HOW PARTIES DISCIPLINE THEIR LEGISLATORS:
LESSONS FROM THE ISRAELI LEGISLATURE

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Cohesion versus Discipline

The existence of noticeably “unified” parties is central to the theory and practice of democracy in general, and to parliamentary democracy in particular. However, according to Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999), because this “hidden assumption” has reached normative status for a variety of scholars, its study is relatively underdeveloped. Legislative studies scholars have good reason to cease treating parties as monolithic, unitary actors, for they evidently are not. The first step in this direction is to ask why one of the distinguishing features of modern political parties is their legislative unity. Do parties enter parliament as unified actors, or are they molded into this model by the legislature? The answer depends on whether one is looking at cohesion or at discipline.

The first scholar to define the concepts of cohesion and discipline was Ozbudun (1970).\(^1\) His comprehensive attempt to outline the causes of party cohesion also

\(^1\) Almost a generation later, Owens (2003) masterfully compiled a literature review of cohesion and discipline.
presented a preliminary definition aimed at overcoming what he called the “conceptual overlap” and confusion between these two terms. In doing so, Ozbudun not only pioneered the attempt at conceptual clarity, he also succeeded in proposing much of the distinction itself.

Ozbudun distinguished between cohesion and discipline in the following manner.

Cohesion is “the extent to which, in a given situation, group members can be observed to work together for the group’s goal in one and the same way.” (1970:305)

Discipline, on the other hand, “refers either to a special type of cohesion achieved by enforcing obedience or to a system of sanctions by which such enforced cohesion is attained.” (1970:305) Interestingly, Ozbudun uses the term cohesion to describe discipline, which means that while he might have defined the terms independently, he did not differentiate between them completely. “The term cohesion suggests an objective condition of unity of action among party members, which may or may not be the function of disciplinary repressions.” (1970:305) Hence, cohesion is a party acting in unison, and discipline is simply one way to achieve this outcome. There are other ways, too – such as party organization, social structure, constitutional systems and even theories of representation – and here is where the bulk of Ozbudun’s study rests. But whatever the cause, or the sanction, if the observed result is one of party togetherness, then we have cohesion.

In a recent article, I attempted to take Ozbudun one step further, not only to distinguish between these two concepts, but to divorce them (Hazan 2003). To put it bluntly, discipline starts where cohesion falters. If the goal is unity of action among party representatives in parliament, it can be achieved either by cohesion or by
discipline. When cohesion weakens then discipline can help maintain party unity of action, up to a point.

Cohesion and discipline are umbrella concepts that encompass two very different approaches to parliamentary behavior in general, and to party unity in particular. Cohesion is rooted in the sociological approach that emphasizes norms and roles. Scholars adopting this approach argue that legislators act in unison for normative reasons including ideological convictions, socialization, party solidarity, etc. Discipline, on the other hand, is institutional, and it stresses strategic incentives and constraints. Researchers from this tradition argue that party unity emerges from the formal organizational makeup of parties and parliaments, which pushes legislators to discover self-interested reasons for utility maximization. While cohesion is behavioral, discipline is rational. As Jensen (2000:210-11) stated, “Cohesion is associated with a certain consensus in values and attitudes, while discipline is related to compulsion.”

The differences between these two approaches are profound. Cohesion stresses informal rules of behavior that constrain legislators. Parties are seen as a web of informal authority based on norms such as loyalty and solidarity. In other words, the key to cohesion is proper socialization, which must take place to a large extent prior to arrival in parliament. Strong norms of teamwork and loyalty cannot be internalized overnight.

Discipline focuses on formal rules, and sees parliamentarians as rational, self-interested, strategic actors. Parliament in general, and parties in particular, provide
and control the distribution of influence, perks and re-(s)election. In short, institutions have what parliamentarians want. The key to discipline is policy, office and votes – a legislator’s most basic of interests (Müller and Strøm 1999). Thus, it is the institutional forces that have the means of getting legislators to act in a unified manner, through congenial or coercive measures.

Cohesion thus results from actions that took place prior to the legislators’ arrival in parliament, whereas discipline is based on rules that apply to those already in parliament. This temporal distinction is apparent to Bowler, Farrell and Katz (1999:14) who state that, “Getting and keeping control over who gets into the legislative caucus can help (or, in some cases, can hinder) cohesion. Once in the parliament, however, the cast of players is fixed and cannot be changed. This raises one final area of concern: just who is being disciplined?”

Parties thus arrive in parliament either cohesive or not. Either there is enough glue to keep the party representatives together – due to their anticipated socialization based on norms and roles or to their common ideological preferences – or togetherness has to be induced by legislative discipline – formal and informal, party and parliamentary, incentives and constraints. Parliamentarians will either toe the party line of their own accord, or measures will have to be implemented that will constrain their behavior so that the party stays united. Parliamentarians are driven by preferences and constrained by rules. Herein lies the distinction between cohesion on its own (agreement or shared preferences) and discipline (the enforcement of obedience).
Only when the sociological and behavioral reasons for party voting agreement weaken do the institutional and organizational measures become relevant. In other words, as long as there are non-institutional (i.e., sociological/behavioral) reasons for party solidarity then, in effect, we have a cohesive party functioning in parliament. But, when party cohesion begins to break down, there is a need for institutional mechanisms to keep the party together, and here is when discipline comes into play.

The goal of this paper is to distinguish and delineate how parties discipline their legislators, to help us better understand if legislatures are working (the topic of our panel). In order to do so, the paper began by distinguishing between the concepts of party cohesion and legislative discipline. It will now describe where we can seek out the mechanisms of discipline, and where not. The paper subsequently delineates the tools of legislative discipline, based on a survey of legislators in the Israeli parliament. It then addresses the difference between discipline in the legislature at large to that in committees. The paper concludes with a call for further research on this significant yet largely ignored topic.

**Where to Look for Discipline, and Where Not to Look**

Socialization to party loyalty based on ideological beliefs or teamwork norms needs to have taken place prior to the election of a legislator to parliament. A sampling of the attributes in the pre-parliamentary arena that produce a cohesive party (or not) upon its arrival in parliament would include the extent of party organization (how much pressure can be exerted upon prospective parliamentarians to conform), social
structure (the degree of homogeneity, or the depth of polarization), the constitutional system (parliamentary or presidential), the electoral system (single-member districts or party lists), and candidate selection (inclusive versus exclusive party selectorates) among others. This is not the place to provide an exhaustive list, because here we are describing attributes of cohesion, not discipline.

The institutional mechanisms begin to function only after the successful candidates have reached parliament. A plethora of tools, incentives and constraints, are available to the party and to the parliament. Career advancement and perks are rarely awarded to the habitual dissenters. The apparent influence of party whips – even if their direct influence is the exception rather than the rule – can elicit party unity on issues that divide the party. Linking policy to confidence votes and limiting policy choice by agenda control are exceptionally powerful tools for the party leadership to squash internal opposition (Döring 2003). The problem with all these, and the many other discipline-producing attributes, is that they are not necessary if the party is cohesive, and not efficient if cohesion has completely broken down. At some point, when cohesion has broken down too much, even discipline might not successfully produce party unity.

In short, when cohesion falters, discipline can help maintain party unity, up to a point. This distinction is not surgical, because sociological factors do work in parliament and institutional elements can have a role in the extra-parliamentary arena as well. Moreover, there is never a time when a party is only cohesive and does not employ

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2 A classification of the tools available to both leaders and members, and their influence on “loyalty,” can be found in Longley and Hazan (1999). The most comprehensive examination of how parties function in parliament is provided by Heidar and Koole (2000).
any discipline; or conversely, it may be party cohesion that involves the accommodation of internal party differences in a non-coercive manner.\textsuperscript{3} The two approaches interact, largely because legislators and parties function in both arenas, but this does not mean that they cannot be delineated. Systemic interaction does not mean that they are interchangeable.

There are those who have argued against such a distinction between unity of action based on preferences or on parties. For example, Krehbiel (1993, 1999) contends that parties cannot show that they have managed to enforce discipline despite their members’ preferences, because unless preferences can be measured directly then party unity could simply be the result of a congenial configuration of preferences. However, recent research findings show that parties can affect their members’ behavior in ways that are observable, and thus can alter legislative outcomes. These studies show that party unity cannot be adequately explained by preferences alone – hence party cohesion – but rather that parliamentary behavior depends on parties as well – hence discipline (Bowler 2000, Kam 2001\textsuperscript{4}).

Parties are more than shared preferences, and it is important to delineate how parties can hold themselves together when preferences are not enough. If parties indeed matter, even once preferences have been taken into account, then it is time to

\textsuperscript{3} Certainly, party discipline does not necessarily achieve party unity, even if cohesion has not broken down completely. A fragile state of party unity can be maintained despite a lack of party cohesion – e.g., over “conscience issues” – by the absence of, rather than the imposition of, discipline. In these cases, party cohesion may involve an agreement to disagree.

\textsuperscript{4} Kam (2001:31) is most emphatic about this when he states that, “One can change the level of analysis or alter the nature of the sociological explanation, but there is still no empirical evidence to suggest that socialization (or a lack thereof) has any effect whatsoever on MP’s parliamentary voting behaviour. If it does have an effect, it must be thoroughly overwhelmed by institutional and electoral factors.”
distinguish the institutional mechanisms available to parties from those sociological attributes that parties have less control over.

As social changes blur cleavages and increase electoral volatility, as elections become more candidate-centered, we should have seen a corresponding decline in party unity across parliaments. Yet, the reduction in cohesion has apparently not affected the unity of parties in parliaments to a significant or similar extent. The answer to this paradox is that sociological attributes have been counterbalanced by institutional factors. Changes in the extra-parliamentary arena apparently do not diminish the incentives and constraints facing legislators inside parliament. Discipline has helped keep parties together, and maintained them as central actors in the legislature.

The study of this delineation has relevance. Comparative knowledge of the tools that allow parties and parliaments to enforce obedience is lacking, which points to an urgent need for future research.\(^5\) Data on disciplinary methods is not easily accessible and is rarely addressed in case studies, and comparative data is basically non-existent. It is only when we understand that discipline is different from cohesion that we can begin to study its particular causes and consequences.

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\(^5\) Preliminary attempts to investigate elements associated with discipline can be seen in the articles by Davidson-Schmich, Patzelt, Malloy, Depauw, and Döring in the special issue of the *Journal of Legislative Studies* focusing on cohesion and discipline (Vol. 9, #4, 2003). See also the chapters by by Mitchell, Whiteley and Seyd, Rasch, Laver and Shepsle, and Sanchez in Bowler, Farrell and Katz, eds. *Party Discipline and Parliamentary Government*. 
Assessing the Tools of Legislative Discipline: Evidence from Israel

Comparative knowledge of the tools that allow parties and parliaments to enforce obedience, i.e., institutional mechanisms, can be compiled only if legislative scholars in their respective countries produce in-depth analyses of the parliamentary and party tools that are available. From such studies we could begin to assess which tools are equivalent across legislatures and which are particular to a specific country, or group of countries. We could understand which tools are available on paper, as opposed to which mechanisms are enforced, and if this is done in an equivalent manner across countries. In short, we need to begin to compile country cases that focus on assessing the tools of discipline. This paper attempts to do so for the Israeli legislature.

Interviews were conducted with Members of Knesset (MKs) during the 15th Knesset (1999-2003). Of the 120 MKs, 30% were randomly selected to be interviewed, in order to provide a sampling size that could proportionally represent all of the parties elected to the legislature. In 1999, 15 parties were elected to the Knesset; only one party was not represented in the interviews and only one other was not represented proportionally in them (1 MK instead of 2). The Knesset is elected in a single, nationwide electoral district based on fixed party lists. The MKs chosen to be interviewed were the third on each party list, starting at a random position. If a particular MK refused, the next one on the list was interviewed.

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6 I am indebted to Avital Epel, formerly of the Research and Information Center of the Knesset, for her assistance and the implementation of the interviews. The data reported here was collected by her under my supervision. The analysis is mine, as are any faults in it.
Table 1:
Election Results for the Knesset 1999 and MKs Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>MKs Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>26 (21.7%)</td>
<td>8 (22.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likud</td>
<td>19 (15.8%)</td>
<td>4 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shas</td>
<td>17 (14.2%)</td>
<td>4 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meretz</td>
<td>10 (8.3%)</td>
<td>3 (8.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yisrael B’aliyah</td>
<td>6 (5.0%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinui</td>
<td>6 (5.0%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>6 (5.0%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Religious Party</td>
<td>5 (4.2%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Torah Judaism</td>
<td>5 (4.2%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ra’am</td>
<td>5 (4.2%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Union</td>
<td>4 (3.3%)</td>
<td>2 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel Our Home</td>
<td>4 (3.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadash</td>
<td>3 (2.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Nation</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balad</td>
<td>2 (1.7%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>120 (100%)</td>
<td>35 (29.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the total 35 MKs interviewed, 54% came from the coalition parties and 46% from the opposition benches, similar to the ratio in the Knesset itself. The number of incumbent MKs as opposed to new legislators – and within the incumbents the number of veteran legislators as opposed to those in their second or third term – as well as the average age of the MKs, mirrored the makeup of the Knesset. Of the 35 MKs interviewed, 86% were men and 14% female, which is also representative of the Knesset.

The interviews were presented to the MKs as a survey to assess what motivations influenced their voting patterns, both in the plenary and in committee, in an effort to avoid placing a biased focus on either party unity in voting or the tools of party discipline. Besides the MKs, interviews were also conducted with parliamentary assistants, party officials, and others, in order to provide a better picture that would
assist in the analysis of the interviews. Some of the MKs refused to answer all the questions, and thus the total for each question does not sum to 35 responses.

The issues addressed in the interviews can be divided into the following overall categories: the relevance of party discipline for legislators; their behavior if they disagree with their party’s position; the decision-making process by which parties reach their position; how legislators feel about this process; the procedure for imposing party discipline; the existence of a party whip and the use of either negative sanctions or positive incentives; and the factors responsible for a lack of party voting unity.

The first aspect to be addressed was whether party discipline played an important role in how MKs decided to vote. They were asked to what extent (greatly, somewhat, hardly, none) do various influences have an impact on their voting in the plenary and in committee. These influences included the well-being of their voters, their party’s ideological position, their chances of re-selection, arguments raised during the debate, and party discipline. When it came to party discipline, 30 MKs stated that it influenced their voting in the plenary either greatly (15) or somewhat (15), while only 5 said hardly or that it did not have an influence. In committee the replies were slightly different, with 27 stating that it influenced their vote either greatly (12) or somewhat (15), while 7 said hardly or that it did not have an influence. Apparently, legislators are influenced by party discipline. If the answers are assessed by party, there is only one where those interviewed replied that party discipline hardly or did not influence them both in the plenary and in committee. In all the other parties, the MKs stated that discipline had influence. The one deviant party was the Center Party,
which was a new party formed by politicians from both the left and the right in Israeli politics, and which collapsed soon after the elections.

Given the significant influence of party discipline, it is surprising to note that the MKs interviewed did not rank this as the most important influence on their voting. More MKs said that the ideological position of their party influenced them the most, but party discipline was ranked as the second most influential aspect. This could mean that party cohesion is evident, but that when it is not enough then party discipline can still influence how legislators vote.

The interplay between cohesion and discipline can be seen in a series of questions. MKs were asked if it is important for them to know the position of their party before a vote in the plenary or in committee. An overwhelming majority said that it is always (28) or usually (5) important in the plenary, while a smaller majority said so in committee (always 20, usually 7). Only 1 MK said that it is rarely important to know the party’s position before a plenary vote, and 5 MKs said the same for committee votes. None of the MKs interviewed stated that it is never important for them to know the position of their party, either in the plenary or in committee. Similar results were seen when MKs were asked not if it is important for them to know their party’s position, but if they actually do know it. Moreover, all of the MKs who replied stated that there is a person in their party who is responsible for overseeing that the party members vote in the plenary as the party decided, while only 4 stated that there is no such person when it comes to voting in committee. These answers indicate that cohesion is present – MKs want to know their collective position, they in fact do know it, and there is a party whip to make sure. However, when asked if party
discipline is important, an even larger majority of 31 MKs stated that it is either very important or important, and only 4 said that it is not so important or not important at all. Apparently, knowledge of the party position is not enough, and legislators have concluded that at times disciplinary tools are necessary to ensure that it is translated into voting patterns.

This leads to a possible conflict between cohesion and discipline. MKs were asked what they would do if they disagreed with the position of their party on how to vote in the plenary. Only 3 said they would vote against the party line (3 said they would vote the party line despite their disagreement); another 5 said they would abstain or be absent; and 21 MKs said that they would ask for permission to vote against the party line. The results for committee votes were similar. Legislators are apparently unwilling to break party discipline, and asking for permission to vote against the party line cannot be considered akin to doing so without permission. If such permission is granted, it could be because the party leadership assessed that the voting results would not be affected by a few “rebels.” In short, discipline can help where cohesion no longer has an impact, but it can only work up to a certain point; it is not a mechanism that can fix a party broken beyond repair. MKs acknowledged this when asked about how binding a decision by their party on how its members should vote was considered. While 15 said that either it was always binding (9) or that it was binding if this was specifically decided (6), a majority (17) replied that it was binding unless a specific MK was given permission otherwise. None said that it was never binding.

The question then becomes how often the party makes a decision on how its members should vote – without which parties could not be the major actors in the legislative
arena – and thus raises the possibility of a conflict with some of its members. Most MKs replied that their party either always decided (11) or usually decided (17) how its members should vote, only 6 said that it rarely decided, and none said that it never decided. One of the ways that parties impose discipline and reduce the negative impact of this tool is the manner in which it is decided. When asked how the party decided how its members should vote in the plenary, an overwhelming majority (24) replied that the decision was reached by an equal vote, while only 3 stated that the party leadership decided and 2 said that the party member responsible for the issue decided. The answers were slightly different concerning committee votes. A majority (16) still replied that a decision was reached by voting, but 7 MKs said that the party member responsible for the issue decided. Interestingly, all of the MKs interviewed except for 4 said that they felt that they could have an influence on the position of their party. This kind of empowered attitude, along with decisions made by equal vote, can elicit increased adherence to party discipline when it is imposed.

In order for legislatures to function properly, the parties need to keep their members voting together, but must avoid ongoing conflicts surrounding the party position. One of the ways this is controlled is party cohesion, since each particular party’s legislators arrive in parliament with a similar ideological background. Other mechanisms include the empowerment of its members and decisions made by voting. But these are not always sufficient, and the question remains of how often the parties impose discipline when divisive issues arise. Interestingly, the parties seem to know just how far the tools of discipline can be utilized. The replies of MKs were evenly split between the 15 who said that their party always (3) or usually (12) imposed such discipline, and the 16 who said rarely (13) or never (3).
When asked if a member of the party voted contrary to its decision, would the party employ sanctions against them, none of the MKs interviewed replied always and only 2 answered usually, while the rest said either rarely (10) or never (15). From the opposite perspective, MKs were asked if their party rewarded those members who consistently vote according to its decisions, and all but one replied never. Apparently, discipline is an organizational tool rather that one that is backed by either a carrot or a stick. Discipline seems to build on cohesion – it can help when cohesion falters – but the Israeli experience shows that no punishment or reward can overcome a severe breakdown in cohesion, and thus these sanctions or incentives are rarely in use.

What then are the mains reasons for the lack of voting unity in parliament?
Surprisingly, none of the MKs interviewed replied that it was intra-party divisions; only 1 said that it was due to quarrels with the leadership; 3 pointed to the candidate selection method (party primaries, in particular, which forced MKs to stand out and be recognized by an inclusive party selectorate, see Hazan 1997); and 28 stated that it was due to ideological divisions. These results show that cohesion is not strong enough to keep the party together, despite the common ideological platform on which the party is elected and the similar ideological background of its legislators, because ideological differences are by far the root cause when it comes to MKs breaking party unity.

If ideological differences are at the core of party disarray, do parties allow their members more freedom of voting on some issues than others? MKs were asked how often their party allows them to vote freely on religious, budgetary, social and
political issues. Their replies showed that the MKs are rarely (17) or never (16) allowed to vote freely when it comes to the budget (not a single MK replied either usually or always). When it came to religion, which is a hotly contested issue in Israeli politics, most MKs replied that their party either always (5) or usually (14) allowed them to vote freely. Most of the MKs who replied differently (that is, rarely or never) were elected from the religious parties. Social issues, and to a lesser extent political issues, both showed no respondents who answered always, a small number who replied usually, a majority who said rarely and a few who answered never. The overall result is that MKs rarely break with their party, and when they feel that it is necessary they ask permission to do so – which the party rarely grants. The outcome is that without having to employ either sanctions or incentives, most of the parties are able to maintain their unity in voting in the plenary at higher than 90%, based on roll-call data.

To summarize, the Israeli experience shows that MKs are cognizant of the importance of knowing their party position; they indeed are aware of it; they acknowledge the existence of a whip whose task it is to make them know this and act accordingly; and, in turn, they agree that the party’s position plays an important role in influencing how they vote. However, they also have ideological differences with their party, which sometimes forces them into a confrontational position. The party, in turn, almost always makes a decision on how its members should vote, but will not impose party discipline on all divisive issues. There are clearly some battles worth fighting and some that are not, especially if the party could lose. The party attempts to abate the conflict by discussing the issue openly, giving its members the feeling that they can influence the party’s position, and allowing all of the MKs to participate in a vote to
decide the party’s position. In this case, since the MKs recognize the significance of party discipline, they see party decisions as binding and do not vote against their party unless they receive permission to do so – i.e., MKs usually fall in line. Voting unity is not something that has to be coerced or bought, and MKs who do not adhere to the party line are either convinced to do so through the process of producing the party position or are allowed to opt out. Party discipline, in the Israeli case, seems to be achieved more by the routines of the legislative institution, based on the existing yet varying level of cohesion in each party, rather than by indiscriminate imposition by an authoritarian party leadership backed by coercive mechanisms.

**Are Committees Different?**

The reason for establishing committees is that they can perform certain tasks better than the plenary as a whole. They provide a more informal setting for deliberations than the plenary, shunning the demagogy of debates in the legislature in exchange for less rhetoric and more frank, responsible discussion. Thus they reduce the degree of partisan divisions, which are more pronounced in the plenary, allowing compromises to be worked out. A recent comparative study on committees focusing on the Israeli case (Hazan 2001) showed that the polarization in Israel based on the dominant security dimension produced two adversarial camps, but did not succeeded in bringing the legislative process to a halt because the committees were able to reduce the level of conflict. In short, even in the Israeli Knesset, where existential security issues are debated, there is a general pattern of consensual committee behavior in the legislative
process. This can be seen in the attitudes of MKs toward discipline in the Knesset committees.

While fewer MKs said that it is important for them to know their party’s position before a committee vote than a plenary vote, even fewer said that they knew it. When it comes to committees there are clear differences vis-à-vis the plenary concerning how parties decide what their position is, who informs the members of this, how it is implemented, and if it is perceived as binding.

When asked if their party discussed the issues that could be voted on in the plenary, 25 MKs said that it did on either all or most issues, while only 6 said that it discussed only a few issues or none at all. When it came to committees, the responses were the opposite. Only 5 MKs said that their party either discussed all or most of the issues that would be voted on in committee, while 24 replied that only a few issues, or none, were discussed. Similar results were obtained when MKs were asked how often their party discussed the issues. While all but 1 said that they did so at least once each week when it came to the plenary, practically one-half of the MKs said that their party discussed issues that would be voted on in committee only once every two weeks, or once each month. Moreover, while most MKs replied that their party decides on how its members should vote in the plenary, a majority of those interviewed said that in committee their party rarely did so. Parties in Israel seem to discuss fewer of the issues faced in committee, when they did so it was done less often; and even when this was done the party rarely came to a decision on how its members should vote in committee.
Finally, a majority of MKs interviewed stated that while their party had a person who was responsible for overseeing that the party members in committee voted as the party decided, most of the time a discussion concerning the committees did not take place. MKs were also asked if the party whip informed them of the party’s position if no discussion took place, and most replied no. Parties also imposed party discipline more infrequently in committees than in the plenary, and fewer MKs perceived the decision of their party as binding in committee votes compared to plenary votes.

Searching for discipline in the committees is, therefore, probably both more difficult and somewhat less important. While there is a valuable comparison to be made with the mechanisms and tools that are either available or implemented by the party in the plenary, and vis-à-vis other legislatures, the committee arena is not where legislative scholars should focus their attention when it comes to investigating the ways and means of producing, implementing and enforcing party discipline.

**Conclusion**

The conceptual delineation presented herein, together with the data from the Israeli case, are an attempt to tease out the discussion of discipline from that of cohesion. The study of this delineation has a practical value in addition to its academic relevance, for at least two reasons. First, examining plenary voting behavior is not enough because we must look inside parties as well, at what takes place before voting decisions are made. Parties are internal coalitions, comprising factions as well as fragmented and non-aligned tendencies. It is during the entire voting “process” that
levels of cohesion will be appraised by both the party legislators in general and the party leaders in particular, and assorted tools of party discipline will be put to the test. Second, comparative knowledge of the tools that allow parties and parliaments to enforce obedience is lacking, which points to an urgent need for future research. Data on disciplinary mechanisms is not easily accessible, even to country experts, and is thus rarely addressed in case studies, let alone in a comparative manner – which is basically non-existent. It is only when we understand that discipline is different from cohesion that we can begin to study its particular causes and consequences.

The survey conducted in the Israeli legislature raises interesting findings that beckon for comparative data. For example,

- When more than one legislator was interviewed in a particular party, several of the responses were quite different. This points toward either a lack of legislative norms, or – if this is not the case – that cohesion is not evident, and that discipline is therefore needed in order to keep the party functioning as a relatively unitary actor.

- Levels of party unity varied, as did the use of disciplinary tools, based on factors that have yet to receive attention in legislative studies. The Israeli data points to a clear connection between the inclusiveness of the candidate selection method (i.e., party primaries on the inclusive end, and a very exclusive leadership selection committee – or even a single selector – on the other end) and party voting unity.

- A party continuum delineating the more unified parties from the less unified ones matches neither a left-right continuum based on party ideology – the more ideological parties are not necessarily more unified – nor one that positions the
parties based on their size – the larger, aggregating parties are not necessarily less unified.

In summation, this paper has attempted to show that it is important to investigate how parties discipline their members. In order to do so, we first need to distinguish the tools and mechanisms of party discipline from the sociological attributes of party cohesion. We then need to uncover data, country by country, and maybe even chamber by chamber,\textsuperscript{7} in order to begin the process of building a comparable data base on party discipline.

This paper does not argue that discipline is the sole determinant of legislative behavior, but rather that legislative studies cannot afford to ignore or discount the distinctiveness of this factor. Without divorcing and delineating party discipline from other concepts and explanations, understanding legislative behavior will only be partially successful. If we want to move ahead, to understand the consequences of legislative behavior and to assess if legislatures are working, we cannot afford to do so with only partial theories and sanguine conceptual frameworks.

\textsuperscript{7} See, for example, Norton's (2003) study of discipline in the House of Lords, in comparison to studies of the House of Commons.
REFERENCES


