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At the root of
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At the root of parliamentary party cohesion: the role of intraparty heterogeneity and party ideology

Abstract

Party cohesion is a central issue in legislative studies. The way cohesion is reached in parliamentary parties has therefore attracted a lot of attention. A frequent assumption states that party cohesion stems from party agreement measured as the homogeneity of preferences among MPs. This paper argues that the two concepts – agreement and homogeneity– cover different realities, and shows that the relationship between them is not as straightforward as often suggested. The paper contends that party ideology works as a mediator between the heterogeneity of preferences and intra-party disagreement. The analysis is based on attitudinal data collected among 840 MPs from 15 European national assemblies and is computed at the aggregate –party– level. The results bring new perspectives on the relationship between ideology, homogeneity of preferences and agreement within parliamentary parties.

Résumé

La cohésion est un enjeu crucial pour les groupes parlementaire. Les chercheurs se sont donc largement intéressés aux déterminants de cette cohésion. Une idée très répandue est que la cohésion découle d'un niveau d'accord important entre parlementaires, produit de l'homogénéité de leurs préférences idéologiques. Cette recherche fait valoir que ces deux dimensions –accord et homogénéité– recouvrent des réalités différentes, et que leur relation n'est pas si évidente. Le document soutient que l'idéologie du parti fonctionne comme un médiateur entre l'hétérogénéité des préférences et le niveau de désaccords au sein du parti. Les analyses se basent sur des données attitudinales collectées auprès de 840 députés dans 15 assemblées nationales européennes, et sont réalisées au niveau agrégé. Les résultats ouvrent de nouvelles perspectives sur la relation entre l'idéologie, l'homogénéité des préférences et le niveau d'accord au sein des groupes parlementaires.

INTRODUCTION

Party cohesion is a crucial feature of daily life of parliaments. The existence of unified blocs of legislators constitutes an important requisite in many normative accounts of liberal democracy. Cohesiveness directly impacts government's survival (Saafeld 2009), coalition behaviour and bargaining power of the party in public office (Bäck 2008, Giannetti and Benoit 2009, Pedersen 2010, Tsebelis 2002). It shapes the electoral strategies, influences the electoral success or failure of the party in the electorate (Boucek 2012, McAllister 1991) and may have important consequences at the intra-party level, ranging from altering candidate selection procedures (Cox and Rosenbluth 1996, Kohno 1992) to shaping the party's positions (Harmel and Tan 2003). Yet cohesiveness varies across time, across parliaments and across parties (Depauw 2003, Malloy 2003, Patzelt 2003). Scholarly effort has been dedicated to put forth some explanations to this variance –mostly, institutional explanations (Carey 2007, Coman 2015, Depauw and Martin 2009, Sieberer 2006). This article aims at improving our knowledge of the mechanisms that may explain the different degrees of party cohesion found in political parties. It does so by clarifying the concepts of agreement and homogeneity of preferences and by bringing party ideology to the forefront of the explanation.

According to the literature, party agreement refers to a situation of cohesion “stemming from homogeneous policy preferences among legislators of the same party” (Van Vonna et al. 2014: 112). Whereas theoretically intra-party agreement results from the homogeneity of preferences among MPs, empirically speaking, scholars have often equated both concepts, by measuring the extent to which an MP disagrees with her/his party as the distance between the MP's position and the party's placement (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011, Kam 2001, Kam 2009). However, these two concepts do not cover identical realities. At the individual level, whereas agreement refers to a situation in which an MP evaluates whether (s)he agrees with the concrete policy proposal s/he has to vote for, s/he may, at a more abstract level, have preferences that are more or less distant with the party's average placement. At the aggregate-level, MPs' preferences within a party might be heterogeneous, but this does not systematically result in a high level of disagreement within the party. When legislators feel that their views on important issues are not aligned with those of

the party, they are more likely to express higher levels of disagreement. This paper puts that hypothesis to the test, by developing distinct measures of intra-party disagreement and ideological distance. Delineating between the two concepts is fundamental for a better understanding and a better conceptualization of party cohesion.

If party cohesion has sometimes been used as a synonym of unity in parliamentary votes (Özbudun 1970), the present study delineates between the two concepts. It considers cohesion as the voluntary pathway to reach voting unity (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011, Bowler et al. 1999, Hazan 2003), by contrast to discipline that constitutes the compulsory one. Party cohesion would be made of ideological homogeneity or agreement, as well as of loyalty, deriving from legislators' internalization of the norms of party unity and solidarity. Discipline rather refers to the tools and institutional mechanisms –e.g. use of carrots and sticks, whipping¹, division of labour², candidate selection procedures³ etc.- available to the party leader to enforce unity when neither agreement nor loyalty is effective (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011, Van Vonnö et al. 2014). This research focuses on the agreement dimension of cohesion, and thus leaves aside both loyalty and the disciplinary mechanisms affecting legislators' final decision to toe or not the party line.

In a second step, this article argues that the relationship between heterogeneous preferences and intra-party disagreement is dependent on two interrelated factors: party ideology –in terms of party family– and the type of issues on which preferences are heterogeneous. Looking at party family is quite innovative. Indeed, most studies including party ideology as a factor of cohesion have grasped the concept only in terms of left versus right placement, and have therefore missed an important part of the story. This article contends that ideology matters in the sense that party families have emerged around specific cleavages and have been structured around core issues. We argue that if parliamentarians' preferences are heterogeneous around these core issues, it will translate into disagreement more visibly. The analysis partly supports that disagreement increases when MPs' preferences are heterogeneous around issues that are at the core of the party's ideology. In that way, the findings

¹ See Ceron (2015) Kam (2009), Malloy (2003), Norton (2003), Patzelt (2003).

² See Andeweg and Thomassen (2011), Skjæveland (2001), Sieberer (2006).

³ See Cordero and Coller (2014), Hazan and Rahat (2011), Sieberer (2006).

suggest that party ideology works as a mediator between the heterogeneity of preferences and intra-party disagreement

The demonstration is based on the analysis of attitudinal data collected among 840 parliamentarians from 15 European national assemblies, in the frame of the PartiRep Comparative MP Survey⁴. The empirical contribution of the paper resides in aggregating at the party level both subjective and objective assessments of ideology and preferences. The advantage of focusing on the aggregate level is that it helps us to “uncover relationships that do not appear at the individual level” (Curtice 2007: 906). In this case, the aggregate-level perspective provides interesting insights into the way ideology influences the relationship between heterogeneous preferences and disagreement within a party.

The article proceeds as follows. First, the main hypotheses and expectations are presented regarding the impact of heterogeneity and ideology on disagreement. Second, the data and method used in the analyses are described. Third, the article proceeds with the analyses and results. A final section summarizes and discusses the research's main findings.

HETEROGENEITY, IDEOLOGY AND DISAGREEMENT: HYPOTHESES

Introduced by Krehbiel (1993), the “preference-driven” approach claims that individual MPs' policy preferences “are crucial to any understanding of legislative behaviour” (Willumsen and Öhberg 2013: 2). Legislators' voting cohesion would primarily result from their shared preferences over the legislation voted in parliament: MPs within the same party have similar policy preferences, and they simply vote because of ideological convictions (Hazan 2003: 3). Cohesion is reached voluntarily rather than coercively.

The literature suggests that the heterogeneity of preferences within a parliamentary party leads to voting disunity, because it increases the MPs' propensity to disagree

⁴ The PartiRep (Participation and Representation) research project (<http://www.partirep.eu/>) is funded by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO).

with their party. If, theoretically, disagreement results from the heterogeneity of preferences among MPs from the same party, the chain of causation has rarely been demonstrated. Indeed, *empirically*, disagreement has been equated to heterogeneous preferences. At the individual level, disagreement has been measured as the ideological distance between an MP's position and her/his party's placement (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011, Kam 2001, Kam 2009, Willumsen 2011), either on left-right or policy scales. At the aggregate level, general indexes of party agreement have been based on indicators such as the standard deviation of a party's MPs' self-positioning on left-right or policy scale, or on measures of dispersion – e.g. Van der Eijk's (2001) agreement index⁵.

We argue that the two concepts do not cover identical realities, and should therefore be measured distinctly. Whereas (dis)agreement refers to a situation in which an MP evaluates whether (s)he agrees with a concrete policy proposal s/he has to vote for, on a broader and more abstract level his/her preferences may be more or less distant with the party's average position. At the aggregate level, one might expect that if MPs within the same parliamentary party share very disperse ideological opinions and positions, it will be more difficult to find a high level of agreement with the party line when it comes to actual voting in parliament. Yet there is a lack of empirical studies on this relationship at the aggregate level. Therefore, the relationship between heterogeneity of preferences and intra-party disagreement needs to be put to the test, and this constitutes the first aim of this article. In order to achieve this aim, we develop distinct measures for intra-party disagreement and MP-party ideological distance, and we test the hypothesis that, *ceteris paribus*, i.e. assuming that all other factors (discipline and other institutional mechanisms) remain constant:

H.1. The more dispersed ideological positions within a party are, the higher the level of disagreement.

If the ideological heterogeneity within a party matters in determining its level of cohesion, the very nature of a party's ideology itself should also be taken into account. Actually, even if ideology constitutes a fundamental element for political

⁵ Van der Eijk's index has been applied in several studies (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011; Willumsen 2011), and helps assessing whether a party is polarized around an issue (index equals -1), or split evenly across the scale (index equals 0), or in complete agreement (index equals 1).

parties, few works have investigated its impact on party cohesion (Owens 2003: 26). The few studies investigating the relationship between a party's ideology and its level of cohesion have focused on the party's placement in the left-right spectrum: some studies argue that left-wing parties have a higher degree of cohesion or discipline (Bailer et al. 2011: 5-6, Damgaard 1995: 322), while others make this statement for right-wing or centrist parties (Owens 2003: 26). These studies have mostly focused on the linear relationship between the party's positioning in the left-right spectrum and its level of voting cohesion, thus neglecting other dimensions of ideology. This article departs from these studies, by considering the effect of the party's family instead of the effect of the party's placement in the left-right spectrum.

We argue that the relationship between ideological heterogeneity and the probability of disagreement is mediated by the ideological nature of the issues at stake.. This paper contends that MPs' preferences should be more homogeneous on what we called the party's core issues; but also that, given their centrality and visibility in the party's identity and day-to-day legislative work, disagreement is more likely to occur when MPs' preferences are heterogeneous on these core issues. This concept stems from the discussion on issue ownership (Budge and Farlie 1983, Petrocik 1996) defined by Walgrave et al. (2012) as "the fact that specific political parties are, in voters' minds, identified with specific policy issues and considered best able to deal with them" (2012:771). These authors point out the fact that this definition mixes a "competence component" –which party is perceived by citizens to deal best with an issue– and an "associative component" –the link of specific parties with specific issues. In this sense, our approach would rather be focused on those issues to which parties pay more attention; that is, to the associative component. We argue that voters are most able to link parties with certain issues when parties pay more attention to them. Typically this attention translates in holding more extreme positions on these topics. As such parties' positioning on these core issues allows differentiating between parties in the minds of voters. This approach therefore also relates to van der Brug's (2004) view of issue ownership as a question of party "priorities" (Bellucci 2006, Bélanger and Meguid 2008).

These core issues are fundamental from both an exogenous and an endogenous point of view. Firstly, from an exogenous point of view, the party's core issues constitute the basis of the framework of reference among voters (Pennings et al. 2006: 206) ; or,

in other words, the party's "brand" identity –how the party wants to be perceived by the voters and what makes the party or party family different from other competitors in the electoral arena. Parties "'own' specific issues in the sense that they are the natural bearers of this ideology" (Pennings et al. 2006: 206).

The link between party ideology and these core issues stems from the fact that party families in the European political space have emerged and have been structured around specific cleavages or divisions (Lipset and Rokkan 1967, Rokkan 1970): historically, the Church/state; the rural/urban; and the owner/worker or 'class-cleavage'. These divisions have varied in duration and strength across Europe (Bartolini and Mair 1990). As Kriesi argues, today these four classic cleavages "essentially came to boil down to two: a cultural (religion) and a social-economic one (class)" (Kriesi et al. 2006: 923). In addition, a new structuring conflict seems to have developed since the late 1960s and is now "embedded into existing two-dimensional national political spaces" (Kriesi et al. 2006: 921). Various labels apply to this new cleavage: the "new value" (Inglehart 1977, Inglehart 1990), the "new politics" (Franklin 1992) or the "postmaterialism/materialism" cleavage (Ignazi 2003: 201). Hooghe et al. (2002) also talk about an opposition between a "GAL" pole (Green-Alternative-Libertarian) and a "TAN" pole (Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalism).

We assume that the policy positions of parties can be located in those conflicts that structure the actual cleavage system. Parties' preferences "may be described in terms of a position in these conflict [or issue] dimensions" (Narud and Skare 1999: 50). After all, "a cleavage delineates the social base on which parties build their support" (Narud and Skare 1999: 50). Issue dimensions can be associated with the traditional left-right socio-economic policy dimension (class cleavage), but can also pertain to other dimensions: morality issues (derived from the old Church/state cleavage), environmental issues (embedded in the new value cleavage) etc. Parties differ in the weight or the relative importance they attach to these dimensions and in terms of the position they adopt on these conflict dimensions (Narud and Skare 1999: 50-51).

Secondly, these core policy areas are important from an endogenous perspective: the recruitment of political personnel is linked to these areas. For instance, in the case of a Green MP, it is possible that s/he has had previous working experience in the field of NGO of environmental protection and therefore may pay more attention to the party's positions in this area than, say, in the field of justice reforms. In the case of

Social democratic parties, part of their political personnel is likely to be recruited in workers' associations and unions and among employees; while in the case of Liberal and Conservative parties, candidates are likely to be recruited among managers and self-employed. MPs from these parties might therefore pay special attention to their party's placement on socio-economic issues.

Parliamentarians' preferences are expected to be very homogenous around the party's core issues. Homogeneity is expected because of a double process of (self)selection: "parties select candidates whose preferences are most in line with that of the party, and candidates self-select into parties [...], adopting the party label that most closely suits their own policy preferences" (Van Vonna et al. 2014: 114). However, heterogeneous preferences on the party's core issues may occur. Given the saliency of these issues in the party's ideology, such heterogeneity is more likely to be translated into disagreement between the MP and her/his party. The impact of heterogeneous preferences on disagreement is thus mediated by both the party's ideology and the type of issues on which preferences are heterogeneous.

H2: The more preferences are heterogeneous on the core policy issues of the party ideology, the greater the level of disagreement.

Next section describes the data on which this study is based, then presents the conceptualization, expectations and operationalization of each ideological family.

DATA AND METHOD

The dataset

Our analyses rely on data collected through the PartiRep Comparative MP Survey, which is part of the PartiRep international project. The Comparative MP Survey database comprises an attitudinal survey carried out among national and regional legislators in 15 European democracies⁶, and other macro- and meso- level variables (mostly linked to the state structure, electoral system, legislative organization and

⁶ 14 geographically European (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom), plus Israel.

activity, party organization, ideology, etc.). In this paper, only those MPs from national parliaments are included. Data were collected between the spring 2009 and the spring 2011. MPs were invited to respond either through online web-survey (46.8%), print questionnaires (33.7%), face-to-face interview (18.7%) or telephone (0.8%). Data were collected with an average response rate of 19.5%, although this rate varies quite a lot from one parliament to another –below 15% in Italy, France, the United Kingdom and Poland, above 40% in the Netherlands and in Belgium. Despite these varying response rates, the sample remains representative of the population⁷.

For the purpose of the analysis, we have excluded respondents who sit as independent in the parliament. Then, we have deleted the parties which included less than six respondents in order to allow for enough intra-party variation in the responses provided by each party's MPs. The final dataset thus includes 840 parliamentarians from 50 parties across 15 national assemblies.

Conceptualizing party agreement

As exposed at the beginning of this article, many studies of parliamentary party cohesion have conceptually equated agreement to MPs' ideological closeness to their party's position, or, at the aggregate level, scholars have measured party agreement as the homogeneity of preferences within a party. This paper computes a different measure: party agreement is conceived as the MP's self-reported frequency of disagreement with her/his party (see also Van Vonna et al. 2014), regardless of the MP's ideological preferences. In this way, the paper differentiates between the frequency of disagreement stated by MPs (i.e. concrete disagreement) and the ideological distance between an MP's position and her/his party mean position (on policy and/or left-right scale), and considers this ideological distance as a potential factor of disagreement instead of a measure of disagreement. This does not mean that other factors - discipline and other institutional mechanisms - are not at play, but rather, that we exclusively focus on the impact of ideology on disagreement.

In order to grasp that dependent variable, we use a question based on the Likert type question included in the PartiRep Comparative MP survey that measures the MP's self-

⁷ Deschouwer et al. (2014) tackle the question of representativeness of the sample by using the Duncan index of dissimilarity, which “measures differences between the sample and the population distributions” (Deschouwer et al. 2014: 13). According to their observations, as far as party composition is concerned, differences between the sample and the population are quite low (Deschouwer et al. 2014: 15)

reported frequency of disagreement with her/his party⁸. The variable has been dichotomized to indicate whether the MP disagrees more often ("about once a month" or "about every three months") or whether s/he does it less frequently ("about once a year" or "(almost) never"). This variable has been dichotomized to maximize comparability across parties from different countries given the unequal frequency of sessions across parliaments –e.g. the Swiss parliament meets far less often than the French parliament. Amongst the 840 parliamentarians, data are missing on that variable for 16 individuals. Amongst the remaining 824 individuals, 60.5% appear as "rarely disagreeing"⁹ MPs, while 39.5 % appear as "often disagreeing"¹⁰ MPs. At the aggregate level, within each party, we have calculated the percentage of MPs that disagree more often with the party line. These proportions constitute our dependent variable. These proportions follow a normal distribution¹¹. The average proportion of frequently disagreeing MPs per party equals 39% (with a minimum at 0, a maximum at 100% and a variance equals to 19.5).

We must draw attention to the fact that this dependent variable grasps an *attitudinal* dimension, and does not aim to measure an actual *behaviour*. Relying on the approach of Andeweg and Thomassen (2011) and Van Vonnó et al. (2014), we consider party voting unity as an outcome resulting from a sequential process, in which several mechanisms are at play at the individual level: agreement, loyalty, and discipline. Our dependent variable measures the MP's self-reported disagreement, which might or might not coincide with the MP's decision to comply and follow the party line. This survey item allows us to measure what usually occurs behind closed doors: disagreement *before* a vote, in other words, before threat of sanctions or disciplinary measures –in the form of whipping mechanisms or roll-call voting for instance– have incentivized MPs to stick to the party line. We assume that disciplinary mechanisms are exogenous from and hardly affect the ideological preferences of legislators, and have a limited influence on MP's self-reported frequency of disagreement in the survey.

⁸ "How often, in the past year, would you say you have found yourself in the position that your party had one opinion on a vote in Parliament, and you personally had a different position?"

⁹ 27.2% of the MPs said they (almost) never disagreed, 33.2% said they disagreed about once a year.

¹⁰ 10.1% of the MPs said they disagreed about once a month, 29.5% said they disagreed about once every three months.

¹¹ The p values of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk normality tests are above the .05 significance level –the null hypothesis that the distribution is not normal can be rejected.

Our measurement of agreement in fact provides a more realistic picture of the attitudinal component of party cohesion compared to indexes of unity built on the basis of behavioral data, which grasp only the visible behaviour of legislators. Such indexes usually indicate an almost perfect unity in parliamentary votes (Depauw & Martin 2009), with low variation across assemblies, groups or time. The attitudinal data used in this research reveal that parties are not monolithic entities, and allow examining greater variations across countries, parties and individuals.

Ideology and ideological distance: operationalizing the independent variables

The dataset includes parties from diverse ideological horizons (see table 2 in Appendix). Seven party families are identified, from the more leftist to the more rightist: the Radical Left, the Social Democrats, the Greens, the Liberals, the Christian Democrats, the Conservatives and the Radical right. Some ideological families (Radical left, Green and Radical Right) include very few parties (three, two and three respectively) compared to the Social democratic (14 parties), Conservative (12), Liberal (9) and Christian democratic (7) families. Since the Green family only includes two parties, our second hypothesis can hardly be tested for this group of parties, but we include it for informative and comparative purposes. In addition, since the Radical Left and Radical Right families only include 3 parties each, the results should be considered carefully.

As regard the other independent variable –heterogeneity of preferences–, our analyses are based on two distinct measures. First, a 'subjective' measure¹², for which we compute the left-right ideological distance between each MP and her/his party, using a question asking MPs to position themselves and their national party on a 10 point left-right scale¹³. Second, we focus on positions within each party around specific policy issues. Five types of policy issues are considered, which are derived

¹² A more 'objective' and standard measurement of the left-right ideological distance has also been tested. We have calculated the absolute difference between the MP's self-positioning and the average party position (computed as the mean of the scores that MPs attribute to their party). However, this measure does not reflect the extent to which parliamentarians see themselves as having a different position from their co-partisans, which is precisely what we want to grasp.

¹³ "In politics, people sometimes talk of left and right. Using the following scale, where 0 means left and 10 means right where would you place ...?" "your own views?", "your national party?"

from traditional and more recent cleavages: two socio-economic issues (class cleavage), a morality issue (Church/state or cultural cleavage), a security issue and an immigration issue (both related to the new politics cleavage).

These are based on questions that ask MPs to position themselves on several policy issues –socio-economic, morality, security, and immigration issues¹⁴. The party's position on each policy has been computed by equating it to the position of its average MP. Heterogeneity of preferences is measured as the standard deviation of each party's average position. In spite of the limitations¹⁵ that this type of scales pose, using different measures contributes to improve conventional measures of intraparty heterogeneity of preferences and provides a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying party cohesion.

Table 1 shows the policy dimension issues on which we base our analysis as provided by the PartiRep dataset, the cleavages to which they are linked and the ideological families with more extreme (positive or negative) positions. We depart from the assumption that paying more attention to certain policy dimensions with the aim of being associated with them usually entails that those parties express more extreme positive or negative positions on these policy dimensions. According to our second hypothesis, we expect that a higher heterogeneity of preferences on core issues is related to a higher disagreement; therefore, that the relationship between heterogeneity on specific issues and disagreement varies across party families.

Table 1. Ideological families' core issues

Policy item	Cleavages	Ideological families with more extreme positions*
Larger income differences are needed as incentives for individual effort.	class cleavage	Liberals (3.23) Radical Left (1.52) Social Democrats (1.89)

¹⁴ "People hold different views on political issues. What do you think of the following?". Answer categories: 1: strongly disagree/ 2: disagree/ 3: neither / 4: agree/ 5: strongly agree. The selected issues concern the propositions: a) "Larger income differences are needed as incentives for individual effort"; b) "People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences"; c) "Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of our country"; d) "Government should make sure that films and magazines uphold moral standards".

¹⁵ On the one hand, the issues included in policy scales might not have the same relevance across countries, parties and time. On the other hand, Kam (2001: 103) mentions a risk of error when using some central tendency of all legislators' self-placements to determine a party's position; since MPs placing their party on a similar position on a left-right scale for instance might have different interpretation of that particular score.

Government should play a smaller role in the management of the economy	class cleavage	Liberals (3.44) Radical left (1.4) Social Democrats (2.03)
People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences	new politics cleavage	Radical Right (4.04) Green (2.44) Radical Left (2.17)
Immigrants should be required to adapt to the customs of our country	new politics cleavage	Radical Right (4.38) Green (2.69) Radical Left (2.92)
Government should make sure that films and magazines uphold moral standards	Church/state or cultural cleavage	Conservatives (3.04) Radical Left (2.05) Liberal (2.08)

* Average position across parties in the Partirep dataset in parentheses.

The socio-economic cleavage “has dominated the political conflict for most of this century” (Narud and Skare 1999: 50). Accordingly, we could have similar expectations for all party families. But we expect that heterogeneity should strongly translate into disagreement in those groups with a clearer (more extreme) position on the socio-economic cleavage: Liberals, Radical Left and Social Democrats. These are the ones for which a more positive (Liberals) or a more negative (Radical Left and Social Democrats) position is found on the items asking about the need for income differences to incentivize individual effort and about the need for a smaller role of government in the management of the economy.

Two issues have been selected that are representative of the new politics cleavage: security, and most notably, immigration. Arguably, these issues are at the core of the ideology of the party families that have crystallized around the new politics cleavage: the Radical Right and the Radical Left. On one side, the Radical Right has been “fuelled [by] the need for self-defence and self-reassurance” (Ignazi 2003: 201), and has promoted the value of law and order (Hagtvet 1994). The relationship between the heterogeneity of preferences on the immigration and security issues and intra-party disagreement should be manifest in the Radical Right family, as these issues are central in these parties’ program –especially, the immigration issue (Delwit 2007: 11, Mayer 1997: 17-8, Mudde 1999). On the other side, Radical Left parties have aggregated postmaterialist values of self-affirmation or self-fulfilment, they have been “combating all kinds of diehard domination” (Escalona and Vieira 2013: 8) and have

been at the forefront of the fight for immigrants' rights. The Green family¹⁶ can also be said to be rooted on this cleavage based on postmaterialist values (Bennulf and Holmberg 1990, Müller-Rommel 1990). Issues related to the new cleavage politics are at the core of their ideology: we therefore expect a positive relationship between the heterogeneity of MPs' preferences and intra-party disagreement.

As regard the Church/state or cultural cleavage we analyse a cultural or moral issue that measures MPs' agreement with the fact that governments should guarantee moral standards in the media. The traditional cultural or religious opposition has mostly concerned the Liberals and, in many cases, the Radical Left, on the secular and progressive side, and the Conservatives, on the traditional side of the conflict. As such the expectation is that heterogeneous preferences –regardless of their direction– on that issue should result in higher disagreement in the case of these three families. This expectation should also be applicable to the Christian Democratic family, but its average position on this item is not as extreme as in the three families.

HETEROGENEITY AND DISAGREEMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF IDEOLOGY

While at the individual level it might seem straightforward to expect more disagreement from those MPs who feel that their position is different from their party's, this does not hold at the party level. Figure 1 displays the average subjective ideological distance for each party and the percentage of MPs that frequently disagree with their party. It shows that there is no correlation between both variables ($P=-0.122$, $\text{sig}=0.398$, $n=50$) even when other variables such as country or party size are controlled for. Hypothesis 1 is therefore not confirmed. The claim often made in the literature that heterogeneity of preferences can be equated to disagreement should accordingly be revised.

¹⁶ The sample includes few cases of Green parties and, as explained in the next section, this entails that not all the analysis can be performed on this family.

Figure 1. Subjective ideological heterogeneity and level of disagreement.

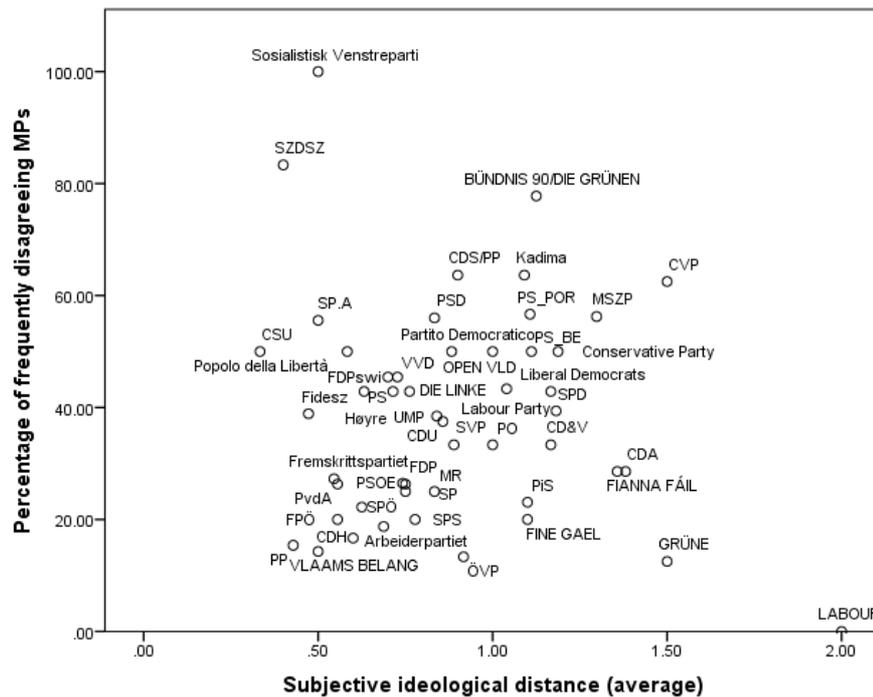
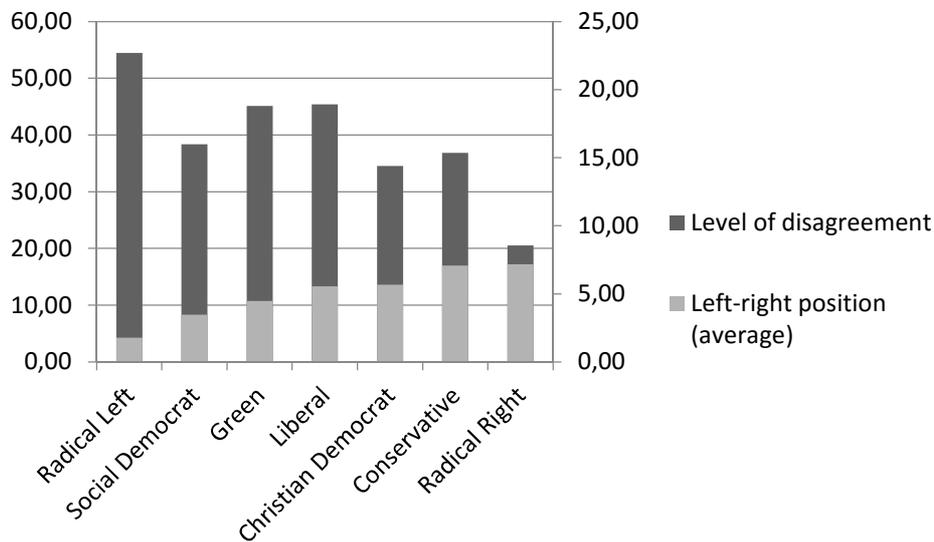


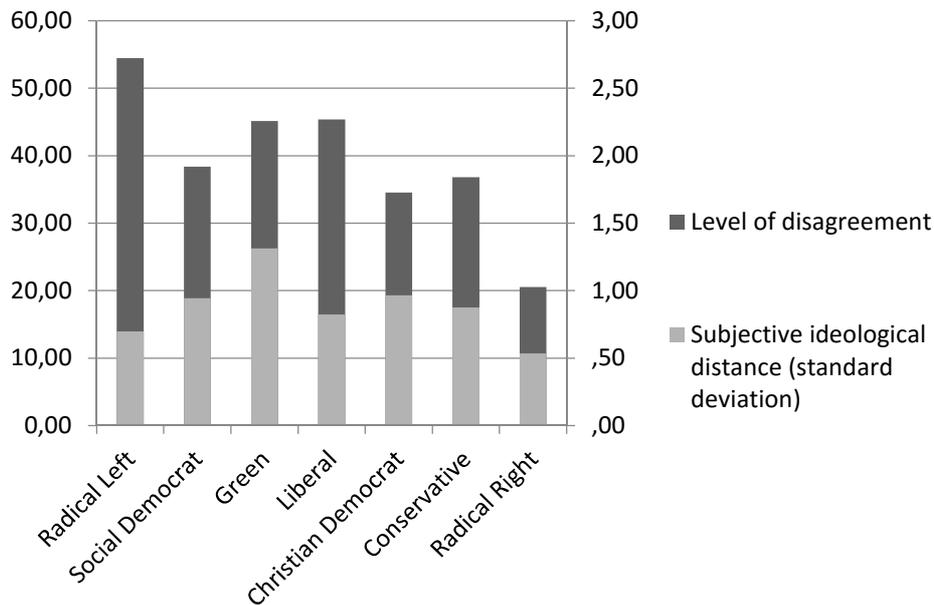
Figure 2 introduces party ideology as a potential factor of disagreement. Figure 2 shows the average left-right positioning of each party family as expressed by the parties' MPs and the level of disagreement. At first sight, one could conclude that there is a greater disagreement in those families that are situated more to the left of the left-right continuum. Yet, a closer look at the graph instead reveals that traditional families –Social Democrats, Conservative and Christian Democrats– have a quite similar level of disagreement. Great differences appear between the two radical families, with the Radical Left showing high levels of intra-party disagreement, and the Radical Right showing very low levels. Variances are relatively important inside the party families. Yet, an analysis of variance reveals significant differences across groups: Radical right parties have an average proportion of disagreeing MPs significantly lower than Liberal and Radical Left parties (LSD test, p value < 0.05). These findings suggest that the role of party ideologies should not be understood simply in terms of left-right effect, but well in terms of families.

Figure 2. Left-right position and level of disagreement.



Introducing party ideology as a mediating factor between ideological heterogeneity and disagreement provides further interesting perspectives. Figure 3 shows that the ideological heterogeneity measured through the subjective assessment of ideological distance becomes much more informative when party families are considered. It can be observed that in some party families both variables – heterogeneity and disagreement– share a common, though not perfect, pattern. Families that are located more to the right tend to have lower ideological distances and, consequently, less disagreement. Within the Social Democratic family, both variables seem to be congruent. However, in some families, the relationship is not as expected. This is the case, for instance, of the Radical Left family, and to a lesser extent of the Liberal family: they show an ideological distance that is below what should be expected given they high levels of disagreement. Another interesting distinction is between Christian democrats and Conservatives: while both have a relatively similar degree of disagreement (around 35% of MPs frequently disagree), the ideological heterogeneity seems to be higher in the former than in the latter. A reason for this relative lack of fit might be found on Hypothesis 2, which relates the heterogeneity of preferences around the party ideology core issues to the level of disagreement.

Figure 3. Subjective distance and level of disagreement



In the theoretical section, we argued that greater disagreement is expected to stem from more dispersed positions, especially when this dispersion takes place around the party ideology core issues. In this section we look into this relationship through two different perspectives. On the one hand, we analyse absolute levels of dispersion across party families in each policy issue (Table 2) and, on the other, we examine whether the relationship holds within each party family (Figure 5). **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** shows the dispersion of policy preferences of each party family in each of the policy items considered: distribution of income in society, size of government, the need for stiffer sentences, the adaptation of immigrants to the country's customs and the position on imposing moral standards in media. Figures 5 to 9 show the extent to which there is a relationship between the heterogeneity of preferences and disagreement within each party family for each policy item.

Obviously, while these figures do help to compare two general dimensions –the dispersion of MPs' preferences on issues and their self-reported frequency of disagreement–, they are plagued with serious empirical limitations. On the one hand, the issues are very general topics that may not be much grounded in the reality of parliamentary debates in the legislatures under study. This is certainly the case for instance of the moral issue, that appears a bit outdated. On the other hand, what

should be examined, but is not available in the dataset, is the self-reported frequency of disagreement on these particular issues, and not MPs' very general feeling. Such data would have allowed to better assess the sequential relationship between ideological distance and disagreement depending on the issue at stake. Unfortunately, we do not possess such empirical material, but we encourage future researches to test this hypothesis with more accurate data. Nevertheless, we think that the findings presented below are already telling regarding the potential mediating role of ideology in this sequential mechanism. Indeed, these figures permit the exploration of the dynamics that occur inside party families. In the following paragraphs we address the interpretation of these figures for each party family.

Radical left

This family needs to be examined with caution, since the sample contains just three political parties. It is the ideological family that shows the highest level of disagreement: over 50% of the MPs affirm to disagree frequently with the party line. In spite of this, the Radical Left family is not the one most affected by having very heterogeneous positions when looking at the dispersion of MPs positions on individual policy issues. The policy items that qualify as core issues for this family are the ones related to the socio-economic cleavage –positioning on the need for income differences, and size of government–, and to the New politics cleavage –immigration and security. For these issues, **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** shows that the Radical Left parties display more homogeneity than the rest of the ideological families.

In comparison with other party families, we do not observe a link between heterogeneity of preferences and disagreement. However, when we look into the internal dynamics of this family (Figures 5 to 9) on this item mixed results appear. We find a positive relationship between the two variables in two out of the three core issues: income differences and immigration. Table 1 also highlighted that the Radical Left family has an extreme position on moral issues; accordingly, the slope is positive for this issue.

Social Democrats

The Social Democratic family interestingly shows very different dynamics compared to the Radical Left both on disagreement and on the heterogeneity of preferences. On the one hand, Social democrats have a lower level of disagreement: an average of more than 10% points less of disagreeing MPs than the parties in the Radical Left

family. On the other hand, when looking at specific policy issues, in many cases the levels of dispersion are larger than those of the Radical Left. Among the core issues of this party family, this is especially notable in the case of the item on the position on the size of government. Party size certainly matters in that regard: as Social Democratic parties are larger organizations than Radical Left parties, heterogeneity of preferences is thus more likely. Yet, these parties seem to be more efficient in taming this heterogeneity, as evidenced by the lower frequency of disagreement reported by their MPs.

When analysing the internal dynamics across parties within this family, we observe a negative slope in these parties' two core issues: size of government and position on income differences (socio-economic cleavage). However, this is due to the existence of a clear outlier (the Irish Labour). Once this party is excluded from the analysis, the slope becomes clearly positive, hence confirming our expectations.

Greens

There are only two parties in the sample so figures need to be interpreted with caution. We cannot analyse the dynamics inside the ideological family, being limited to the comparison with other party families. Green parties show a similar average level of disagreement as the Liberals, but the former have more in common with the dynamics seen for the Social democrats. The Greens' level of dispersion is larger than the one seen for the Social Democrats but to the same extent that does their level of disagreement. This might point at the existence of similar mechanisms linking heterogeneity of preference and cohesion in both families; although disagreements seem more frequent among Green MPs.

Liberals

As said above, this party family shows a similar level of disagreement as the Greens, but with very different patterns of dispersion of preferences within the family. Coherently with their ideological stances they seem to be more homogenous around their core issues –i.e. those linked to economic freedom, such as size of government and need for economic differences. Interestingly, their level of homogeneity resembles that of the Radical Left family (Table 2), although their level of disagreement is lower –they seem to be more efficient in taming this heterogeneity. In Figures 5 to 9 it can be observed that hypothesis 2 is confirmed for this group of political parties: within this family we observe that there is a positive relationship between the

degree of heterogeneity and the level of disagreement on core issues: socio-economic and moral issues. However, relationships are positive also in two unexpected cases: on security and immigration issues. Arguably, these issues are becoming core issues in many Liberal parties.

Christian democrats

Christian democrats are the second ideological family with a lower level of disagreement, just after the Radical right. According to our definition of core issues, the average position of this family on the topics we analyse points at the centrist character of this family. There are no extreme (positive nor negative) positions in any of the five issues analysed here. Coherently, Christian Democrats show a degree of heterogeneity of preferences that is close to the average across families. It shall be noted that these parties appear to be the least homogeneous in items linked to economic differences (std.dev=1.01) showing the greater disparity that can be found inside the parties of this family. Within the family we observe that a greater dispersion of preferences tends to be related with a higher level of disagreement, being the item on judicial sentences the only one that shows an opposite relationship.

Conservatives

As the other two ideologies situated more to the right of the ideological spectrum, the Conservatives display rather low levels of disagreement (less than 40% of frequently disagreeing MPs). This appears to be related to the fact that this family also shows a lower heterogeneity of preferences than the average. According to the conceptualization of this ideology's core issues, two items require special attention: the items on immigration (New politics cleavage) and on moral issues (Cultural cleavage). Table 2 shows that, with the exception of the Radical Right, this party family scores the lowest levels of heterogeneity around these issues. Figures 5 to 9 reflect that there is mixed evidence for hypothesis 2. Whereas the slope is positive for the item on immigration, there is a negative relationship in the case of the item on moral issues.

Radical Right

The Radical Right family stands out as the ideological family that displays the lowest level of disagreement and, at the same time, the most cohesive preferences. This ideological family exceeds the level of homogeneity of the rest of ideologies in almost all the items. The only item for which the Radical Right does not follow the same

pattern is on the position on government size. For this item, this family has the highest score of heterogeneity, which might also be related to the differences regarding this topic across parties of this family.

Radical Right parties appear to have a more extreme position –core issues– in two of the items analysed here: the one on the need for stiffer sentences and the one that points at the adaptation of immigrants to the country’s customs (New Politics cleavage). Although in the former item the relationship is not confirmed (the slope being nearly flat), in the latter we can see a clear positive slope.

Table 2: Heterogeneity across ideological families and disagreement

Ideological family	Percentage of frequently disagreeing MPs	Income differences are needed (Std. Dev.)	Position on size of government (Std. Dev.)	Security issue (Std. Dev.)	Immigration issue (Std. Dev.)	Moral issue (Std. Dev.)
Radical Left	54.49	0.87	0.60	0.80	0.77	0.99
Social Democrat	38.38	0.92	0.89	0.91	0.88	1.08
Green	45.14	1.01	0.98	0.90	1.03	1.12
Liberal	45.39	0.90	0.66	0.99	0.88	0.94
Christian Democrat	34.56	1.02	0.83	0.82	0.95	0.97
Conservative	36.83	0.93	0.80	0.79	0.69	0.94
Radical Right	20.52	0.83	1.01	0.72	0.55	0.73

Figure 4. Socio-economic issue (larger income differences are needed as incentives for individual effort)

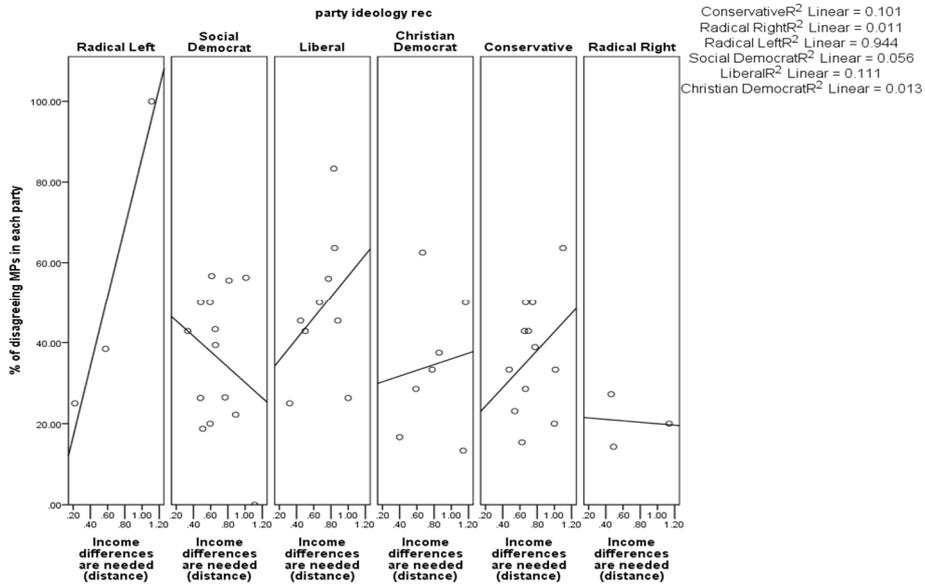


Figure 5. Socio-economic issue (position on size of government)

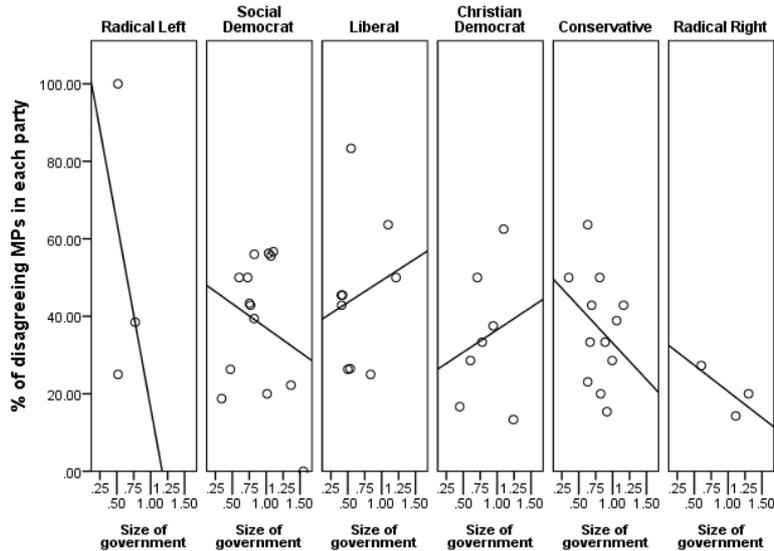


Figure 6. Moral issue

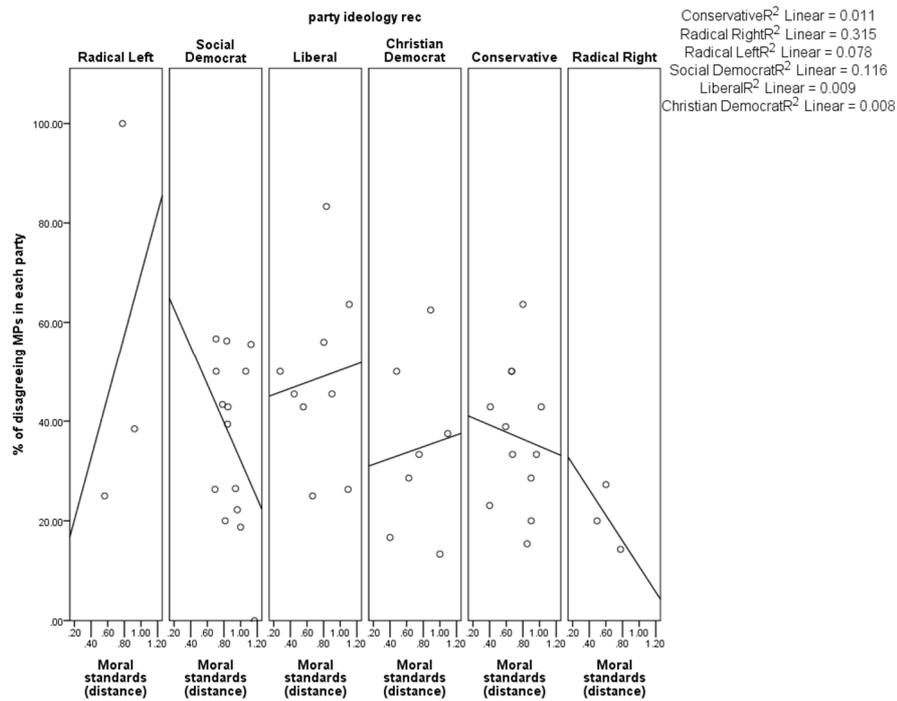


Figure 7. Security issue

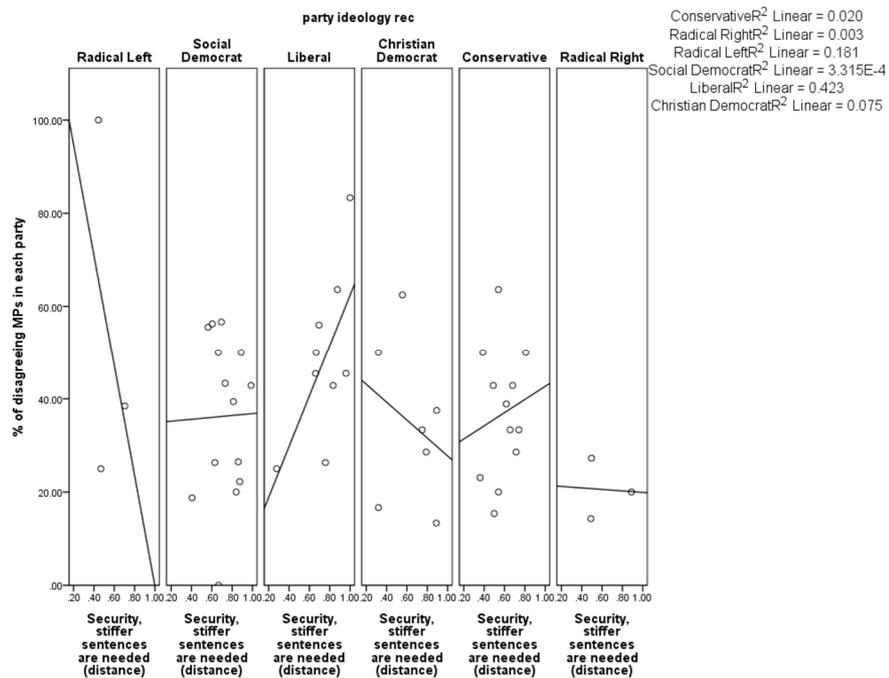
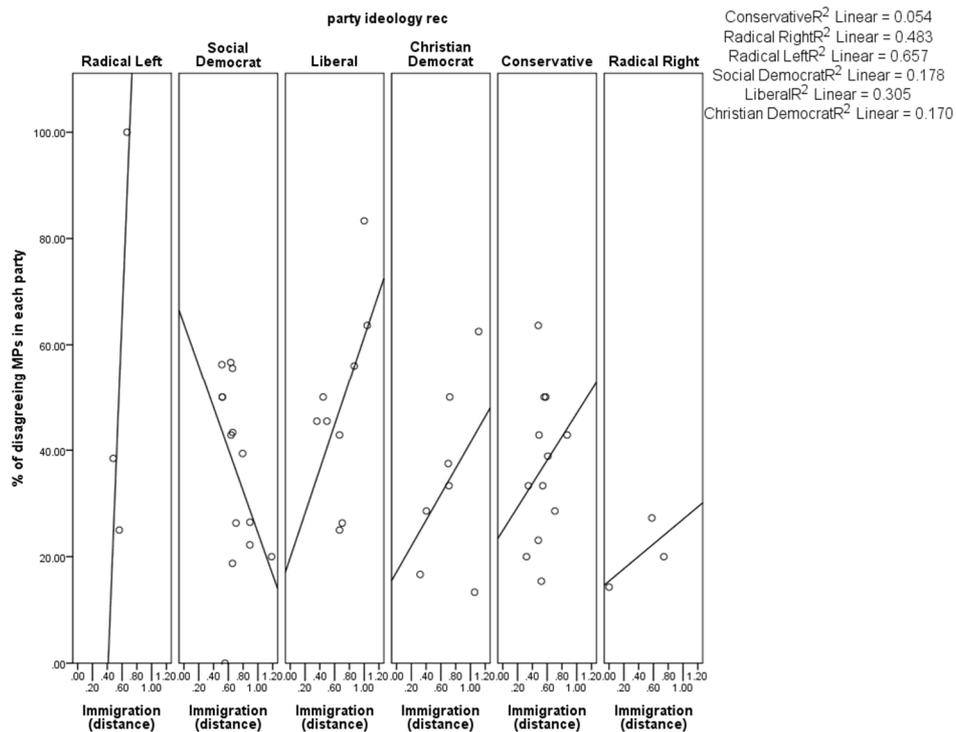


Figure 8. Immigration issue



DISCUSSION

In sum, several interesting patterns emerge from this analysis. First of all, equating heterogeneity of preferences to disagreement is misleading. This research has shown that this relationship does not hold at the party level¹⁷.

Second, associating the degree of disagreement with the party family's core issues reveals interesting patterns. Parties tend to have on average more cohesive preferences around topics that are at the core of their ideology. Those ideologies that are more heavily centred on issues along the socio-economic cleavage (Radical Left, Social Democrats or Liberals) display more homogeneous preferences than the other ideologies on these issues. Similarly, the families that pay more attention to issues related to the New Politics cleavage (Radical Right, Radical Left, Conservatives) also share less dispersed views on these core issues.

¹⁷ In a research note submitted to the *Journal of Legislative Studies*, we explore this relationship at the individual level, and find that only the subjective measure of MP-party ideological distance significantly increases the MP's probability to disagree, although to a lesser extent than usually acknowledged by the literature.

Third, the positive relationship between heterogeneity of preferences on core issues and disagreement has been confirmed in most of the cases, although, as suggested, our measure of disagreement is too general to grasp the accuracy of the sequential relationship. The only instances in which such positive relationship is not found are the Radical Left (only for the item on size of government), the Conservatives (on moral issues), and the Radical Right (no relationship is found on the item of judicial sentences). However, we also find unexpected positive relationships, which do not support the idea that disagreement only stems from heterogeneity on core issues. Positive relationships are found for most issues within the Christian Democratic family, although we had no specific expectation given the ideological centrality –or uncertainty– of this family. Positive relationships are found within the Radical Right family on the socio-economic issue, and within Liberals and Conservative on the New politics issues. Interestingly, while these issues were not defined as core issues for these families, they might well constitute important topics on which these families are actually realigning –a process that certainly result in a high frequency of disagreement. Our second hypothesis should be revised accordingly. On the basis of these results, we can nevertheless argue that the relationship between heterogeneity in policy positioning and the frequency of disagreement is mediated by the party ideology.

Fourth, party ideology matters in this relationship, and not only in terms of left-right positioning. In some party families, heterogeneity (either measured subjectively or on policy issues) follows the same pattern as disagreement: this is the case of the Conservatives and the Radical Right. But in others, the relationship between ideological heterogeneity and disagreement contradicts what is usually assumed. The Radical Left and Liberal families show at the same time relatively high levels of intra-party disagreement and homogeneous preferences in terms of policy issues, but also in terms of subjective distance on the left-right scale. By contrast, the Social Democratic family displays rather high levels of ideological heterogeneity, with relatively low levels of disagreement.

The more or less important mismatch observed between the degree of homogeneity of preferences and MPs' reported frequency of disagreement in fact constitutes one of the most important contribution of this research. Explaining these variations require digging more into the role of the political culture and identity of the party families, but

also into their common organizational structure (see Close 2015). Party ideology, intended as a set of values and principles, can directly affect legislators' perception of role and integration of behavioural norms. Liberal or libertarian values embodied in Liberal, Green and certain Radical left parties might bring about a greater emphasis on self-affirmation and self-fulfilment and thus a more individualistic style of representation. By contrast, right-wing values of order and discipline might translate into a lesser tendency for MPs to state their disagreement. At the organizational level, some families tend to foster internal democracy and MPs' freedom of choice more than others –e.g. Green parties– , which rather promote a greater centralization of intra-party decision around a charismatic leader – e.g. the Conservatives and the Radical right. MPs in Social-democratic parties might be more prompt to appear as a unified bloc, as these parties usually promote a collective style of representation and are organized accordingly. Such organizational devices often reflect the party families' foundational ideological values (Gauja 2013), and certainly impact on the importance MPs attribute to party unity or freedom to dissent.

Obviously, the mismatch between homogeneity of preferences and level of disagreement informs on the values embodied in the different ideologies, but also gives some insights into the relative capacities and willingness of the parties to socialize their members to the norm of party unity or to appear as democratic organizations. The impact of both the ideological and organizational components of party families on MPs' socialisation to the norm of party unity and on the psychological dynamics of cohesion (Raymong and Overby 2014, Russell 2014) certainly deserve greater attention.

CONCLUSION

This article provides new insights regarding the roots of parliamentary party cohesion. At the empirical level this paper brings evidence of its claims at the party level by aggregating survey responses from 840 parliamentarians from 50 parties across 15 national parliaments. While the relatively small number of parties in our sample makes it difficult to run satisfactorily more complex multivariate statistical analyses, our results shed light over the relationship between party cohesion and ideology.

Several contributions need to be highlighted. The first is conceptual. Our results show that homogeneity of preferences and agreement with the party line are different phenomena. Preferences within parties might be heterogeneous and yet the party might enjoy high levels of agreement. This goes counter a common practice in the field: the one consisting on equating agreement and homogeneity of preferences. The second contribution of this article is theoretical. Most studies of party cohesion have focused on institutional and individual-level factors. The effect of ideology has been reduced to the placement in the left-right scale and has been so far underexplored. In this article we contend that there is a need to include in party cohesion studies a more complex and rich concept of ideology. In so doing we examine the dynamics of party cohesion across political parties according to their political family. Ideologies are hence considered to be primarily frameworks of shared ideas. We base our argument on the policy dimensions to which each political family attributes more importance: their core dimensions. We show how the frequency of disagreement within parties is related to heterogeneous differences regarding these core values.

The results we present in this article show that there is a need to delve more deeply into the factors that lead to party cohesion. More in-depth analyses of the process of agreement and preference formation within party families are therefore needed to unveil the precise mechanism that would lead to greater disagreement. While here the focus has been put on the party, there is a need to explore more precisely how the possible underlying mechanisms work across the party and the individual levels, and how individuals and parties influence each other's. Party ideology and ideological families should therefore remain on the party cohesion research agenda.

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APPENDIX

Table 2. List of party families and parties;

Ideology	Party	Country	% Seats	Count
Social Democrat	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	Austria	31.69	18
	Parti Socialiste	Belgium	13.33	10
	Socialistische Partij Anders	Belgium	09.33	9
	Parti Socialiste	France	32.20	21
	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands	Germany	23.47	33
	Magyar Szocialista Párt	Hungary	48.19	48
	Labour	Ireland	12.05	6
	Partito Democratico	Italy	34.40	18
	Partij van de Arbeid	Netherlands	22.00	19
	Arbeiderpartiet	Norway	36.09	16
	Partido Socialista	Portugal	42.17	30
	Partido Socialista Obrero Español	Spain	43.43	68
	Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz	Switzerland	21.50	10
	Labour Party	UK	29.00	30
Conservative	Union pour un Mouvement Populaire	France	54.20	21
	Fidesz	Hungary	39.90	36
	Fianna Fáil	Ireland	46.99	14
	Fine Gael	Ireland	30.72	10
	Popolo della Libertà	Italy	43.00	16
	Høyre	Norway	13.61	7
	PiS	Poland	36.00	13
	Platforma Obywatelska	Poland	45.43	21
	Partido do Centro Democrático e Social - Partido Popular	Portugal	09.13	11
	Partido Popular	Spain	44.00	26
	Schweizerische Volkspartei	Switzerland	31.00	9
	Conservative Party	UK	36.10	22
	Liberal	Mouvement Réformateur	Belgium	13.33
Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten		Belgium	12.00	6
Freie Demokratische Partei		Germany	14.95	19
Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége		Hungary	04.66	6
Kadima		Israel	23.00	11
Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie		Netherlands	14.67	11
Partido Social Democrata		Portugal	35.22	25
Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei		Switzerland	15.50	11
Liberal Democrats		UK	23.00	7
Christian Democrat	Österreichische Volkspartei	Austria	27.32	15
	Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams	Belgium	16.70	12
	Centre Démocrate Humaniste	Belgium	06.67	6
	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands	Germany	31.19	32

	Christlich-soziale union in Bayern Christen-Democratisch Appèl Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei der Schweiz	Germany Netherlands Switzerland	07.23 27.33 15.50	6 21 8
Radical right	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs Vlaams Belang Fremskrittpartiet	Austria Belgium Norway	19.13 11.33 22.49	10 7 11
Radical left	Die Linke Socialistische Partij Socialistisk Venstreparti	Germany Netherlands Norway	12.22 16.67 08.88	26 8 6
Green	Grüne Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Austria Germany	10.38 10.93	8 18