesive groups are more likely to call upon members to support the group line in that the group's success is more important than any policy objection they may hold. In turn, the perceived responsibility of the president in these groups is to remind members that the shared values and goals that bind members to one another are at-stake in plenary votes. The president in most groups may normally leave direct lobbying to other leaders, but helps to secure support for the common line by appealing to the group as a whole on the basis of shared beliefs or to appeal to a sense of loyalty to the group by requesting that they dissent at a less costly level. In other words, while the group president may not be perceived to bear the primary

responsibility for building group unity, most respondents recognize the opportunity afforded to group presidents to appeal for widespread support of the group line in their role as chair of group meetings and as primary public spokespersons for the group.

The ability to convey shared beliefs was also cited by all EFD respondents as the defining attribute of an effective group president though the responses and my observations indicate that while the co-presidents divide responsibilities neither appears to be engaged in any form of dissent management. In this sense, conveying shared beliefs refers to the reiteration of shared attitudes on integration and other policy areas but not in urging members to pursue any particular voting behavior in plenary. In turn, while a shared EFD group identity exists to some degree it is not cultivated by group leaders including the co-presidents.

“Well, it works in a way that is very pragmatic I would say. If one has to be away, the other can chair the group meetings. Anything having to do with public communication, it is mostly Nigel Farage who is representing the group. When it comes to more internal affairs, that is the Council of Presidents and how to set the agenda for the plenary and things like that it is mostly Speroni who goes. They have at least a week-to-week discussion on who does what and I think it has worked quite reasonably”. (October 13, 2011)

Meanwhile, the frequency of respondents from influential party groups offering the response of consensus-building did not occur to the anticipated extent in that while S & D respondents frequently cited consensus-building, they were joined in this assessment by a similar percentage of GUE respondents but not by a majority of respondents in the other influential groups. However, if the ALDE national leadership responses are included, the gap between expectations and actual results is closed considerably in that responses citing Verhofstadt’s previous experience as prime minister stressed his consensus-building skills. In contrast, GUE respondents tended to underscore the responsibility of the group president to ensure equal participation in group forum discussions and to respect the divisions that occur within the group when citing consensus-building as an attribute of effective presidents.

“The role of the president is important in the group. He must provide the collegium and the unity at the same time, which is very difficult when you have two hundred sixty-five members, twenty-six counties, and more than fifty parties. The organization of the group is very clear, there are different levels of responsibility which help to manage the group, but even if there are coordinators and leaders in the working groups, sometimes you cannot find a compromise at these levels and then it is necessary that somebody will take the decision. This is the role of Daul in the organization of the group. He also has other responsibilities like representing the opinions and positions of the group which are very important”. (November 9, 2011)

As the response above emphasizes, leading a large group requires a president to preside over an extensive communication network. Normally, the EPP or S & D leadership structure identifies and secures consensus prior to the party group meeting, which in turn on the whole acts as a forum to affirm the group line rather than one for defining consensus. However, when a working group is deadlocked or when dissent arises outside of the working group, the group president may be called upon to lead negotiations and to take a more assertive role in the group meeting.

“Well, this is my personal opinion, but an effective group leader would be an effective big coordinator. An effective leader can bring all of the differences between the different delegations under one position which can be acceptable to everyone. A good group leader takes into consideration the positions of small countries but also considers the clout of big countries. A good group leader can convince different delegations and MEPs that we are here to compromise and that Europe is about give and take”. (June 27, 2012)

In the three most cohesive groups (EPP, Greens/EFA and S & D), an effective group president is assessed in part according to the skill of communicating with other leaders, policy experts, and national delegations in securing minimal dissent or as the response above described the role as a “big coordinator” When the group is deadlocked or when a consensus has not been identified prior to a group meeting, the group president is uniquely positioned as the person chairing the meeting to identify and communicate a potential consensus. This requires the skill to not only listen but also to identify the key elements of a potential compromise.

“He is a very talented and skilled and most of all an experienced leader being a former Prime Minister of Belgium in that the whole country is a compromise in a sense. He’s got good routines when it comes to finding a common position even though the initial positions can be quite far

from one another. He is very good at seeing where we have the very smallest common denominator and being able to find a compromise.” (October 26, 2011)

ALDE respondents were more likely to assign primary consensus-building responsibility to the president. In my observations of group meetings, Verhofstadt often identified consensus where none seemed to be apparent or successfully advocated for the group line despite initial intense objections within the group. Consensus-building meanwhile is interpreted differently by respondents in the less cohesive groups. In the GUE, when a delegation or a member deviates from the rapporteur’s position or the view of the majority, there is little or no effort to convince them to support the majority position or to express dissent at a less costly level. GUE group presidents are in turn viewed as effective when they are able to convince a majority within the group to support a given position but yet are expected to accept frequent dissent.

“We have a different nature from the other European parliamentary groups. We are a confederal group, so the role of the President, and I think he does it very well, is to balance the different positions in the group and try to keep the union on all the common positions, which are the majority, but we don’t have a discipline of vote, as all the delegations have the freedom to vote one way or the other depending on their positions...so I think he tries to keep that balance between keeping us united and also to respect the differences”. (October 27, 2011)

The confederal organization of the group influences the shared group identity in the sense that maintaining the unity of the group is measured by keeping national parties in the group and not by ensuring that a maximum number of members support a common line. In my observations of group meetings, President Zimmer would often advocate a common line (at times to abstain as a group) while always noting that no member or delegation was bound to support any line. In this sense, her efforts are restricted by both the confederal organization of the group and the group culture that does not positively view efforts to secure voting discipline.

DETERMINING WHEN TO INTERVENE

When should the group president defer to others to build consensus and when should they intervene to ensure that the maximum number of members support the group line or that dissent

is expressed at less costly levels? I asked the question of when the group president(s) become involved in ensuring that the group is unified. In turn, I anticipated four responses: the group president is never involved in building group unity, the president is involved only when prominent reports are at-stake, the president is involved when the party group meeting or working group is deadlocked, and the president is always involved in building unity.

H1: Respondents from more influential party groups will be more likely to contend that the group president is involved in building unity only when party group meetings are deadlocked.

With higher legislative stakes in terms of plenary outcomes and reputation, presidents of influential party groups will have more incentive to address dissent or to break the deadlock that may occur in party group meetings. Whereas presidents of less influential party groups will be more willing to let dissent raised in group meetings go unanswered or to accept that no group line can be formed, presidents of more influential groups will in most circumstances address dissent in group meetings or ensure that the meeting produces a group line.

H2: Respondents from less influential party groups will be more likely to maintain that the group president is never involved in building party group unity.

With little or no influence upon plenary outcomes, group presidents have little incentive to ensure that the group is unified in plenary voting. Accordingly, they will not take on any dissent management responsibilities and assume more of a ceremonial role. In contrast, presidents from more influential groups should be involved in ensuring group unity to some degree.

H3: Respondents from more influential party groups will be more likely to maintain that presidents are active in dissent management only on prominent reports or always involved.

Plenary influence should provide incentive to group presidents to ensure that an optimal number of members support the group line on prominent reports. While plenary losses or higher than expected dissent levels on most reports should not be welcomed, much higher costs are

associated with dissent on prominent reports. In turn, presidents of influential party groups should always be engaged when prominent reports are at-stake.

H4: Respondents who are coordinators, rank-and-file group members, or staff will be more likely than other respondents to cite the president's efforts to build group unity in party group meetings.

Whereas, respondents who are group vice-presidents or secretary-generals are more likely to work with or observe the president's efforts to build group unity in a variety of forums, respondents who are lower in the membership or staff hierarchy will be more likely to only observe the president's contributions (if any) to group unity during party group meetings. In turn, rank-and-file members and staff will be more likely to associate the president's role of presiding over group meetings with any efforts to build unity within the group.

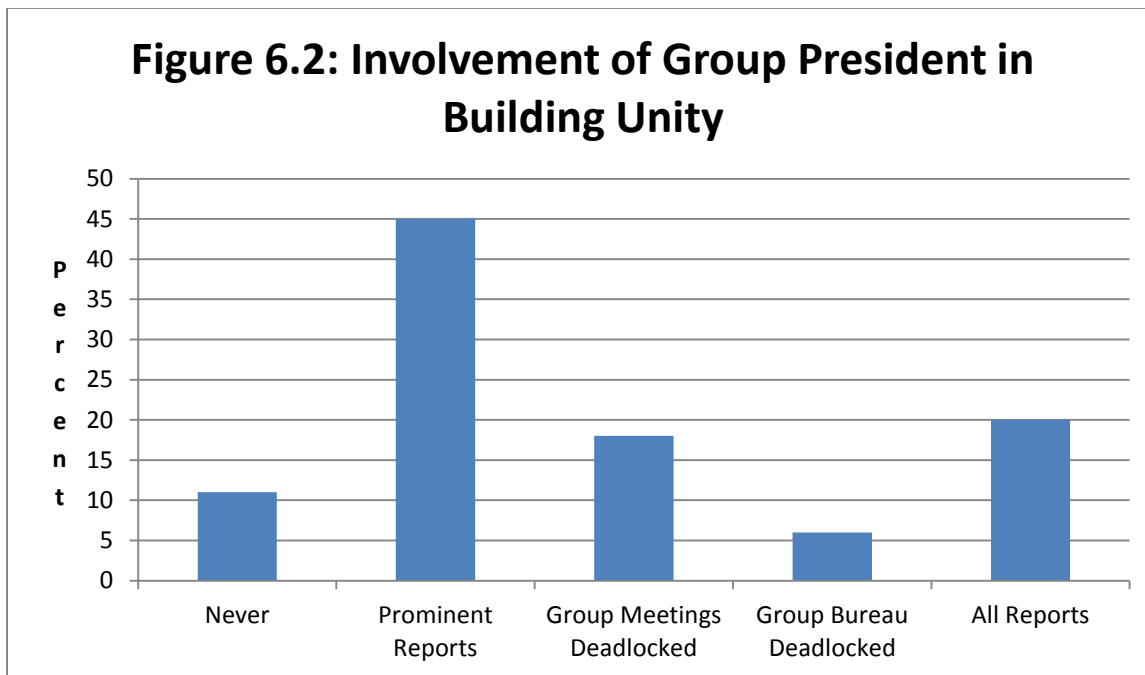
H5: Respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to identify the party group president's contributions to building unity on prominent reports.

Increased exposure to group organizational and socialization processes should lead respondents to contend that the group president is only involved in building unity when prominent reports are at-stake, whereas those with less exposure will be more likely to assume that the group president is always involved in building group unity due to the assumed responsibilities associated with representing the entire group.

H6: Respondents from member-states with a strong or moderate positive public view of the EU will be more likely to cite the president's role in building unity in party group meetings.

Respondents from member-states with a positive public view of the EU will have more incentive to strongly identify with the party group. In turn, respondents should view the party group meetings as valuable forums that provide opportunities to contribute to the development and produce consensus on the group line. As these meetings are chaired by group presidents, respondents from these member-states should be more likely to positively view the contributions of presidents than those from member-states with a more negative public view of the EU.

As depicted below in Figure 6.2, all but five respondents answered the question and unlike the previous question, respondents did not offer multiple explanations but instead were specific as to the point to when the group president became involved in building unity. An unanticipated fifth response maintaining that the group president was only involved when the group bureau/presidency is deadlocked was offered by five percent of respondents.⁸ Forty-five percent of respondents indicated that presidents were only involved in building group unity when prominent reports were at-stake. In these instances, presidents are expected to make appeals in group meetings, leadership forums, and if necessary in meetings with individual MEPs and national delegations. In contrast, when prominent reports are not at-stake, the group president is expected to rely on other leaders and act more as a cheerleader rather than as an arbiter.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents offering each response. N of Cases: 79

However, twenty percent of respondents maintained that their group president was involved in building unity on all reports. For these respondents, group unity is more readily attained if the

⁸ The bureau normally consists of the group president, vice-presidents, the secretary-general, coordinators and national delegation leaders. The ALDE and S& D have a separate forum known as the presidency which excludes coordinators and national delegation leaders.

group president takes the lead on securing support from dissenting or undecided members. Eighteen percent of respondents noted that the group president was involved in building group unity only when party group meetings are deadlocked. In turn, the group president is expected to: identify consensus derived from deliberations, secure support for the pre-existing group line, or to propose a group line when one is not apparent. Eleven percent of respondents did not perceive the group president as having any role in building group unity. According to this perception, the president's primary role is not to manage dissent or build consensus but rather to (1) preside over group meetings in order to ensure equal opportunity for all members to contribute to discussions and (2) represent the group in plenary debates, Conference of Presidents and other forums.

TABLE 6.3: PREDICTORS OF GROUP PRESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Party Group	0.4460***
Group Position	0.2670
Member-State	0.4341
Gender	0.2478
Years of Service	0.4634
Profession	0.4907***

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. . *, **, *** denote statistical significance on the .05, .01, and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 79

When considering the relationship between respondent characteristics and the likelihood of offering each of the five responses, party group membership and the previous profession of respondents achieved both high statistical and substantive significance. As Table 6.4 below indicates, respondents who had previous leadership experience or had served in elected or party office were more likely to maintain that group presidents are involved in building group unity only on prominent reports. This suggests that previous leadership responsibility and acquaintance with the legislative process may lead respondents to associate the party leader's involvement in building unity only on high profile reports and otherwise defer to other leaders to manage dissent. In contrast, respondents with previous staff backgrounds in national parliaments or parties or at the EU level were nearly evenly split among response categories.

TABLE 6.4: GROUP PRESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND PREVIOUS PROFESSION

Professions	Never	Prominent Reports	Group Meeting	Bureau	All Reports	N
Leadership	0.05	0.55	0.18	0.04	0.18	22
Elected/Office	0.09	0.41	0.27	0	0.23	22
Staff	0.25	0.30	0.20	0	0.25	20
Private Sector	0.75	0.25	0	0	0	4
Education/Student	0.33	0.17	0.33	0.17	0	6
Unknown	0.20	0.40	0	0.20	0.20	5
(N of Cases)	(9)	(35)	(14)	(5)	(16)	79

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to respondent's previous profession of when the group president becomes involved in building group unity. N of Cases: 79. Cramér's V (0.4907) ***

As depicted in Table 6.5 below, expectations regarding the hypothesized relationship between party group membership and the likelihood of offering particular responses to the question of when the group president becomes involved in building unity were largely met. However, the high frequency of responses referencing prominent reports across most party groups was unexpected. This indicates that aside from the least cohesive group (EFD) and the ALDE (whose leader is more visibly engaged on all reports) most group presidents relegate their consensus-building roles to prominent reports in order to maximize their influence and limit their involvement for situations when the plenary stakes are at their highest.

TABLE 6.5: GROUP PRESIDENT INVOLVEMENT AND PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Responses	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS	GUE	S & D	N
Never	0	.11	1.0	.07	.20	0	0	9
Prominent Reports	.18	.78	0	.60	.30	1.0	.37	35
Group Meetings	.23	.11	0	.27	.20	0	.19	14
Bureau Deadlocked	.06	0	0	.06	0	0	.19	5
All Reports	.53	0	0	0	.30	0	.25	16
(N of Cases)	(17)	(9)	(5)	(15)	(10)	(7)	(16)	79

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to party group affiliation. Number of respondents per party group appears on the last line of the table. N of Cases: 79. Cramér's V (0.446) ***

In addition, respondents from the more influential party groups were more likely to maintain that presidents become involved in building group unity when party group meetings are deadlocked. These responses also at times revealed the impact of party group size in that respondents from the two largest groups often referenced the role of horizontal working group

meetings in building support for the group line. In turn, when working group meetings are deadlocked or when there is dissent in the party group meeting, the group president is more likely to become involved in consensus-building whereas they are likely to otherwise defer to vice-presidents and the rapporteur to argue for the group line.

While every EFD respondent maintained that the group co-presidents were never involved in building group unity, ECR and GUE respondents defied expectations by contending in large numbers that the group president was involved in building group unity on prominent reports which indicates a higher priority on plenary unity compared to the EFD at least when the plenary stakes are at their greatest. However, unlike respondents from the more cohesive groups, ECR and GUE respondents do not associate an importance of group unity with the president's advocacy for a group line on prominent reports to any significant degree.

ALDE respondents were more likely than those from any other party group to identify the group president as the primary leader responsible for building group unity. Most ALDE respondents noted the skill at which Verhofstadt identified consensus when it was not evident in group meetings or in proposing a common line in group meetings when none existed.

“In general, what makes him a good leader is that he has the ability to listen. For example, in the beginning of my career in the European Parliament, we had a big discussion on something and there were opposing opinions in the group and we discussed for three hours, and he listened and let everybody tell what they want to have as this group line and he made a decision that everybody thought was perfect, because his proposal was kind of a compromise proposal. It wasn't the right or the left side of our group, but something everybody could feel comfortable with and besides he let us discuss for such a long time...” (June 21, 2012)

I witnessed similar efforts by Verhofstadt in group meetings who after a lengthy debate when no consensus seemed evident made a proposal supported by most or all members. On other occasions, Verhofstadt suggested a free vote by members was in order thereby underlining the importance for a group president to know when to propose or urge support for a group line.

“Maybe about a year ago, we had a debate about criticizing Berlusconi’s hold of the media. So, we discussed it in our group meeting and we all agreed to vote the critical Berlusconi line. We then had the vote in parliament and it lost by one vote and we were all mystified because we had done the calculations and we thought we would win it. We found that our three Irish members had switched sides after our meeting. They didn’t think it would matter, but it made all the difference. So in the following evening’s group meeting, Verhofstadt made sure the Irish members were there and said we had an agreement in our meeting and you three voted against it. Would you like to explain in front of the whole group why you did that? In the end, Verhofstadt said we have done this, so let’s go on to the next item, but it was a masterful performance. I said to him after afterwards that I was very impressed by that trick. He said unfortunately you can’t do it often, because if you do it too often, it loses its effectiveness”. (October 26, 2011)

Knowing when to become involved in building group unity is a key skill for any leader. The response above highlights the skills honed by Verhofstadt as a former Belgian prime minister in not only building coalitions but in maintaining discipline within the coalition or in this case the party group. If a group president were to call members out on their dissenting votes in every party group meeting, the tactic would lose its effectiveness and a backlash might occur. However, if done sparingly, it may help to secure unity on future votes and re-enforce group norms governing dissent (alerting the group ahead of time).

Apart from ALDE respondents, Greens/EFA members were the most likely to reference the role of their co-presidents in building group unity. Having co-presidents enables one to chair meetings while the other lobbies members off to the side during the meeting as I witnessed on occasion. The Greens/EFA further differentiate themselves from other groups in that a majority of members and even staff take part in group meeting discussions. In turn, some respondents may believe that co-presidents are involved in building unity on all reports, because they regularly participate in group discussions. Similarly, other respondents may identify the role of co-presidents in building unity with only prominent reports, because it is on these occasions that the co-presidents act more as advocates in the group meetings rather than as individual participants or as facilitators of consensus.

“They are extremely different people. I would say that it is partly a national thing and partly a personal thing. Danny just does it by sheer charisma and clout within the parliament and within Europe as a whole saying this is the line for me and I need your vote and he will do that only very sparingly. He will only do it if the foundations of the Union are coming into play, with the compact, or a proposal for a new treaty change. Rebecca basically keeps to the things she knows a lot about: energy policy, environmental policy, some human rights cases”. (June 14, 2012)

In contrast, group presidents from the least influential party groups take the lead consensus-building role in far fewer instances. Consequently, the group president is expected to be involved in building group unity only when there is a perceived opportunity to impact plenary outcomes (which is less common for these groups) or in terms of core group beliefs being at stake. Nonetheless, even in such situations, the group president is expected to honor norms governing dissent in that consensus is not pursued at the cost of separate lines by national delegations.

”Well, she has a very difficult job. We have a confederal character in our group which means she has to try to see the consensus coming. She can’t do that in a way that she is depriving the people of their opinion, but she gives the floor to the parties and her job is to see if the majority...we don’t use that word majority...the consensus is there. If there isn’t any consensus, then she says that’s ok, we know we have that confederal character and everyone can do what they want to do. Of course, even if there is a consensus, someone can vote differently”. (June 27, 2012)

Though the group culture is more conducive to building support for a common line, the presidents of the larger and more influential party groups are similarly perceived to relegate their consensus-building roles to prominent reports. The key difference with the GUE being that dissent is managed by other leaders on nearly all reports. In turn, EPP and S & D group presidents may in part be perceived as being involved in building group unity only when prominent reports are at stake because they are expected to work with other group leaders in a whip structure assigning particular roles and cues for involvement (vice-presidents in working groups, etc.). Otherwise, the group president is expected to utilize opportunities as chair of the group meeting to re-enforce the group identity and the appeals of other leaders.

As the leader of the largest and most influential party group, the EPP president has enormous responsibility to ensure the group's legislative objectives are reflected in plenary outcomes. This requires a unified group and constant communication within a hierarchical structure managing consensus among twenty-six national delegations (many of which are national governing parties) and over two hundred-seventy members.

“I remember one important example. One cornerstone of this six-pack economic package was to give the right to the Commission to enter automatically into punitive measures if a member-state does not conform with what is contained within the package, keeping the rate of inflation down, keep the deficit below three percent, and a number of issues. In our group, the French delegation was going to vote differently and this was going to be lost. Having the entire package to be lost would have tremendous consequences...there were behind the scenes efforts, not only with the members of the French delegation but also with Sarkozy directly. The French government agreed and the French members were liberated to vote along with the group. Mr. Daul played a key role, he made telephone calls, went to the Elyse Palace, and to the Germans”. (November 9, 2011)

The six-pack exemplifies when the EPP president should take the lead in building group unity. If the six-pack had not passed, its failure would have called into question the ability of the EPP to lead coalitions and deliver votes for prominent reports. This led Daul to negotiate with national leaders from his European party while assuming a more assertive role in building party group unity. This was reflected in appeals in group meetings, through negotiations with national delegations and at times in appeals to individual MEPs which culminated in ninety-eight percent cohesion or unanimity on each of the six-pack votes (www.votewatch.eu). Otherwise, most EPP respondents believed that the president should respect the group decision-making process.

“He tries not to be involved in all of the issues because he respects the competence of the members...His philosophy is to rely very much on colleagues who are dealing with an issue, he believes they are the persons that should convince colleagues of the group to behave in a responsible way, to attend the meetings, to vote when they should vote, so he very much relies on that. When he sees that there could be a problem, then he uses his authority as chairman to make sure we avoid that”. (October 15, 2011)

Similarly, the S & D group president is expected to work with and rely upon a leadership structure to identify and ensure support for a common line. If a report is not regarded as crucial

because it concerns a social issue or a divisive foreign policy question, the group president may call for a free vote. However, if the report is perceived to be vital to group interests, the president may intervene in the bureau or in the group meeting.

“So, Swoboda is chairing the group meeting, but he is not really interfering into business except when there are very crucial reports, and in this case he might call for a meeting of the respective coordinators and vice presidents in his office to coordinate a common position before the dossier is discussed in the group meeting. Like what we had with ACTA for instance”. (June 17, 2012)

GROUP VICE-PRESIDENTS

To better understand the impact of group vice-presidents in dissent management, I asked respondents how vice-presidents in your group contribute to group unity. Group vice-presidents are often assigned as rapporteurs on prominent reports and may stand in for the group president in party group meetings, the Conference of Presidents, and in other forums. They are also often group spokespersons and in the three largest party groups, some are assigned as chairs of horizontal working groups. However, the dissent management role of group vice-presidents is undocumented. As effective dissent management requires a bridge in regards to communication between and coordination among between rapporteurs/coordinators and the group president, I expect vice-presidents in the more cohesive groups to take lead dissent management roles. In turn, I anticipated five potential responses: group vice-presidents are not assigned any responsibilities, vice-presidents are purely administrators, vice-presidents contribute to group unity by chairing working groups, vice-presidents coordinate consensus-building in group bureau/presidency meetings, and vice-presidents are active lobbyists on behalf of the group line throughout every stage of the legislative process.

H1: Respondents from less influential party groups will be more likely to maintain that group vice-presidents have no responsibilities or are purely administrators.

Greater plenary influence should incentivize party groups to assign consensus-building and dissent management responsibilities to every member of the group leadership team including

vice-presidents. In contrast, party groups with little or no plenary influence will either treat vice-president positions as awards for particular members or delegations with only ceremonial duties such as sitting in for the group president at certain events or meetings, or relegate responsibilities to administrative functions such as policy research and development.

H2: Respondents from the more influential party groups will be more likely to maintain that group vice-presidents are active participants in dissent management efforts.

As a party group's level of plenary influence increases, the dissent management role of group vice-presidents should become more widespread. This will translate into active lobbying roles for group vice-presidents at every legislative stage whether in committees, group forums, or on an individual basis especially when prominent reports are at-stake. Vice-presidents in these groups will work with other leaders to identify and manage dissent in order to build consensus or ensure dissent is expressed at minimal levels. According to social identity theory, vice-presidents in these groups should also be agents of socialization as well as advocates for the group line.

H3: Respondents from larger party groups will be more likely to maintain that group vice-presidents manage dissent as chairs of working groups or in the group bureau/presidency.

Larger party groups have created horizontal working groups as forums where group members from committees with related policy portfolios can prepare the group line and assign responsibilities including rapporteurs and plenary speaking time. Vice-presidents in these groups chair horizontal working groups whereas the role is not applicable in the small and most of the medium-sized groups. In turn, larger party groups are more likely to rely in part on group vice-presidents to build consensus in group bureau/presidency meetings.

H4: Respondents who hold non-elite group positions will be more likely to maintain that group vice-presidents have no responsibilities or are merely administrators.

Rank-and-file members and staff are likely unaware of the full responsibilities of group vice-presidents as most will only have contact with coordinators or rapporteurs unless they are

members of influential delegations or have expressed dissent on prominent reports. Otherwise, non-elite respondents are likely to not associate any dissent management responsibilities with group vice-presidents or only view them as administrators whereas elites will be more acquainted with these roles where applicable.

H5: Respondents with more years of parliamentary service will be more likely to maintain that group vice-presidents are active in dissent management or reference their role in working groups.

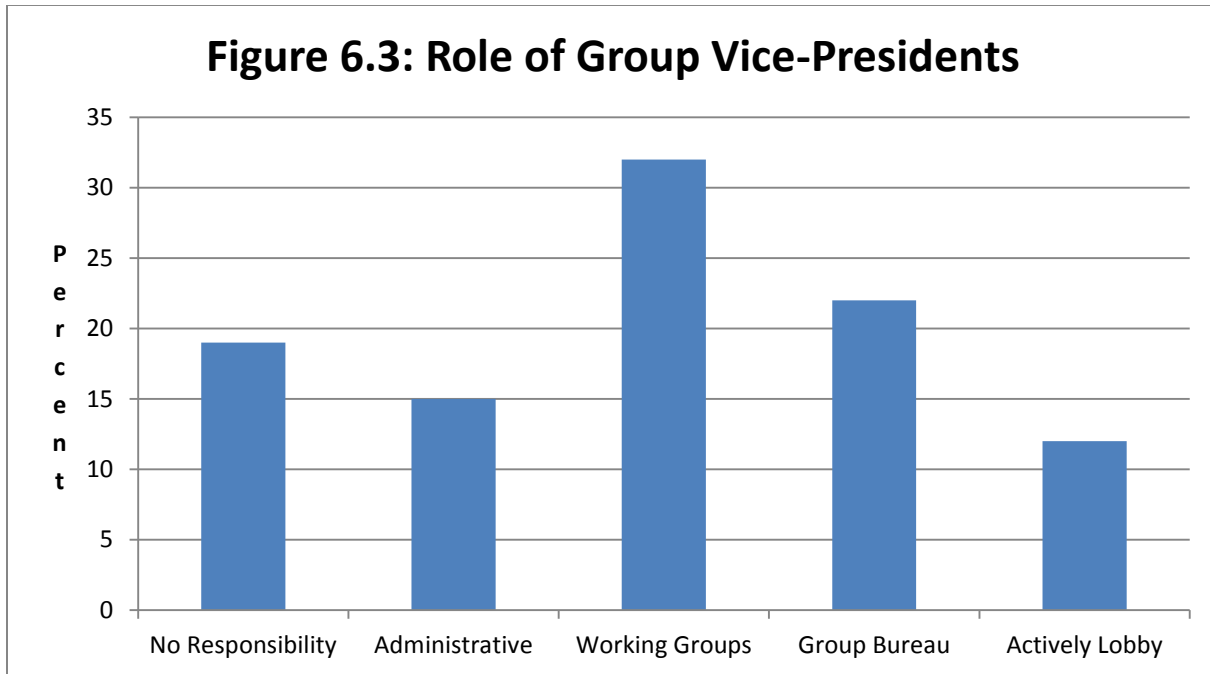
With greater exposure to party group decision-making and socialization processes, respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to understand the responsibilities of group vice-presidents and associate a dissent management role with this position either in all instances or in specific forums as working groups where applicable. In contrast, fewer years of service will lead to less awareness and to less socialization in that members with fewer years of service will not closely identify with the group.

H6: Respondents from member-states with strong pro-EU attitudes will be more likely to maintain that group vice-presidents are active participants in dissent management efforts.

More successful socialization efforts should lead to a shared conceptualization of the group identity facilitating support for the group line but also promotion of specific behavior including deferral to group leaders such as vice-presidents and associating these positions with the promotion of group unity. In this instance, representing or originating from a member-state with high levels of support for the EU should incentivize respondents to identify with the group, particularly the more cohesive groups which have strong pro-European integration identities.

Every respondent answered the question with ten offering multiple examples of how vice-presidents contribute to group unity. As depicted below in Figure 6.3, nearly a third of responses stated that group vice-presidents solely or primarily contribute to group unity by chairing horizontal working groups. The three largest party groups (EPP, S & D, and ALDE) have

horizontal working groups chaired by group vice-presidents, whereas the Greens/EFA working groups are normally chaired by other members. Working groups provide a forum to resolve differences between group members across committees. When presiding over working groups, vice-presidents act as mediators and as ‘coordinators-in-chief’ preparing the group line or advancing it to the group meeting where they join with other leaders in pursuing consensus.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents offering each response. Number of Cases: 94. Multiple Responses were permitted.

The second most commonly cited contribution of group vice-presidents was their role in pursuing consensus in the bureau or presidency. In these forums, group vice-presidents may advance a particular line or to secure a compromise before they and others advocate for the line in the group meeting. In contrast, fifteen percent of responses described vice-presidents primarily as administrators. Administrative responsibilities consist of: overseeing the secretariat, managing group finances, developing policy positions, as well as standing in for the president in group meetings or in the Conference of Presidents. Respondents citing administrative duties or no responsibilities did not provide multiple explanations.

In turn, nineteen percent of respondents maintained that group vice-presidents have neither administrative nor dissent management responsibilities and are solely awards to specific members or national delegations. However, twelve percent of responses went a step further by maintaining that group vice-presidents actively lobby members to support the group line or express their dissent at less costly levels. For some respondents, this is a reference to the vice-president serving as a group whip or parliamentary secretary. For others, it is indicative of a more active dissent management role: on prominent reports or at times on other reports whether by taking members aside during group meetings or meeting with them afterwards.

As depicted in Table 6.6 below, respondent's party group affiliation was the only characteristic to have both a substantive and statistically significant relationship with responses to the question of what role do group vice-presidents play in building party group unity, and only in regards to the first and third response options.

TABLE 6.6: PREDICTORS OF GROUP VICE PRESIDENT ROLE RESPONSES

Predictor	None	Administrative	Working Groups	Bureau	Actively Lobby
Party Group	0.5637***	0.4998*	0.6804***	0.1857	0.2622
Group Position	0.1515	0.1973	0.1902	0.2139	0.2708
Member-State	0.3632	0.3763	0.5000	0.3824	0.4456
Gender	0.0005	-0.0219	-0.0731	0.1698	0.2042
Years of Service	0.3500	0.2866	0.3352	0.5000	0.4533
Previous Profession	0.4393	0.4473	0.3412	0.3891	0.3721
(N of Cases)	(18)	(14)	(30)	(21)	(11)

Note: Entries are Cramér's V measuring strength of association. *, ** and ***, denote statistical significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels respectfully. The number of cases associated with each response appears in parentheses on the last line of the table. N of Cases: 94. Multiple responses permitted.

Members of less influential party groups as expected were more likely to maintain that vice-presidents had no or only administrative responsibilities while members of the two largest party groups most frequently cited the vice-president's role of chairing working groups as the primary contribution to party group unity. Respondents who maintained that group vice-presidents are active lobbyists on behalf of the group line largely originated from the three most cohesive

groups (Greens/EFA, EPP, and S & D) with much of the rest coming from ECR respondents. Finally, responses citing the vice-presidents' contributions to group unity group bureau or presidency meetings largely came from S & D or Greens/EFA respondents.

TABLE 6.7: VICE PRESIDENT RESPONSES AND PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D
No Responsibilities	0.11	0.55	0.60	0.06	0.18	0.72	0
Administrative	0.50	0	0.20	0	0.18	0.14	0.06
Chair Working Groups	0.17	0.11	0	0.75	0.09	0	0.77
Group Bureau/Presidency	0.22	0.22	0.20	0.19	0.36	0.14	0.35
Actively Lobby Members	0.06	0.22	0	0.13	0.27	0	0.18
(N of Cases)	(18)	(9)	(5)	(16)	(11)	(8)	(17)

Note: Entries are percentage of respondents within each party group who offered each response with the last line depicting respondents per party group. N of Cases: 94. Multiple responses were permitted.

When ECR respondents discussed the contributions of group vice-presidents they largely were referring to the role of Ashley Fox as group whip and to a degree that of Timothy Kirkhope as (former) deputy chair and chair of the policy development group. The group does not have working groups and in turn, ECR vice-presidents (apart from Fox) do not have dissent management responsibilities.

“I think it has to do with the Anglo-Saxon tradition of having a Whip. The person worrying this week about the votes for next week would be Ashley Fox on the leadership team. If you looking slightly further down the road it would be the Deputy Chairman, Timothy Kirkhope, who has responsibility for the Policy Development Group, which brings together the coordinators and the committee chairs and national delegation leaders and that tends to focus on particular areas where interest has been expressed or a need has been identified”. (September 23, 2011)

The ECR have established a leadership structure acting as an alert system identifying a common line in the long-term through the Policy Committee and addressing divisions in the short-term through the whip office. The final product is at times a common line advocating a position on reports or amendments or an agreement to abstain as a group though distinct national lines are possible, especially on the EU budget. With no working groups, finding consensus on the report at-hand begins at the committee level and ends at the group meeting which is the primary decision-making forum.

In turn, this places an enormous burden on ECR rapporteurs and coordinators (who are often one of only two or three group members on a committee) and the whip to achieve consensus in the group meeting without the assistance of group vice-presidents. As chapter four outlined, these efforts are further undermined frequently by separate national lines on prominent reports and the norm of accepting national divisions unless consensus through a group line of abstain can be attained by the whip and others. However, as the parliament has progressed, group cohesion has increased which suggests that as this new group establishes a coherent identity and a more extensive whip structure buttressed by a stable presidency, cohesion may continue to rise.

Above all, I am surprised by the ALDE results in that contrary to expectations respondents from the second most influential party group on the whole maintained that their group vice-presidents had only administrative or no responsibilities. On the other hand, this helps to explain the emphasis placed on the group president's consensus-building role by ALDE respondents and the gap between expected and actual cohesion.

“Up till now, maybe besides Guy Verhofstadt, the most important one was Alexander Graf Lambsdorff. Only because he is the leader of our German delegation and he is quite experienced in working with policy...and so on, and so he is quite a broad-based politician so to say. That doesn't mean that the others are not, but he is very experienced”. (June 25, 2012)

Respondent perceptions of ALDE group vice-presidents in part reflect the poor regard members have toward horizontal working groups. If working groups are not viewed as useful instruments for ensuring group unity, then the dissent management role of vice-presidents in the larger groups will in turn likely be accorded less importance and members may not be as easily socialized into following norms of behavior (See Garner and Letki 2005). In turn, while ALDE party group meetings are viewed as vital forums for consensus-building and identifying the group line, ALDE vice-presidents (unless they are rapporteur) are not perceived to play important roles in these meetings.

Another explanation for the high frequency of administrative responses is that particular group vice-presidents are afforded higher status by ALDE respondents. At the time of field research, Mr. Lambsdorff served as the deputy chair (the position was being phased out) along with his responsibilities as vice-president and as leader of one of the two largest delegations in the group (FDP from Germany). Many respondents considered him, the UK delegation chair (Fiona Hall) and the secretary-general to be the most influential in setting the group line with the greatest emphasis placed on the group president.

“Verhofstadt has made the real decision-making the vice-presidency. So, he, and Lambsdorff, and Alexander Beels who is our secretary-general, and the rest tend to decide. They do inform the bureau and they inform the group, but actually the impetus seems to come from the vice-presidency, the small group, whereas under Graham Watson the previous leader, he was much more consensual, he didn’t want to take decisions on his own and left it to a bigger body, the bureau”. (October 26, 2011)

Respondents from the two largest party groups were more likely to reference the contributions of group vice-presidents as chairs of working groups or as the parliamentary secretary (whip) but were also more likely to perceive vice-presidents as active lobbyists for the group line. For example, as chairs of working groups, EPP vice-presidents manage dissent prior to the party group meeting where they are among the primary spokespersons for the group line.

“Yes, we are persuading in the working groups, but sometimes if there is a difficult situation and we need a majority and there are some members that need to be convinced, I discuss this with them also in private meetings outside the working group. I explain why I think this should be the position, they explain their position, and then we reach a compromise, a common position at the end”. (November 5, 2011)

Vice-presidents in either of the two largest groups may call for a free vote in the working group and/or the group meeting when a report pertains to an issue where the group accepts divisions (social issues, nuclear energy, etc.). However, in most instances, the EPP or S & D pursue a common line which is formed at the committee level, molded at the working group level, and then adopted at the group meeting. At every stage of the legislative process, vice-

presidents in the two largest groups try to resolve disputes by proposing amendments or reaching an agreement with members to dissent at a lower level such as by abstaining.

On the whole, responses from the most cohesive party group (Greens/EFA) mirror those of their counterparts in the two largest groups yet also reflect the group's size and culture. Vice-presidents do not normally chair working groups which focus on specific policy areas rather than committees with related portfolios. This may lead some members to conclude that vice-presidents serve a purely administrative function. However, Greens/EFA vice-presidents are viewed by a majority of respondents as active participants in securing support for a common line.

“We have discussions about the group line and at times I ask to be recognized to address the point and urge members to support the group position. That includes me taking members aside during the meeting, where I listen to their concerns and try to reach an accommodation or make a final appeal on behalf of the group, but I have done that in group meetings very often. Usually, we solve it in the group meetings, or bilateral in the group meetings.” (June 4, 2012)

More than any other group, Greens/EFA members are actively engaged in discussions in the group meeting, both formally as well as informally in private conversations in the aisle or in the hallway as the response above mentions. Greens/EFA vice-presidents advocate for support of the group line yet also often participate in give-and-take with colleagues to re-shape the group line through additional amendments, or to produce consensus by agreements to abstain as a group.

In the least influential party groups, respondents maintained that group vice-presidents had no responsibilities or were mere administrators though some did reference their decision-making role in the group bureau. For example, EFD respondents reiterated that group unity is not important and that vice-presidents and other group leaders have no role to play in building group unity. The absence of administrative replies also reflects in part the EFD group having co-presidents. This removes one role of vice-presidents: to fill in for the president as one co-president can cover for the other in group meetings.

“I participate in the bureau meetings. We have a bureau that consists of the two presidents and the vice-presidents, and we take decisions on the staff of the group, we take decisions on the more long-term strategic interests, for instance on enlargements and applications and things like that which might be considered confidential and that’s the primary role. There is also a public role to it in every time I speak on behalf of the group”. (October 13, 2011)

EFD vice-presidents do represent the group when they meet with the press and participate in plenary debates. Some vice-presidents also utilize their position as group coordinators to advocate policy goals as they are often the only group member on committees. In circumstances such as these, individual members can appeal to group colleagues to support their position on reports and a majority might be obtained. However, a group line is never presented at meetings thereby leaving vice-presidents to advocate for policy positions largely as individuals.

GUE respondents mirrored their EFD counterparts in mostly asserting that group vice-presidents had no real responsibilities in building group unity. However, the responses differed in that they reflected an evolving view among some in the group that not only should vice-presidents have greater responsibilities, but that the group should more actively pursue a common line even if it is to abstain as a group in plenary.

“The vice presidents in our group have not played a very great role. It’s not good. Rebecca is working on changing this. That’s why she has meetings once a month after the group meeting where she informally invites the vice presidents to discuss different things, but it’s not possible to take positions, because some people of the group think that this will be a new hierarchy... This is a problem in our group... It is very important that we retain some elements of our confederal character, but there must be ways of finding some common solutions, common positions, some common line”. (June 19, 2012)

As the response accentuates, GUE vice-presidents may meet to discuss reports, but they are not permitted under group rules to propose a common line at that meeting. Instead, they must individually either lobby delegations or advocate for a common line in the group meeting with the understanding that members and delegations are under no obligation to adopt a common line. Whether or not the current group president, Rebecca Zimmer, is successful in assigning greater

responsibilities to group vice-presidents will likely depend on whether the group culture evolves to embrace a group identity in which unity is valued over individual or delegation independence.

GROUP VICE-PRESIDENTS AS WHIPS

We know very little about the role of party group whips. According to Bailer (2009) party group leaders issue voting instructions to their members via voting lists which are often referred to as the group whip (Bailer, 2009, 195). In turn, I propose that a group whip is necessary in the larger and medium-sized groups in order to overcome logistical challenges. Their responsibilities should consist of: coordinating dissent management efforts by other leaders, mediate disputes between delegations or members prior to the group meeting, advise the group president on dissent management, address dissent during group forums, or lobby members and delegations to support the group line in private discussions.

During initial interviews, respondents often contended that their group did not have a whip. However, when pressed to identify responsibility for coordinating the group line and constructing the voting list, respondents often identified the parliamentary secretary. This led me to ask how the group parliamentary secretary helps to build group unity. In turn, I anticipated five possible responses: the group does not have this position, the group whip is only responsible for constructing the voting lists, the group whip coordinates consensus-building efforts but does not lobby dissenting members, the whip lobbies members only on prominent reports, and the group whip lobbies members on all reports.

H1: Large party groups will employ a group vice-president as a whip/parliamentary secretary in order to coordinate consensus-building and dissent management efforts.

The three largest party groups should require someone to coordinate consensus-building as well as dissent management efforts due to the sheer size of the group and number of reports. In this sense, they act both as an early alert system warning the group president and others of

potential dissent and as a facilitator of compromise among competing committees, working groups, and/or delegations. The smaller party groups meanwhile should not have a parliamentary secretary or whip as coordination is a simpler task with such small membership.

H2: Respondents from influential party groups will be more likely to maintain that the parliamentary secretary helps to manage dissent only on prominent or on all reports.

With higher plenary stakes, party groups should not only employ a member of leadership to coordinate the development of the group line and alert the group president and others of potential dissent but to assume greater responsibility by lobbying dissenting members or delegations on prominent reports or potentially all reports. In particular, given the stakes of prominent reports for influential party groups, there will be incentive to have someone address dissent in the working groups or in private meetings before involving the group president.

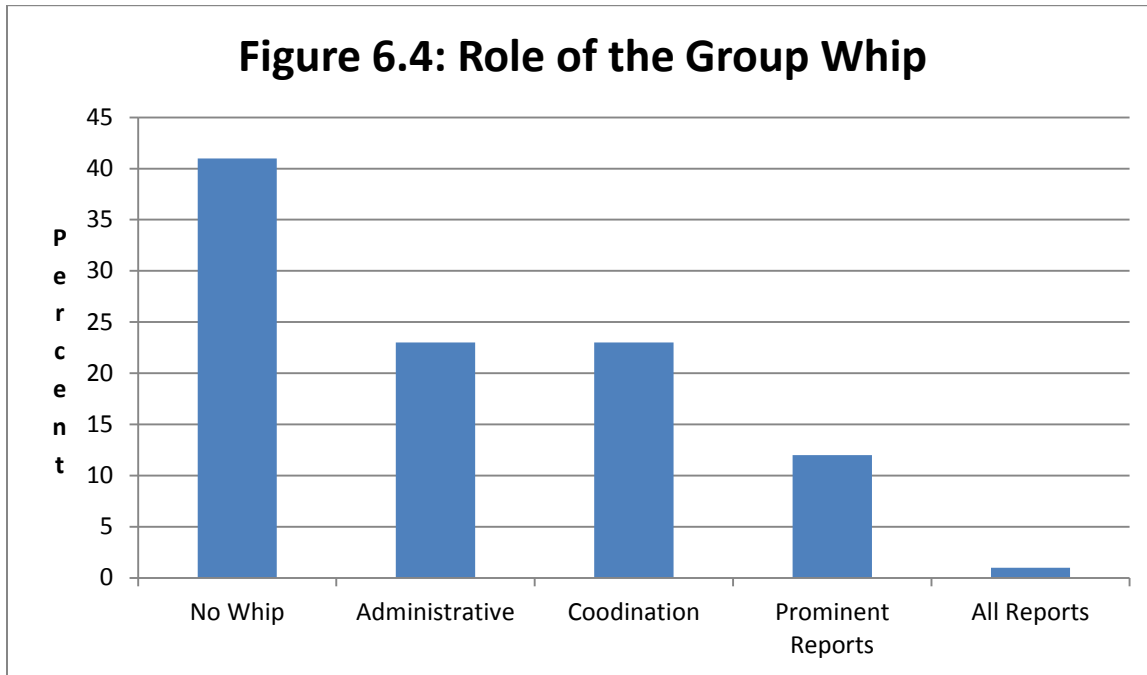
H3: Respondents from medium-sized party groups will be more likely to maintain that the group whip is responsible only for constructing the voting lists and other administrative tasks.

Respondents from the ECR and Greens and possibly the ALDE should maintain that a group vice-president has been designated to be responsible for constructing the group lists that are passed out to members in plenary informing them of the group line or the occurrence of a free vote on each report or amendment. In turn, this position may also be utilized to either approve or coordinate the assignment of plenary speaking time. Otherwise, the position should not be responsible for coordinating consensus-building and dissent management efforts.

H4: Respondents who do not hold elite or leadership positions within party groups will be more likely to maintain that the group does not have a whip or that it has only administrative tasks.

Respondents who are rank-and-file MEPs or staff should have less contact with group vice-presidents and in particular those who serve as the group whip or parliamentary secretary. Instead, these members or staff should work more closely with delegation leaders, coordinators and the rapporteur when building the group line or in discussing voting intentions. In turn, these

respondents will either assume the group does not have such a position or that this person is only responsible for distributing the voting lists or possible allocating plenary speaking time.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents offering each response. Number of Cases: 77

All but seven respondents answered the question and no multiple explanations were offered. As indicated above in Figure 6.4, forty-one percent of respondents maintained even after probing questions that the group did not have a parliamentary secretary or whip, which in most cases was correct. In other words, there were a few cases where the respondent insisted that the group did not have a parliamentary secretary even though the position did in fact exist. Twenty-three percent perceived the role of the parliamentary secretary as one involving primarily administrative duties, while the same percentage of respondents identified the role of the parliamentary secretary as one of coordinating consensus-building and dissent management efforts among group leaders. Twelve percent maintained that parliamentary secretaries/whips were among the primary leaders addressing dissent by members or delegations on prominent reports while only one respondent defined an active role in building consensus on all reports.

A statistically significant relationship at the .001 level occurred between a respondent's party group membership and the likelihood of offering one of the responses to the question of what was the role of the group whip or parliamentary secretary. In addition, a statistically significant relationship at the .05 level occurred between a respondent's gender as well as previous profession and the responses.

TABLE 6.8: PREDICTORS OF WHIP ROLE RESPONSES

Party Group	0.4597***
Group Position	0.2665
Member-State	0.4350
Gender	0.3910*
Years of Service	0.4052
<u>Previous Profession</u>	<u>0.4451*</u>

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, ** and ***, denote statistical significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 77

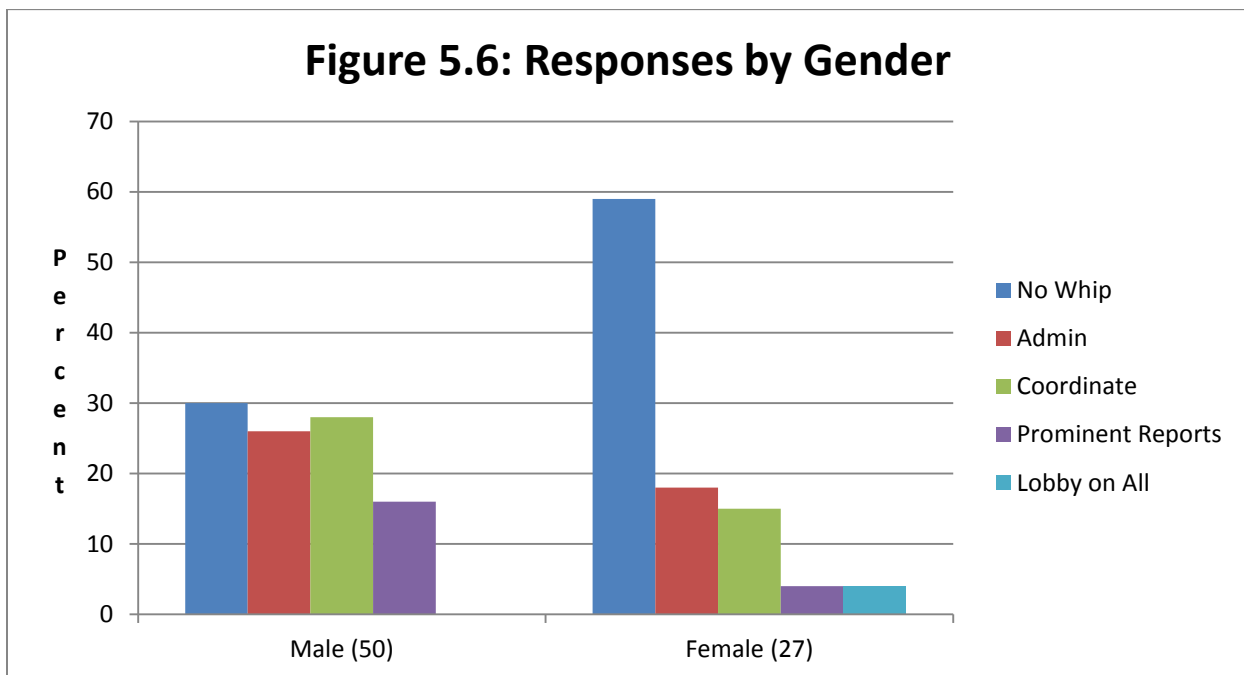
As depicted below in Table 6.9, those with previous leadership experience in national/local elected or party office were more likely to assign an administrative role for the group whip, yet also were more likely to identify a coordination role for the group whip in comparison to those from other previous professional backgrounds. Those who had previously served as legislators in various levels of government were more likely to have identified a key dissent management role for the group whip when prominent reports were at-stake though a plurality maintained that the group had no whip which was a sentiment shared by most of those who had previously served as staff or worked in the private sector.

TABLE 6.9: GROUP WHIP RESPONSES AND PREVIOUS PROFESSION

<u>Professions</u>	<u>No Whip</u>	<u>Administrative</u>	<u>Coordinate</u>	<u>Prominent</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>N</u>
Leadership	0.33	0.33	0.29	0.05	0	21
Elected Office	0.40	0.14	0.23	0.23	0	22
Staff	0.47	0.21	0.26	0.06	0	19
Private Sector	0.75	0.25	0	0	0	4
Education/Student	0.33	0.17	0.33	0.17	0	6
Unknown	0.20	0.40	0	0.20	0.20	5
<u>(N of Cases)</u>	<u>(31)</u>	<u>(18)</u>	<u>(18)</u>	<u>(9)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>77</u>

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to respondent's previous profession prior to service in the European Parliament. N of Cases: 77, Cramér's V: 0.4451*

As depicted below in Figure 6.5, female respondents were far more likely to maintain that their party group did not have a whip, while male respondents were more likely to contend that group whips contributed to unity by coordinating dissent management or by playing a key role on prominent reports. I am not sure why a respondent’s gender influenced these response trends. Perhaps the differences would be less pronounced with a larger sample of female respondents particularly given that most respondents not answering the question were women. The response that group whips build consensus on all reports was provided by a sole and female respondent.



Note: Figure depicts percentages of responses by respondent’s gender. Number in parentheses depicts number of respondents by gender. N of Cases: 77. Cramér’s V: 0.3910

When party group membership effects are considered in Table 6.10 below, respondents from the two largest groups as expected were more likely to assign a dissent management coordination role to the parliamentary secretary, while a third of ECR respondents also provided this response. As expected, all EFD and GUE respondents maintained that their group did not have this leadership position but I was surprised to hear the same response from all Greens/EFA respondents and from fifty-nine percent of ALDE respondents. However, as I proceeded with

interviews and observations, I concluded that Greens/EFA respondents offered this response because their secretary-general uniquely functioned as a whip, while ALDE responses reflect in part that parliamentary secretary responsibilities are split among three persons. Meanwhile, respondents from two of the three most influential party groups as expected were more likely to maintain that the group whip lobbied dissenting members or delegations when prominent reports were at-stake. ECR respondents were also likely to provide this response.

TABLE 6.10: GROUP WHIP RESPONSES AND PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D	N
No Group Whip	0.59	0	1.0	0	1.0	1.0	0	31
Administrative	0.35	0.11	0	0.43	0	0	0.31	18
Coordination	0.06	0.33	0	0.36	0	0	0.56	18
Prominent Reports	0	0.56	0	0.14	0	0	0.13	9
All Reports	0	0	0	0.07	0	0	0	1
(N of Cases)	(17)	(9)	(5)	(14)	(9)	(7)	(16)	77

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to party group affiliation with the last line depicting respondents per party group. N of Cases: 77, Cramér's V: 0.4597***

The EPP parliamentary secretary operates as part of a support system for building consensus and managing dissent. The sheer size of the group prevents individual leaders from meeting with every group member to address potential dissent. To resolve this collective action problem, the EPP have designed a hierarchical whip structure to identify and address dissent.

“If everyone had to take all of their problems and their differences to the Szajer level, then the load at that level would be unmanageable. Usually, it is not Szajer that we update usually it is the chair of the working group. If we have a delegation that has problems, we raise it during our working group meetings. So that is where we would take problems one step up.” (June 27, 212)

Coordinators are expected to resolve dissent in the committee level and the vice-presidents chairing the working group is responsible at their level. If the working group cannot resolve conflict, they appeal to the parliamentary secretary, Mr. Szajer, who if necessary will bring disputes as I observed at times to the attention of the group meeting. In this sense, while each group leader within the EPP whip structure is responsible for addressing dissent at their level, they can appeal to the person at the next stage for assistance.

“All working groups are chaired by vice presidents, so the vice presidents have the responsibility of keeping the members in line as we go into the votes, etc. So, these are the first people, and then Mr. Szajer is coordinating the logistics and if there is a problem the chair of the working group will tell him, so he is the first instance of appeal and Daul would be the last instance. Again, Daul will try to ask the vice presidents who are chairing the working groups to try and find solutions, if they don't find a solution they will try to go to Szajer and find a solution and if it is not really possible, then they will go to the Chairman”. (October 15, 2011)

The response below from one of the two persons who served as S & D parliamentary secretary during the period of field research and outlines how he utilizes leadership or group meetings to propose compromises and ensure that the largest possible number of group members support the adopted line. Just as in the EPP, lobbying individual members is not feasible except through discussions in the group meeting or when necessary in private if the individual is someone who can influence the votes of others.

“At the group meeting, if we see there are strict opposing different views on certain elements then my job is to find an amendment which is bridging the different positions in the group unless it is a very clear minority and majority for the positions, and then we just vote...My job is not so much to go for individual members unless it is in the group discussion where we will see the differences, because it is impossible with many individual members unless it were my only job, then I could do it. I think it is important to get a very high number of people on board and of course if you see that there is one individual who has a different opinion with some influence with a certain sector of the group, then you speak with them”. (November 9, 2011)

The S & D parliamentary secretary is similar in many ways to his EPP counterpart. Both are leaders in large groups that must rely on a communication network from the committees to working groups and ultimately the group meeting to identify dissent. The role of the parliamentary secretary is to pursue compromise when leaders at lower levels in the whip structure cannot foster consensus and to appeal to the group president or to the group as a whole to secure a resolution through adoption of the group line or through a compromise.

“As Vice-President in charge of parliamentary affairs, he is definitely involved...We go to the vice presidents in charge of the given portfolio area, but Mr. Swoboda also plays a vital role in making decisions. What we usually have before each bureau meeting is a separate meeting with (President) Martin Schulz and Mr. Swoboda and a number of senior staff in the secretariat where

we highlight the issues, the potential problems, and the potential solutions. They determine how to proceed and we go into the bureau meeting and they discuss it". (October 13, 2011)

The role of the S & D parliamentary secretary though differs from the EPP in the use of the group bureau. The S & D group bureau provides an intervening forum for resolving disputes and forming the group line in between the working groups and the group meeting. Here, the parliamentary secretary can build consensus among leadership and invite dissenting delegations to discuss a compromise with the applicable committee coordinators and working group chairs. If this setting does not produce a common line, the parliamentary secretary can appeal to the group meeting to determine the line or to secure support for the preferred leadership position. In this sense, the S & D parliamentary secretary is more of a coordinator than a lobbyist.

"I wouldn't consider that position as a whip position. Our British Labour delegation has the Westminster tradition of having a whip, and a similar kind of thing occurs in the German delegation, but we don't have it in the group. Guerrero's position is coordinating coordinators which are more about things like setting the parliamentary agenda for sessions, dealing with horizontal issues". (June 13, 2012)

A majority of ALDE respondents maintained that no such position existed. In part, I believe this perception is due to the division of parliamentary secretary responsibilities between the vice-presidents Adina Valean and Alexander Lambsdorff, as well as the secretary-general, Alexander Beels (allocating plenary speaking time). Based upon most of the responses and my observations of group meetings, the role of Ms. Valean is to indicate the group line on the voting lists handed to members prior to plenary. In my observations of ALDE group meetings, I never heard Ms. Valean advocate for the group line, but rather only provide verification of it, whereas her ECR, EPP and S & D counterparts pursued consensus in the group meetings on prominent reports.

"She is our whip, but we don't have a whipping system like in the House of Commons, but we do need someone to show the vote, because if you vote on amendments at lunchtime, then a certain amount of people get distracted, they say that oh this is a procedural point and you need someone to indicate the group line. So, the whip's first role is to guide the members in the

established votes in plenary and the second role is to explain afterwards to the members if there were successes or failures in the votes”. (May 30, 2012)

None of the responses cited Valean or Lambsdorff as someone who would approach members to support the line or dissent at less costly levels (unless they were from the same delegation). Lambsdorff did at times chair group meetings or stood in for the president at the Conference of Presidents. In addition, he also chaired weekly meetings of the group coordinators which in the absence of influential working groups provide a forum to identify problems which may be brought to the attention of the bureau or presidency. However, Lambsdorff does not bring disputes to the attention of the group meeting. In turn, the president and the rapporteur take the lead on consensus-building in the group meeting and in subsequent negotiations.

“Alexander chairs the coordinators’ meetings, but I don’t see a role of coming up with a common position or joint platform from different points of view and that’s also the case with the whip. The whip has to indicate the votes in plenary, but I don’t see any role in the group or in the working groups, I don’t see any specific work in trying to merge the position, but this in our group is more the role of the Chair...and it is really up to the Chair to formulate a compromise view in order to gather all of the group and to have a single position recommended by the working group to the entire group, and it is really up to the president to shape a common platform and a compromise”. (June 12, 2012)

Meanwhile, the ALDE secretary-general, Alexander Beels, holds greater responsibility than his EPP and S & D counterparts in that he allocates plenary speaking time and is considered by some in the group to be among the key decision-makers in the group presidency and act as a close confidante to the group president. However, unlike his Greens/EFA counterpart, he does not take part in group meeting discussions and does not directly lobby members.

“I think he is very much involved. He has a huge job in preparing the meetings, in coordinating the positions, in understanding where we have differences in signalling to the president in preparing internal compromise. So, he doesn’t take the floor in group meetings, but he does take the floor a lot before and after group meetings”. (June 12, 2012)

This raises the question of why the Greens/EFA is the most cohesive group yet lacks a parliamentary secretary. The answer in part I found lies in the unique role of the group secretary-

general Vula Tsetsi. On the whole, group secretary-generals are perceived to play a more administrative or behind-the-scenes advisory role as the response below describes.

“In formal terms, the politics is done by the politicians. That is their role and they do that. I think the strength of a secretary-general is not being very visible, but by doing a behind the scenes job. If you have a complicated dossier, what would be bad is that only during the group meeting do we discover that this is a complicated issue-the right person is not aware of this on the agenda, the leader is not aware of this complication, and then it is the role of the secretary-general to make sure that all information is provided in time, that people are forewarned and have the information necessary to make a decision”. (May 30, 2012)

After observing my first Greens/EFA group meeting, I noted that the secretary-general not only openly participates in group meeting discussions, but also lobbies members and delegations to support the group line. In turn, Vula Tsetsi acts as a group whip not only through the allocation of plenary speaking time but also through her efforts to coordinate dissent management and if necessary to lobby members.

“She is indeed active and she tries to be tough towards the other secretaries-general to express our Green interests. We are the fourth biggest group, so we don’t have the biggest influence, but she really tries to defend the Green interests and to make us heard within the other groups, and to show towards our group that is really eager to go for what we want to see as far as debates in the plenary and what issues should be tackled. I think this engagement and in being tough in these negotiations with the others, that is her way of keeping the group together”. (June 5, 2012)

On many occasions, Vula appealed to members in the group meeting to adhere to the group line to ensure plenary coalition success or the attainment of party group policy goals. When she thought a particular amendment or strategy (to vote no or abstain as a group) was insufficient or even detrimental to these goals, she succinctly articulated her position, even when it differed from one or both of the co-presidents. In turn, though the co-presidents and other leaders take the lead in forming a common line in the group meeting, the opinion of the secretary-general aids and at times shapes consensus-building efforts.

Turning to the less cohesive groups, a majority of ECR respondents maintained that the group whip contributes to unity mainly on prominent reports. Though united in their desire to

reform the EU, the ECR group is divided on particular policy areas (such as the budget) mainly along UK and new member-state lines. The office of group whip provides a vehicle to try and overcome these obstacles to group unity though it is often frustrated by the confederal organization of the group and its evolving group identity.

“The way it works with us that coming up to a group meeting, Fox will circulate a note to the shadows letting him know if they want him to discuss something, so this way you find out what might be controversial within the group prior to the meeting and the chief whip asks the group in the meeting to discuss its position, but there’s never an instruction to anyone to vote in a particular way...In this case, the chief whip has to make the judgment based on what has happened. Members will have in their plenary notes to look to the chief whip”. (October 5, 2011)

As the response above notes, Mr. Fox may independently learn of potential divisions over reports, but on the whole, he relies upon the group rapporteurs or coordinators to identify individual members or delegations who have developed a line contrary to that pursued by leadership or by a majority in the group when a common line can be identified prior to the group meeting. He will then present these divisions in the group meeting and following debate will often suggest a way in which to achieve consensus.

For example, I observed an exchange between four delegations in an ECR group meeting who sought to abstain on a report and one delegation that intended to vote no. Mr. Fox suggested that the group as a whole adopt a line to abstain on the report as it would demonstrate unity while securing each delegation’s preferences. This position was subsequently adopted. In turn, delegations are expected to inform the group whip either in the meeting or in private that they intend to dissent from the majority line. The group meeting might produce a shared line or a majority line with one or more delegations voting separately. Each scenario is reflected in the member’s voting list as an indication of which line to support and how to vote (yes, no, abstain).

In this sense, while the ECR whip is a consensus-builder, he is far less likely than his counterparts to pursue the adoption of a common line among all members. Therefore, while the

presence of a group whip in the ECR defies my expectations in regards to medium-sized and less influential groups, once the UK parliamentary tradition is accounted for, the creation of this position makes sense as does the limitations of the office given the group's evolving identity.

Group unity is not important for the EFD, so there is no need to assign responsibility for noting the group line or to assist in promoting a line in the group meeting. The organizational structure and size of the GUE similarly leaves no need for a parliamentary secretary as issues are resolved (if at all) primarily in discussions between the group president and the rapporteur on one hand and delegation chairs on the other or on a broader basis within the group meeting.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In order to ensure the maximum number of MEPs supports the group line and that dissent is expressed at a minimal level, party group leaders in the more cohesive groups divide dissent management responsibilities. Group leaders identify and address dissent at every legislative stage and if consensus or a compromise cannot be achieved at one level then the dispute is referred to another where additional group leaders may become involved.

ALDE respondents were more likely to identify an active role for the group president on all reports. In contrast, respondents from most other groups were more likely to assign a consensus-building role for the group president only on prominent reports in part because other leaders are perceived to hold a greater consensus-building responsibility. In addition, party group culture shaped responses in that it influences perceptions of when consensus is desirable, when and how dissent is expressed, and when the group president should (if at all) become involved.

For example, the ECR and GUE have developed norms encouraging dissent which complicates efforts to build consensus and restricts the role of the group president. In contrast, the EPP or S & D have developed norms encouraging the adoption of consensus and have promoted a dissent management role for the group president, particularly on prominent reports.

Across the more cohesive groups, presidents are viewed as the unifying figure who gives voice to the group's values as well as to its legislative priorities. The president helps to communicate a sense of what defines being a member of a particular party group and in turn guides the socialization process through which members closely identify with the group (See Brown 2000). In turn, presidents in the more cohesive groups help to set expectations of how to behave and how to contribute to group unity. Accordingly, most respondents do not prioritize a president's previous leadership experience as much as they emphasize a president's communication skills.

Though other leaders in most groups assume a more active dissent management role, party groups with lower dissent rates share in common a president who is perceived to contribute to group unity and to be engaged in dissent management on reports where the plenary stakes are high, whereas party groups with higher dissent levels are led by presidents who are perceived to either not be engaged in dissent management or are restrained in their efforts by a group culture that does not re-enforce consensus-building efforts. However, given the variation in party group characteristics and the noted contributions of other leaders, the activity of the group president alone cannot explain dissent variation among party groups.

Aside from the GUE and EFD, group vice-presidents contribute to various extents to low group dissent rates as part of a whip structure responsible for identifying and managing dissent supported by socialization processes contributing toward a shared conceptualization of the group identity. In turn, I find that those party groups with the highest cohesion rates (Greens/EFA, EPP, S & D) are those whose vice-presidents or secretary-generals are assigned a prominent dissent management role. In contrast, cohesion rates are lower in party groups who assign and perceive an administrative or no role at all for vice-presidents (ALDE, GUE, and EFD) or in the case of the ECR who assign a clearly-defined role only to the group whip.

EPP and S & D respondents maintained that vice-presidents contribute to group unity largely by chairing working groups where they resolve disputes and build consensus prior to serving as a lead advocate for the group line in the bureau and the group meeting. Though Greens/EFA vice-presidents do not normally chair working groups, they perform many of the same roles as their EPP and S & D counterparts, and together with the group co-presidents and the secretary-general play vital roles in building party group unity in the group meeting and elsewhere.

Similarly, the three party groups with the highest cohesion rates have a vice-president who serves as a parliamentary-secretary or have assigned such responsibilities to the secretary-general. This person is responsible for coordinating the group line, acting as an early alert system, and when necessary serving as a key advocate for the group line. The ECR whip (in addition to allocating plenary speaking time) brings divisions to the attention of the group meeting in the hopes of identifying a common line or minimizing dissent but his influence is restricted by the emphasis within the group on national rather than group membership.

When viewed separately, the absence of dissent management roles for group vice-presidents or of a parliamentary secretary does not explain variation in group dissent rates. Rather, it is the absence or minimal utilization of all leadership positions in combination that facilitates higher dissent rates. For example, one explanation for the ALDE having the fourth highest cohesion rate despite their influential plenary position is the administrative role assigned to group vice-presidents and the division of the parliamentary secretary's administrative responsibilities among three persons with no assignment of dissent management responsibilities. Though the group president and others normally build consensus in party group meetings and achieve relatively high cohesion rates, the maximum potential for ALDE cohesion is not reached in part because a gap exists between the efforts of the president and other leaders in group meetings and plenary

voting. Specifically, there are not vice-presidents or a whip to ensure that members adhere to the agreed upon consensus or to address dissent left over from the meeting.

However, a fully-utilized whip structure is insufficient if not accompanied by socialization processes promoting consensus. Successful socialization leads to the adoption of norms conducive to group unity such as those governing dissent. In turn, socialization fosters a shared identity in which members and leaders each are assigned specific roles which help to govern relationships and expected behavior. For example, if ALDE members do not positively view horizontal working groups and defer to these forums and its presiding leaders, dissent rates may rise (See Garner and Letki 2010). Furthermore, relatively high ECR dissent rates despite the coordination efforts of a group whip demonstrate that while a whip structure with clearly assigned dissent management roles is essential for building group unity, members must also view themselves as part of a party group rather than a collection of national delegations. In turn, neither the EFD nor the GUE place importance on group unity and often lack a group line. Though smaller groups do not need a whip to ensure unity, they do require group norms promoting unity and leaders who are empowered and determined to pursue unity.

To this point, I have considered one component (leaders) of the equation explaining low dissent rates. In chapter seven, I will begin a more detailed examination of the impact of the next component of the equation (socialization processes) upon dissent levels by considering the role of working group and party group meetings in terms of their place in the group's decision-making structure, but also the extent to which they are regarded by respondents as contributing to group unity defined in part as a cohesive group identity.

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Note: References to roll-call votes and group cohesion rates in the current parliament are drawn from data obtained on the website, www.votewatch.eu.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PARTY GROUP FORUMS AND DISSENT MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Party group leaders in the European Parliament contribute to group unity and thereby the level and form of dissent expression to various extents often reflecting their group's organizational structure and culture. In the previous chapter, I reviewed responses to a series of questions concerning the role of party group leaders and their impact upon group dissent levels as part of a whip structure. A whip structure consists of an organized effort by party group leaders to distribute and execute dissent management responsibilities as well as group forums.

The primary task of those within the whip structure is to identify and address dissent at every stage of the legislative process: committees, horizontal working groups (where applicable), party group meetings, and plenary. The desired outcome is minimal levels of dissent both in terms of the number of those opposing the group line and in the form of dissent expression (such as voting to abstain). The components of a whip structure in terms of assigned responsibilities or in regards to dissent management tactics vary in many ways among the party groups but some overlapping characteristics are evident across groups.

Respondents overwhelmingly identified that coordinators and rapporteurs bear the brunt of dissent management in that they help to shape the group position on each report and work to ensure maximum support for the common line at every legislative stage. In addition, I found that in two of the three most influential party groups, presidents will become directly involved in managing dissent only when prominent reports are at-stake. In contrast, the ALDE group president is primarily responsible for building group unity in most cases, while the Greens/EFA co-presidents work as part of a leadership team in securing support for the group line on all reports. Meanwhile, group presidents in the least influential groups either are not interested in

building group unity (EFD) or in the case of the ECR and GUE are hindered in their efforts by the group's confederal structure and a culture that encourages separate lines and dissent.

In turn, respondents from the three most cohesive groups (Greens/EFA, EPP and S & D) identified a dissent management role for group vice-presidents. In the two largest groups (EPP and S & D), vice-presidents chair horizontal working groups which bring together group members from associated committees and provide a forum to build consensus and advocate for the group line. Similarly, Green/EFA vice-presidents serve as advocates for the group line in the party group meeting and often lobby members at multiple legislative stages to support the group line or express dissent at a less costly level even though they often do not chair working groups.

Both the EPP and S & D also designate a vice-president as a parliamentary secretary who monitors the progress of each report, identifies potential dissent, and works with the leadership team to minimize dissent both prior to and during group meetings. The most cohesive group, the Greens/EFA, lack an official parliamentary secretary, but group respondents and observations confirmed that the secretary-general takes on a much more influential and visible dissent management role than her counterparts in other groups by acting as a parliamentary secretary through her advocacy for the group line and allocation of plenary speaking time.

In contrast, ALDE respondents perceived the group president as having the biggest impact on group unity, whereas group vice-presidents were viewed as having largely administrative roles or no responsibilities whatsoever. Similarly, ALDE respondents stated that the group lacked a parliamentary secretary which interviews and observations confirmed in fact was split among three persons but only in terms of administrative and not dissent management responsibilities. While these perceptions of leadership roles and the group's leadership structure do not singularly explain its comparatively higher dissent levels, the contrasts with other groups

do suggest that when party groups lack a fully developed whip structure to communicate with or lobby members at various legislative stages, dissent levels are likely to increase. However, a group's whip structure will only successfully manage dissent if it is accompanied by socialization processes and a shared group identity that promote unity.

This chapter acts as a bridge in that it will on one-hand complete the consideration of the dissent management role of party group leaders while initiating the discussion of the contribution of socialization processes toward group unity through a comparison of how party groups utilize party group and (where applicable) horizontal working group meetings. In particular, it examines how group leaders utilize such forums to foster particular norms and a shared conceptualization of the group identity in conjunction with lobbying on the political and legislative merits to ensure maximum support for the group line and minimal levels of dissent expression.

Following a literature review, the chapter will consider responses to the questions of how working group and party group meetings contribute to group unity which are compared to findings obtained through my observations of meetings. In turn, the chapter will (1) identify how party group and working group meetings are utilized in consensus and dissent management efforts by group leaders and (2) indicate the extent to members view group meetings as vital forums for contributing to the development of the group line as well as the extent to which members believe it is important to adhere to the decisions taken by the group as a whole within such meetings. In addition, the chapter will explore how group meetings facilitate the development of a shared conceptualization of the group identity and socialize members into adopting shared expectations on dissent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of what we know about legislative party caucus meetings comes from either U.S. congressional studies or those examining Westminster systems such as the UK and Canada. One

important contribution of legislative party caucus meetings is to disseminate information. As Forgette (2004) notes, "Information asymmetry exists between leadership and rank-and-file regarding legislative strategy, policy priorities, and electoral marketing of party agenda" (Forgette, 2004, 410). In turn, the aim of caucus meetings is in part to provide information to members who are not part of the committee responsible for a given piece of legislation and thereby to afford leaders with the opportunity to build cohesion through information transmission (Forgette, 2004, 410). Information transmission in this sense acts as a two-way conduit by which members are aided in decision-making efforts and through which leaders identify dissent and the potential means by which to mitigate or eliminate dissent (Forgette, 2004, 410).

In addition, Forgette identified an correlation in the U.S. Congress between legislative party caucus meeting attendance and the extent of voting discipline in that "a member's attendance at a strategically timed conference meeting results in an 11% increase in the odds of voting the party's position" (Forgette, 2004, 425). "Strategically timed" refers to caucus meetings scheduled before floor sessions in the House or Senate. Legislative party caucus meetings are in turn opportunities to not only build support for the group line in floor voting but also to build a cohesive group identity with these forums diffusing norms encouraging deference to decisions taken in group meetings and those governing when and how to express dissent.

Garner and Letki (2005) found in their interviews of UK Labour and Canadian Liberal MPs that party caucus meetings and other forums act as "party opportunity channels" through which members may develop a group identity conducive to unity aided by the perception that they have a voice in party affairs which facilitates efforts by leaders to instill a sense of loyalty (Garner and Letki, 2005, 468). The authors tested this assumption through a survey which contained four specific questions constituting an "Isolation Scale" which ascertained the extent to which MPs

identified with the party caucus meetings and the extent to which they perceived they as backbenchers contributed to the formation of the party line (Garner and Letki, 2005, 471).

The authors found that MPs in the two parties were more likely to dissent from the party line if they scored lower on the Isolation Scale. “They must view communication channels between leaders and backbenchers as accessible or otherwise they feel isolated from leaders and the party in the legislature as a whole” (Garner and Letki, 2005, 472). More specifically, an increase of one point on the Isolation Scale (1-5) resulted in an increase in the level of dissent by 6.4% (Garner and Letki, 2005, 474). In turn, I assume that given the increasing legislative stakes, party group leaders will utilize group forums to identify and manage dissent in order to ensure greater cohesion in regards to plenary voting and in terms of a shared identity (See Brown 2000).

We know very little about the role of party group or working group meetings in building group cohesion. Raunio (1999) briefly mentions party group meetings by noting that especially in the larger groups, it is expected that MEPs will announce their intentions to dissent before the entire group (Raunio, 1999, 193). He also noted that these meetings are “important forums for consensus-building with extensive negotiations often taking place in search of mutually acceptable compromises” (Raunio 1999, 193). My observations confirm that since Lisbon (2007), nearly every party group has developed formal and informal processes governing the announcement to dissent and that the more cohesive groups regardless of size have developed a whip structure which utilizes the group meetings to identify and manage dissent.

A more detailed assessment of the dissent management role of party group forums is provided by Ringe (2010) in his assertions that group forums are part of a communication network “designed to reduce the workload of a party group and to solidify a common position” (Ringe, 2010, 60). Ringe further noted that the role of these meetings was in part to act as an

“alarm system” in which dissent was announced and subsequently addressed by coordinators and rapporteurs often through compromise (Ringe, 2010, 63). However, Ringe maintained that the primary function of group forums was to relieve the information asymmetry confronting members both in terms of the lack of information but also often in terms of dealing with an information overload leading to frequent deferral by MEPs to group experts (Ringe, 2010, 65).

Every report cannot be discussed in detail in the party group meetings which is addressed in part by the formation of working groups in the larger groups, but also in most groups, by discussing only controversial or prominent reports in any detail in the party group meeting (Ringe, 2010, 63). Given the supranational organization of party groups and the absence of re-nomination control, party group leaders are under greater pressure compared to their national counterparts to fully utilize meetings as dissent management and socialization tools. Otherwise, divisions along delegation lines may become more pronounced whereas fully utilized party group meetings aid in producing cohesive plenary voting and a shared group identity.

In turn, I find that the more cohesive groups are those with well-attended working group and party group meetings overseen by engaged leadership. More specifically, party group forums contribute to high cohesion levels when utilized by leaders to identify and manage dissent and when respondents are invested in the processes and outcomes associated with group forums. Group forums in this sense provide specific contributions to group unity in that they: disseminate norms governing behavior, re-enforce a shared conceptualization of the group identity, resolve disputes between members and/or delegations, identify and address dissent and afford leaders with the opportunity to articulate or formulate the group line.

HORIZONTAL WORKING GROUPS AND PARTY GROUP UNITY

Before examining the dissent management role of party group meetings, I first asked respondents how working group meetings contributed to party group unity. In turn, I anticipated

five potential responses: our party group does not have working groups, working group meetings are not well-attended or very important, working group meetings are important only for those invested in the report, working groups are important only for resolving disputes on prominent reports, and working groups are forums for building consensus on all reports.

H1: Respondents from large party groups will be more likely to contend that horizontal working groups contribute to group unity on all reports.

Larger party groups will encounter a greater logistical challenge in constructing and in building support for the group line. In turn, EPP and S & D respondents will be more likely to contend that working groups build unity on all reports because information asymmetry will be the greatest in these groups which may be solved in part by encouraging members to defer to working groups (See Ringe 2010). In turn, leaders in the larger groups focus their dissent management efforts in the party group meetings on prominent reports.

H2: Respondents from the more influential party groups will be more likely to contend that horizontal working groups contribute to party group unity on prominent reports.

Respondents from the more influential groups should be more likely to view working groups as important forums for building group unity on prominent reports because with higher stakes every forum will be utilized for dissent management. In contrast, a decline in plenary influence should lead respondents to conclude that working groups do not contribute to group unity or are important only for those invested in the report as efforts at each stage to secure support for the group line are unimportant given the limited (if any) impact the group will have in plenary.

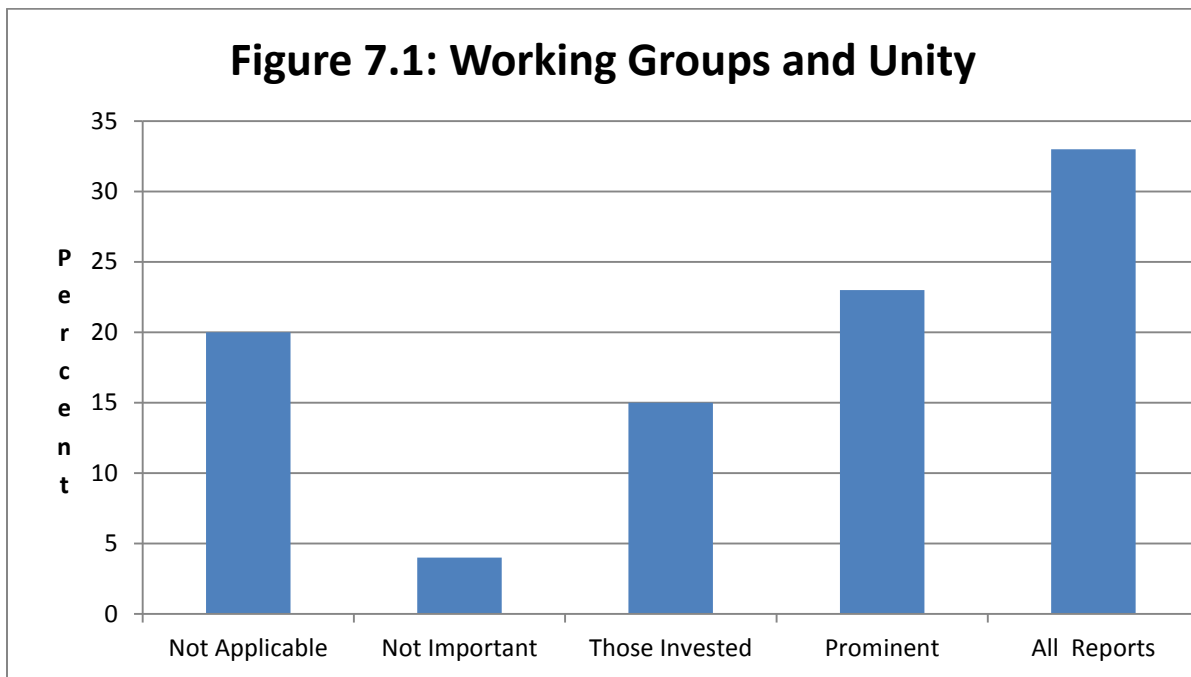
H3: Respondents who hold elite positions within party groups will be more likely to contend that horizontal working groups are important for building group unity on all reports.

Those respondents who are more invested in developing a group line and in building high levels of support for the group line will be more likely to contend that working groups build group unity on all reports. Elites include group presidents, vice-presidents, and secretary-

generals. These elites have more at-stake and in turn will have greater dissent management and consensus-building responsibility. In turn, rank-and-file members and staff will be more likely to provide other responses as they have less at-stake and have less responsibility.

H4: Respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to contend that horizontal working groups contribute to group unity on all or on prominent reports.

More years of service in the parliament as MEPs and/or as staff will be accompanied by a greater likelihood to positively view the contributions of working groups in building party group unity. This stems from greater exposure to the processes associated with decision-making in working groups, but also a greater reliance on experts in these forums to set the group line due to information asymmetry and overload. More years of service in turn facilitates efforts by group leaders to socialize members into deferring to and in highly regarding the work of these forums.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents offering each response category. N of Cases: 79

All but three respondents answered the question. As depicted above in Figure 7.1, thirty-eight percent of respondents stated that working groups help to build unity on all reports, while twenty-three percent of respondents noted that working groups contributed to party unity only on

prominent reports. Meanwhile, twenty percent of respondents maintained that the question was not applicable as their party group did not have working groups, while fifteen percent of respondents contended that working groups mattered only to those invested in the report. Finally, only four percent stated that working groups did not contribute at all to party group unity. In all, the response trend indicates that where present, working groups are positively viewed perceived to contribute to party group unity.

TABLE 7.1: PREDICTORS OF WORKING GROUP RESPONSES

Party Group	0.5189***
Group Position	0.2333
Member-State	0.4858
Years	0.4417
Gender	0.2180
Profession	0.4208

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, ** and ***, denote statistical significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 79

As Table 7.1 above depicts, while substantive relationships between years of service, previous profession, and member-state origin are associated with working group responses, only party group membership provided a statistically significant relationship with the likelihood of offering particular responses. For example, while a respondent may acquire particular attitudes over time in the parliament toward the role of working groups, these perceptions are in turn shaped by experiences as a member of a particular party group. This suggests that party group size, plenary influence, and group culture are the most important contributors to forming a respondent's perceptions of the role of working groups in building party group unity.

When responses are framed by group membership, all GUE and EFD respondents correctly noted that their party groups did not have working groups. However, ECR respondents were divided on the question in that while the ECR does not have horizontal working groups it has formed the Policy Development Group, which some respondents counted as a working group. In

turn, respondents from the two largest party groups (EPP and S & D) as hypothesized were more likely to contend that working groups contribute to party group unity on all reports.

TABLE 7.2: WORKING GROUP RESPONSES AND PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D	N
Not Applicable	0	0.33	1.0	0	0	1.0	0	16
Not Important	0.29	0	0	0	0.11	0	0.06	7
Only if Invested	0.34	0.44	0	0	0.22	0	0	12
Prominent Reports	0.29	0.23	0	0.29	0.56	0	0.31	18
Most/All Reports	0.08	0	0	0.81	0.11	0	0.63	26
(N of Cases)	(17)	(9)	(5)	(14)	(10)	(8)	(16)	79

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to party group affiliation with the last line depicting respondents per party group. N of Cases: 79, Cramér's V: 0.5189***

In contrast, ALDE respondents representing the second most influential group were more likely to maintain that working groups did not contribute to group unity or that working groups mattered only to those invested in the reports. Meanwhile, despite their status as the fourth most influential party group, a majority of Greens/EFA respondents perceived that working groups contributed to group unity on prominent reports. In turn, even though Greens/EFA working groups are organized according to policy priorities rather than associated committees, members value their contributions toward group decision-making whereas ALDE respondents are more likely to solely value the party group meeting as an important forum for building unity.

Horizontal working groups are viewed as important forums by respondents in the two largest party groups (EPP and S & D) because they resolve collection action problems and contribute toward a shared group identity. The sheer size of membership and the legislative volume require these two groups to provide forums for members prior to the party group meeting to set and resolve conflict over the group line as well as to allocate plenary speaking time. Working groups also provide opportunities for leaders to re-enforce the group identity and its values to participating members who in turn convey and build support for the group line in the party group meeting which in turn facilitates the norm of deferral to the working groups.

“Yes, we are persuading in the working groups, but sometimes if there is a difficult situation and we need a majority and there are some members that need to be convinced, I discuss these issues also with members in private meetings outside the working group. I explain why I think this should be the position, they explain their position, and then we reach a compromise, a common position at the end”. (November 9, 2011)

As one of the EPP vice-presidents chairing working groups above explains, working groups provide a forum for leaders to hear differing views from members of related committee and then produce consensus. However, dissent management does not end for the vice-president (and for other leaders) in the working group. Some of its members may not be on board with the group line and require additional lobbying afterwards. Others may still not support the group line but may be convinced to dissent at a less costly level. I found these efforts also extend into the group meeting especially on prominent reports or reports addressing divisive issues. In this sense, the presiding vice-president, other leaders, and often many of the working group rank-and-file, act as spokespersons and advocates for the group line in party group meeting discussions.

“They are very important, because you have to see that there are more than just the committees you are a member of and you have to hear the discussion of what is going on in other committees. Committees often work together and then for others you can hear their discussion in the horizontal working groups”. (June 19, 2012)

The response above from a new MEP in the EPP group identifies the perception among most members that working groups provide a necessary and vital forum to share ideas and build the group line on reports. This not only reduces the information gap or overload confronting MEPs but also contributes to the development of group norms. For example, members on the whole positively view the efforts of working groups and defer to them on most votes as its members are presumed to be experts as well as colleagues who share the group’s values and interests. In turn, when a prominent or divisive report produces opposition or questions in the party group meeting, working group members take the lead in addressing these concerns.

I observed two EPP working groups: Foreign Affairs and the Economy and Environment. While the personalities and leadership styles of the presiding vice-presidents and of members differed, there were many similarities. The vice-presidents (with the assistance of staff) of both working groups allocated plenary speaking time at the conclusion of discussion on a given report. Both working groups met in large rooms accommodating the dozens of members, MEP aides, group staff, other MEPs, and observers from the Commission and other EU institutions. Both working groups were also led by vice-presidents who together with the rapporteur oversaw discussion often resulting in consensus but at times determining that further meetings were necessary or that the working group's division should be reported out to the full party group.

For example, in the Foreign Policy working group, a member raised an objection about a particular paragraph in a report. Members discussed his concerns and he ultimately agreed to withdraw his objections. On another report, multiple members raised objections and the vice-president determined that the group line should be to demand a split vote on the paragraph where the plenary would vote separately on the two halves of the paragraphs with the group line to be support for one half and for the group to not take a line on the more divisive half. This position was later adopted in the subsequent party group meeting I observed without much discussion.

In the Economy and Environment working group, the presiding vice-president announced that division over a particular report had been resolved in committee and the working group voted to adopt this position as the group line. When a member raised objections on a different report, the vice-president said she would meet with the member and the shadow rapporteur to resolve the issue. Later, in the party group meeting, the report was reported to receive unanimous support from the working group. The working group is also a forum to announce cross-group agreements which are later noted in voting lists.

“These working groups are very informal...and everything is openly discussed and we try and find a common position. If we don’t, if we see that there is a division within the Socialist working group, we bring it on the agenda of the S & D political group meeting with all of the S & D members where it can be discussed in a greater forum and then if the position is still not clear, then we take positions to a vote in the group meeting and then we decide if we vote in favor or against a certain amendment or a certain report as a whole”. (June 18, 2012)

As with the EPP, I observed that S & D working groups incurred high attendance, full participation, and served as forums for allocating plenary speaking time and reporting the group line to the full party group meeting. As a member of the group secretariat above notes, an S & D working group is an informal setting in which to debate, report on inter-group and inter-institutional relations, and construct the group line with (as in the EPP) the decisions of the working group adopted in most instances by the group. However, as the response trends highlights, there is also an assumption by many S & D respondents that working groups are important for building unity only for prominent reports with a few even asserting that the working groups have little impact on the group decision-making process.

“They should be important but sometimes are not so important because the members of the horizontal working groups do not always go to the meetings and so many times it is not clear what the decisions of the working groups are before the discussion of the group meeting. However, if there is a good debate inside of the working group and if there is a huge majority supporting the decision within these working groups, then that is quite relevant for the position of the group”. (June 19, 2012)

The response above places working groups within the framework of the S & D decision-making process which includes a more prominent role for the group bureau as a forum to resolve disputes on prominent reports which as discussed in chapter three often consists of negotiations between group and national delegation leaders whereas working groups are primarily forums for resolving disputes between group members of associated committees.

I also observed more frequent unity appeals by S & D leaders in comparison to the EPP such as when the presiding vice-president of the Civil Liberties and Justice working group reiterated

during debate on one report of what “a strong and united group” would mean for the parliament and for the people of Europe. Such appeals were also very common in S & D party group meetings, where leaders reminded members of the need for the group to appear united and tied being ‘socialist’ to voting in a particular way. I believe this in part reflects the acknowledgement by S & D leaders that they often attain less cohesion on prominent reports compared to the EPP. In other words, higher dissent on prominent reports produces more appeals by leaders.

In the same working group, another report was tabled to the next meeting as members were divided while on another report, the presiding vice-president clearly stated “I need your support”, a sentiment I never heard expressed in such stark terms in the EPP working group meetings. Such appeals were also commonly expressed by the presiding vice-president and the respective rapporteurs in the Health, Environment, and Safety working group. Discussion on one report produced a group amendment to be introduced in plenary, while extensive debate accompanied another report which achieved unanimous support while concerns on another were referred to the shadows’ meeting where rapporteurs from all seven groups meet to discuss progress on reports.

The sheer size and legislative responsibility of the EPP and S & D necessitate the creation of horizontal working groups in order to resolve collective action problems and build support for the group line. As the third largest group, and particularly as the second most influential party group, ALDE leaders are incentivized to develop horizontal working groups for the same reasons though their smaller size is more conducive to highly participatory party group meetings.

“Working groups are a forum for disagreements to be resolved but sometimes these may go to the entire group to decide, otherwise policy is determined at this level with the bureau providing the political support within the group”. (October 11, 2011)

The sentiments expressed above by a member of the ALDE secretariat differ from those of most ALDE respondents. A plurality believed that working groups matter only for participating

members, with the remainder split between those who thought that working groups did not contribute to group unity or did so only on prominent reports. The ALDE formed working groups A, B, and C and recently have consolidated A/B into a single working group covering all committees not related to international issues addressed by C. While the ALDE may not require as many working groups as the two largest party groups, consolidation in my view reflects the poor attendance and the largely negative views of ALDE respondents toward working groups.

“They are not so important. That actually is something that I would say is a problem, the attendance is quite low and most of the important things are handled in the full group, because our group is still small enough that we can still handle these things in our full group. But sometimes it is frustrating because you know that for example the working group on Israel-Palestine discusses this for one hour and then an hour later the same debate among the same people will continue into the full group”. (October 26, 2011).

Interview responses repeatedly convey the theme expressed above by an ALDE vice-president that the working groups matter only for the respective members and not the group as a whole. When combined by the frequent perception that attendance in these meetings is not necessary, ALDE working groups fail to instill norms of deference and group unity that are prevalent not only in the two largest groups but also in the Greens/EFA.

“I think they are important, but I am not sure they contribute to group unity. I think they are important because that’s how you find out what’s going on elsewhere. I don’t always go to them; I only go to them where there is something I am interested in. They are not that well-attended in general. It is usually only the people who are interested in the topic, either supporting it or not, but as far as building group unity, you do have the opportunity and it’s a great opportunity for anyone who wants to use it, especially if you don’t support something, to go and be heard and try to get people to agree with you there. So, in the sense that it is part of a process that allows you input into final outcomes in the group, then yes, it helps group unity. (June 17, 2012)

The introspective response by an ALDE coordinator above in many ways underlines the ALDE group decision-making process. Working groups can provide valuable outlets for those in attendance to express opinions and exchange ideas with colleagues from related committees. Yet, the party group meeting is regarded as the primary forum for setting and affirming the group

line. In turn, the ALDE president and others must often utilize the full group meeting to manage dissent and build consensus on most reports, whereas EPP and S & D leaders utilize full group meetings to manage dissent only on prominent or divisive reports.

The failure to fully utilize working groups in conjunction with the absence of dissent management responsibilities for vice-presidents helps to explain why the ALDE are the fourth most cohesive group. For example, poor attendance in and negative attitudes toward working groups hinder the development of a shared group identity in that the group meeting becomes the exclusive forum to disseminate norms and make appeals for unity. On the whole, the ALDE overcome these logistical and socialization challenges in the group meeting to produce relatively high cohesion. However, when comparing ALDE cohesion in terms of both roll-call votes and shared attitudes to the more cohesive groups, I believe the discrepancy is largely due to a breakdown in the ALDE whip structure and in socialization before and after the group meetings.

My observation of ALDE working group C refuted responses in that the meeting was well-attended by members and staff. However, I believe this was the result of scheduling the working group in the same room as the party group meeting which followed immediately. The meeting provided recent World Bank data to members and reported on a cross-party group agreement on amendments. The presiding vice-president next oversaw debate on another report which the working group concluded through voting should be accompanied by a group line of calling for split votes on four particular amendments. Later in the party group meeting, this position was reported and after extensive debate was adopted as the group line.

My observation of ALDE working group A/B confirmed respondent perceptions in that only the presiding vice-president, three other MEPs and about a dozen staff were in attendance. The presiding vice-president proposed an amendment on one report while noting that the group

would not co-sign an amendment on a particular report with other groups. The shadow rapporteur wanted to split a paragraph three ways (in terms of plenary voting) with a group line of No on two of the paragraphs. The next week in the party group meeting, the A/B vice-president presented these recommendations which were met by some opposition. However, Verhofstadt secured support for most of the recommendations.

“We have working groups and from January on we have a kind of horizontal working groups. They will be around climate change, the Green New Deal, and about the international affairs, in order to make some debates as deep as possible and to prepare some group positions as better as possible, because not everything can be done at the plenary level. We have meetings with coordinators and we will have them on a very regular basis from January on, once per month, together with the co-chairs of the group, and the secretariat”. (November 9, 2011)

The Greens/EFA are slightly smaller than the ALDE and do not exert as much plenary influence when measured in terms of percentage of times the group is in the plenary majority. However, the group’s influence is perceived internally and among the party groups to be exerted in its impact on policy development prior to plenary. In turn, the Greens/EFA have constructed three horizontal working groups along policy priority lines, rather than along membership of related committees as a member of the group secretariat above explained. These working groups are not chaired by vice-presidents in every instance and consist of only about a dozen members each in addition to staff. A variety of factors prevented me from attending these meetings.

My group meeting observations confirmed the prevalent respondent perception of Greens/EFA working groups as constructive forums to develop the group line on prominent reports though the group line on most reports is shaped in party group meetings. Nonetheless, working groups provide an outlet for Greens/EFA members outside committees to contribute to the development of the group line and to become invested in its adoption. On repeated occasions, I observed the co-presidents and the secretary-general referring to reports from the working groups and call for their implementation as a basis for the official group line.

However, the Greens/EFA more closely resemble the ALDE in their greater emphasis on the party group meeting for dissent management and policy formulation which suggests that for medium-sized groups, working groups can be utilized to form consensus on controversial topics or prominent reports but are not as important forums as the party group meetings more easily accommodate debate. In this sense, working groups are not absolutely necessary components of the medium-sized group whip structure as party group meetings can fill this gap. However, when members overwhelmingly negatively view the role of working groups, the dissent management burden grows for leadership and cohesion in term of attitudes toward group membership and unity suffers, whereas a positive reception and constructive role of working groups contributes to high cohesion in plenary votes and in the attitudes of membership.

Similarly, while the formation of horizontal working groups may not be a necessary component of the ECR whip structure, leaders have identified the need for a forum where members can contribute to the formation of the group line on sensitive issues. In turn, as a UK ECR MEP below notes, the Policy Development Group was created to resolve some collective action problems and in the long-term contribute toward group unity.

“I think the reason for that is the size of the group. We have 56 members, so there isn’t a need in my view to have for example an agricultural working group meet and discuss that issue. What Mr. Kirkhope chairs is something called the Policy Development Group and that meets most months. It met this morning and was discussing a trade issue. The month before, it discussed Palestine, Israel, and foreign relations. We discussed agriculture previously and we found a form of words that we, the British, the Poles, and the rest of the group could live with. It’s a working group on any particular topic the group feels needs discussion”. (November 9, 2011)

However, as noted in the discussion above, group cohesion can only be accomplished by a highly utilized and valued party group meeting. Given the ongoing development of the ECR group in terms of its identity and organization, the group may find a need in the future to develop working groups along similar lines as the Greens/EFA while its leaders may also find increasing

impetus through more frequent coalitions with the EPP for re-enforcing the dissent management role as well as positive attitudes by members toward the party group meeting.

Similarly, the smaller GUE and EFD do not require working groups though as a GUE vice-president below notes, working groups of an informal sense often are formed by interested members on various topics. However, as with the ECR, the smallest groups must procure high cohesion through an engaged whip structure and through a cohesive group identity that promotes unity which the GUE and EFD at the present lack.

“We don’t have formal meetings because of the dimension of the group that I mentioned, but we have other meetings. For instance, as a coordinator of a committee, we often meet with the members who are from the group on that committee and with the staff who are following that committee. We also have other groups that are not associated with a committee. For example I work on climate change issues and we have members who are interested in this or if we are talking about refugees, there are members who are very interested in this. So, it is not a formal division of the group into inter-groups, but it works on the basis of subjects”. (October 21, 2011)

PARTY GROUP MEETINGS AND COHESION

While working groups may provide valuable contributions, party group meetings are the most important forums for managing dissent and building consensus. It is in these forums that leaders can appeal to the entire group and ensure the widespread adoption of the group line. In turn, I expect respondents to offer one of five potential responses to the question of how party group meetings contribute to group unity: party group meetings serve no real purpose, group meetings are forums for discussing national politics, group meetings are primarily procedural forums for conveying the group line, group meetings are key forums for building unity on prominent reports, and party group meetings build unity on all reports.

H1: Respondents from more influential party groups will be more likely to contend that party group meetings are important forums for building unity on prominent reports

When the legislative stakes are high, influential party groups will be incentivized to ensure that a maximum number of members support the group line or will dissent at less costly levels.

To accomplish this goal, leaders in these groups will utilize the party group meeting to identify and manage dissent particularly on prominent reports accompanied by appeals for unity and shared identity. In contrast, respondents in the least influential party groups will be more likely to contend that party group meetings serve no purpose or are forums to discuss national politics.

H2: Respondents from the largest party groups will be more likely to contend that the primary function of party group meetings is for leaders to convey the group line.

Due to the sheer size of membership and the logistics associated with discussing every report in detail, respondents from the two largest party groups should presume that party group meetings primarily serve a logistical purpose in conveying the group line. Otherwise, respondents from medium and smaller groups should be more likely to contend that party group meetings build unity on prominent or all reports as party group size and the logistical challenges associated with multiple reports declines.

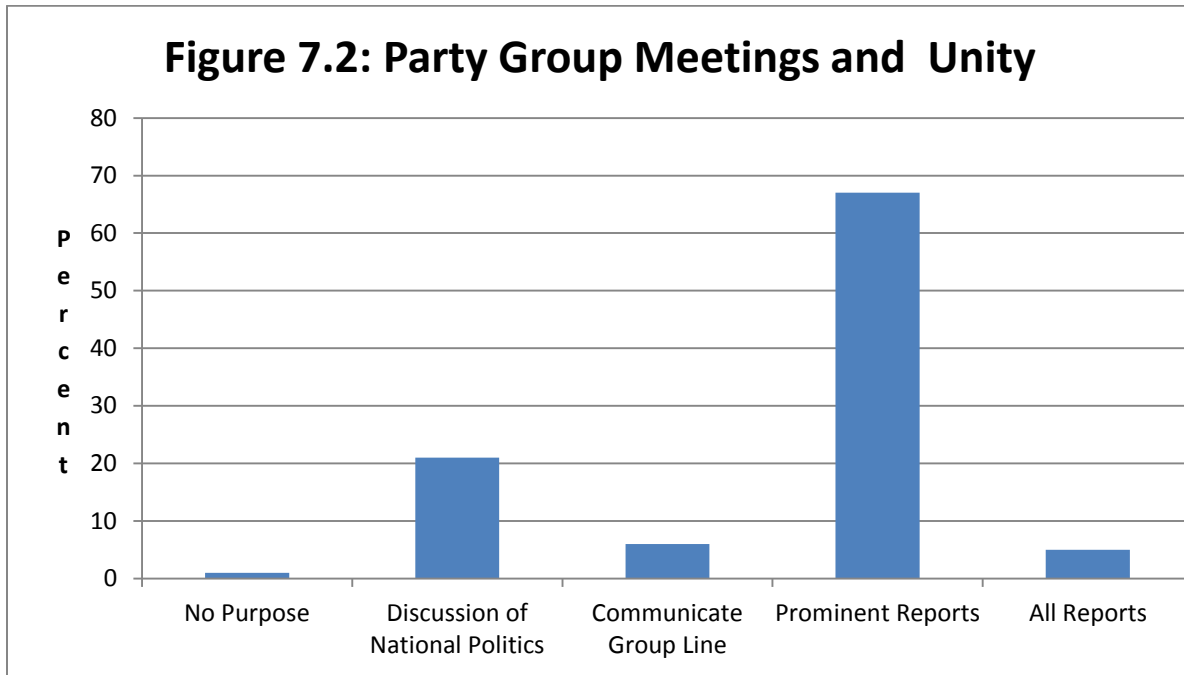
H3: Respondents who are in party group leadership or are the secretary-general will be more likely to contend that party group meetings build support for the group line on prominent reports.

Respondents with greater dissent management and consensus-building responsibilities will be more likely to associate the role of party group meetings with building unity on prominent reports because the legislative stakes are highest on these reports which in turn require the full attention of leaders and other group elites. In contrast, rank-and-file MEPs and staff will be more likely to assume that group meetings are forums primarily for leaders to convey the group line as they have less at-stake in ensuring widespread support for the group line.

H4: Respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to contend that party group meetings primarily build unity on prominent reports.

As respondents acquire greater familiarity with parliamentary and particularly party group decision-making processes, they will be more likely to assign an important role to forums such as party group meetings for resolving differences and building unity on prominent reports as these

reports incur the highest stakes. In turn, more years of service should be accompanied by greater exposure to and easier identification of socialization processes and appeals for group unity accompanying group-level discussions of prominent reports.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents who offered each response category. N of Cases: 81

All but three respondents answered the question. As depicted above in Figure 7.2, the overwhelming majority (two-thirds) of respondents identified a unity-building role for party group meetings primarily associated with prominent reports. This reflects the higher stakes associated with prominent reports but also the logistics of most groups not having the time to accommodate widespread discussion of all reports. In turn, only five percent of respondents identified a link between party group meetings and group cohesion on all reports whereas six percent regarded group meetings primarily as procedural forums for conveying the group line. In contrast, twenty percent viewed party group meetings primarily as a forum for discussing national politics and not for building group unity with one EFD respondent maintaining that the party group meeting did not serve any purpose.

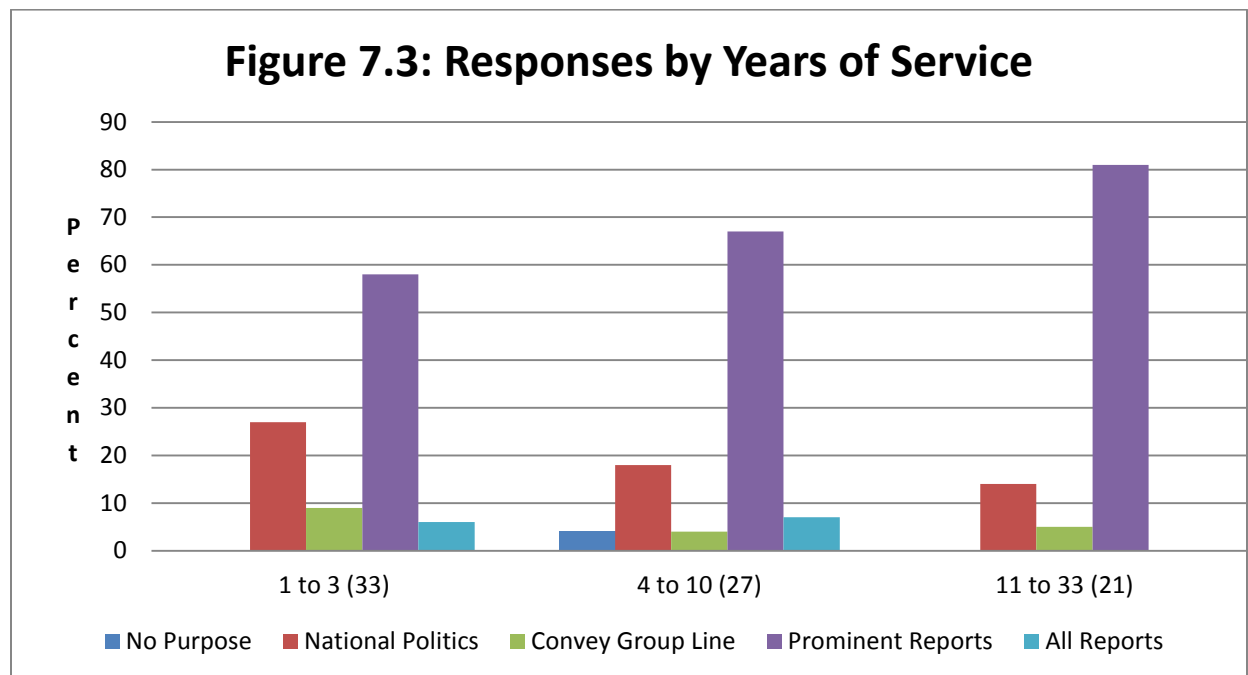
As depicted below in Table 7.3, a respondent's length of service in the European Parliament, previous profession, and party group membership were statistically significant predictors of party group meeting responses. As respondents acquire greater familiarity and closer ties with their party group, aided by previous political and leadership experiences, they are more likely to identify a link between party group meetings and ensuring unity on prominent reports.

TABLE 7.3: PREDICTORS OF PARTY GROUP MEETING RESPONSES

Party Group	0.4067***
Group Position	0.2455
Member-State	0.3905
Years of Service	0.5577***
Gender	0.2985
<u>Profession</u>	<u>0.4869**</u>

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, ** and ***, denote statistical significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 81

Figure 7.3 below illustrates that the probability of contending that party group meetings contribute to group unity primarily on prominent reports increases as years of service and exposure to party group organizational and socialization processes increases.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents who offered each response. Numbers in parentheses indicate respondents by years of service. N of Cases: 81, Cramér's V = 0.5577***

In contrast, those with fewer years of service were more likely to relegate party group meetings as forums for discussion of national politics or as procedural forums for conveying the group line although a majority of these respondents also offered the prominent reports response. This indicates that while respondents may view party group meetings as providing a variety of functions, the prevailing perception that the primary function of party group meetings is to build support for prominent reports grows over time.

TABLE 7.4: PARTY GROUP MEETING RESPONSES AND PREVIOUS PROFESSION

Professions	No Purpose	Nat. Pols	Communicate	Prominent	All Reports	N
Leadership	0	0.08	0.08	0.84	0	22
Elected Office	0	0.25	0	0.75	0	22
Staff	0.04	0.23	0.09	0.50	0.14	22
Private Sector	0	0.25	0	0.50	0.25	4
Education/Student	0	0.17	0	0.83	0	6
Unknown	0	0.20	0.40	0.40	0	5
(N of Cases)	(1)	(17)	(5)	(54)	(4)	81

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to respondent's previous profession prior to service in the European Parliament. N of Cases: 81, Cramér's V: 0.4869**

As depicted above in Table 7.4, the single respondent who maintained that party group meetings serve no purpose had previously served as staff at the national or party level. While perceptions of party group meetings contributing to unity extended across respondent professional categories, responses referencing prominent reports were more likely offered by those with previous leadership or elected office experience with comparatively only half of respondents with previous staff or private sector experience citing prominent reports. However, the few respondents who maintained that party group meetings contribute to group unity on all reports had a previous staff or private sector background. These results indicate that greater familiarity with legislative processes and in particular previous experience with party caucus meetings contribute toward identification of party group meetings as key forums for building support for the group line primarily on prominent reports where the stakes are highest.

As depicted below in Table 7.5, the response trend followed predicted patterns in regards to group membership in that respondents from the most influential party groups were more likely to contend that party group meetings primarily contributed to group unity on prominent reports. With higher legislative stakes, leaders in more influential groups will be incentivized to focus dissent management efforts on prominent reports. However, EPP respondents offered this response in lower numbers which suggests that group size also influences perceptions of party group meetings in that EPP respondents are more likely to view group meetings as procedural forums where the group line is articulated with members deferring to working groups.

TABLE 7.5: PARTY GROUP MEETING RESPONSES AND PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D	N
No Purpose	0	0	0.20	0	0	0	0	1
National Politics	0.06	0.22	0.80	0.07	0	0.75	0.19	17
Communicate Line	0	0	0	0.26	0.10	0	0	5
Prominent Reports	0.83	0.78	0	0.60	0.80	0.25	0.81	54
All Reports	0.11	0	0	0.07	0.10	0	0	4
(N of Cases)	(18)	(9)	(5)	(15)	(10)	(8)	(16)	81

Note: Entries are percentages of party group meeting responses according to party group affiliation with the last line depicting respondents per party group. N of Cases: 81, Cramér's V: 0.4067***

In turn, Greens/EFA and ALDE respondents were the most likely to contend that party group meetings contribute to group unity on all reports which underscores the widespread positive attitudes by respondents toward and the observed extensive participation by members of these groups. Meanwhile, ECR respondents also were more likely to offer the response citing the link between group meetings and prominent reports which indicates that as the ECR identity and whip structure evolve, group leaders can utilize meetings as forums to build group unity though, at least for now, these efforts are relegated to a handful of reports viewed as 'prominent'.

Finally, respondents from the two smallest and least influential party groups were more likely to perceive party group meetings merely as forums for discussing national politics with an EFD respondent providing the sole perception of no role whatsoever for party group meetings.

My observations corroborate these perceptions in regards to EFD meetings, but I also observed that GUE meetings often encompass spirited and informed debate as well as national updates. I believe this reflects GUE culture in that individual and national independence in voting is prioritized over group unity leading most respondents to conclude that the group meetings do not contribute to unity though participation in them is high.

Party group meetings in the two largest groups are focused on building consensus and addressing dissent on prominent reports. In part this reflects the logistical limitations confronting leaders as a member of the EPP secretariat below asserts. In addition, EPP and S & D working groups are very influential in developing a common line that is adopted with minimal discussion in the group meeting or in the case of prominent reports is the framework for dissent management efforts by leaders. In this sense, the working group vice-president, along with the rapporteur and coordinators together at times with the parliamentary secretary take the lead in party group meetings to ensure maximum support and minimal levels of dissent expression.

“Our group like I think all groups tries to have as much discipline as possible. First we try to have debates in the group on the tricky issues. We have a big group with two hundred and sixty-five members. We have a number of forums and places where we try to merge a consensus...When there is a problem that has not found a solution in this context, then we go to the group meeting, and we have a discussion. We try to discuss for a long time when it is necessary because we usually find a compromise”. (October 15, 2011)

In my observations of EPP party group meetings, working group positions were nearly always adopted as the official group line. When encountering opposition, leaders were successful in addressing dissent during the meeting or pledged to follow-up with individuals afterwards. In a few instances, particular individuals or delegations were successful in securing group sponsorship of plenary amendments or agreed to dissent by abstaining or voting against a particular amendment but not the entire report. I believe this reflects in part the group culture that emphasizes unity as well as deference to working groups.

Based on my observations and interview responses, President Daul tends to take a more relaxed role when presiding over party group meetings. He normally defers to other leaders to secure support for the group line except on prominent reports. When reports address divisive issues such as social issues or some foreign policy questions, Daul will ensure that all sides participate in a discussion and then a free vote is called for with the group line in this instance reflecting a majority and not an official leadership stance. However, when prominent reports are at-stake, Daul assumes a more assertive role.

In my first observation, after other leaders argued for the group line on a particular report, Daul urged members to “close ranks” behind him and pledged not to “pull punches” when meeting with national government leaders. On another report, one member took issue with the group line and engaged in a debate with the working group vice-president. The vice-president pledged to meet with the member even though she was not a delegation chair and that member later vote the group line in plenary. In another observation, the parliamentary secretary, Szajers, took a visible dissent management role such as by noting what he regarded as ‘the unacceptable position’ of the Council on a particular report while clarifying the group line.

Szajers assumed the role of moderator on another report when noting a division between the rapporteur and a coordinator on particular paragraphs. Following discussion, Szajers forged a compromise which was supported in a recorded vote by the group. In my subsequent observations, Daul also acted as mediator in referring one report back to a working group and in overseeing a compromise on an amendment for another report. Daul was also very demonstrative in a Strasbourg meeting addressing a particular dispute with the Council by referring to its position as “unacceptable” and vowed to defend the parliament’s interests which drew loud

applause. Later Daul concurred with the rapporteur on having split votes on various amendments which would be proposed by the EPP in plenary.

“It’s through persuasion, it’s through dialogue and encouraging full discussion in the group and that requires some trust. People have got to feel that they can raise an objection in group without being shot down, that they will get a fair hearing, that there will be a sensible discussion around the issue. So, we have worked hard as a group I think to nurture that feeling”. (October 16, 2011)

The comments above from an S & D vice-president underline the importance of party group meetings not only in the scheme of a whip structure managing dissent but also in regards to attitudes toward group unity (See Garner and Letki 2005). If members do not view party group meetings as forums where competing views may be heard and where the group line reflects consensus, group cohesion in plenary and in attitudes toward unity will decline. If such disconnect exists, members will be less likely to follow the lead of colleagues in supporting the group line in adopting group norms governing dissent. However, logistics prevent the larger groups from discussing every report in detail and not every member can participate in discussions. Therefore, group unity reflects the efforts of leaders to accommodate discussion and of members adopting the norm of adhering to the line set or articulated in the meetings.

“So, Swoboda is chairing the group meeting, but he is not really interfering into business except when there are very crucial reports, and in this case he might call for a meeting of the respective coordinators and vice presidents in his office to coordinate a common position before the dossier is discussed in the group meeting. Like what we had with ACTA for instance. Then, in the group meeting, we try to discuss in order to find an agreement or compromise, and we cannot do this, then we vote and the majority is the position of the Socialist group”. (June 21, 2012)

As I also noted above, S & D presidents and other leaders were more likely to reference the group (Socialist) identity and appeal for unity than their EPP counterparts. The S & D are also more likely to set the group line or produce compromises on prominent reports in the group bureau before the full meeting. Otherwise, S & D group meetings mirror those of the EPP in their attention to prominent reports and in their deference to the working group position as the

group line. In turn, any expression of dissent must be made prior to or during the group meeting with less costly forms of dissent expression often secured in the meeting.

The first S & D party group meeting I observed was chaired by President Schulz. His style differed from his successor Swoboda (parliamentary secretary during my first research phase) in that he was more demonstrative in his speaking and in that he adopted a more top-down approach to consensus. In part, this was reflected in more frequent votes in the meeting to identify a group line under Swoboda's leadership but also in that Schulz was quicker to address dissenting views, whereas Swoboda tended to let the debate play out before reverting to appeals for unity on the group line. As with Szajers, the S & D parliamentary secretaries noted the group line and at times acted as moderators/lobbyists.

In another meeting, Schulz noted that a vote on a particular report would be "a signal to the Council" underlying the defense of the European Parliament as an institution. Multiple members made appeals to Schulz to go further in his plenary address in criticizing the banks. Schulz then outlined three clear goals that must accompany any future S & D line on fiscal and financial integration. He then turned over the discussion to one of the WG vice-presidents who echoed many of Schulz's criticisms. In a meeting I observed during the second phase of research, President Swoboda was critical of the level of plenary cohesion for the group on a particular set of prominent reports while the new parliamentary secretary, Guerrero, reviewed the upcoming plenary agenda and group lines on reports and amendments.

Party group meetings in the medium-sized groups provide the same consensus-building and dissent management forum as in the larger groups yet also differ in key ways. With fewer members, ALDE, ECR, and Greens/EFA party group meetings provide more of an opportunity for members to participate in discussions and to contribute to the development of the group line.

In turn, party group meetings become the focal point for dissent management, socialization, and (apart from the ECR) instilling a common group identity. In this sense, the relatively high cohesion obtained by the ALDE and the Greens/EFA is in large part a product of the full utilization of party group meetings by leaders AND the investment of members in valuing the role and output of these forums.

“For example, we had a big discussion on something and there were opposing opinions in the group and we discussed for three hours, and he listened and let everybody tell what they want to have as this group line and he made a decision that everybody thought was perfect what he proposed, and his proposal was kind of a compromise proposal. It wasn’t the right or the left side of our group, but something everybody could feel comfortable with and besides he let us discuss for such a long time and of course there must be compromises” (June 29, 2012)

I often witnessed the scenario described above by an ALDE MEP in my observations of group meetings. The rapporteur would propose the group line which would be followed by extensive discussion which left me and members baffled as to what exactly was the common line. Then, Verhofstadt would propose a common line reflecting the bulk if not the majority of views of those who had participated in the discussion. At times, this was a modification of the rapporteur’s position and in other instances was an entirely new approach to the group position. This clearly demonstrates the unusual role of Verhofstadt in that he acts as the principle consensus-builder in party group meetings.

“We had a debate about criticizing Berlusconi’s hold of the media. So, we discussed it in our group meeting and we all agreed to vote the critical Berlusconi line. We then had the vote in parliament and it lost by one vote and we were all mystified because we had done the calculations and we thought we would win it. We found that our three Irish members had switched sides after our meeting...So in the following evening’s group meeting, Verhofstadt made sure the Irish members were there and said we had an agreement in our meeting and you three voted against it. Would you like to explain in front of the whole group why you did that? In the end, Verhofstadt said we have done this, so let’s go on to the next item, but it was a masterful performance.” (October 26, 2011)

The example above offered by a member of the ALDE bureau highlights the norm of members giving advance notice to group leadership that they or their delegation will dissent from

the group line. This may be done in private, in the working group, or in the party group meeting. Norm adoption occurs when members copy the behavior of their colleagues and/or follow the appeals of group leaders. In this sense, widespread norm adoption of indicating dissent prior to or during group meetings as well as a strong sense of investment by members in the processes and outcomes associated with group meetings helps to explain relatively high ALDE cohesion.

However, an explanation for the ALDE's ranking as the fourth most cohesive party group may be found in the breakdown of the whip structure in that in contrast to the collaborative efforts by Greens/EFA leaders during and after group meetings, the ALDE group president and rapporteur bear the brunt of dissent management. In addition, poor attitudes toward working groups as described by most ALDE respondents in the previous section undermines or at the least complicates dissent management in that unlike their EPP or S & D counterparts ALDE leaders cannot rely on norms encouraging deferral to group experts.

My observations of ALDE group meetings affirmed that group presidents and other leaders in general must pick their battles in the sense that they cannot secure universal support for the group line in all matters and otherwise pursue lower levels of dissent expression. In my first observation, one delegation announced that they would oppose the group line on a report, which was met with a notation by Verhofstadt. Instead, the president focused his time addressing what he considered as the key points of the group's priorities concerning economic governance. The group then affirmed a common line on four other reports following extensive discussion.

In another observation, the parliamentary secretary asked the group to clarify its position on a particular report. From there, the rapporteur took the lead role in advocating for support of the group line as defined by the relevant committee members. After an extensive debate, Verhofstadt identified a consensus consisting of a proposal by the group in plenary to split a particular

paragraph, have a free vote on one amendment, and adhere to the original line on the bulk of the report and on its final passage. This exchange also highlights the far more reserved role of the ALDE whip in comparison to her EPP, S & D, and even ECR counterparts in that she asked for clarification for the group line but never advocated for a position and did not act as a mediator.

Later, Verhofstadt pledged to raise an issue of concern identified by many members to the Council of Presidents. In another meeting, Verhofstadt confirmed that the group would support a particular amendment on a report but asked the group to identify its views on another amendment. After debate clearly identified a pronounced division among the group, Verhofstadt announced that a free vote would accompany that particular amendment.

“In the beginning, I had some difficulty with the way the group discusses things sometimes. It’s difficult to follow and a bit messy and it depends a bit on the mood of the chair. Once you get to understand the dynamics and the method in a way, I think that usually I am more in line when I leave than when I arrived. We have all the written briefings and we have very good staff, and they write very elaborate briefings on all of the files, and if we have questions we can raise, but I think usually they solve a lot on the written text because they are so thorough”. (June 4, 2012)

The response above from a Greens/EFA vice-president to the question of whether party group meetings contribute to group unity reflects both the structure and the culture associated with party group meetings. Greens/EFA meetings are distinctive in their extensive participation (followed closely by the ALDE) but are also unique in that the group secretariat and MEP aides participate in debate exemplified by the ‘whip’ role assumed by the secretary-general, Vula Tsetsi. Vula not only participates in debates but also pursues consensus for the group line while providing updates on developments in other groups and institutions. In turn, Greens/EFA meeting notes are the most detailed and easily understood produced by any group.

“It depends. So, normally if it is in the group meeting that it is clear that the working group could not solve the conflict and there are very different notions, and sometimes the people indicated to the co-presidents and the secretary-general that there is a conflict, it’s tackled in the group meeting and normally Rebecca Harms and Cohn-Bendit try to make their interests clear, Danny is especially strong in defending his interests, and then the procedure is that we try to figure out

by indicative voting in the group what is the majority and minority position, and then in these cases if we find that it is a conflict that we cannot solve, then we have indications in the voting list of where we have a free vote, what is the majority vote, and which people want to vote differently”. (June 5, 2012)

The response above provided by a Greens coordinator underscores the contributions of working groups on prominent reports but also highlights the crucial dissent management role played by a ‘team’ of group leaders consisting of co-presidents, vice-presidents, the rapporteur, Vula, and others in securing near universal support for the group line. Even after fractious debate, either the Greens/EFA group line is re-affirmed or a compromise among the group occurs after the debate in the group meeting. Though separate national lines do occur (especially by the EFA parties), on most votes, the group is nearly unified despite the obvious reservations of some members expressed in in the group meeting. In this sense, Greens/EFA members strongly identify with the group in that they put their objections aside and support the line agreed upon in the group meeting which I believe is in part a product of a strong sense of investment in the meetings and of the efforts of leaders to identify and manage dissent prior to and during the meeting as illustrated by frequent lobbying in the aisle or hallway.

On most occasions in my observations, either Harms or Cohn-Bendit were in the chair for the entire proceedings while the other either talked to members at their seats or elsewhere, or left the room for periods of time. When discussing one report, the rapporteur noted that the group had made it ‘greener’ through amendments at the committee level while also addressing group goals. However, as there were administrative costs in the report for a program the group very much oppose, she recommended that the group abstain as its official plenary line in the first reading and then vote no in the second reading following conciliation with the Council.

In one group meeting during the economic governance crisis, Vula took the lead role in articulating the outline of any future group position. The debate highlighted significant divisions

in an otherwise ideologically cohesive group in that some members prefer austerity measures, while others prefer stimulus spending. Later, the near unanimity on the six and two-pack (See www.votewatch.eu) is in turn evidence of successful lobbying and socialization associated with Greens/EFA party group meetings. In another meeting a particular report was met with substantial reservations. The appeals for unity by the rapporteur were reiterated by vice-presidents, Vula, and Harms while Cohn-Bendit worked the aisles lobbying members. After agreeing to a compromise amendment, the group line on the entire report was affirmed.

My observations confirmed the views of a significant majority of ECR respondents who maintained that party group meetings contribute to group unity on prominent reports. In turn, many of the components of a successful whip structure are in place. The group whip utilizes the meeting to state the group line on all report, notes divisions within the group on particular amendments or reports, and at times proposes compromises to secure consensus or to minimize dissent at less costly levels as the response from an aide to an ECR vice-president contends.

“The way it works with us that coming up to a group meeting, Fox (whip) will circulate a note to the shadows letting him know if they want him to discuss something, so this way you find out what might be controversial within the group prior to the meeting and the chief whip asks the group in the meeting to discuss its position”. (October 5, 2011)

In turn, the ECR party group meeting acts an additional component of the whip structure in that it is utilized by the rapporteur, the whip, and other leaders to clarify and build support for the group line. However, what distinguish the ECR from the more cohesive groups are the prevalence and the acceptance of separate national lines. For instance, while Fox may pursue a common line, more than often, a group line either does not accompany a report or it entails a majority opinion rather than the official leadership view unaccompanied by lobbying.

“I would say that nine of ten plenary notes come before the group and there is no comment. In other words, everyone is happy that the coordinators made the right decision. Of the remaining ten percent, any member could say I am not happy with that plenary note and I want a discussion

or occasionally the coordinator will say this is a genuinely difficult issue on which the members of the committee are divided and therefore we want the group to inform us on how they feel. Those are fairly rare, because I think for example on agriculture, we know that the British delegation will have a position x and the Polish will have a separate whip. So, there might be a thorny issue on agriculture but it doesn't need to be discussed in the group because we know what the result will be". (November 9, 2011)

As an ECR vice-president above describes, the group meeting is often a venue for noting either the majority view or a series of national lines on various reports. However, if the coordinators, the rapporteur, and others approach the whip to pursue a compromise or if he and the group president believe that the ECR can influence a plenary outcome on a prominent report, then Fox will argue for a common line in the meeting. This may take the form of abstaining as in the vote on ACTA which as another ECR vice-president below notes was the result of lobbying by the group president, Martin Callanan (second field research phase).

"A good example would be the recent discussion on ACTA that took place in the ECR group meeting. Whereas some ECR Members were inclined to support ACTA, others were strongly against. Mr. Callanan formed a consensus and the group abstained". (ECR VP, June 19, 2012)

In this sense, while the ECR have a whip and more recently a group president who pursues a common line on prominent reports, the bulk of ECR party group meetings act as information forums rather than dissent management venues. As I have argued in previous chapters, the ECR have obtained relatively high cohesion in a short time since their founding in 2009 and have the potential to become even more influential in plenary. However, the acceptance of separate national lines on a majority of reports impedes the influence of party group meetings. In turn, a greater emphasis on securing a common line adhered to by most of the group on most reports would contribute toward greater plenary cohesion and a more cohesive group identity.

However, it is important to note that I never observed an ECR group meeting chaired by Callanan and observed only two group meetings chaired by Zahradil. However, these observations did confirm the perceived influence of the group whip and of the prevalence of

separate national lines on a majority of reports. In my first ECR meeting observation, the Czech prime minister addressed the group and fielded questions from members. Fox then briefed the group on the upcoming plenary and announced that an agreement among delegations and the rapporteur had been reached that the group would abstain as a whole on a particular report.

In another meeting observation, Fox summarized the conflicting positions among some within the group on a particular report. He gave way to the rapporteur who was from one of the delegations comprised of only one member. A debate among members entirely along delegation lines ensued with Fox noting in the end that the UK delegation would abstain and the other delegations would support the rapporteur's position. In this sense, the rapporteur's position while reflecting a majority of the group was not the official party group line with a significant portion of the group adopting a separate line. However, on another report, Fox secured an official group line of abstaining on a particular amendment but supporting final adoption in plenary.

Most GUE respondents view party group meeting primarily as forums for discussing national politics though a quarter believed meetings contributed to unity on prominent reports. My observations on the whole confirm these perceptions although I did notice a change in attitude by leadership toward the role of group meetings following the election of Rebecca Zimmer as group president prior to the second phase of field research. As one GUE leader below notes, leadership does pursue a common line on some reports including abstaining as a group.

"Sometimes abstain is also a position. It depends on the issue and from the direction of the report if an abstention is more positive or negative. Normally, the chair wants to get a common position to support or to reject a report. Sometimes for abstention, but we need good feelings for it and sometimes she and other leaders may have the feeling that there is no common position and will say ok, if you don't want to come to a common position, then this is a free vote." (June 19, 2012)

The GUE more than often do not have an official line on reports and any 'group line' more often reflects a majority of members rather than a position pursued by leadership. In this sense,

the rapporteur's position is rarely adopted as the common line and the GUE according to responses and my observations are far less often than the ECR to utilize group meetings to pursue a common line. However, President Zimmer on occasion did argue for a common position and has called for a more substantive consensus-building role for GUE vice-presidents. If the GUE pursue and utilize group meetings to achieve consensus on more reports, then they may acquire greater plenary influence and more cohesion. In other words, the GUE would need to replace the norm of dissent with one emphasizing adherence to a common line and regard consensus as a unity-building exercise rather than as 'subversion of democracy'.

That is not to say that the GUE do not debate issues in group meetings. In some ways, my observations refute the response trend in that I heard far more substantive discussions on reports than in the EFD meetings which indicate an interest among many members in plenary outcomes. In my first observation, the group was notified by one member of a planned general strike in Portugal and of developments in Greek protests which both underlined the closer connections to social movements enjoyed by the GUE compared to the other groups except perhaps for the Greens. In my initial two observations, President Bisky moderated discussions but never advocated for a common line on any reports. Similarly, the rapporteur's appeals in most instances lacked the support of other leaders that I observed in other group meetings.

In my third observation, President Zimmer announced that an agreement had been reached between delegation leaders and the rapporteur to propose a common line of abstaining on a particular report. One MEP notified the group of a rally on repealing border controls which the president promised to attend and urged members to record video testimonials on this issue. This underscores how in many instances, the GUE are a protest movement criticizing liberalization and other policies yet in other instances a majority join with the S & D and Greens to pass or

defeat particular reports. On another report, the president tried to secure a group line of abstaining but many members persisted in calling for split votes. In the end, this side won in that the group would sponsor amendments splitting paragraphs but a majority pledged to abstain.

EFD party group meetings are almost exclusively forums for discussing national politics and opposition to the EU project with little discussion of the plenary agenda. However, some EFD members do participate in policymaking at the committee level and will urge colleagues to support their position in plenary. Vice-President Messerschmidt of Denmark and the Lega Nord delegation typify this approach of though being critical of integration utilize the tools at their disposal to safeguard particular interests whereas UKIP members reject the process as a whole. Nonetheless, EFD members do positively view party group meetings as one MEP below asserts.

“We all find it useful to be in a Group and to attend group meetings, where we hear reports from other countries, often containing interesting details, which do not appear in the media; or meet personalities from around the world, who can shed new light on familiar matters. Sometimes we undertake campaigns, as a Group - like our campaign in Ireland, against Fiscal Union - but, as in that case, not all delegations participate. It's a live-and-let-live situation. Maximum freedom for all to do what they like”. (June 21, 2012)

At my first observation of an EFD group meeting, Nigel Farage was not in attendance and co-president Speroni chaired the meeting. The meeting consisted largely of a series of national political reports by delegations though the co-president did state the group's opposition to developments within a particular EU agency. One vice-president lobbied his colleagues to coordinate efforts to derail financial and fiscal union, though my sense was that each delegation viewed its efforts as sovereign and independent endeavors. In the absence of the UKIP, I believe the EFD could exert greater plenary influence and attain higher cohesion if its leaders pursued a common line which they rarely. In another observation, Farage was in the chair and he asked for one delegation to clarify their position on a particular issue. Following this discussion, Farage

offered insight on a particular report which revealed his knowledge of the financial sector. From here, Farage was ecstatic in reacting to recent public opinion polls and the meeting adjourned.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Party group and (where applicable) working group meetings contribute to party group unity by functioning as dissent management and consensus-building forums. Group meetings provide an opportunity for members to express their views and contribute to the development of the group line which in turn strengthens the cohesion of the group in that members who regard group meetings as productive and vital forums are more likely to support the group line in plenary and view themselves as group members rather than solely as individuals or as part of a national delegation. In this sense, group meetings provide an opportunity for leaders to socialize members into adopting the norm of adhering to the group line affirmed or identified in the group meeting and to announce the intent to dissent either before or during the group meeting.

In addition, party group meetings are also opportunities for leaders to identify and manage dissent. In turn, a whip structure consisting of clearly-assigned roles for leaders who work as a team is necessary in order for group meetings to be utilized to the fullest potential in terms of securing consensus and managing dissent. Observations confirmed the prevalent perception among respondents that party group meetings are primarily utilized by leaders in the more cohesive groups to build consensus and manage dissent on prominent reports whereas the least cohesive party groups (EFD and GUE) primarily utilize group meetings to discuss national politics and to articulate separate lines. This perception is also more evident among respondents with more years of service in the parliament and those with previous national governmental or party leadership experience. I also find that the ALDE president is far more active in consensus-building and dissent management in party group meetings than his counterparts, while the Greens/EFA are unique in their practice of including the secretary-general and other staff in

meeting deliberations. Overall, in the four most cohesive groups, leaders make appeals and when necessary lobby members during or after the meeting.

Group forums as a whole reduce information asymmetry, facilitate dissent management, and instill the norm of deference to decisions taken in group forums. Interview responses similarly identified an important dissent management role for horizontal working groups and that negative views toward working groups contribute to low levels of group cohesion both in plenary and in terms of attitudes within the party group toward unity. Positive perceptions of the role of working groups were held by respondents in the two largest groups on all reports. In contrast, ALDE respondents on the whole negatively viewed working groups as either unimportant forums accompanied by low attendance or as forums important only for those invested in the report. While the ALDE have secured relatively high cohesion, negative views toward working groups helps to explain their comparatively higher dissent levels.

Meanwhile, though the Greens/EFA do not have working groups in the same organizational sense as the three larger groups their thematic working groups are positively viewed by members and are part of a whip structure that aggressively pursues unanimity at every stage. Similarly, the ECR have formed a policy development group which identifies long-term issues and positions for the group. When considered in conjunction with the coordination role played by the group whip, ECR cohesion is in part a product of members' views toward group forums and of the efforts of the group whip. However, ECR cohesion remains far lower in part because separate national lines displace or accompany the group line articulated in the meetings.

Finally, while the smallest party groups do not require working groups, their lower cohesion is a product of their inability (or in the case of the EFD unwillingness) to fully utilize party group meetings to build consensus and address dissent and of a group culture which undermines unity.

In this sense, group size and influence contribute to specific forums and leadership roles, but unity for any party group is attainable through the full utilization of party group meetings by leaders and of a widespread perception among members that meetings are forums where participation is encouraged and whose decisions embody the values and goals of the group.

In the next chapter, I will continue my consideration of the relationship between socialization and group cohesion by considering to two questions included in the Farrell et al. survey (2011) and responses to two questions I asked in interviews: when is it appropriate to dissent from the group line and what is done to help new MEPs understand the organization and values of the party group? Low dissent levels can only be achieved when a whip structure is accompanied by socialization processes that foster a shared group identity and instill particular norms. Socialization in this sense both assists and builds upon lobbying efforts by group leaders in that it reduces their workload by encouraging members to adopt the group line or dissent at less costly levels yet also is another tool utilized by leaders to ensure unity.

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Note: Referenced roll-call votes such as the six pack and two-pack may be found on www.votewatch.eu in regards to full voting results and breakdown by party group.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SOCIALIZATION AND PARTY GROUP COHESION

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I considered the contributions of horizontal working groups (where applicable) and party group meetings toward party group cohesion. I found that the more cohesive party groups utilized both forums to identify and address dissent, instill norms, reinforce shared conceptualizations of the group identity, and reduce information asymmetry/overload for MEPs. Group meetings provide an opportunity for members to contribute to the development of the group line which in turn strengthens the cohesion of the group in that members who regard group meetings as productive and vital forums are more likely to support the group line in plenary and view themselves as group members rather than solely as individuals or as part of a national delegation (See Brown 2000, Garner and Letki 2005).

Observations confirmed the perception among most respondents that party group meetings are primarily utilized by leaders in the more cohesive groups to build consensus and manage dissent on prominent reports whereas the least cohesive party groups (EFD and GUE) primarily utilize group meetings to discuss national politics and to articulate separate lines. This perception is also more evident among respondents with more years of service in the parliament and those with previous national governmental or party leadership experience. In addition I found, the ALDE president is far more active in consensus-building and dissent management in party group meetings than his counterparts, while the Greens/EFA are unique in their practice of including the secretary-general and other staff in meeting deliberations.

Interview responses similarly identified an important dissent management role for horizontal working groups with negative views toward working groups contributing to low levels of group cohesion. For example, whereas respondents in the three most cohesive party groups viewed working group leaders and members as experts who embody the values and priorities of the

group, ALDE respondents on the whole negatively viewed working groups as either unimportant forums with low attendance or as forums important only for those invested in a given report.

Meanwhile, though the Greens/EFA do not have working groups in the same organizational sense as the three larger groups their thematic working groups are positively viewed by members and are part of a whip structure that aggressively pursues cohesion at every stage. Similarly, while the ECR lack working groups, they have formed the policy development group which identifies long-term issues and positions for the group. Finally, while the smallest party groups do not require working groups to resolve collective action problems, lower cohesion reflects an unwillingness to fully utilize party group meetings and a group culture which undermines unity.

In this chapter, I will consider the relationship between socialization and party group unity in greater detail. The chapter will first review literature defining socialization, shared identity, and norms of behavior at the group level which I link to dissent management processes. From here, the chapter will consider evidence of socialization in party groups through responses to two questions asked as part of the extensive Farrell et al. (2011) MEP survey which identify the level of a shared group identity defined in “European” terms as well as the perceived importance of party group unity among membership. The bulk of the chapter will then consider further evidence of socialization through field research interview responses to two questions. The first question asked respondents to identify expectations for communicating dissent from the group line and the second enquired about efforts at the party group level to socialize new MEPs. In turn, the goal of the chapter is to indicate how party group leaders utilize socialization processes in conjunction with lobbying to secure high levels of group cohesion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kam (2002) defines socialization as “the process of exposure or learning through which MPs acquire certain norms” (Kam, 2002, 194). In turn, Brown (2000) notes that “our sense of who we

are and what we are worth is intimately bound-up with our group memberships” (Brown, 2000, 28). In this sense, the combination of a shared conceptualization of the group identity and the diffusion of norms through socialization contribute to a cohesive group in regards to both voting behavior as well as the extent to which members strongly identify with the group and its aspirations (Brown, 2000, 64). Some party groups have shared histories dating back to the foundation of the European Parliament or in some cases much deeper foundations as part of a European political party family whereas the ECR have only been in existence since the 2009 elections. In turn, a succession of treaties and ECJ rulings have provided added incentive to party groups to remind members of shared histories and traditions in order to secure high cohesion.

With higher legislative stakes, the more cohesive party groups have pursued a shared conceptualization of the group identity in order to instill a sense of unity by socializing members into considering themselves as part of the (x) party group and not solely as individuals or members of national party delegations. For example, party group leaders encourage members to view themselves as ‘Europeans’. As Smith (2004) notes in his study of European foreign policy decision-making forums, this requires members to “reconstitute their behavior in favor of European norms rather than solely national norms” (Smith, 2004, 30). This does not require members to sacrifice national or individual identities in favor of group identities as “identity is not a zero-sum characteristic and does not require a transfer of loyalty” (Smith, 2004, 30). It does though require members to highly value group unity and to put group interests before their own. In turn, loyalty to the party group is obtained in part by the promotion of group membership as a vehicle for European cooperation and in appeals stressing ‘Community’ or ‘European’ solutions.

A shared identity is in part re-enforced through role assignment for leaders and rank-and-file. As Brown (2000) notes, particular roles “bring order to the group’s existence and imply

expectations about behavior (Brown, 2000, 72). Role assignments clarify dissent management responsibilities for leaders and consensus-building roles for group forums. For example, the EPP and S & D have assigned leadership roles to vice-presidents chairing horizontal working groups and instilled norms of deferring to the group line adopted on most reports by working groups. In contrast, the GUE have to-date refused to assign dissent management roles to group leaders and often promote national or individual interests at the expense of party group unity.

According to Brown (2000), “norms specify...certain rules for how group members should behave and thus are the basis for mutual expectations among the group members” and that “norms may serve to enhance or maintain the identity of the group” (Brown, 2000, 56 and 60). In this sense, group leaders are not only disciplinary figures and lobbyists but also role models or reference points for other members. As Crowe (1983) notes, “socialization aims to establish conformity with group norms, ensuring regularized patterns of behavior and interaction among members of the group” (Crowe, 1983, 923). Brown similarly contends that “once a group develops a clearly-defined goal inevitably norms encouraging goal-facilitative actions and discouraging inhibitory behaviors will emerge” (Brown, 2000, 60).

With high electoral turnover, retirement, and members leaving during a parliament, a cohesive group comprised of an overall fluid membership is obtainable in the long-term if there is a wide-spread adoption by membership of group goals and shared attitudes toward group-level decision-making processes which is in turn passed on to incoming members. As Crowe (1983) notes, “a well-established normative structure limits the de-stabilizing impact of new members by subjecting them to socialization” (Crowe, 1983, 909). In this sense, socialization encompasses an ongoing effort by group leaders across successive parliaments yet also draws from a shared group identity that is not bound to a given report or plenary session.

Imbedded norms (those which are widespread and have been in practice for some time) as Crowe (1986) identifies impose obligations on members in the sense of a shared loyalty to the group. In turn, when a member indicates their intention to dissent or of their uncertainty, leaders can appeal to that sense of loyalty to the group in conjunction with lobbying efforts and in place of disciplinary efforts (Crowe, 1986, 163). Loyalty to the group in this sense becomes as Kam (2002) notes, “routine and consensual” in that leaders rarely have to lobby most individual members or otherwise the whip structure would become strained and the group’s plenary influence as well as its identity would suffer. In turn, Kam contends that socialization ensures that party loyalty becomes “normatively desirable” with members internalizing the costs of not adhering to established norms at the group level thereby making dissent management efforts easier for group leaders to achieve and maintain (Kam, 2002, 31).

FARELL, HIX, AND SCULLY 2011 MEP SURVEY AND SOCIALIZATION

One source of evidence for the extent of socialization in party groups may be found in MEP responses to a survey conducted early in the current parliament (Farrell et al. 2011). From this extensive survey, I have selected one question which considers the relationship between competing identities and one which examines the extent to which respondents not only value party group unity but also how they perceive colleagues view group unity. Responses to both questions reveal a correlation between shared identity and extensive socialization with high levels of party group cohesion. In turn, I consider responses only within the context of party group membership for the purposes of addressing the topics raised in this chapter.

While each party group may develop its own identity, one common link between a shared conceptualization of the group identity and a highly cohesive party group may be to socialize members into seeing themselves and the group as European. Question 6.8 of the survey asks MEPs (including non-attached) if they see themselves: in terms of their nationality only,

primarily in terms of their nationality but also as European, the same combination but with an emphasis on being European, solely in the sense of being European, or according to some other category (EPRG MEP Survey Dataset: 2011). This question differs from an earlier that asked MEPs to place themselves on an ideological scale measuring support for European integration.

As depicted in Table 8.1 below, when responses are organized according to party group membership, two patterns emerge. First, nearly three-fifths of respondents accentuated their national origins but included a European aspect to their identity. Secondly, respondents from the more cohesive party groups are more likely to define their identity in European terms. Members of the most cohesive party group, the Greens/EFA, were more likely to view themselves solely as European or to emphasize being European over their national origin. This perception was followed in intensity by ALDE, S & D, and EPP respondents. In contrast, ECR and EFD respondents were more likely to define their identity according to national origins while GUE members were more likely to select the other category which perhaps reflects economic class?

TABLE 8.1: EUROPEAN/NATIONAL IDENTITY AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Identity	EPP	S&D	ALDE	Greens/EFA	ECR	GUE	EFD	NA	N
Member-State	0.02	0	0	0	0.29	0	0.40	0	7
MS/European	0.72	0.61	0.59	0.07	0.71	0.33	0.30	0.80	103
European/MS	0.16	0.24	0.34	0.43	0	0	0	0.20	38
European	0.02	0.02	0	0.14	0	0	0.10	0	5
Other	0.08	0.12	0.07	0.36	0	0.67	0.20	0	23
(N of Cases)	(60)	(49)	(27)	(14)	(7)	(4)	(10)	(5)	176

Note: Table depicts percentage of respondents according to party group affiliation from largest to smallest party group with last line depicting number of respondents per party group. N of Cases: 176, Cramér's V = 0.3764***. Data Source: Farrell et al. EPRG MEP Survey Dataset: 2011

How do these responses impact party group cohesion? As Smith (2004) above noted, an emphasis on being European does not necessarily translate into an abandonment of a national identity but rather indicates in this case that membership in a particular party group is defined in part by the degree to which a member views themselves and in turn perceive their party group as European. In this sense, European refers to support for European rather than national solutions

which in turn translates into pursuing consensus (within and when possible across party groups) with party group unity viewed as an essential step in order to obtain the European solution.

For example, I found that the more cohesive party groups have much closer ties to their Europarty with members viewing both the party group and Europarty as part of a larger ‘family’ or ‘movement’. In contrast, respondents from the less cohesive party groups identified far weaker ties with their Europarties or noted that a Europarty was still in the process of formation. This stronger European bond was further evident in the language employed by leaders from the more cohesive party groups. For example, group presidents often made appeals to members to support the group line on prominent reports because European or Community solutions were necessary or because the “European experiment” was at-stake along with the group’s reputation.

As an EPP vice-president below emphasizes, members of the more cohesive groups derive a sense of unity from sharing a European approach to issues. In turn, I contend that the absence of a European identity in the less cohesive party groups contributes to higher dissent levels in that party group membership is viewed by members as a necessity rather than as a vehicle for obtaining a shared vision for Europe. For example, when an MEP’s goals are defined in part by their definitions of group membership, leaders may draw from a shared emphasis on finding European solutions as group affiliation is partially defined in European terms. On the other hand, a shared identity in any form is insufficient for securing high cohesion if unaccompanied by other socialization processes and a fully functional whip structure.

“Our group has a common line which is in favor of more European integration. I think that is the main strength of our group. Then, we might have different views which are center-left or center right, more progressive or more moderate policy on how to implement a European approach, but I would say that main European approach is the main goal of our activities”. (June 12, 2012)

Party group unity is in this sense also a product of an engaged leadership (whip structure), and of a membership that places an emphasis on unity. In turn, high cohesion is in part the

culmination of efforts by leaders to socialize members into framing their goals according to group membership. Accordingly, members perceive that their goals and those of the group are one in the same and that shared goals are only attainable through a unified party group. For example, whereas EFD members do not value group unity and instead direct their attention to an external audience, Greens/EFA members value group unity to the point of setting aside differences in order to secure a compromise culminating in a common line.

Unity in this sense is rational yet also reflects group cultural influences in that while members may pursue group unity because it facilitates the fulfillment of their preferences, group unity is also a product of members adhering to the appeals and copying the behavior of leaders and colleagues who emphasize the importance of group unity. In turn, if group leaders demonstrate the importance of unity through voting and in speeches while also pursuing unity through lobbying, members are more likely to copy this behavior and adopt similar attitudes.

In Question 5.4 of the Farrell et al. survey (2011), MEPs were asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “For our European political group, it is very important to appear united” (EPRG MEP Survey Dataset: 2011). The response set was arranged according to a five-point scale with 1 indicating complete agreement, 2 agreement, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 4 disagreement and 5 indicating complete disagreement. The number of respondents for this question is one larger than those answering the previous question and Gamma rather than Cramér's V is utilized as a measure of strength of association as responses to the question are of an ordinal rather than a nominal nature. As depicted in Table 8.2 below, nearly three-fourths of respondents completely agreed or agreed with the statement that it was important for their party group to appear united. MEPs in the ECR group as well as members of the more cohesive party groups most often agreed with the statement with members of the two largest groups most likely

to completely agree. In contrast, those from less cohesive party groups were more likely to disagree or completely disagree that it was important for their group to appear united.

TABLE 8.2: IMPORTANCE OF APPEARING UNITED AND GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Group Unity	EPP	S&D	ALDE	Greens/EFA	ECR	GUE	EFD	NA	N
Completely	0.26	0.35	0.08	0.14	0	0	0.22	0.20	40
Agree	0.52	0.53	0.65	0.64	0.87	0	0.11	0	92
Neither	0.14	0.08	0.15	0.07	0.13	0	0.22	0.60	24
4	0.02	0.02	0.12	0.14	0	0.50	0.44	0	13
5	0.06	0.02	0	0	0	0.50	0	0.20	8
(N of Cases)	(62)	(49)	(26)	(14)	(8)	(4)	(9)	(5)	177

Note: Table depicts percentage of responses according to party group affiliation from largest to smallest party group with the last row depicting the number of respondents per party group. N of Cases: 177, Gamma = 0.2637**, Data Source: Farrell et al. *EPRG MEP Survey Dataset: 2011*

The ECR response trend defies expectations in that as among the least cohesive party groups, its members responding to this survey place a great emphasis on party group unity. In part, this may reflect the influence of the UK Conservative MEPs with their long history of party discipline and their primary role in forming the group and its organizational structure (whip office) which in turn leads colleagues from other member-states to conclude that the appearance of party group unity is important because their UK colleagues stress its importance. Regardless, the responses do provide further evidence that the ECR may achieve higher cohesion if it develops socialization processes to translate the perceived importance of party group unity into reality. In other words, non-UK members must take the next step from acknowledging the importance of appearing unified to adhering to a single line rather than separate national lines on a consistent basis if higher cohesion levels are to be attained.

SOCIALIZATION AND EXPECTATIONS ON ANNOUNCING DISSENT

Norms governing dissent expression may be translated into informal practices re-enforced through appeals by leaders as well as through observing and copying the behavior of colleagues. However, informal practices may be codified over time into formal rules (See Smith 2004). Party group rules are normally not available to the public, but in the course of field research, some

respondents referenced rules governing dissent announcement. For example, one senior member of the ECR secretariat noted that it was required in the 2009 Prague Declaration (the group's constitution) for any member to inform the group whip of their intent to dissent either directly or through their delegation chair. In the absence of accessible rules governing dissent announcement in most groups, I asked the question of: when is it acceptable for an MEP to dissent from the official group line? I also asked the question in order to gauge the extent to which party group unity was valued by respondents and the extent to which they perceived unity was valued by colleagues. Dissent can be conveyed in private meetings, or may be announced in group forums in order to provide leaders with the opportunities to address or mitigate its effects.

For example, large party groups should utilize working groups as forums for announcing dissent prior to the full meeting with the bureau/presidency serving a similar function, whereas in the smaller party groups, the full group meeting provides the sole forum for dissent announcement outside of delegations. In turn, I anticipated five potential responses: there is no (formal or informal) requirement to announce dissent from the group line, members are expected to indicate dissent to their national delegation leaders, members are expected to privately inform group leaders (or the secretary-general), members are expected to announce dissent in group forums, and group rules require members to announce dissent in group forums.

H1: Respondents from the smaller party groups will be more likely to contend that an MEP is (formally or informally) expected to indicate their intention to dissent in party group meetings.

With fewer members, leaders of smaller party groups will be more likely to encourage members to indicate their intent to dissent from the group line in group forums as it is more feasible to facilitate widespread participation in group forums. Smaller forums may also in turn encourage adherence to the group line through peer pressure and prompting from colleagues. In

contrast, leaders of the larger party groups will prefer for members to announce dissent privately or through delegation leaders as the full group forum does not facilitate widespread participation.

H2: Respondents from the more influential party groups will be more likely to contend that it is a group rule that MEPs announce their intent to dissent in working groups and group meetings.

Plenary influence though may trump logistics in that with high plenary stakes, influential party groups should require members to announce their intent to dissent in group forums. Group forums provide leaders with opportunities to address dissent or ensure that it is expressed at a less costly level prior to plenary. Through discussion, lobbying and peer pressure, group forums provide opportunities for dissenting members to adhere to the group line or to compromise. In contrast, less influential party groups lack incentive to install rules for dissent announcement.

H3: Respondents who are rank-and-file members/staff will be more likely to contend that members do not have to inform party group leaders about their intent to dissent.

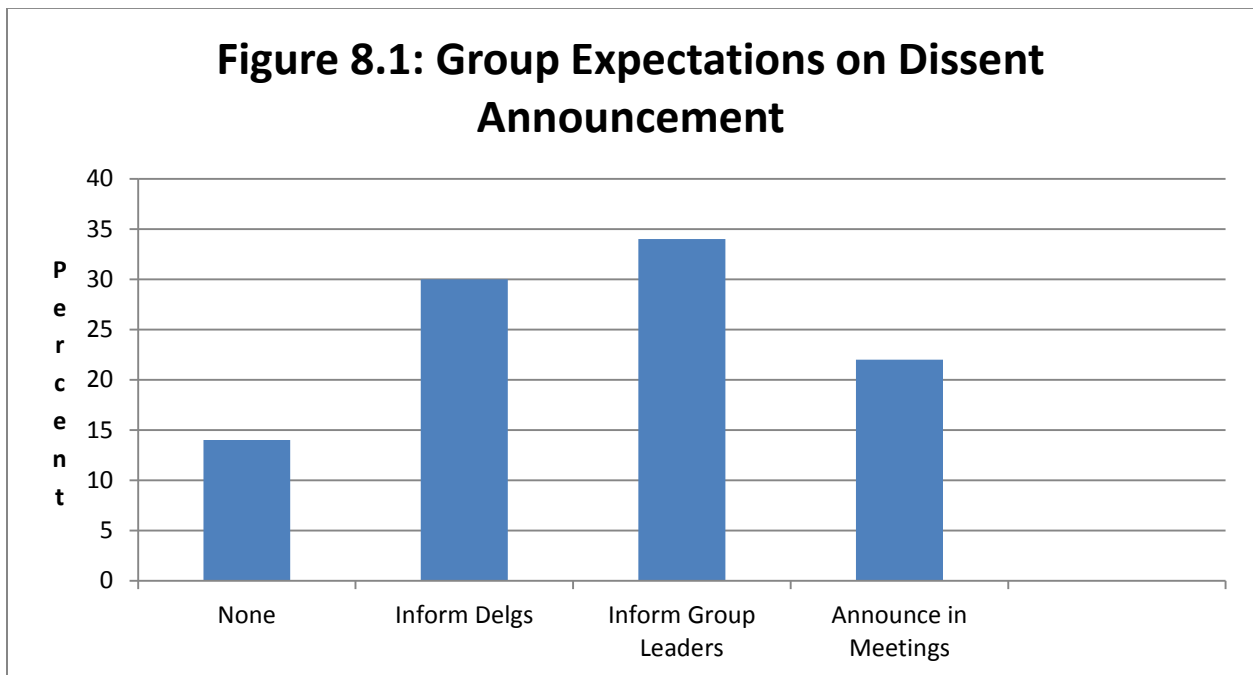
While the extent and the forms of socialization effects should vary by party group, a respondent's position should also influence perceptions regarding expectations on announcing dissent. In turn, respondents who are rank-and-file members or staff in the absence of responsibility should be more likely to believe that there are no informal or formal rules governing dissent. In contrast, group leaders/secretary-general should maintain that members are expected or are required to indicate dissent as a result of greater responsibility and incentive.

H4: Respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to contend that it is an expectation or the group rule to announce dissent in party group forums.

Respondents with more years of service will be more likely to contend than there is an expectation within the group or that the group has formal rules requiring members to indicate dissent in group forums. More years of service provides greater familiarity with party group procedures as well with more opportunities to dissent from the group line. In contrast, those with

fewer years of service will be more likely to assume that no such expectations or rules exist as they have less familiarity with the group and fewer opportunities to dissent from the group line.

Seventy-nine of eighty-four respondents answered the question. As depicted below in Figure 8.1, a plurality of respondents (thirty-four percent) perceived that members were expected to indicate their dissent to group leaders. The leader to whom they report may vary according to the legislative stage (coordinator) or to party group whip structure (Greens/EFA secretary-general). The second most common response (offered by thirty percent of respondents) was that dissent should be conveyed to the national delegation chair. This practice should be prevalent in the least cohesive groups, but also in the S & D which tends to address dissent through delegations as noted in earlier chapters.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents offering each response category. Fifth response category not depicted due to zero responses. N of Cases: 79

Twenty-two percent of respondents went a step further than the plurality by contending that members are expected to announce their dissent in group forums rather than convey this intent in private meetings with group leaders. Such a requirement not only facilitates extensive

socialization in that dissent is public and thereby incurs comments and behavior from colleagues encouraging group unity, but also affords leaders with the opportunity to address or mitigate dissent. Fourteen percent of respondents however maintained that there were no informal or formal rules governing dissent announcement from the group line indicating in turn that group unity is not valued or perceived to be valued by these respondents.

However, the most striking result is the absence of responses maintaining that party group rules specify a requirement for members to announce their dissent in group forums. A closer inspection of responses reveals that the fifth response category was not offered because most respondents perceive that the group requires advance notice of dissent but does not specify the manner in which it is conveyed. In other words, while most respondents believe that dissent must be indicated prior to plenary, respondents perceive that members may do so through their delegation chairs, in private to group leaders, and/or in group forums.

TABLE 8.3: PREDICTORS OF DISSENT EXPECTATIONS RESPONSES

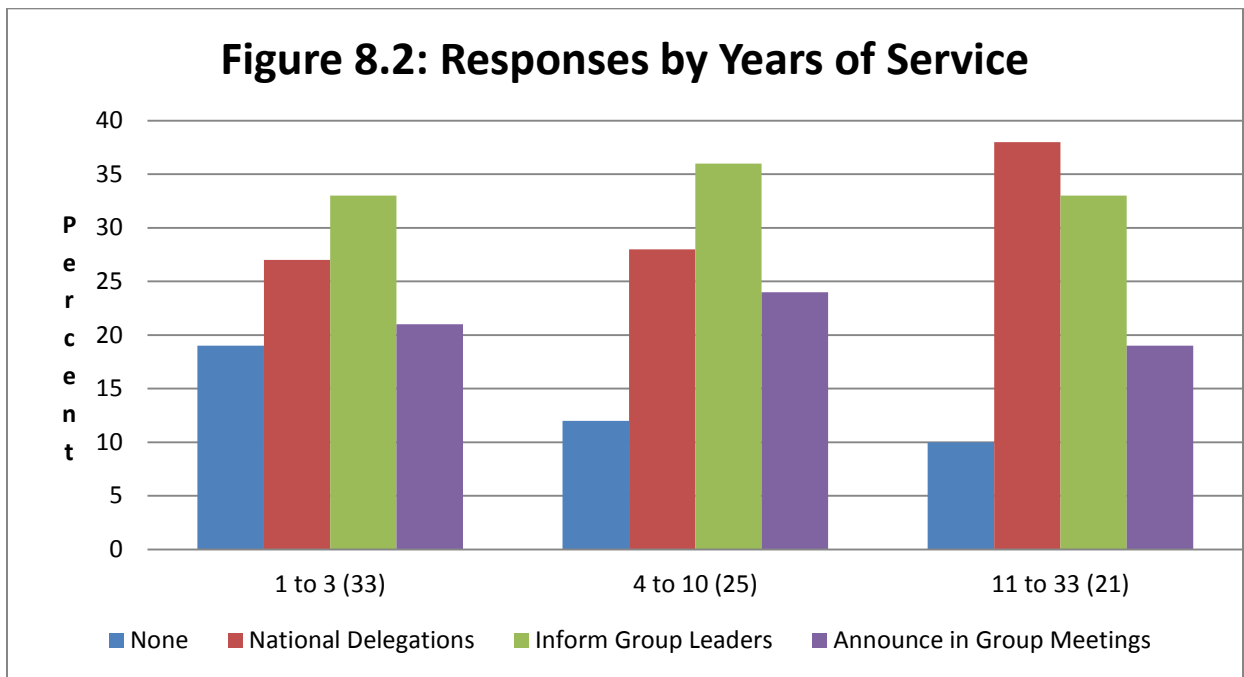
Party Group	0.5428***
Group Position	0.2817
Member-State	0.4623
Years of Service	0.5029**
Gender	0.3223
<u>Profession</u>	<u>0.4739**</u>

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, ** and ***, denote significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 79

As indicated above in Table 8.3, party group membership is the most statistically significant respondent characteristic associated with the likelihood of offering particular perceptions governing dissent announcement. Party group leadership decision-making forums influence perceptions on dissent announcement as each afford members with particular outlets for expressing dissent that may not be available in other groups. In turn, socialization practices fostering a sense of loyalty to the group may vary in regards to extent and tactics across party

groups, In addition, years of service in the European Parliament and a respondent’s previous profession were also found to be statistically significant predictors of responses at the .01 level.

As depicted below in Figure 8.2, responses in part conformed to expectations in that respondents with fewer years of service in the parliament were more likely to maintain that no informal or formal rules were in place within the party group in regards to announcing dissent from the group line. However, while the probability of contending that members were expected to inform group leaders of intentions to dissent in private or in the group meeting increased with more than three years of service in the parliament, the trend dropped off somewhat among respondents with more than ten years of service in the parliament.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents who offered each response. Numbers in parentheses indicate respondents by years of service. N of Cases: 79, Cramér’s V = 0.5029**

In addition, respondents with more years of service were more likely to contend that intent to dissent must be conveyed to a member’s national party delegation chair. While dissent may be conveyed to delegation leaders, it does potentially undermine the efforts of group leadership to secure higher cohesion and lower dissent levels if group membership is not placed on at least

equal terms with national delegation membership. For example, GUE respondents may inform delegation leaders because group unity is unimportant, whereas the same response by S & D respondents reveals an internal process that does not necessarily undermine group unity.

Responses on dissent announcement are also influenced by a respondent's previous profession prior to service in the European Parliament. As depicted below in Table 8.4, respondents with a staff background at the governmental or party level along with those with a private sector background were more likely to contend that there were no informal requirements on group members to announce dissent. However, respondents with previous experience in leadership or elected office along with those previously from the private sector were more likely to contend that members were expected to indicate dissent to national delegation leaders.

TABLE 8.4: DISSENT EXPECTATION RESPONSES AND PREVIOUS PROFESSION

Professions	None	National Delegations	Inform Leaders	Announce in PG	N
Leadership	0.14	0.27	0.36	0.23	22
Elected Office	0.14	0.32	0.36	0.18	22
Staff	0.20	0.20	0.35	0.25	20
Private Sector	0.25	0.50	0	0.25	4
Education/Student	0	0.33	0.33	0.33	5
Unknown	0	0.60	0.40	0	6
(N of Cases)	(11)	(24)	(27)	(17)	79

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to respondent's previous profession prior to service in the European Parliament. N of Cases: 79, Cramér's V: 0.4739**

In contrast, respondents with previous governmental or party leadership experience, as well as those with previous experience in elected office were more likely to maintain that members were expected to convey dissent in private with group leaders. In all, apart from the perception that the group did not have expectations regarding dissent announcement, a respondent's previous profession appears to have little impact on response trends. Meanwhile, as depicted below in Table 8.5, some clear patterns occur which separate the more cohesive from the least cohesive party groups. The effects of party group size are evident in that respondents from the EPP and S & D were more likely to contend that members are expected to inform group leaders

in private of their intent to dissent and that party group meetings were utilized to address dissent primarily on prominent reports, while members of the medium-sized groups (ALDE and Greens/EFA) were more likely to announce dissent on all reports in group meetings. The latter reflects the greater ease with which medium-sized groups may accommodate widespread participation in group meetings yet also indicative of greater concern for unity than the smaller groups who do not utilize group meetings in the same way.

TABLE 8.5: DISSENT EXPECTATION RESPONSES AND PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D	N
No Rules/Norms	0	0.11	1.0	0	0	0.57	0.06	11
National Delegations	0.23	0.89	0	0.20	0	0.43	0.38	24
Inform PG Leaders	0.18	0	0	0.73	0.60	0	0.44	27
Expected to Announce	0.59	0	0	0.07	0.40	0	0.12	17
(N of Cases)	(17)	(9)	(5)	(15)	(10)	(7)	(16)	79

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to respondent's party group affiliation with the last line depicting number of respondents per group. N of Cases: 79, Cramér's V: 0.5428***

In turn, fewer respondents than expected from the two largest groups may have maintained that dissent was expected to be announced in group meetings because they distinguished discussion of dissent in party group meetings from that in working groups or group bureau meetings. In contrast, with low regard for working groups, ALDE respondents expect dissent announcement to occur in party group meetings which are the primary forum for securing support for the group line, as well as for expressing dissent. Finally, respondents from the smallest and least cohesive party groups were more likely to contend that there were no formal or informal requirements to announce dissent while ECR, GUE and S & D respondents were more likely to maintain that dissent should be conveyed to delegation leaders.

In turn, responses citing national delegations have different connotations across party groups. Analysis of complete interviews suggest that when eighty-nine percent of ECR respondents and forty-three percent of GUE respondents maintained that dissent should be conveyed to national delegations, this underscored support for a separate national line pursued by

delegation leaders. In contrast, the same response when offered by thirty-eight percent of S & D respondents underlines that delegations contribute to group unity through their identification of dissent within the delegation in order to secure support for the group line or to facilitate subsequent efforts by delegation leaders to reach a compromise in the bureau or group meeting.

EPP respondents as the vice-president below often cited working groups as forums for expressing dissent when the report originated from an applicable committee.

“Of course, sometimes there are members who are not so happy and in this case they have another chance to go into the working group and there we again discuss all of the positions and if we cannot reach a compromise we vote. If there is such a controversial position that we cannot find an agreement in the working group, we take the discussion to the group. Usually, it is very rare that we have a free vote, because we always try to have a position of the group. Then, we have the ability to vote as we want with the condition to announce before”. (November 9, 2011)

The response also stresses the importance of group unity in that a free vote is rarely called as the group line is set in the applicable committees and working groups, rather than through majority vote in the full group meeting unless the report addresses a social policy or foreign policy question for which leadership has decided not to pursue consensus. In this sense, members are expected to follow the group line set prior to the group meeting or to dissent at a less costly level with lobbying by leaders continuing through and after the meeting if the member is influential or if the vote is expected to be close. As an EPP senior advisor below notes, separate delegation lines may occur but on the whole violate the norm of group consensus.

“We try to discuss for a long time when it is necessary because we usually find a compromise. We don’t always manage to find a compromise, sometimes what we do is to ask the delegations if they know if they will not vote on the line of the group, we tell them to tell us before, but we try to avoid it...as much as possible so we have a line”. (October 15, 2011)

As another EPP vice-president below elaborates, it is not sufficient to announce dissent and the form in which it will be expressed though this expected. Norms within the EPP group also dictate that a member state a clear rationale, address counter-arguments, and above all pursue

compromise (such as in the form of a group-sponsored amendment or a group plenary motion for a split vote on a paragraph) to secure support for the group line or to express dissent in a less costly form than originally stated. In this sense, dissent is accepted in the EPP but it is expressed only after exhausting all other routes with the whip structure engaged at every legislative stage unless a group line identified by leadership is absent.

“Up to some extent you have to do, but it’s not enough to do just that, you have to really explain your position to the group. You need to engage in a debate ...but you can reach your separation point only after you have shown your availability to find an agreement with a majority of the group. So, you really have to first explore all other possibilities and you have to really prove you did try to explore these”. (June 12, 2012)

Similarly, the S & D address dissent through multiple leaders in various forums. In turn, socialization serves as a less costly and at times more efficient means through which to secure group cohesion by establishing clear norms governing dissent announcement and those which encourage group unity. However, the S & D differ from the EPP in their use of the bureau to manage dissent and in the role of delegations in diffusing and enforcing norms governing dissent. As the response below from an S & D staff person stresses, group membership takes priority in that delegations are expected to adopt the group line in most circumstances.

“Not too long ago there was one dossier on which two vice-presidents indicated that their delegations would vote differently from the group. The president said look of course the group respects your mandate and that your group cannot be forced to follow any paths. However, he also reminded these vice-presidents that the group is one unified body; this is not a collection of national delegations. While we respect them, we would like them to make an effort to come closer to the group position. Usually, when the group decides to vote either yes or no, then we ask those who have a different opinion to abstain or not to attack the group by voting with other groups. That way, this is also an indication that they have a different position, but they do not weaken the group that much”. (October 13, 2011)

As with the EPP, delegations as well as members are expected to pursue every possible outlet for compromise and then, if necessary, to dissent at a less costly level. This is evident in the appeals by the group president to adopt a singular voice through the group position rather

than pursue multiple and national lines. The president also makes the allusion to the shared identity of belonging to the S & D group measured in European as well as in ideological terms.

“We encourage them to raise it in the whole group so the bureau and the group can have a chance to hear their problems. On the six-pack for example, our Swedish members found it extremely difficult to follow the group line. If you look at the roll-call vote on the Wortman-Kool report, you will find that some of them abstained and some voted in favor. So, they voiced that in the bureau of the group and in the full group, they made it clear that they had this difficulty, and there was a high level of understanding from other members”. (October 18, 2011)

The response from an S & D vice-president above highlights circumstances in which the group acknowledges domestic political circumstances preventing delegations from adhering to the group line. However, leaders will pursue less costly expressions of dissent by the delegation. In all, the S & D utilize each group forum to identify and address dissent and to stress norms governing dissent announcement, compromise, and stressing group unity. As the response from an S & D MEP below stresses, these practices while informal are influential nonetheless.

“It’s not a written rule, but it’s quite clear that the rule is that if you don’t want to follow the group line, you should inform the group leadership or the responsible rapporteur in advance and you should preferably have your say in the group meeting and explain your position. That’s been the policy of Johannes Swoboda, Martin Schulz and group leaders before them. They would always put pressure on you to make you follow the group line, but everybody understands on the other hand that there are situations when that is not possible for national reasons or whatever. So, it is accepted within the group that if it is important you can go your own way, but it is a kind of rule of honor that we do inform the group leadership in advance”. (June 13, 2012)

The ALDE group’s relatively high cohesion is in part a product of norms governing dissent. There is great expectation that ALDE members announce their dissent in party group meetings as a bureau member below asserts. With the exception of the Greens/EFA, no other party group utilizes their full meeting more to identify and pursue consensus. In turn, ALDE party group meetings are primary outlets for dissent expression in part because working groups are negatively viewed. In addition, as the common line is often set or amended by the entire group, members are in turn expected to indicate dissent before the entire group in order for colleagues to

weigh in and for Verhofstadt and other leaders to pursue compromise or less costly dissent. The response below also notes the role of VoteWatch and other independent plenary monitors in putting pressure on members to adhere to the group line or indicate dissent advance.

“We try to ensure that the group discussions allow all members to express their opinion...Therefore, members that cannot follow the group line need to indicate this in advance of the vote, to allow us to have an overview of our cohesion before the plenary vote...Finally, with roll call votes, and with independent monitors like VoteWatch, this has a disciplining effect on members, as all are aware that the strength of our group is our voting cohesion. By having a fully transparent way to see how members voted, there is an understanding that deviation from the group line must be limited to very special cases”. (July 11, 2012)

The response below from an ALDE vice-president elaborates on the relationship between socialization and lobbying by group leaders through the emphasis on the direct role played by the group president on most reports yet also notes the socialization effect of indicating dissent prior to plenary in order to permit the possibility of compromise or to secure less costly forms of dissent expression. In keeping with the prevalent ALDE response trend, the respondent perceives that dissent announcement and responses by leadership are to be conducted in the open in group meetings. Though some dissent is indicated in bureau or presidency meetings, as well as in private, most dissent is indicated in the full group meeting and rarely in working groups.

“You may very well hear a member in the group meeting tonight say I am sorry Guy but I am going to vote the other way tomorrow despite what we all just agreed and you would give your reason. If it has to do with some region or interests you represent, the rest of us would say ok I don't feel that but I recognize it is very strong for you. If we think though that this is very important and the vote is going to be very tight, then maybe Guy might say is this really important to you because on the bigger scale of things we need your vote to win this thing in parliament tomorrow, this is really important, can you change this?” (October 26, 2013)

The response also provides further evidence that ALDE members are under political and social pressure at the group level to not only indicate dissent in advance but also to change course and adhere to the group line when prominent votes are at-stake or when the ALDE's plenary reputation is at-stake. However, as I have noted in previous chapters, while most ALDE

members value group unity and adhere to norms governing dissent announcement, socialization can only procure high cohesion rates if accompanied by a complete whip structure. In turn, comparatively higher dissent rates are in part the product of a breakdown by the whip structure to secure support by more members prior to and after the party group meeting.

Greens/EFA respondents were nearly evenly divided in their assessment of dissent announcement practices with sixty percent stating that members are expected to inform group leaders when they intend to dissent from the official line, while forty percent maintained that dissent was expected to be announced in the full group meeting. Greens/EFA responses highlight three important themes for the parliament's most cohesive group: members are expected to indicate dissent, group leaders will almost always attempt to reverse or mitigate the intent to dissent, and group meetings are the focal point of decision-making as well as socialization.

“It is almost always ok if you have a reason on content or if the debate seems really heated in your own country. With the pensions and the French, I am sure if left to their own devices, they might move a bit towards us, but considering it is such a heated debated there, they cannot let their left wing friends in France down, which is understood and you do need to flag it to the shadow rapporteur because it would be highly impolite to vote differently without flagging it. It's only a problem if the Greens are necessary for a majority, so if those two votes, three votes, ten votes can make the difference between a report being adopted or not, then there will be some sort of a whip”. (June 14, 2012)

The response above from a Greens/EFA vice-president stresses that domestic political concerns may necessitate dissent from the group line as well as those underscoring the norm of informing leadership (in this case the shadow rapporteur) prior to the group meeting. In addition, the response also notes that if the Greens/EFA can impact plenary outcomes, leaders may ask dissenting members to reconsider or express dissent at a lower level.

“So, that happens, but we try to think together and there is always an acceptance that you could have good reasons for not doing so, but sometimes it is not important, but sometimes if it is very important, if the media is aware and everybody is watching you, then I would say it has consequences to vote against the group line. I mean, you have to at least explain why you are

doing this according to something back home mostly, or something involving integrity, you just can't do it or whatever, but it has consequences". (June 4, 2012)

As the response above from another group vice-president notes, lobbying in some instances is not necessary because the norm of group unity is re-enforced in group meetings and through social interaction. In this sense, Greens/EFA leaders and staff focus their efforts upon certain individuals or delegations as the bulk of membership agrees with and/or has been socialized into adhering to the group line on a given report. Consequences are defined as the failure to secure the group's plenary agenda, denial of prominent rapporteur assignments, as well as social pressures in the sense that colleagues will lobby dissenting members to support the group line.

While EFA members dissent from the group line on issues such as fisheries, the same expectations regarding dissent announcement apply to them as well. As a group vice-president below notes, EFA members are on the whole treated in the same manner as Greens members. In turn, EFA members are likely to adhere to the group line and participate in group meetings as regular members rather than as a separate faction.

"Normally, we don't give them particular consideration we just treat them as normal members of the group, so if they want to join the discussion they are welcome. If they don't join, then we don't go back and ask if they have a different point of view, we just accept that as a reality also. On some issues where we know that they have some particularly strong interests and particularly strong views, we make it a point to ask for their opinions, and we make it a point to include them, like on fisheries for example" (June 26, 2012)

ECR responses highlight the challenges confronting a new group which is undergoing a process of developing a shared identity as well as implementing a complete whip structure. Nonetheless, the ECR distinguish themselves from the two least cohesive party groups in that members have quickly been socialized into adopting the norm of announcing dissent prior to or during the group meeting through delegations. The comments below from a member of ECR leadership underscore the efforts to identify dissent when setting a group line. However, the

official line may reflect a majority vote on the group rapporteur's position or one developed in the group meeting with either accompanied by separate national lines. In contrast to the role of delegations in the S & D, separate delegation lines are prevalent in the ECR and in turn while the norm of indicating dissent is present, the norm emphasizing group unity remains absent to-date.

"Now, having determined what that group position is, anyone of our own nine national delegations can have their own national whip, and under my group rules, their only duty is to advise leadership of their separate whip and having advised leadership, they are totally free to go their own separate way". (November 9, 2011)

The response below from a senior member of the ECR secretariat accentuates the absence of a group identity. When a shared identity does not accompany a particular norm, socialization will not be an effective dissent management tool. In this case, while the group whip and other leaders are aided in their efforts to secure a common line through the norm of indicating dissent, they are limited in their ultimate objective in that the next step of adopting the group line or dissenting at a less costly level is much more difficult to achieve in the absence of a shared identity.

"The basic building blocks of the group are not formally members, but are the national delegations...It is an important principal that they are supposed to inform the Chief Whip so there are no surprises. Often though, this will be seen coming way down the tracks because they will have often voted that way in committee. Other times though we will find out at the last minute if a particular delegation has a problem with us...Members are encouraged to vote the group whip, but national delegations have different whips and there is no punishment for not following the group line, so it's mainly a question of generating good will and trust rather than any kind of threat". (September 19, 2011)

In the smaller and least cohesive party groups, norms governing dissent are absent altogether (EFD) or in the case of the GUE respondents that norms are either absent or members should inform their delegation leaders of dissent. The response below by an EFD vice-president stresses that group membership is a vehicle for individual or delegation pursuits and not a source of shared identity. In turn, though some EFD members do pursue plenary objectives at times, the absence of a group line and of a shared identity contributes to the absence of norms.

“Well, that easy, we don’t have a group line. It goes like this, if we don’t decide on it, we don’t have a group line. It is up for every delegation for them to decide. I think it has happened three times since the election that there actually was a group line...The group gives this sort of flexibility to the members. We are here, the group is here that is to say to serve us as MEPs and not the other way around as it might be in the rest of the groups where if you are the leadership you have a large control of the group”. (October 13, 2011)

In contrast, socialization is evident to a degree within the GUE in that some respondents do perceive the presence of norms governing dissent announcement, primarily by alerting delegation leadership. However, my observations also suggest that the GUE secretariat is active in identifying dissent and passing this information to the rapporteur and the president who may choose to follow-up with debate in the group meeting. However, the norm (to the extent that it occurs) of alerting the delegation is not accompanied by one promoting group unity. In turn, a common line in the GUE is often absent or reflects a majority vote with no formal or informal requirement of adherence among members or of every member or delegation alerting leadership of their intent to dissent as the response below from a member of the GUE secretariat contends.

“This group is different from the others, mainly from the big groups. Not only from the political point of view, but also in the function of the group, because our group is confederal. That means it is not obligational for a delegation to vote or behave in a certain way or in a way that a majority of the delegation decide to behave, so that means that each delegation has the possibility to vote in the way they think is best for their political position. We don’t work in a way of majority and minority but to find a broader consensus between groups without putting one position to a vote to see what is the majority or minority but to find at least in the crucial issues for our group, to find the consensus between delegations”. (October 18, 2011)

NEW MEP ORIENTATION

In my interviews, I asked about new MEP orientation in part to identify the process of assisting new MEPs with the often difficult transition to life in the European Parliament which the literature rarely discusses. I also asked the question because socialization efforts are in part exemplified by new membership outreach. The focal point of socialization on a given report will be those who are unsure or have announced that they intend to dissent from the group line. However, new members should be the primary target for ongoing socialization efforts as these

members will be the least familiar with party group decision-making and with the practice of particular norms. New members on the whole refer to those who join the European Parliament after an election or following the resignation of an elected member. New members also refer to those MEPs who leave one party group to join another, which is rare but occurred during the current parliament when two EFD members for example left to join the ECR.

In either circumstance, leaders in all party groups should reach out to new members, but these efforts should be more evident in the more cohesive party groups as they have greater impetus to ensure that the new member comes to value group membership in terms of adherence to the group line but also in regard to viewing group interests and their own as the same. Socialization in this sense occurs in every legislative stage as well as in informal encounters throughout a parliament. Socialization may be directed at the committee level by group coordinators or rapporteurs or may occur at the delegation level if delegations value group unity. Socialization may also be an effort executed primarily by group staff in terms of MEP aides, group policy advisors and others as they may be in more frequent contact with MEPs.

While elites were the primary target for interviews, I did contact new MEPs in each party group in order to provide for some balance in perceptions toward group decision-making and socialization processes. To identify how and the extent to which new MEPs are socialized into party groups, I first asked if the group had formal orientations or mentorship programs directed toward all new MEPs which I soon found were absent across party groups. Accordingly, I substituted the question of: after an election or throughout the parliament, what is done to help new MEPs understand how your party group is organized and to communicate its values or beliefs? In turn, I anticipated five potential responses: little if anything is done to help new MEPs, some help is provided by the group secretariat, most help for new MEPs is provided by

their national delegation, most help is provided by members and staff at the committee level, and new MEPs are provided extensive help at the group leaders and staff.

H1: Respondents from the larger party groups will be more likely to contend that most help for new MEPs is provided by the members and staff at the committee level.

Larger groups should be more likely to focus socialization efforts for new MEPs at the committee level. In committees, new MEPs may interact with the group coordinator and rapporteur, as well as policy advisors who serve as daily tutors for policymaking and for explaining the group culture with new members having access to these actors throughout the legislative process. In contrast, new MEPs in smaller groups may be the only member or one of two on a committee which should encourage leaders or staff to assume a more responsive role.

H2: Respondents from the least influential party groups will be more likely to contend that no help is provided for new MEPs or that some but not much help is provided at the group level.

With less incentive for ensuring favorable plenary outcomes, less influential party groups should be unlikely to pursue socialization of members, including new MEPs. In turn, new MEPs in less influential party groups will be more likely on their own to learn the legislative process and to participate in a disparate group culture in which unity is not stressed. As a group's plenary influence increases, added incentive will encourage party groups to offer some help to new MEPs through the group staff, with more focused help offered by the more influential groups.

H3: Respondents who hold party group leadership positions will be more likely to contend that extensive help is provided for new MEPs by members and staff at the party group level.

Responses should in some ways reflect group hierarchy in the sense that those with more responsibility should contend that new MEPs are offered extensive help at the group level as leadership or senior secretariat positions are vested with greater responsibility for assisting rank-and-file members. In contrast, norm adoption by rank-and-file members and staff should be accomplished through daily interaction at the committee and delegation levels or through

observation and copying of leadership behavior in group forums leading these respondents to conclude that group leaders and staff do not (extensively) directly assist new MEPs.

H4: Respondents with fewer years of service in the European Parliament will be more likely to contend that little if any help is provided to new MEPs, “You learn by doing”.

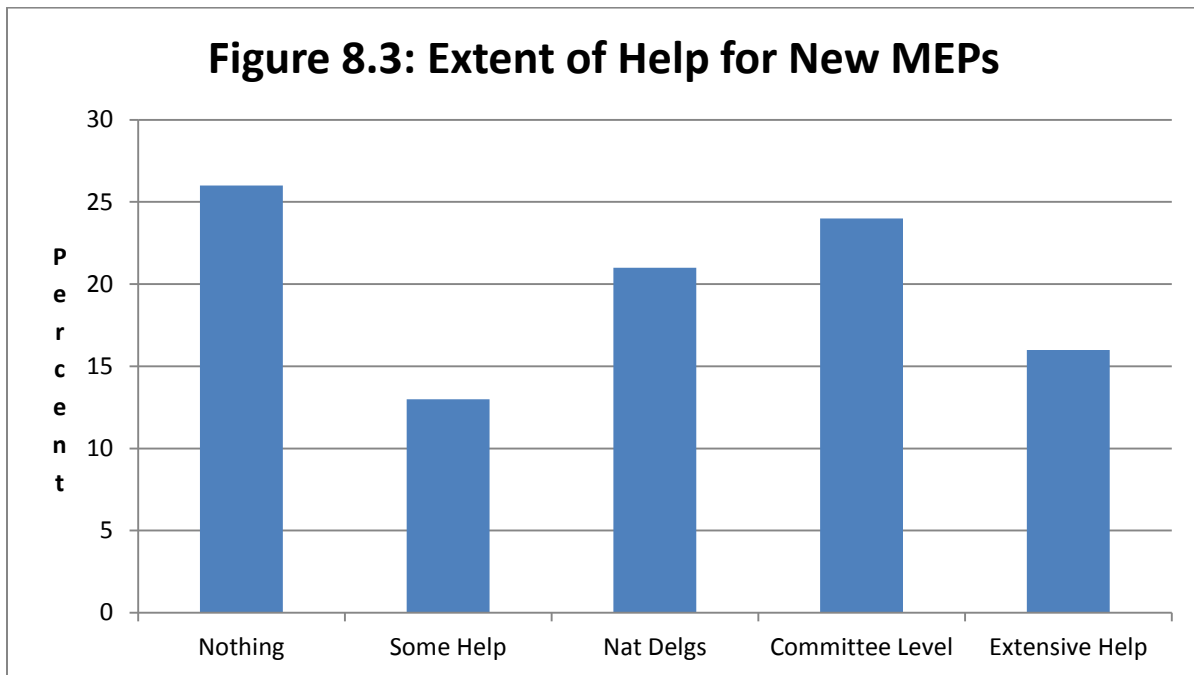
New MEPs should feel overwhelmed and perceive (accurately or inaccurately) that they are not receiving adequate help from group leadership and staff. In turn, newer members should conclude that they receive little help or are mostly aided by delegations which provide a more familiar setting for newer members. In contrast, as service in the parliament increases, members and staff will assume that more help is provided for new MEPs as they will possess a greater (perceived) understanding of party group organizational and socialization processes.

H5: Respondents from larger national party delegations will be more likely to contend that all or most assistance is provided for new MEPs at the delegation level.

As a national delegation within a party group increases in size, the likelihood of a respondent contending that most or all help for new MEPs is provided by national delegations should increase. Larger delegations (UK, Spanish, German, French, etc.) should have greater incentive for ensuring that members are quickly acquainted with the parliamentary and the group decision-making process as the delegation’s ability to shape the group line and ensure its success in plenary is at-stake whereas one-member delegations and smaller delegations may have less incentive to socialize new members as they have less impact in regards to the group line.

While most respondents believed that not enough help was provided to new MEPs and that learning was accomplished largely through direct participation in parliamentary and party group activities, there was consensus among most respondents that some training and socialization was afforded in particular venues and by particular actors. All but two respondents answered the question. As depicted below in Figure 8.3, responses were divided across the five expected

categories with a plurality of twenty-six percent maintaining that nothing was done to help new MEPs. However, nearly as many respondents maintained that members and staff at the committee level are the primary source of help for new MEPs followed by twenty-one percent who stated that most help for new MEPs was provided through their delegation. Sixteen percent stated that extensive help for new MEPs was provided by members and staff at the group level, while thirteen percent conceded that some but little help was provided by members and staff.



Note: Figure depicts percentage of respondents offering each response category. N of Cases: 82

The extent to which new MEPs are socialized into a group culture and in adopting particular norms is in part determined by the extent to which the party groups develop and fully utilize whip structures. My observations and assessment of responses finds that in the more cohesive party groups, new MEPs receive help from a variety of actors and in multiple venues though committees may afford more focused opportunities to acquaint new MEPs with parliamentary and group level processes. While formal orientation or mentorship programs are absent in the European Parliament, the more cohesive party groups socialize members individually through a

variety of strategies. However, socialization is also a product of imitating the behavior of group colleagues and of adhering to the appeals of group leaders or staff.

TABLE 8.6: PREDICTORS OF NEW MEP RESPONSES

Party Group	0.3575**
Group Position	0.2915
Member-State	0.4628
Years of Service	0.4030
Gender	0.1951
<u>Profession</u>	<u>0.3957</u>

Note: Entries are Cramér's V scores measuring strength of association. *, ** and ***, denote significance on the .05, .01 and .001 levels respectfully. N of Cases: 82

As depicted in Table 8.6 above, party group membership was the only respondent characteristic to serve as both a substantively and statistically significant predictor of responses to questions regarding help for new MEPs to understand party group processes and its values. In turn, length of service did not serve as a statistically significant predictor though the Cramér's V score suggests that there is some substantive impact. However, experiences associated with length of parliament service are framed in many ways by membership in a particular group. Member-state origin should be similarly assessed for effect in that while membership in larger delegations may influence perceptions of help for new MEPs this outlook is as well to an extent dependent upon party group membership with the ECR for example highlighting how delegation membership may frame how a new member views group unity.

As depicted in Table 8.7 below, expectations regarding the relationship between party group membership and responses were met to an extent. Members of the two largest party groups (EPP and S & D) were most likely to maintain that most help for new MEPs is provided by members and staff at the committee level. Committees not only provide more personalized opportunities to socialize new MEPs but also hands-on experience such as by serving as a rapporteur. The largest groups also utilize horizontal working groups to socialize members which are a continuation of experiences in the committee. In contrast, members of medium-sized or small party groups do

not place as much importance on committee experiences in regards to learning more about their party group as they are the only or one of a few group members on a given committee.

TABLE 8.7: NEW MEP RESPONSES AND PARTY GROUP AFFILIATION

Response	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	Greens	GUE	S&D	N
Nothing	0.44	0.22	0	0.33	0.20	0.25	0.12	21
Some Staff Help	0.06	0.11	0	0.07	0.30	0.25	0.17	11
National Delegations	0.11	0.67	0.20	0.27	0	0.13	0.18	17
Help in Committees	0.28	0	0	0.33	0.20	0.11	0.41	20
Extensive PG Help	0.11	0	0.80	0.00	0.30	0.25	0.12	13
(N of Cases)	(18)	(9)	(5)	(15)	(10)	(8)	(17)	82

Note: Entries are percentages of responses according to party group affiliation with last row depicting number of respondents per party group. N of Cases: 82, Cramér's V: 0.3575**

In contrast, plenary influence appears to not significantly shape responses as evident with forty percent of ALDE and a third of EPP respondents maintaining that nothing is done to help new MEPs whereas EFD and GUE members take a more positive view of group efforts. However, interviews reveal that particular group cultures influence perceptions of new MEP socialization. For example, EPP respondents were the most likely to use the phrase “learn by doing” and to reference the socialization role of committees or working group meetings. Meanwhile, though EFD respondents may note the friendliness coinciding with group membership, they are just as quick to stress that group unity isn’t important. In other words, though some EPP members are unable to identify organized socialization efforts for new MEPs, they come to value group unity through copying the behavior and adhering to the appeals of their colleagues, whereas the help afforded to new EFD members has more to do with collegiality than with instilling the importance of party group unity in new members.

In turn, the emphasis on the socialization role of delegations by ECR and EPP respondents frames views toward unity differently in that EPP delegations on the whole appear to emphasize unity at the group level which is mimicked by new MEPs. In turn, delegations in the ECR group are more assertive in pursuing separate agendas even at the expense of the group line which is

similarly mimicked by new MEPs. Finally, the division among Greens/EFA respondents suggests that though perceptions widely vary, the overall positive trend reflect observations and replies to other questions that underline the impact of socialization (particularly in group meetings). Similarly, the overall negative perceptions by ALDE respondents underscore the challenges confronting Verhofstadt and others in pursuing consensus and socializing members.

Help in the largest party groups may come from leadership and the staff at the group level as a senior member of the EPP secretariat below asserts.

“There are many ways, for example, when a new member comes to the group they are immediately received by the chairman. He welcomes them and he wants to try and see if there is any problem. If the new member has a logistic or a political problem, then we in the staff are here to check-up with the members and solve the problem. They will receive documents explaining the rules of the group, how the group works, who is responsible for what in the secretariat and they are told which committees they will be members of”. (October 15, 2011).

The prevailing perception among EPP respondents is that new MEPs learn about the parliament and about the party group primarily or solely at the committee level a socialization role for working groups was also frequently mentioned. As the response below from an EPP aide to a coordinator asserts, socialization is a two-way street in which the group staff, MEP aides, and the coordinator on one-hand identify a new member’s goals and assist them yet assistance also requires the new member to be engaged and receptive to advice.

“First of all, this would depend on the member themselves. You get members who are enthusiastic to work on the committee, and you have other members who are interested in other issues... When my boss became coordinator, one of the first things we did was to offer a meeting with each and every member of the committee. We also send emails asking them what their priorities are, so we can plan accordingly: what own initiative reports they would like to do, which hearings they would like to see, which delegations they would like to go on, and so on and so forth. So, yes, we do reach out, but then it is up to the members themselves”. (June 27, 2012)

Similarly, as the new EPP MEP below notes, new members often rely on experienced office staff as well as their delegation for help in learning more about the group’s cultural and decision-making processes. However, a new member is incentivized and socialized into placing faith in

the group and its principles as well as in its experts as a new member is overwhelmed by information and more likely to copy the behavior of colleagues as they sort through collective action problems and become acquainted with social practices at the group level.

“When you get to the parliament, it is not so easy to remember where everything is in Brussels and Strasbourg. Then, I went to the EPP group and (my) delegation, and they were very helpful, some of them I have known for many years and of course they told me if you have questions, come to us and we will help you. ...So, in the beginning, on the thirteenth of March, I had to go to my first plenary when I first got here, and I had no idea on what we were voting on, and then I had to believe in my group of course. (June 19, 2012)

S & D respondents also stressed the socialization role of committees as well as working groups with the rapporteur and coordinator serving as the primary contact and role model in regards to learning about acceptable behavior and practices within the group. Leaders in committee aid new MEPs by offering advice, providing examples, but also by quickly integrating the new member into parliamentary and group level processes at times such as by assigning a report to them to shadow or carry.

“Of course the basic integration is done by the working group because most of the important work is done at the committee level for a normal member. So the rapporteur or the coordinator brings in the new member and invites them and their colleagues to work together on some issue, but I think it is done relatively smoothly basically via the working group. (November 9, 2011)

The more negative views of ALDE respondents in regards to help for new MEPs underscore the comparatively lower group cohesion in terms of attitudes as well as plenary votes. As the ALDE coordinator below contends, members learn over time and in the view of those with more experience, a new member learns about the ALDE group through observation, interaction, and experience over time, and not through a concerted effort by leaders or staff. In other words, most ALDE respondents believe new members learn rather than are taught to value group unity.

“You have to find your own way. If it is people from my country or my party, I try to help them and explain things as I go, but for every new MEP it’s a question of trial and error...I have been an MEP for eighteen years and have a long institutional memory, so if they ask me questions in my committee or elsewhere I will help them”. (June 25, 2012)

However, the relatively higher cohesion compared to the ECR, GUE, and EFD suggests that socialization does occur as my observations of ALDE party group meetings underscore. In this sense, the ALDE do pursue socialization in that they instill the importance of the group's role as a plenary dealmaker or the norm of adhering to the group line identified or adopted in the full group meeting. Yet, as the response below by an ALDE bureau member underscores, socialization is in many ways an individual pursuit guided at times by colleagues but lacking the informal or formal (working groups for example) structure of the more cohesive groups.

“Nothing really. You always get the complaint from the new members, no one tells me anything. New members usually say after about six weeks I am going to write a book to help the new members next time how to get started and they never do. The parliament staff helps them. There is a team of civil servants within the parliament who welcome them and say this is the handbook and so on. It's like going to a new school really. You arrive at the new school, the teacher says sit down, and you have to learn as fast as you can”. (October 26, 2011)

In contrast, the Greens/EFA group adopts a much more concerted socialization effort which is evident in the near unanimity achieved on most votes following very often contentious party group meetings. As a senior member of the secretariat below asserts, socialization of new MEPs is crucial for group unity and requires the efforts of leaders and staff to ensure success in plenary as well in instilling a deep sense of identification with the group.

“We also take this very seriously, obviously because you need a good introduction in the group, then we organize meetings between the co-chairs with them. We discuss the details of departure and arrival, we discuss their personal interests and how we can optimize their presence in the group. There, staff also plays a certain role of helping MEPs to adapt themselves as quick as possible”. (October 17, 2011)

For other Greens/EFA respondents such as the new MEP below, most help is provided at the committee level by the coordinator and the staff. However, Greens/EFA respondent perceptions of sources of help for new MEPs reflect the group's presence on a given committee in that it will direct the allocation of points by placing more members on targeted committees (environment) and place only two members on most committees.

“When I joined, we had briefings from the main kinds of secretariat people: how does it work to organize the plenary speaking time, etc. Then, in the first week of January, we had different working groups for the different committees. In the first committee working group meeting, I was given an introduction of how the work of the committee goes: how the parliament structure is organized, what role our group can play, how you can get a dossier, how do we organize the shadows. So, this was good and maintained by the coordinator”. (June 25, 2012)

As a new group, the ECR have limited experience with socializing new members in the historical sense and are in the early stages of developing decision-making, as well as socialization processes as a member of the ECR secretariat below asserts in a reference to the group’s founding declaration and to the role of national delegations.

“We have had two new MEPs: one Danish and one new British. In both those cases, a lot of preliminary discussions took place before they joined in order to sound them out to see if they were in sympathy with the group’s aims. They don’t have to agree with every line but they do have to agree with and sign the Prague Declaration. If you take the Danish individual member for example, there are key areas where she and the group will not agree...In the case of the British member, it was the delegation who led that process. In both of those cases, they are already sitting MEPs, so they already had reasonably good connections with members of the group. (September 23, 2011)

These assertions were echoed by a group vice-president in my second phase of field research following the arrival of new members to the UK delegation after some original members had left the parliament. The response also underlines the ongoing influence of national delegations and the evolving group identity that has yet to fully embrace group unity.

“We had some new British Conservative members join. They all came in new but they are settling very well. The delegations are really the first place to help new MEPs, not in the group. My committee has a very friendly atmosphere, but you would have to talk to the other committees”. (June 25, 2012)

As noted above, the positive reception reported by new MEPs in the two smallest and least cohesive party groups indicates the closeness among members and staff in these groups yet is devoid of reference to group unity. In turn, though colleagues make efforts to become acquainted with and be available to new members, outreach is of a personal nature as group unity is unimportant (EFD) or not prioritized (GUE).

“Yesterday, we got a new colleague and yesterday we had coffee for two hours. MEPs will take him to coffee or to dinner and try to get to learn who is this person is. He probably has talks with the secretary-general. You have a huge role for the staff. ...After the last election seventy-five percent of the MEPs were new, so it was a huge task of the staff to explain how things work and to make things work. (October 26, 2011)

Collegial sentiments devoid of references to group unity are expressed above by a member of the GUE secretariat and are echoed below by a new EFD MEP. The latter also underscores the contrastive role of the group’s co-presidents compared to their Greens/EFA counterparts whose personal outreach reflects both collegial as well as dissent management motivations.

“Actually, they were quite nice. First, in the group meeting, they introduced me on two separate occasions...There were no regular meetings with group leaders, but they are always available when needed. I met with Farage many times, mostly because we speak English...I am sure Speroni would be available too if we had any common interests to discuss. (October 13, 2011)

In other words, while Farage or Speroni may welcome new members, they do not build individual relationships to facilitate group unity. In turn, the influx of new GUE members complicates efforts by President Zimmer to form a group line or to instill a norm of group unity given the predisposition towards confederality by veteran members in that leadership offices lack formal authority and the group as a whole lacks an identity conducive to unity-building efforts.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

How does socialization contribute to securing a cohesive party group and to what extent is socialization evident among party groups in the current parliament? Kam (2002) defines socialization as “the process of exposure or learning through which MPs acquire certain norms” (Kam, 2002, 194). In this sense, party group members are socialized into valuing group unity and following certain practices through observation and copying of colleagues’ behavior as well as adhering to the appeals of leaders and other members. If other members value party group unity and if leaders stress group unity in their appeals, members are likely to adopt the view that group unity is important and in turn define their goals through the prism of group membership.

Socialization in this sense culminates into not only adhering to the group line in most cases, but also to expressing dissent at a less costly level in order not to jeopardize the group's goals. In addition, once a member values group unity as defined above, they will adopt norms governing dissent and other behavior as logic of appropriateness influences their decision-making in that as choices related to voting behavior for example are considered, the preferred choice will be the one that is regarded as acceptable by group leaders and by a majority of their colleagues both of whose support for the decision to support the group line is sought after by the member.

According to Brown (2000), "norms specify...certain rules for how group members should behave and thus are the basis for mutual expectations among the group members" and that "norms may serve to enhance or maintain the identity of the group" (Brown, 2000, 56 and 60). In this sense, norms serve as informal rules governing behavior and link the member to the group. In turn, Brown (2000) notes that "our sense of who we are and what we are worth is intimately bound-up with our group memberships" (Brown, 2000, 28). Accordingly, party group leaders promote norm adoption in part because they (in the more cohesive groups) value group unity but also in a rational sense in that socialization supports lobbying efforts and is a less costly (and in the parliament a realistic) dissent management tactic compared to disciplinary measures.

As more members are socialized into valuing group unity and adopting particular norms, leaders may focus their attention on a select number of members as most will support the group line or will announce/express dissent according to established conventions without direct prompting. In turn, when leaders lobby a wavering or dissenting member, they may appeal to shared attitudes toward group membership and to particular norms in addition to the policy and political merits of supporting the group line. In this sense, socialization does not replace rationality but rather is one facet of an MEP's decision-making.

Group membership influences an MEP's decision-making if they value membership, define their identity in part through group, and if they perceive that other members adopt similar attitudes toward the group and its practices. In turn, the more cohesive party groups are those that possess a shared conceptualization of the group identity (See Brown 2000) as well as those who secure widespread support for the group line in plenary as a consequence of socialization and lobbying overseen by leaders and staff as part of the whip structure.

For evidence of socialization, I first considered responses to two questions included in the extensive MEP survey by Farrell et al. (2011). The first question asked members how they saw themselves in terms of: exclusively along member-states lines, primarily member-state but also as European, primarily as European, and exclusively as European. When framed according to party group membership, respondents from the most cohesive party group, the Greens/EFA, are the most likely to self-identify strictly in European terms followed by ALDE respondents, and those from the two largest groups. In contrast, respondents from the least cohesive groups were more likely to view themselves according to their member-state or other origins. When combined with interview responses on relations with Europarties and other observations in my field research, the results suggest that group cohesion is more easily attained by leaders when a party group adopts a more European outlook and defines its identity in part in European terms.

A second survey question asked members if it is important for their party group to appear united with responses arranged on a 1-5 scale from completely agree to completely disagree. When responses on the first and second levels of the scale are considered, those from the most cohesive party groups are more likely to perceive that appearing unified is important for the group, while those from the less cohesive groups are more likely not to share this perception. However, given that an overwhelming number of ECR respondents replied according to the

higher levels of the scale, perceptions that group unity is valued must be accompanied by social practices promoting group unity. In other words, while for example ECR respondents from new member-states may perceive that group unity is valued in part because their UK colleagues stress the importance of group unity, perceptions must be accompanied by norms governing dissent announcement, the prevalence of a group line over national lines, and of a fully functional whip structure in order for high levels of group cohesion to occur.

As part of my field research, I asked two questions identifying the level of socialization within and across party groups. First, I asked when it was acceptable to dissent from the group line. An overwhelming majority maintained that there were norms in place governing dissent announcement though respondents differed on whether members were expected to announce in group meetings, consult delegation leaders, or report dissent privately to group leaders or staff. Those respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament were more likely to contend that dissent was expected to be announced in group meetings, while those with less years of service and those with previous staff or private sector experience were more likely to maintain that there were no expectations governing dissent announcement.

Party group organization and culture also influenced perceptions of dissent announcement in that ALDE and Greens/EFA respondents were more likely to contend that dissent should be announced in group meetings which are the focal point of decision-making and consensus-building. Respondents from the largest party groups were more likely to contend that dissent should be expressed to group leaders and staff, while those from the least cohesive party groups either believed that dissent should be expressed to delegation leaders or that norms governing dissent were absent in their group. I also asked the question of what is done to help new MEPs adapt to the parliament and to be educated about the group's values and practices.

New MEPs should be the focal point of education and socialization efforts as they are the least familiar with group beliefs and practices. While no formal orientation program are in place, informal socialization and education of individual new MEPs is evident in committees where coordinators assist and where new MEPs may take turns as group rapporteurs. New MEPs are also aided by group staff and colleagues at other levels and learn about the parliament and their party group through daily interaction and/or observation of colleagues' behavior.

Respondents from the two largest party groups were more likely to maintain that new MEPs are primarily offered help in committees, whereas Greens/EFA respondents while mostly contending that help is provided for new MEPs were split as to the precise or predominate venue or source of help. In turn, ALDE respondents were more likely to contend that no help to any real degree is provided for new MEPs, while ECR respondents were more likely to state that most help for new MEPs is provided by their delegations. Meanwhile, though GUE and EFD respondents were likely to contend that extensive help was provided by group members and staff responses reflect collegiality which is not accompanied by expectations for group unity or in turn the education of new members on group level organizational and socialization processes.

In the next and final chapter, I will present a summary of the conclusions reached through the completion of field research as reviewed in preceding chapters and by a consideration of the literature. I will begin with a review of the impetus for examining how party groups in the European Parliament manage dissent and the research design structuring field research. From here, I will define dissent and cohesion before reviewing explanations for group unity offered in chapter four. Chapter nine will then review the role of disciplinary measures, and the whip structures and socialization processes of respective groups in achieving (on the whole) relatively high party group cohesion and in turn account for variation in cohesion levels among party

groups. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of future research which I contend is necessary in order to fully assess the contributions of group leaders, meetings, and socialization processes toward group cohesion. These efforts should primarily consist of a survey targeting all MEPs and should occur after the next elections in June 2014.

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CHAPTER NINE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In the previous eight chapters I have presented the case for determining why party groups are on the whole cohesive and for explaining the variation in dissent levels among party groups. With rising challenges and increasing integration decision-making in Europe has increasingly shifted from the national to the EU level. Accompanying this transition has been a growing decision-making role for the European Parliament which has acquired co-decision authority in nearly every policy area. Given these trends, it is more important than ever to uncover the dissent management processes contributing to party group cohesion. In turn, I interviewed eighty-four MEPs and staff and observed thirty-three party group or horizontal working group meetings over the course of two field research phases in 2011 and 2012 to attain first-hand accounts.

From these interviews and observations in conjunction with the findings of previous studies, I have concluded that cohesion levels and dissent variation may be explained at the individual level as an output of the ideological positioning of MEPs in relation to the ideological mean of their party group (Hix et al. 2007), and at the group level by the full utilization of leadership offices and forums associated with a communication network or ‘whip structure’ in addition to the extent that members are socialized into valuing group unity and adopting norms of behavior governing dissent announcement and expression.

MEP IDEOLOGY + WHIP STRUCTURE + SOCIALIZATION = LOW DISSENT LEVELS

As an MEP is closer to agreement with the median ideological position of the party group, they are more likely to support the group line on a given report or amendment. However, ideology does not explain instances when an MEP ultimately supports the group line or dissents at less costly levels after initially expressing opposition to or reservations about the group line. In turn, party group leaders acting as legislative entrepreneurs (See Cox and McCubbins 2007) have

developed whip structures and socialization processes. A whip structure refers to the leadership offices and group forums associated with dissent management with emphasis upon the full utilization of each component as part of a communication network in which leaders exchange information and collaborate with one another. Socialization refers to the processes through which members come to share a conceptualization of the group identity, value group unity, and adopt norms of behavior such as those governing dissent announcement and expression.

In this chapter, I will review successful dissent management strategies identified in this study while also previewing future research projects. The chapter first reviews the impetus for exploring the research question and briefly recounts the research design. From here, I define dissent and how each level of dissent expression influences dissent management efforts of group leaders. Next, the chapter recounts the limited disciplinary tools available to group leaders before turning to the findings of chapter four which asked respondents to explain why their party group is so unified in plenary voting. Here, I will consider not only the responses stressing shared beliefs and communication processes but also more broadly the impact of party group size and plenary influence upon dissent level variation. Next, I will consider the contributions of party group leaders and socialization processes. Finally, the chapter concludes with ideas on future research; in particular plans for a mass survey of MEPs to be conducted after the June 2014 elections utilizing original questions as well as those from Garner and Letki (2005).

RESEARCH QUESTION AND DESIGN

What explains the variation of dissent levels among party groups in the European Parliament and why are party group cohesion levels on the whole so high? Given such patterns, how do party group leaders manage dissent and how does this impact the form of dissent expression by individual MEPs? As depicted in Table 9.1 below, most party groups achieve relatively high cohesion rates despite their supranational organization and lack of control over re-nomination. In

addition, the table depicts a variation in cohesion and dissent rates that cannot be explained solely as a product of party group size or plenary influence, otherwise the ALDE would be more cohesive and the Greens/EFA would not be the most cohesive party group.

TABLE 9.1: PARTY GROUP COHESION/DISSENT RATES

PARTY GROUP	COHESION RATE	DISSENT RATE
GREENS/EFA	.947	0.053
EPP	.931	0.069
S & D	.928	0.072
ALDE	.898	0.102
ECR	.868	0.132
GUE	.816	0.184
EFD	.498	0.502

Note: Party group cohesion/dissent rates are listed in descending order and reflect plenary roll-call votes during the current parliament (July 2009-March 2013) prior to the accession of Croatia into the EU.

Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

Given the questions raised by dissent level variation among party groups and by the limitations associated with roll-call vote studies (See Carrubba et al. 2006), I chose to conduct onsite research because although past studies (See Hix et al. 2007 and others referenced in this dissertation) have made enormous contributions, we know very little about the internal processes contributing to party group cohesion levels. In particular, the roles of specific group leaders (presidents and vice-presidents) are not well-defined in the literature as are the contributions of party group meetings and other group forums. In turn, past studies have defined dissent mostly in terms of deviation from the group line in plenary with little consideration toward other forms of dissent or of how party group leaders secured lower levels of dissent (opposing the group line on an amendment or voting to abstain). Finally, past studies have also largely defined party group cohesion strictly in relation to plenary voting yet have ignored other definitions of cohesion encompassing shared attitudes toward group membership and the extent to which members perceive colleagues value group unity (See Brown 2000).

In turn, identifying the processes associated with dissent management is necessary in order to fully explain decision-making within the European Parliament, particularly as decision-making increasingly shifts from the national to the supranational level. With the implementation of the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), the European Parliament now holds co-decision authority on nearly all policy areas and even prior to Lisbon decision-making had shifted away from the national and toward the EU level (Benoit and McElroy, 2007, 4-5). Now more than ever, it is imperative for party group leaders to secure high cohesion and minimal dissent expression as the legislative stakes are much higher. As Hix and Hoyland (2011) note, “more at stake means more incentives to strengthen the division of labor inside the political groups to try and win votes to shift outcomes in a particular policy direction” (Hix and Hoyland, 2011, 143).

Higher legislative stakes have in turn incentivized party group leaders and staff to monitor roll-call votes and to identify and manage dissent prior to plenary votes. How is this achieved? As I note above, the gap in the literature is in part a product of institutional limitations in that about thirty-five percent of all plenary votes, roll-call votes constitute a small and unrepresentative sample (Carrubba et al. 2006 and Kreppel 2002). Furthermore, votes in committees or party group meetings are never roll-called. In this sense, while roll-call vote studies display the extent of party group cohesion in plenary votes and indicate the impact of particular MEP characteristics (group membership, age, country of origin, etc.) upon voting behavior, roll-call votes do not reveal the dissent management processes prior to plenary voting and are in many instances not representative of all plenary votes.

For example, Carrubba et al. (2006) found that roll-call votes in plenary sessions are not representative of legislation from all committees. “A majority of roll-call votes originate in just a few committees. Three committees accounted for 63.88% of RCVS, but only 28.35% of all

votes” (Carrubba et al. 2006, 699). Accordingly, while roll-call votes remain a useful and available tool for party group studies, we know little in regards to how party groups manage dissent where roll-call votes are absent, as well as when plenary votes are roll-called. In other words, we lack an explanation for how party groups address dissent both prior to a roll-call vote, but also in the majority of instances where votes by individual MEPs are not recorded. As Carrubba et al. note “The party groups are systematically hiding exactly the voting behavior we are interested in studying” (Carrubba et al. 2006, 699).

In this sense, a field study is necessary in order to reveal the hidden processes associated with dissent management and dissent expression within party groups both prior to and during plenary sessions. While past studies have clarified the role of group rapporteurs and coordinators (See Ringe 2010, and Lindberg 2008), we know very little about the role of and the dissent management tactics employed by party group presidents and vice-presidents. When do party group presidents utilize their unique position as representative of the entire group and as presiding chair of party group meetings to ensure widespread adoption of the group line? Are party group vice-presidents merely administrators or legislative entrepreneurs who lobby members to adopt the group line or dissent at less costly levels throughout the legislative process? In particular, what are the responsibilities and the influence of the vice-president serving as the parliamentary secretary or group whip?

In order to uncover the dissent management roles of leadership offices and group forums, I interviewed eighty-four MEPs and staff and observed dozens of party group and working group meetings across all seven party groups. Interviews provide the opportunity to learn more about internal (party group) processes from those who either have responsibility for or are directly impacted by the dissent management. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), “through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate” (Rubin

and Rubin, 2005, 3). In other words, in order to uncover particular dissent management processes across party groups and to assess their effectiveness, it is necessary to ask questions of those associated with dissent management in a setting which is more flexible and more likely to produce detailed answers compared to surveys.

TABLE 9.2: INTERVIEWS BY RESEARCH PHASE AND SUBJECT CATEGORY

RESEARCH STAGE	MEPS	STAFF	TOTAL
ONE	21	17	38
TWO	41	6	47
TOTAL	61	23	84

Note: Table depicts number of interviews by research phase and by subject category broadly defined here as MEPs or staff. N of Cases (Interviews): 84

Interviews in this study targeted (See Table 9.2 above) party group leaders (presidents, vice-presidents, and coordinators) and elites among the secretariat (secretary-generals and senior advisors). I contacted every MEP holding a leadership office in each of the seven party groups for an interview and apart from the absence of EPP coordinators I secured a representative sample of group leader interviews in regards to group membership and leadership positions. I also pursued interviews with rank-and-file MEPs as well as staff varying from policy advisors at the group level to MEP aides. In particular, I contacted MEPs who were new to the parliament (one year or less of service) and those who exhibited the highest dissent rate in plenary votes (identified through www.votewatch.eu) within their group.

The targeted populations among rank-and-file MEPs provided supplementary or even contrastive accounts of assertions made by leaders while staff interviews often provided informative behind-the-scenes accounts. Though interviews offered extensive insight, party group and working group meeting observations not only provided opportunities to view the behavior of members as well as staff in group settings but also to identify the extent to which party groups utilized group forums as dissent management tools.

In turn, given the contributions of party caucus meetings in other legislatures toward party unity (See Forgette 2004), I expected that party group meetings and (where applicable) working groups would serve not only as vital forums for developing the group line, but also opportunities for group leaders to identify and mitigate the extent of dissent. As depicted below in Table 9.3, I observed every party group and horizontal working group meeting as possible given the confines of a restrictive parliamentary calendar that schedules meetings of all groups on particular days and nearly always during overlapping times. Nonetheless, my observations of party group meetings are a representative sample in terms of group size and given the time constraints, while observations of working groups apart from the Greens/EFA similarly are representative of the frequency of these forums during the legislative calendar across groups where applicable.

TABLE 9.3: PARTY GROUP AND WORKING GROUP MEETING OBSERVATIONS

	ALDE	ECR	EFD	EPP	GREENS	GUE	S & D	TOTAL
PARTY GROUP	5	2	2	6	5	3	4	27
WORKING GROUP	2	NA	NA	2	0	NA	2	6

Note: Table depicts number of observations of party group and horizontal working group meetings during the two phases of field research (2011-2012). NA (Not Applicable) refers to groups who do not have horizontal working groups. N of Cases (Observations): 33

DEFINING DISSENT

In chapter three, I defined and assessed dissent in broad terms in order to convey on one hand the nuances associated with dissent but also to relate the possible forms of dissent expression to particular dissent management tactics employed by group leaders. The nuances of dissent expression refer to the multiple options available to MEPs to express dissent throughout the stages of the legislative process. Dissent occurs in the European Parliament when an MEP votes against or expresses opposition to the group line. The group line may be indicated by leadership and communicated to members prior to and during party group meetings and later through a voting list passed out during plenary. The group line may also reflect a majority view not directly sponsored by leadership such as when a majority of MEPs advocate a particular

position which becomes the group line. In some instances, this is done through votes in party group meetings. In other cases, no formal vote is taken and the group line is simply the ad hoc expression of a particular position by a majority of MEPs through voting and speeches.

How may dissent be expressed? As in other legislatures, dissent in the European Parliament is often expressed and at times addressed behind closed doors or at various stages prior to the floor or plenary session: committees, working groups, or party group meetings. As Morgenstern (2004) notes, “The degree of party unity revealed by voting may in fact conceal higher or lower levels of unity experienced prior to each vote or for that matter how the revealed degree of unity was obtained in the first place” (Morgenstern, 2004, 21). To measure dissent expression, I modified a scale constructed by Crowe (1983) to reflect the voting options and legislative stages associated with the European Parliament.

TABLE 9.4: LEVELS OF DISSENT EXPRESSION

1. Voice dissent in working group meetings
2. Voice dissent in party group meetings
3. Not voting (or not being in attendance)
4. Speak against the group line in plenary debates and speeches
5. Vote Abstain
6. Vote against the group line on amendments
7. Vote against the group line in early reading(s)
8. Vote against the group line in the final reading (following the conciliation committee)

Each level of dissent in turn incurs costs tied to the form of expression and the stage in the legislative process in that the form of dissent expression at the higher end of the scale is more harmful to party group unity and in that dissent expressed prior to plenary voting may be more readily addressed by group leaders. Dissent management efforts by group leaders in turn should be centered upon the goal to secure maximum support for the group line or otherwise to produce a compromise with delegations or individual MEPs that results in dissent from the group line at a lower and less costly level on the scale. Voting against the group line on a final reading entails the most costly form of dissent expression in that not only the group line but as well the

institutional position of the parliament is at-stake. Similarly, group leaders should in lieu of universal consensus, pursue expressions of dissent which do not impact the group line on final reading. For example, lobbying and/or socialization may induce MEPs or delegations to oppose the group line on a particular amendment but adopt the group line on an entire report.

In turn, voting to abstain is a less costly form of dissent in that abstaining does not count against the passage of an amendment or report except in final readings where an absolute majority of MEPs is required. Otherwise, abstaining does not send as powerful signals of divisions to other members or those in other groups. Explanations of vote and interview responses reveal that when MEPs abstain they do so because they have mixed feelings about particular amendments or reports or because they want to dissent without damaging the group's plenary agenda or reputation.

MEPs also have the option of expressing dissent through plenary speeches. Plenary speeches occur during debates, explanations of vote following plenary debate, and catch-the-eye segments where the presiding officer may call on MEPs to address the parliament. Plenary speeches are assigned a less costly level because they may be followed with successful lobbying and/or socialization efforts to secure a vote to abstain or a contrary vote on an amendment rather than on an entire report. Furthermore, very few members are present for plenary speeches outside of debates which the more cohesive groups address by relegating the number of and reserving the last slot(s) for dissenting speakers as discussed in the following section.

Not-voting for those in attendance is similarly a less costly outlet for MEPs to express dissent though parliamentary rules linking payment of salary to a minimum number of roll-call votes limit the availability of this option. Expressing dissent in party group or working group meetings (where applicable) is the most preferred form of dissent expression by group leaders

because it provides them with the opportunity to address dissent prior to plenary. Members of the more cohesive groups may announce dissent in one of the group forums out of a sense of obligation to group norms or reflecting individual rationality in that group support is necessary in the future to secure the member's preferences. Dissent announcement in turn provides clear signals of the extent and the form of dissent to group leaders who may convince dissenting members/delegations to adopt the group line, secure a compromise to dissent at a less costly level, or in some circumstances reconfigure the group line to accommodate dissenting views.

DISCIPLINE AS A DISSENT MANAGEMENT TOOL

Why do party group leaders rely almost exclusively on a whip structure and socialization to ensure maximum support for the group line and minimal dissent? In part, this stems from the supranational organization of the parliament. With national parties responsible for re-nomination of MEPs and with Europarties only recently (and in a limited extent) providing electoral support, party groups must rely on other dissent management tools. Party groups do assign committee seats and chairmanships but these are allocated internally in most groups along a points system associated with national delegation size with the group acting at times as mediator (See Hix et al. 2007). Three other disciplinary tools available to party group leaders are: control over speaking time in plenary debates, rapporteur assignment, and their role as amendment gatekeepers in plenary. When I asked respondents about their perceptions of each, I found that disciplinary tools are considered as a limited resource for party group leaders.

Nearly eighty-six percent of respondents maintained that when a member dissents from the group line, they are either never denied plenary speaking time or they are assigned the last slot(s). Surprisingly, this was one of the few questions in which a respondent's party group membership was not a statistically significant predictor of providing a particular response. Party group size and plenary influence do not appear to impact perceptions of plenary speaking time

allocation because group leaders and staff are confronted across groups with the challenge of often allocating finite time to an excess of applying members. In addition, as dissenting MEPs have alternate forums for expressing dissent in explanations of vote and catch-the-eye segments, group leaders are not only less concerned with but are also ill-equipped in this instance to punish dissenting members. Instead, party group position (leadership, rank-and-file, and staff) and years of service (as MEPs and/or staff) in the parliament were more significant predictors.

Those respondents holding leadership positions and with more years of service were more likely to contend that dissenting members are never denied plenary speaking time but rather are assigned the last slot(s). Dissenting members are relegated to the last and limited spots because the group wants to ensure that the first speakers are those in leadership, who worked on the report, or in a few cases members from delegations who have lobbied for more high profile speaking slots. In this sense, leaders do not deny dissenting members speaking time just as they do not reward every member supporting the group with speaking time.

Responses and field research however indicate that party group leaders do consider a member's voting history when assigning rapporteurs but only in particular groups and almost exclusively on prominent reports. Rapporteurs are responsible for carrying reports (legislation) throughout the legislative stages and are awarded to each group on a points system reflecting party group size (See Hix et al. 2007). In turn, the larger groups tend to successfully bid on the more prominent reports or in the case of the Greens/EFA reserve their points for reports associated with particular policy areas. Each report is then assigned a shadow rapporteur by each group who represents the group in negotiations in the respective legislative stages. Rapporteurs (along with coordinators) are also important dissent management actors because they are regarded as experts to whom group members will often defer to (See Ringe 2010).

Nearly half of respondents maintained that voting behavior is never considered when rapporteurs are assigned. Instead, group leaders (primarily coordinators) assign rapporteurs on the basis of individual expertise and work ethic in committees. In contrast, a little over twenty percent of respondents countered that voting behavior is considered when prominent reports are assigned but otherwise agreed with the assessment above. This latter perception increases over time among respondents as they acquire more years of service in the parliament and acquire a better understanding of the assignment process. Party group membership also influenced results in that respondents from the medium and smaller groups noted that the question was not applicable as their group only had one to three members on most or all committees.

The effects of party group membership are also evident in the trend among respondents from the more cohesive groups who were more likely to maintain that prominent reports are denied to dissenting members as the stakes associated with group reputation and plenary influence are at their highest. In contrast, members from the less cohesive groups were more likely to contend that only expertise and work ethic are considered on all rapporteur assignments. In this sense, leaders in the more cohesive party groups do punish dissenting members by not assigning them prominent reports to carry or shadow on a consistent or targeted basis. However, committee assignment mitigates this dilemma for group leaders in that a member who disagrees with the group line on a particular policy area is unlikely to be assigned to that committee. Whereas, in the smaller groups, limited committee membership and less emphasis on group cohesion also renders rapporteur assignment as a limited dissent management tool.

One final disciplinary tool available to group leaders is their role as amendment gatekeepers in plenary. In committees, individual MEPs may table amendments without group sponsorship whereas in plenary amendments must be sponsored by party groups unless the members can

obtain twenty-seven co-signatures of fellow MEPs (See Hix et al. 2007). When speaking with staff and MEPs and in my observations of each of the respective stages of the legislative process, I found that control over the plenary agenda is an important dissent management tool for group leaders but that groups either ignore or barely mention individually-tabled plenary amendments that dissent from the group line as they are nearly always assured to fail.

For example, aides to coordinators often described the behind-the-scenes process culminating in formation of the group line. Constant communication in most party groups between staff and MEPs, and among MEPs, culminates in the offering of amendments in committees that either reflect group policy preferences or are accepted by group leaders as compromises so long as they ensure the main content of the group position is preserved in the report. Dialogue and negotiation continues on through the working groups (where applicable) and into the party group meeting. In this sense, though party groups act as amendment gatekeepers, the group line is a reflection of ongoing and inclusive efforts within the group. In turn, individually-sponsored amendments in plenary are rare and often reflect the priorities of a few members within and across groups aside from the non-attached members.

EXPLAINING PARTY GROUP UNITY

If disciplinary tools are limited, then what explains why the party groups are on the whole so cohesive and why do some groups have higher dissent levels than others? Turning to the literature, increasing legislative power in terms of co-decision authority and party group size provides some explanation. Even prior to Lisbon, group cohesion rates rose by eleven percent following the expansion of co-decision authority (Hix et al. 2007, 102). Since Lisbon, (setting aside the ECR) cohesion rates and patterns among groups have remained relatively stable (See Hix and Noury 2009). With more at-stake, party groups have more aggressively pursued higher cohesion and minimal levels of dissent expression.

Ringe (2010) provides some additional explanation in that if MEPs are regarded as rational actors, they will defer to group leaders in most votes due to in part because group support is necessary for securing their individual preferences but also as a result of information overload. MEPs are confronted with votes on hundreds of reports and thousands of amendments each year. In turn, particularly when they are not members of the responsible committee, they are incentivized to defer to the positions of rapporteurs, coordinators, and other experts within the group unless the vote raises an issue associated with intense national interest (See Ringe 2010).

TABLE 9.5: PARTY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Group Name	Number/% of MEPs
EPP (European Peoples Party)	271/35.9%
S & D (Socialist and Democrats)	189/25.0%
ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats)	85/11.2%
Greens/EFA	58/7.7%
ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists)	56/7.4%
GUE (Union of European Left)	34/4.5%
EFD (Europeans for a Free Democracy)	34/4.5%
NA (Non-Attached Members)	29/3.9%
Total	756/100%

Note: Table depicts the number of members per party group and non-attached members in the current parliament prior to the accession of Croatia in 2013 as well as each group's percentage of all MEPs.

Data Source: www.europarl.europa.eu

Roll-call vote studies also reveal that a relationship between party group size and high cohesion rates in that a five percent increase in a group's seat share corresponds to a 0.19 percent increase in group cohesion (Hix et al. 2007, 101). As depicted above in Table 9.5, the larger party groups in the current parliament are the more cohesive. Larger membership requires constant communication among leaders and between leaders and rank-and-file in regards to both developing the group line as well as for dissent management.

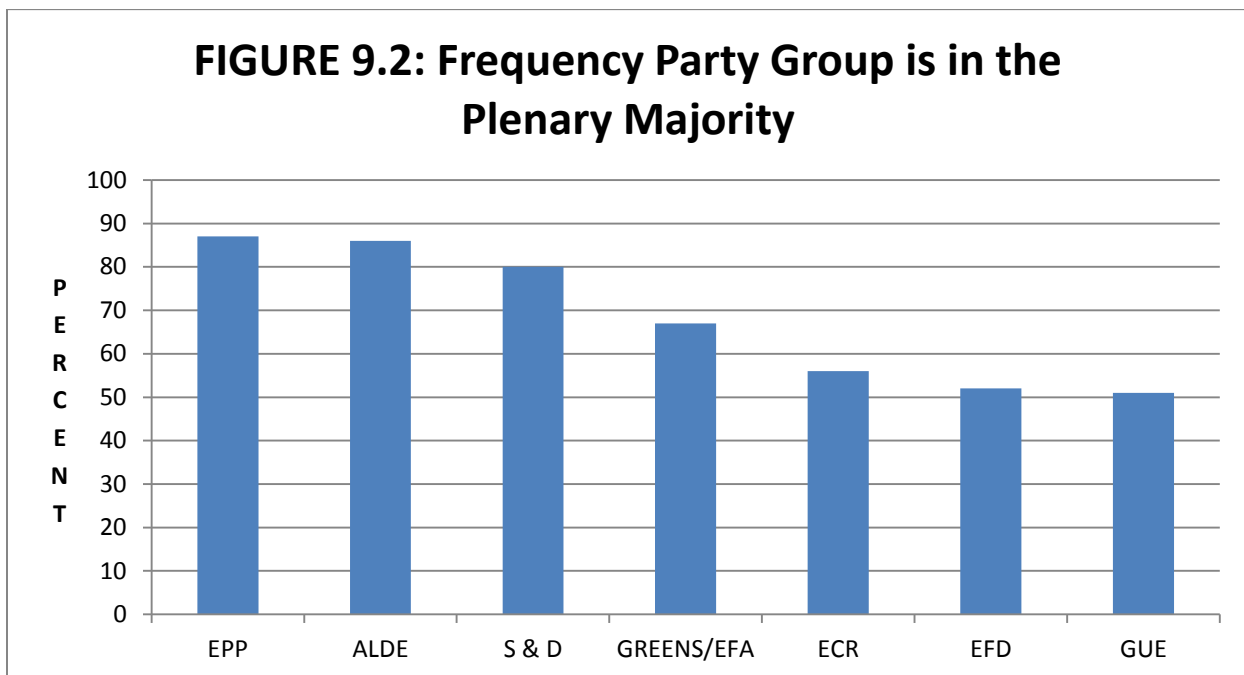
In particular, larger groups face a collective action problem in that individual leaders cannot speak with every member who may be wavering in support or intending to dissent from the group line. Leaders in the larger groups respond to this collective action problem by assigning

clear dissent management roles such as placing coordinators in committees or assigning a vice-president to serve as parliamentary secretary who can offer mediation and be as some respondents noted the “eyes and ears” of the group president. Leaders in larger groups also create additional forums (working groups) in order to build momentum for consensus prior to the full group meeting. In turn, because smaller party groups do not face such logistical challenges they may lack incentive to assign clear leadership roles or develop specific forums. However, small groups do have tools at their disposal to ensure high cohesion such as the party group meeting where leaders can in comparison to the larger groups more easily encourage participation.

I believe smaller party groups are less cohesive in part because of their attitudes toward group membership in that they are formed by national parties who are vehement in their opposition to the EU (EFD and GUE) or in the case of the ECR are outside the institutional mainstream in regards to support for further European integration. Opposition to the EU project as a whole or to further integration may undermine group cohesion in that despite the prevailing ideological consensus within the smaller groups, a leading rationale for cooperation is absent. In other words, the four largest party groups are motivated to secure high cohesion in part because they want to impact plenary outcomes in order to expand and shape European integration. In contrast, the EFD and the GUE rarely pursue group unity partly because they do not regard the parliament as a vital actor in EU policymaking and therefore any group line let alone dissent management is unnecessary. Whereas, in the the ECR, a lower priority on group unity reflects an incentive for group membership grounded in the accomplishment of national rather than ‘European’ priorities which impedes dissent management.

However, while the larger party groups share logistical challenges and positive attitudes toward European integration, group membership size cannot fully account for variation in dissent

management strategies. In turn, the extent of a party group’s ability to influence plenary outcomes shapes dissent management strategies and ultimately group cohesion rates in that higher plenary stakes incentivizes group leaders to more aggressively pursue maximum cohesion and lower levels of dissent expression. Plenary influence as depicted below in Figure 9.2 is measured as the percentage of times a party group is in the majority in plenary roll-call votes. However, party group size does not automatically correspond to extent of plenary influence as exemplified by the ALDE who are the third largest but the second most influential party group.



Note: Graph depicts percentage of times each party group has been in the plenary majority in the current parliament and is arranged from the most to least influential group. Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

Plenary influence provides incentive for party group leaders to fully utilize all components of a whip structure but also to utilize all the dissent management tools at their disposal. If group size were the only factor, leaders might develop working groups for example to resolve collective action problems associated with policymaking, but plenary influence provides additional incentive to identify and manage dissent in working groups and to build a culture within the entire group that encourages members to defer to decisions taken in working groups.

Similarly, while group size encourages the creation of the group whip, plenary influence provides the incentive for the group whip to lobby dissenting members and to encourage members to adopt norms governing dissent announcement and expression.

However, Figure 9.2 raises questions about the extent to which party group size and influence explains dissent level variation among party groups. Specifically, why is the ALDE the second most influential yet only the fourth most cohesive party group? Perhaps more importantly, why is the Greens/EFA the fourth largest and fourth most influential group yet the most cohesive? I contend that the Greens/EFA is the most cohesive party group because they have been the most successful in utilizing all components of the whip structure and of fostering a sense of shared identity. In this sense, leaders and the decisions they take matter. Despite comparatively less incentive provided through membership size and plenary influence, Greens/EFA leaders have prioritized and successfully pursued high cohesion.

I often began interviews with the general question of what explains why your group is mostly unified in most (or in the case of the EFD a majority) of plenary votes? I did so in part to frame the remainder of the interview but also to obtain perceived explanations for group level processes contributing to cohesion levels often missing in the literature. In turn, I anticipated five potential responses: we are nearly always unified because we have shared beliefs and values, because there is constant communication within the group, because members know that plenary cross-group coalitions and the group's plenary reputation are at stake, because members mostly defer to group experts when voting, and unity is not important for my group.

Respondents often offered two or more explanations for party group unity while EFD members were the primary source of assertions that party group unity was unimportant. The response of plenary coalitions was most often provided by ALDE respondents reflecting the

pivotal role played by the group in that when the EPP and S & D cannot reach agreement, both will first turn to the ALDE to build plenary cross-group coalitions. In turn, many ALDE members believe that the group is largely unified in part because each member knows that dissent from the group line will jeopardize the group's plenary agenda and its plenary reputation.

However, most respondents cited shared beliefs and/or communication as the main explanations for group unity. Shared beliefs refer to a shared ideology but also to shared values and attitudes toward membership. I found that respondents from the more cohesive groups defined shared beliefs differently with repercussions for dissent management. When respondents from the four most cohesive groups cited shared beliefs, they defined cohesion not only in terms of unity in plenary votes but also in regards to the extent to which members perceived that their colleagues shared similar values or backgrounds and the degree to which members adhered to particular norms of behavior. In contrast, when respondents from the three least cohesive party groups cited shared beliefs, they were referring not only to the extent to which members at times shared policy positions, but also to the shared perception that delegations/members remained in the group because they could freely pursue a separate line at any time.

In this sense, whereas the definition of shared beliefs offered by respondents from the more cohesive groups were conducive to unity, those offered by respondents from the least cohesive groups undermined group unity in that members shared the belief that group unity was unimportant or secondary to individual or delegation agendas. A shared identity may be derived from shared backgrounds or histories among party group members. For example, Greens/EFA members are mostly from Northwestern Europe and respondents regularly cited the desire to make reports "Greener". Shared background and goals in this sense facilitate lobbying efforts by group leaders but also encourage widespread norm adoption.

Similarly, S & D leaders appeal to a shared Socialist or social democratic heritage embodied by advocacy for the working class which translates not only into shared ideology but also a shared outlook toward group membership. For example, national party delegations will opt to express dissent from the S & D line at a less costly level because they do not want to jeopardize the broader group agenda and because they are socialized into believing that adherence to the group line or in extreme cases dissenting at less costly levels is the appropriate behavior.

In contrast, the ECR have not defined a shared group identity since their formation after the 2009 elections. Therefore, while ECR members share a common ideology of reforming the EU and slowing the pace of integration, the group often splinters into national delegation positions. In this sense, the ECR are not only comparatively less cohesive in terms of plenary votes but are also less cohesive in that members do not closely identify with the group (See Brown 2000). The response of shared beliefs in this sense conveys not only the perceived extent of ideological homogeneity but also the perceived importance members place on group unity.

For example, an MEP's decision to dissent from or support the group line is framed in part by group membership in that social interactions influence individual perceptions of group leadership roles (group whips as mediators) and aid in the identification of appropriate norms of behavior (deferral to working groups or those governing dissent). In turn, if an MEP belongs to a party group whose leaders effectively communicate the necessity for and the importance of group unity and the MEP observes other members deferring to group leaders, the MEP is likely to adopt a positive view of the party group and copy the observed behavior. In turn, widespread adoption of shared beliefs and attitudes requires an effective communication network overseen by party group leaders. For example, MEPs in the S & D group may share the belief that the EU

has an obligation to promote economic and social equality. However, differences may arise on how best to achieve this goal in a report or in regards to a particular amendment.

Communication in this sense re-enforces shared beliefs through the utilization of group forums and by the persistence of group leaders to maintain a constant dialogue with membership. Responses citing communication and observation notes reveal that leaders assign particular tasks to group forums such as to communicate policy preferences, secure compromises, and if necessary, to manage dissent. In addition, respondents citing communication perceived that the group was cohesive because members were constantly talking to one another. Constant dialogue in turn acts as both a conduit for leaders to manage dissent and disseminate norms but also for members to convey beliefs and concerns while building logistical and social connections to the group. These explanations mirror the findings of Rasmussen (2008) of stronger communicative links between MEPs and party groups than with national parties back home.

In turn, party groups are on the whole highly cohesive because dialogue is accompanied in most groups by lobbying and socialization efforts by group leaders. For example, ALDE and Greens/EFA respondents often stressed how their group ensured extensive unity through mass participation in party group meetings. While the ALDE president often directed consensus-building efforts in group meetings, Greens/EFA leaders and the secretary-general acted in concert with other leaders to secure support for the group line in the meeting. Accordingly, when members develop a sense of loyalty but also a sense of investment in the group line through their participation in the decision-making process as well as by leaders' appeals to shared perceptions of group identity, cohesion levels are likely to rise (See Garner and Letki, 2005). In contrast, when members do not value group forums or when group leaders fail to utilize all dissent management tools associated with group forums, dissent levels are likely to rise.

LEADERSHIP EFFECTS

The explanations of shared beliefs and communication for party group unity repeatedly refer to the vital role of group leaders in ensuring widespread support for the group line or in ensuring minimal levels of dissent expression. Leaders accomplish this task through appeals on the basis of shared group identity/values, by lobbying on the political and/or legislative merits of respective reports or amendments, and through references to the group's plenary influence and reputation being at-stake. In order to ensure the maximum number of MEPs supports the group line and that dissent is expressed at minimal levels, leaders in the more cohesive party groups divide dissent management responsibilities. Leaders in these groups identify and address dissent at every legislative stage and if consensus or a compromise cannot be achieved at one level then the dispute is referred to another where additional group leaders may become involved.

The extent to which particular group leaders become involved is largely absent in the literature. Specifically, we know very little about the dissent management roles of group presidents, vice-presidents and whips. The literature in contrast has a lot to say on the dissent management roles of group coordinators and rapporteurs. Coordinators and rapporteurs in the more cohesive party groups build support for the group line at every legislative stage and group members often look to these leadership positions for voting guidance particularly when a report originates from a committee or (when applicable) a working group outside of their purview. As Ringe (2010) noted, "the official party line of a given proposal is the end result of this information distribution process, acting as a series of information filters" and "the two (coordinators and rapporteurs) tend to work in tandem and jointly lead their party groups through the decision-making process" (Ringe, 2010, 58-59).

My observations of party group and working group meetings confirm the important contributions made by coordinators and rapporteurs to group unity in that members holding these

positions took the lead role in not only presenting the group line but in also addressing objections raised by individual members or delegations. In turn, when asked to identify which group leaders were primarily responsible for building unity, respondents most commonly cited coordinators and rapporteurs followed by group vice presidents, presidents, and national delegation leaders.

However, my observations of group meetings also identified key dissent management roles for group vice-presidents (including whips) and to some extent presidents in the more cohesive groups. To ascertain the dissent management role of group presidents, I asked respondents to identify the attributes of an effective group president and when a group president becomes involved in ensuring group unity. Respondents most often identified an ability to convey shared beliefs and to build consensus as attributes of effective group presidents. In contrast, previous national government or European Parliament experience is perceived as welcomed but not necessary attributes of effective presidents.

In all, I found a distinctive difference in interpretation of the group president's responsibilities between respondents from the more cohesive and those from the least cohesive party groups. In addition, party group culture shaped responses in that it influences perceptions of when consensus is desirable and when the group president should (if at all) become involved. For example, when respondents from the more cohesive party groups cited shared beliefs they often referred to a shared conceptualization of the group identity conducive to unity accompanied by socialization processes encouraging the adoption of norms governing dissent and other behavior. In other words, when presidents of the more cohesive party groups cite shared beliefs, they are adopting a dissent management tactic of appealing to a shared priority of group unity and drawing upon positive attitudes toward membership.

Across the more cohesive groups, presidents are viewed as the unifying figure who gives voice to the group's values as well as to its legislative priorities. The president helps to communicate a sense of what defines being a member of a particular party group and in turn guides the socialization of members to closely identify with the group (See Brown 2000). In turn, presidents in the more cohesive party groups are expected to build unity in group forums whether by identifying a common line or by appealing to members to adhere to the established group line. In contrast, when respondents from the less cohesive groups cite shared beliefs, they referred to a common rationale for group membership unrelated to expectations for adhering to the group line and defined consensus in terms of universal agreement among members and not a group line articulated to members by leaders with expectations for unity. In this sense, the responsibility of presidents in the less cohesive party groups is to ensure equal participation in group forums and that no member or delegation is pressured into supporting the group line.

Half of all respondents maintained that group presidents only become actively involved in building party group unity when prominent reports are at-stake, while the bulk of the remaining respondents associated a consensus-building or dissent management role for group presidents on all reports or when group forums were deadlocked. Most respondents perceive that group presidents normally defer to other leaders to carry the bulk of consensus-building or dissent management and then utilize their position as spokesperson for the group to issue final appeals.

ALDE respondents were more likely to identify an active role for the group president on all reports. Verhofstadt is expected to take the lead in building or identifying consensus on all reports in conjunction with the given rapporteur. In contrast, EPP, S & D and Greens/EFA respondents were more likely to assign a consensus-building role for the group president only on prominent reports or when group forums were deadlocked. Therefore, while most ALDE

respondents regard the group president as the most essential dissent management actor, most respondents in the other highly cohesive groups view the president as an actor of last resort.

In sum, though other leaders assume a more active dissent management role, party groups with lower dissent rates share in common a president who is perceived to contribute to group unity and to be engaged in dissent management on reports where the plenary stakes are high. In contrast, party groups with higher dissent levels are led by presidents who are perceived to either not be engaged in dissent management or are restrained in their efforts by a group culture that does not re-enforce consensus-building and does not value unity in general.

When asked to identify how vice-presidents contribute to group unity, a majority identified a key role for vice-presidents as chairs of working groups or as advocates for the group line in bureau or presidency meetings. In this sense, unless they are also the rapporteur, vice-presidents are largely perceived as moderators and advocates rather than as lobbyists. However, nearly forty percent assigned no role or only an administrative role to group vice-presidents with a few assigning a dissent management or consensus-building role for vice-presidents on all reports.

Positive perceptions of the contributions of group vice-presidents are more common among respondents in the more cohesive party groups though some ECR respondents identified a vital role for the group whip. To a degree, perceptions of vice-presidents reflect party group size in that working groups are absent in the smaller groups. However, the difference in attitudes among most ALDE respondents toward vice-presidents in comparison to those from the more cohesive groups underscores the limits of group size or plenary influence as explanations for group unity. Whereas EPP, S & D or Greens/EFA respondents identified dissent management roles for vice-presidents as chairs of working groups or as lobbyists in group meetings when prominent reports

were at-stake, ALDE respondents largely viewed group vice-presidents as administrators rather than as agents for group unity.

My observations of group forums confirmed the more active dissent management role of group vice-presidents in the three more cohesive groups. This was particularly evident in my observations of Greens/EFA group meetings where vice-presidents were not only active participants but also persistent lobbyists often taking dissenting or wavering members aside for private talks. In all, aside from the ECR, GUE and EFD, group vice-presidents contribute to various extents to dissent management whether as part of a whip structure, by fostering socialization processes, as well as promoting a shared conceptualization of the group identity. In turn, I find that those party groups with the highest cohesion rates (Greens/EFA, EPP, S & D) are those whose vice-presidents are assigned and perceived to hold a prominent dissent management role. In contrast, cohesion rates are lower in party groups who assign and whose members perceive an administrative or no role at all for vice-presidents (ALDE, GUE, and EFD) or in the case of the ECR who assign a clearly-defined role only to the group whip.

When asked to identify how group whips contribute to party group unity, EFD and GUE respondents noted that their groups did not have a whip or as it is commonly identified in the parliament as a vice-president serving as parliamentary-secretary. This response was also offered by many ALDE respondents which reflect the division of responsibilities among three persons (noting the group line-Valean, chairing the coordinators' meeting-Lambsdorf, and allocating plenary speaking time-secretary-general Beels) with none responsible for dissent management. In contrast, ECR, EPP and S & D respondents identified the group whip as a "coordinator-in-chief" facilitating consensus when group forums are deadlocked or as chief lobbyists when prominent reports are at-stake.

Most Greens/EFA respondents shared these attitudes but associated the role with the group secretary-general which I confirmed in my observations. The three party groups with the highest cohesion rates have a vice-president who serves as a parliamentary-secretary or have assigned these responsibilities to the secretary-general. This person is responsible for coordinating the group line and acting as an early alert system which may necessitate serving as a key advocate for the group line. The ECR whip (in addition to allocating plenary speaking time) brings divisions to the attention of the group meeting in the hopes of identifying a common line or minimizing dissent but his influence is restricted by the frequent emphasis within the group on national rather than ‘ECR’ objectives.

When viewed separately, the absence of dissent management roles for group vice-presidents or of a parliamentary secretary does not explain variation in group dissent rates. Rather, it is the absence or minimal utilization of all leadership positions in combination that facilitates higher dissent rates. For example, one explanation for the ALDE having the fourth highest cohesion rate despite their influential plenary position is the administrative role assigned to group vice-presidents and the division of the parliamentary secretary’s administrative responsibilities among three persons with no assignment of whip responsibilities. Though the group president and others normally build consensus in party group meetings and achieve relatively high cohesion rates, the maximum potential for ALDE cohesion is not reached in part because a gap exists between the efforts of the president and other leaders in group meetings and plenary voting.

GROUP FORUMS AND DISSENT MANAGEMENT

We know very little about how party group or working group meetings contribute to high cohesion levels which led me to arrange for multiple meeting observations and to ask respondents how they perceived the role of group forums. Group forums reduce information asymmetry, facilitate dissent management, and instill the norm of deference to decisions taken

by experts within the group. Party group and (where applicable) working meetings provide an opportunity for members to express their views and contribute to the development of the group line which in turn strengthens the cohesion of the group in that members who regard group meetings as productive and vital forums are more likely to support the group line in plenary (See Garner and Letki 2005). In this sense, group meetings provide an opportunity for leaders to socialize members into adopting the norm of adhering to the group line affirmed or identified in the group meeting and to announce dissent either before or during the group meeting.

When asked how working groups contribute to group unity, EPP and S & D respondents believed that working groups were key forums for building consensus on all or only on prominent reports. Similarly, though the Greens/EFA do not have working groups in the same organizational sense as the three larger groups their thematic working groups are positively viewed by members and are part of a whip structure that aggressively pursues unanimity at every stage. In contrast, ALDE respondents on the whole negatively viewed working groups as either unimportant forums accompanied by low attendance or as forums important only for those invested in the report. While the ALDE have secured relatively high cohesion, negative views toward working groups helps to explain their comparatively lower cohesion levels in that ALDE members are unlikely to attend working groups or defer to decisions taken in working groups.

ECR respondents often cited their policy development group which identifies long-term issues and positions as a working group. However, ECR cohesion remains far lower in part because separate national lines displace or accompany the group line identified in the policy development group and articulated in the party group meetings. Finally, I contend that while the smallest party groups do not require working groups, their lower cohesion is a product of their inability (or in the case of the EFD unwillingness) to fully utilize party group meetings to build

consensus and address dissent in conjunction with a group culture which undermines unity. In this sense, group size and influence contribute to the construction of specific forums, but unity for any party group is derived from the full utilization of party group forums by leaders and from a widespread perception among members that meetings are vital forums for forming a group line which embodies the values and goals of the group.

Seventy percent of respondents maintained that group meetings primarily contribute to group unity on prominent reports with the bulk of the remainder viewing party group meetings as forums primarily for discussing national politics. Respondents with more years of service in the European Parliament as MEPs and/or staff were more likely to assign a consensus-building role for party group meetings primarily on prominent reports whereas those with fewer years of service maintained that party group meetings were primarily forums for discussing national politics. This suggests that as members acquire greater understanding of party group level decision-making processes, they are more likely to view group meetings as important consensus-building forums when group cohesion matters most. In addition, it suggests, that increased exposure to socialization processes within the group contributes to a greater likelihood of norm adoption at least in regards in attitudes toward group meetings.

Observations confirmed the prevalent perception among respondents in the more cohesive groups that party group meetings are primarily utilized by leaders to build consensus and manage dissent on prominent reports whereas the least cohesive party groups (EFD and GUE) primarily utilize group meetings to discuss national politics and to articulate separate lines. I also found that the ALDE president is far more active in consensus-building and dissent management in party group meetings than his counterparts, while the Greens/EFA are unique in their practice of including the secretary-general and other staff in meeting deliberations.

In this sense, positive attitudes toward party group meetings facilitate efforts by group leaders to secure maximum cohesion and minimal dissent expression. The Greens/EFA exemplify this approach in that group co-presidents, the secretary-general, vice-presidents, and other leaders act in concert in group meetings to articulate and advocate for the group line. They accomplish this through lobbying on the policy and political merits of legislation but also through appeals to a shared conceptualization of the group identity and by encouraging the adoption of norms governing dissent announcement and expression.

SOCIALIZATION

Kam (2002) defines socialization as “the process of exposure or learning through which MPs acquire certain norms” (Kam, 2002, 194). For example, party group members adopt particular behavior through exposure to group forums, appeals from group leaders, and by copying the behavior of colleagues through daily interaction. According to Brown (2000), “norms specify...certain rules for how group members should behave and thus are the basis for mutual expectations among the group members” and that “norms may serve to enhance or maintain the identity of the group” (Brown, 2000, 56 and 60). In this sense, group leaders are not only disciplinary figures and lobbyists but also role models or reference points for other members.

While party leaders will lobby members to support the group line or dissent at a less costly level on the basis of the political and policy merits of respective reports or amendments, group leaders as legislative entrepreneurs will also utilize socialization processes. In turn, successful socialization requires extensive and often long-term exposure to particular norms which requires leadership to act in concert with one another and with other members to establish clear guidelines governing MEP behavior. As Crowe (1983) notes, “socialization aims to establish conformity with group norms, ensuring regularized patterns of behavior and interaction among members of the group” (Crowe, 1983, 923). In this sense, the party group becomes more

cohesive over time in plenary voting but also in shared attitudes toward group membership and conceptualizations of the group identity (See Brown 2000) as members come to view that loyalty to the group is both the appropriate and rational choice.

In turn, socialization fosters a shared identity in which members and leaders each are assigned specific roles governing relationships and expected behavior. For example, whereas GUE members do not associate a dissent management role with the office of group president but rather expect the president to ensure the independence of individual members, EPP members expect their group president to intervene when prominent reports are accompanied by deadlock while EPP leaders in turn expect group members to defer to the rapporteur's judgment in most instances. Furthermore, relatively high ECR dissent rates despite the coordination efforts of a group whip demonstrate that a fully utilized whip structure is one with clearly assigned dissent management roles for all group leaders while maximum cohesion is also a product of members viewing themselves as part of a party group rather than a collection of national delegations.

The extent of socialization within party groups was first examined through responses by MEPs to two questions in the extensive Farrell et al. 2011 survey asking whether unity is important to the MEP's party group and the extent to which MEPs regard themselves as European. I found that MEPs from the more cohesive groups were more likely to value group unity and to view themselves as European. The first question underscores the impetus for broadening the definition of group cohesion beyond roll-call votes in that when members place high importance on group unity and perceive that their colleagues share similar attitudes toward group unity, they will be more likely to support the group line or dissent at less costly levels (See Brown 2000). The second question exemplifies how shared conceptualizations of the group identity contribute to socialization. For example, party group leaders will appeal to dissenting or

undecided members on the basis of the European aspects of the group's identity through the use of language stressing a 'community solution' or of the 'community project' being at-stake.

Building upon the survey results, I asked MEPs and staff two questions measuring the extent of socialization: when is it acceptable to dissent from the group line and what help is provided to new MEPs to understand how the group is organized and what it believes? The first question sought to uncover the informal and formal processes governing dissent expression accompanied by the expectation that members in the more cohesive groups would be socialized into announcing dissent prior to plenary either in specific forums or to specific leaders.

Thirty percent of respondents noted that intentions to dissent from the group line should be expressed to their national delegation leaders while fifteen percent maintained that there were no expectations governing dissent announcement. However, a majority of respondents believed that dissenting members were expected to announce dissent in group meetings or in private to group leaders. In turn, as years of service in the parliament increase, respondents are less likely to contend that there are no expectations governing dissent announcement. This indicates that greater exposure to socialization and decision-making processes at the party group level helps to shape expectations governing dissent announcement.

Respondents identifying formal or informal processes governing dissent announcement hold positive views toward group membership but also share expectations that group leaders should be not only made aware of the extent of dissent but also be given the opportunity to address dissent. When responses are framed according to party group membership, respondents from the larger party groups were more likely to believe that dissent should be indicated to group leaders in committees, working groups, or in private as the full group meeting is largely viewed as a forum for addressing dissent only on prominent reports. For example, EPP respondents most

often indicated that dissent should be expressed prior to the party group meeting unless a prominent report was at-stake and the member was not part of the responsible committee or working group. In turn, ALDE members were more likely to contend that dissent should be announced in the party group meeting which is considered as the primary consensus-building forum. ALDE responses also underscore the impact of group size in that medium-sized groups may more easily facilitate discussion on multiple reports in the full group meeting.

In contrast, members of the less cohesive groups were more likely to maintain that dissent should be indicated to national delegation leaders or that there were no expectations for members to announce dissent prior to plenary. However, S & D members also often provided the response that dissent should be expressed to national delegation leaders. S & D members differentiate themselves from GUE members in that delegation leaders may try to secure support for the group line or will otherwise pursue a compromise with group leaders whereas delegation leaders in the GUE will likely make no such efforts

The second question was asked in order to not only close the gap in our understanding of what help is provided for new MEPs but also to provide an indication of the extent of socialization process in that the more cohesive party groups should provide targeted and ongoing assistance to new MEPs in order to acquaint them with the expectations and processes associated with group membership. While socialization of all members should be the goal of party group leaders, socialization efforts should target new members as they will be the least acquainted with prevalent norms within the group and likely to hold weaker ties to the group in terms of views toward group membership and in attitudes toward the importance of unity. New MEPs should also likely encounter higher degrees of information asymmetry as they encounter information overload and incomplete understanding of party group level decision-making processes.

Opinion regarding the extent and source of help for new MEPs varied widely among respondents with a little over a quarter maintaining that no help is provided, with a little under a quarter viewing the committee as the primary source of information and socialization, and with the rest citing the influence of national delegations or ascribing various extents of assistance from party group leadership and staff.

In turn, members of the largest party groups were also more likely to maintain that help for new MEPs is mostly provided at the committee level by colleagues and staff, but especially by the group coordinator. With smaller membership, committees provide more targeted and personable forums for educating and socializing group members. EPP, ALDE and GUE respondents were more likely to maintain that no help is provided to new MEPs. Instead, members “learn by doing”. However, a majority of respondents from the four most cohesive groups believed that some help was offered by the group with extensive help provided at the committee level and by national delegations valuing group unity. In turn, when EFD respondents commented on the extensive help they received from members and staff, they were referring to general civility and not to efforts emphasizing group unity.

EXPLAINING DISSENT LEVEL VARIATION

Party groups on the whole are highly cohesive because most groups to various extents have: (1) developed whip structures consisting of leadership offices and group forums for managing dissent, (2) socialized members into adopting norms governing dissent and other behavior as well as a shared conceptualization of the group identity, and (3) because most groups are fairly ideologically homogenous. A primary motivation for high cohesion rates is provided by an increasingly equal legislative role for the European Parliament which raises the stakes for plenary outcomes thereby encouraging party group leaders to pay closer attention to voting

patterns within the group. The extent of plenary influence along with group membership size in turn helps to shape the dissent management strategies employed by party group leaders.

However, party group size and plenary influence does not fully account for dissent level variation. While there are some characteristics unique to specific party groups, dissent level variation overall is further explained by the absence of particular components of a whip structure and by the failure to fully utilize all available dissent management tools including socialization.

TABLE 9.1: PARTY GROUP COHESION/DISSENT RATES

PARTY GROUP	COHESION RATE	DISSENT RATE
GREENS/EFA	.947	0.053
EPP	.931	0.069
S & D	.928	0.072
ALDE	.898	0.102
ECR	.868	0.132
GUE	.816	0.184
EFD	.498	0.502

Note: Party group cohesion/dissent rates are listed in descending order and reflect plenary roll-call votes during the current parliament (July 2009-March 2013) prior to the accession of Croatia into the EU.

Data Source: www.votewatch.eu

Looking again at Table 9.1, party groups toward the middle of the list have not assigned dissent management roles to every leadership office or fully utilized group forums to identify and manage dissent. In turn, party groups at the bottom of the list have failed to fully utilize all dissent management tools, but are also missing particular components of the whip structure. Furthermore, party groups at the top of the list have cohesive group identities accompanied by norms governing dissent and other behavior. In turn, party groups in the middle display comparatively less socialization with no evidence of socialization for groups at the bottom. The checklist below starts with the most cohesive and ends with the least cohesive group. Each check reflects my assessment of what best accounts for dissent level variation among the groups.

GREENS/EFA

- ✓ Leadership team constantly communicating with one another and lobbying members.
- ✓ Full utilization of party group meetings to manage dissent but also to instil a sense of investment by members in the proceedings and outcomes of the meetings.

- ✓ Group secretary-general acting as a whip who lobbies and socializes members
- ✓ A shared conceptualization of the group identity embodied in the pursuit of making legislation “Greener” as well as containing a strong ‘European’ component.
- ✓ A common geographic origin for most members (Northwestern Europe) which spares the group of the significant East-West divisions found in most other party groups.

EPP

- ✓ A fully utilized whip structure which identifies and manages dissent at every stage.
- ✓ The common deference of party group members to the rapporteur and working group position on most reports due to information overload and successful norm adoption.
- ✓ The involvement of the group president and parliamentary secretary in key situations.
- ✓ Ties of most member parties to national governments and of the group as a whole to leaders of key EU institutions (Commission President, Council President, etc.).
- ✓ A shared conceptualization of the group identity grounded in a ‘European’ outlook.

S & D

- ✓ A fully utilized whip structure which identifies and manages dissent at every stage.
- ✓ The common deference of party group members to the rapporteur and working group position on most reports due to information overload and successful norm adoption.
- ✓ The involvement of the group president and parliamentary secretary in key situations.
- ✓ A shared conceptualization of the group identity grounded in the historical socialist movement and a shared commitment to shaping the direction of European integration.

Deficiencies

- ✓ National delegations within the S & D are more likely to dissent than those in the party groups at the top of the list though norms govern dissent announcement and expression.

ALDE

- ✓ Understanding of the group’s high level of plenary influence and the impact of dissent upon plenary outcomes and reputation
- ✓ Active socialization of group members evident in the adoption of norms governing dissent announcement and through widespread investment in party group meetings.
- ✓ The aggressive pursuit of group unity by the group president who regularly identifies the foundations for consensus with the assistance of the respective rapporteurs.
- ✓ A shared conceptualization of the group identity grounded in a ‘European’ outlook and an increasingly close European party family.

Deficiencies

- ✓ The failure to assign dissent management responsibilities to group vice-presidents as well as to a single parliamentary-secretary acting as a group whip
- ✓ Weak linkages between group members and working group meetings
- ✓ Comparatively less ideological homogeneity

ECR

- ✓ Constant dialogue between party group leaders and national delegations
- ✓ The full utilization of the group whip office to identify both potential dissent and possible compromise before and during party group meetings

Deficiencies

- ✓ An evolving group identity often in conflict with national delegation priorities
- ✓ The failure to assign dissent management responsibilities to group vice-presidents
- ✓ Frequent turnover in group presidency in a relatively short period (3 since 2009)

GUE

- ✓ Strong historical and ideological foundation
- ✓ Increasing pursuit of group unity by new group president

Deficiencies

- ✓ Absence of norms governing dissent or those encouraging the importance of group unity
- ✓ The absence of dissent management responsibilities for all leadership offices
- ✓ Prevalent negative attitudes toward the ‘European Project’ and its institutions

EFD

Most members do not care about the legislative process and most group leaders regard their positions as platforms for national rather than European Parliament politics. In turn, dissent management and socialization is completely absent.

FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study has provided insight into the dissent management processes within party groups, many questions remain not fully answered. In turn, I contend that an MEP survey is necessary in order to map the leadership and socialization effects associated with dissent level variation. The survey should target the general population of MEPs and be representative of rank-and-file as well as elite populations. While the elite focus of this study has uncovered hidden processes by interviewing and observing those responsible for dissent management, a survey of the entire MEP population is necessary in order to fully investigate dissent management in the parliament. In turn, while staff provided valuable insight for this study, a more complete understanding of dissent level variation requires a focus upon elected members as it is their behavior that ultimately determines the extent of successful dissent management.

The timing and in many ways the impetus for the survey is provided by the European Parliament elections scheduled for late May of 2014. Elections will result in a significant number of new MEPs across party groups and in change-over to various extents in group leadership. Elections will also potentially shape the parliament in that groups will gain or lose seats but also

in that new groups may be formed. In particular, the ALDE may not enjoy the same level of plenary influence. The Greens/EFA and ECR may grow in membership size while the two smallest party groups may barely meet the criteria for group membership or perhaps exceed expectations. Finally, the far right which is currently concentrated within the ranks of non-attached MEPs may expand to the point of spurring the creation of a new party group. With these changes in mind, I contend that a survey is a timely response to as well as an effective tool for continuing to explore explanations for dissent level variation among party groups.

I believe the best approach to conducting a survey given the scheduled elections is to wait until September as group re-organization will occur over the summer and new members will likely be more receptive to surveys after having had some time to adjust to their responsibilities and surroundings. The survey should be made available in both French and English and MEPs should be more likely to complete a survey located on a website than offered as an attachment. I also believe my completion of a doctorate should encourage responses rather than one sent by a graduate student if my experiences booking interviews are any indication of prevalent attitudes.

The survey will examine the extent to which leaders and socialization contribute to group cohesion rates with socialization effects measured through responses to questions identifying whether group members identify with or feel isolated from their party groups. The survey will in turn contain modifications of questions offered by Garner and Letki (2005) presented to Canadian and UK MPs. Responses formed an “additive index for isolation” in that MPs scoring higher on the index placed greater value on group unity and more closely identified with group forums (Garner and Letki 2005, 472). An MP’s voting behavior on particular legislation served as the dependent variable but I believe this would discourage responses as anonymity is missing.

Instead, I will utilize gamma as a measure of strength of association as the responses are of an ordinal nature. This should indicate whether particular respondent characteristics (ideology, tenure, party group membership, etc.) influence response selection. P-values in turn will indicate whether any relationship between responses and respondent characteristics is statistically significant. Next, I will compare isolation and leadership index scores (see below) among the respective party groups to ascertain if there is a correlation between the indexes and group cohesion rates in plenary votes occurring from the start of the new parliament through the conclusion of the survey. In other words, are the more cohesive party groups those with higher averages of index scores which in turn would suggest that increased leadership activity and/or socialization contributes to higher party group cohesion.

I will ask MEPs to place themselves on a left-right ideological scale as well the integration scale featured in the Farrell et al. 2011 MEP survey. Garner and Letki utilized ideological self-placement as an indicator of voting behavior but I will instead include it as a respondent characteristic. Next, to account for tenure effects, I will ask MEPs to record the number of years (or months) of service in the European Parliament to see if responses vary among newer and veteran members. To measure the extent to which MPs identified with their party, the authors constructed an isolation index consisting of responses to four questions which I will modify to ensure relevance to the European Parliament. Responses not arranged on a 1-5 scale such as Q3 are coded as 1, 3 and 5 respectfully. The higher the placement on the scale, the more isolated the respondent feels from their party or in this case party group.

Q1. Leaders in my party group often canvass members for their input prior to presenting policy positions to the parliament or to the public. 1: Always.....5: Seldom

Q2. In general, how much influence do you think members in your party group have upon the decisions made by leaders in your party group?

A1: Very much influential. A2: Somewhat influential. A3. Not enough influence.

Q3. In my experience, party group meetings are not effective forums for the airing of policy issues. (Agree, Disagree, and Don't Know).⁹

Q4. In your experience as an MEP, how would rate the overall responsiveness of leaders in your party group to the opinions and concerns of members? 1. Responsive....5. Unresponsive

Garner and Letki also accounted for the perceived impact of the whip's power. As I more interested in leadership effects overall, I will modify this question and add others to account for the impact of leaders in particular party group positions (party group president/co-presidents, vice-presidents, parliamentary-secretary, coordinators, rapporteur, and secretary-general) with the responses forming a 'leadership effects index'. Below, I have provided the example of the whip question which will be replicated for the other party group leadership positions.

Q. In your experience as an MEP, how would you rate the impact of the group parliamentary secretary or whip upon the level of unity within your party group in plenary voting?

A1: The actions and appeals by the group parliamentary secretary or whip have a substantial impact upon the unity of our party group in plenary voting. (Coded as a 1)

A2: The actions and appeals by the group parliamentary secretary or whip have a limited impact upon the unity of our party group in plenary voting. (Coded as a 3)

A3: The actions and appeals by the group parliamentary secretary or whip have no impact upon the unity of our party group in plenary voting. (Coded as a 5)

I will submit the findings of field research in this dissertation for publication after my defense is complete with an initial emphasis on a short article highlighting the contributions of party group leaders before submitting the research in its entirety in book form. I will subsequently submit findings from the survey described above for publication upon its completion. In a related effort, I will submit a review of 2014 European Parliament election results to the Electoral Studies journal and to the Monkey Cage (Washington Post). The review will consider the impact of election results upon party group formation and policymaking in the next parliament rather than a country-by-country account. In particular, I am interested in the

⁹ Note: I will also include a question concerning horizontal working groups. However, I will not include it in the index but utilize it only to compare to party group meeting responses for the applicable groups.

performance of new parties at the national level (parties not in existence in June 2009) and which party groups they will join, if any. I will present election findings as well as this dissertation to the University of Nebraska-Omaha's October European Studies Conference.

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The quote from Simon Hughes on Pg. 19 originated on the S & D party group’s website which was posted on September 23, 2011, www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu

Note: Roll-call vote, party group cohesion, cross-party group coalition patterns, and other data was obtained from www.votewatch.eu while some information regarding the organization and legislative authority of the European Parliament as well as MEP explanations of vote was obtained through its website, www.europarl.europa.eu.