The Origins of Party Discipline
Evidence from Eastern Germany

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It has long been observed by students of German and western European politics that deputies from the same parliamentary party group (PPG or Fraktion) generally take identical positions when votes are cast in legislatures such as the Bundestag and the British Parliament. Although there is widespread consensus that party voting occurs, the question of why it occurs is more controversial. Earlier scholars took a sociological approach and argued that Members of Parliament (MPs) held together for normative reasons including party solidarity, socialization in proper behavior by caucus leaders, or simply because members of the same party families hold the same ideological convictions. In contrast, more recent research has challenged the sociological approach and found that discipline emerges as rational actors discover self-interested reasons to vote en bloc. Scholars working in this tradition have identified three key institutional mechanisms thought to promote party voting agreement in legislatures—including the need in a parliamentary system to support the executive branch, the desire for efficiency in legislative decision making, and MPs’ hope of reelection. While all three seem plausible, authors have not attempted to investigate the degree to which each of these institutional incentives influence MPs’ behavior. Are all three mechanisms equally important in creating party discipline or does one outweigh the others? To date we do not know. Perhaps this oversight stems from the fact that the Bundestag and other well-established western European legislatures have such consistently high levels of party voting agreement that there is not enough variance to determine the cause of this behavior.

Yet, understanding what causes party discipline is vital if this common practice in long-democratic legislatures is to be replicated...
in newly democratizing settings. In electoral systems like Germany’s, where voters select among political parties rather than individual candidates, citizens can only hold their representatives accountable if their party’s MPs act in concert while in the legislature. If deputies from the same party vote differently, citizens are unable to use their party vote to reward or punish the stance with which they disagree. Similarly, in parliamentary systems like Germany’s, a lack of party discipline threatens to cause political instability if shifting parliamentary majorities lead to cycling executives. Thus, in new democracies with political institutions akin to eastern Germany’s, party discipline is essential to ensure democratic accountability and political stability. Those interested in promoting democracy in such settings need to understand what causes discipline in order to craft the appropriate institutions to promote the practice.

The creation of five new democratic state legislatures after the fall of communism in eastern Germany provides a unique opportunity to investigate the origins of party voting agreement. Because the Bundestag is composed mainly of western Germans, unification did not have an impact on the high level of party voting there. As a result, it is not a useful legislature to study to gain causal insight into the question of which institutional incentives shape party voting the most. Moreover, other newly created legislatures, such as those that emerged in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union, make it difficult to study the effect of institutional rules on party voting because such rules emerged gradually as the countries’ parliamentary and electoral systems took shape. At the state (Land) level in Germany, in contrast, electoral systems and parliamentary structures proven to create a high level of party voting in western Germany were extended to the new eastern states in 1990. These new state parliaments (Landtage) were subsequently filled by PPGs composed of legislators who had never served in a western style parliament before. Only 4.4 percent of those elected to eastern German state parliaments between 1990 and 2000 were western Germans. In this setting, party voting ultimately emerged, albeit at different rates across various parliamentary party groups. By disaggregating the data and comparing the speed at which discipline emerged across eastern German Fraktionen, it is possible to shed light on exactly how institutional incentives for party voting influence MPs in Germany and elsewhere. Furthermore, such analysis makes an empirical contribution to the study of party discipline in Germany at the state level by focusing on cases that have been understudied until now due to the difficulty of obtaining voting data.

In this article, I first outline the different institutional mechanisms hypothesized to promote party voting and discuss how they can be expected to influence governing and opposition parliamentary party groups over time. Next, I examine quantitatively the rise of party voting in eastern German state legislatures to see how the expectations outlined in the first section fare when confronted with empirical evidence. Third, I repeat this analysis using qualitative techniques. I conclude that the logic of parliamentary government, more so than efficiency and electoral incentives, created disciplined PPGs in the new German parliaments. The final section discusses how these findings help explain both the successful transfer of a western German practice to the new Länder and the persistence of party discipline across Germany, despite societal changes that would seem to undermine it.

**Institutional Incentives for Party Voting Across Parliamentary Party Groups**

Three main institutional mechanisms have been hypothesized to cause party voting agreement in established parliaments such as the Bundestag. These include the need in a parliamentary system for PPGs to vote together to keep the executive branch in office, the efficiency advantages to party voting, and election-related incentives for parties to discipline their members and for deputies to submit to this discipline. These three mechanisms affect governing and opposition parties slightly differently. They exerted their logic in eastern Germany more clearly at different times during the development of these new state legislatures. Below, I outline these differences across parties and across time in order to generate testable hypotheses.

The literature on parliamentary systems clearly agrees that a key institutional incentive for party voting agreement is the fact that in a parliamentary system the largest party (or coalition of parties) in the legislature must stand behind its chief executive and cabinet or the government can fall. Were these legislative parties not coherent,
cause of party voting agreement, we would expect to see both opposition and governing PPGs vote in a similar manner. Efficiency incentives are less immediately obvious to legislators than the need to support the executive branch, however, because they only become apparent as legislative work becomes bogged down over time. According to this hypothesis, discipline emerges as MPs begin to search for ways to speed up their work.\textsuperscript{15} As a result, if efficiency incentives were the primary cause of party voting, this practice would have slowly emerged over the course of the first electoral period as eastern German MPs attempted to streamline decision making.

A third group of institutional mechanisms hypothesized to foster party voting agreement are ones that are related to the electoral arena. In the mixed-electoral system used in German federal elections and in eastern German state elections, the second, or party vote, is the more important. Because voters select among competing parties, political parties need to have a clear profile to communicate to citizens. A German party that splits frequently in parliament will lack such a profile and, as public opinion research has shown, will be seen by voters as insecure and untrustworthy.\textsuperscript{16} For governing parties, voting cohesively and enacting party policies is the best way to communicate to voters that their wishes will be represented.\textsuperscript{17} In contrast, opposition parties need to stand together to provide voters with a clear-cut alternative to the governing party. Thus, if party voting agreement is to succeed, competition for the vote requires parties to have cohesive voting blocs.\textsuperscript{18} If parties with little or no chance of winning ... Then there would seem to be no real point in ... trying to impose costly disciplinary measures.”\textsuperscript{10} As a result, if the logic of parliamentary government is the primary institutional mechanism causing party voting agreement, we would observe that governing parties have a significantly higher propensity to vote together than opposition parties do. Because this institutional incentive exists from the moment the first government is formed in a new legislature, we would observe this government-opposition divide in party voting agreement from the start of the first legislative period onward in eastern Germany.

A second incentive for party voting agreement in democratic legislatures has to do with the efficiency of the practice. Even scholars studying presidential systems where the aforementioned executive branch instability is not a problem, find that in the absence of disciplined legislative parties, new majorities would have to be cobbled together to pass each piece of legislation, a highly inefficient practice.\textsuperscript{11} Particularly in modern legislatures responsible for law-making in a wide arrange of complex and technical areas, it is difficult for an individual deputy to master or even understand all the pieces of legislation on which she is to vote.\textsuperscript{12} By joining a parliamentary party an MP can rely on the expertise of other caucus members or government ministers from her party to guide her voting on an array of issues.\textsuperscript{13} Being part of a parliamentary party and deferring to other party members in their area of expertise also provides an individual legislator with allies who will support her position on issues that are of importance to her.\textsuperscript{14} Without coherent legislative parties, then, parliamentary work would be inefficient and uncertain.

These incentives apply equally to all MPs whether their parties are in or out of government. Thus, if efficiency incentives were the primary cause of party voting agreement, we would expect to see both opposition and governing PPGs vote in a similar manner. Efficiency incentives are less immediately obvious to legislators than the need to support the executive branch, however, because they only become apparent as legislative work becomes bogged down over time. According to this hypothesis, discipline emerges as MPs begin to search for ways to speed up their work.\textsuperscript{15} As a result, if efficiency incentives were the primary cause of party voting, this practice would have slowly emerged over the course of the first electoral period as eastern German MPs attempted to streamline decision making.

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promotion to the frontbenches (for example, the positions of caucus head, whip, etc.) and they also choose which committee assignments deputies will receive. If parliamentarians harbor any ambitions beyond the back bench, then, they must continue to remain in their party leadership’s good graces and voting the party line is a minimal requirement in this regard. These incentives apply equally to MPs from governing and opposition parliamentary party groups, as all are likely to desire reelection and career advancement.

In contrast to the logic of parliamentary government, however, the logic of Germany’s electoral system may have not been initially apparent to eastern German MPs and their PPGS. In the first eastern Landtag elections, most parties were quite new and the legislatures for which they campaigned had never existed before, so it was not feasible for parties to run on their legislative records. The rewards for campaigning with a clear parliamentary record, or the punishment for failure in this regard, most likely only became apparent to eastern states’ party leaders as they sought to differentiate themselves from their rivals in the campaigns for second round elections in 1994/1995. Thus, if electoral incentives were the primary motivator of disciplined legislative voting, we would not observe the rise of party voting in the new Länder until late in the first electoral period when campaigning got underway.

Similarly, individual deputies may have also been slow to recognize the importance of party support for their future careers. When elections were first held following German unification, most eastern party organizations were quite new and rather weak. Candidates for the first round of elections were chosen in a haphazard manner, often on the basis of a single speech made at a nominating meeting prior to the 1990 election. Moreover, party group leaders, committee members, and ministers were initially chosen on the basis of their perceived ability to fill a given role rather than on the basis of long-term party loyalty. Thus, the importance of party leaders in developing candidate lists only emerged as candidates were chosen for the second set of elections in 1994/1995. As a result, if such electoral incentives play a primary role in promoting MPs’ willingness to toe their party’s line, we would only observe the emergence of party voting late in the first electoral period (as candidate selection for the second elections approached) or in the second electoral period (after dissenting deputies had been weeded out by their parties).

In sum, each of the three mechanisms through which political institutions are thought to contribute to party voting agreement have different combinations of temporal and cross-party effects:

- If the logic of the parliamentary system were the primary motivator of party voting agreement, we would see higher levels of discipline among governing than opposition PPGs. This difference should be marked from the very inception of the new Landtage.
- If efficiency incentives were the primary motivator of party voting agreement, we would see no difference between the party voting agreement in governing and opposition PPGs. Furthermore, discipline would only slowly emerge during the first legislative period as MPs sought to correct the inefficiencies brought about by low levels of party voting.
- If electoral incentives were the primary motivator we would also see no difference between the party voting agreement in governing and opposition PPGs. Additionally, discipline would emerge only at the end of the first legislative period or in the second, as parties learned that voters punished divided parties and as MPs realized that failing to toe their party’s line would be disadvantageous to their careers.

These hypotheses are tested empirically in the following two sections. The next section relies on quantitative evidence to compare governing and opposition Fraktionen’s voting patterns between 1990 and 2000. A finding of initial significant differences in these PPGs’ rates of disciplined voting would suggest that the logic of parliamentary government is the primary cause of party voting. If no significant opposition-governing differences in voting were found, however, further evidence would be needed to adjudicate between the efficiency and electoral incentives for party voting. For this reason, part three utilizes quantitative evidence derived from interviews with MPs themselves to further assess individual deputies’ motivations for voting with their PPGs or not.
Table One: Rice Index of Cohesion in Roll Call Votes 1991-2000

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVU</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>.84</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NR = Party not represented in this legislative period.

Source: roll call votes recorded in parliamentary transcripts.

All of the parties elected to the eastern German Landtage, except one, scored above 0.87 in 1991. These parties' scores increased slightly in the ninety-eight and sixty-eight roll call votes taken in the second and third electoral periods, respectively, and approached the 1.0 mark. These scores are similar to the voting patterns observed in the Bundestag.

The German People’s Union (DVU) entered parliament for the first time in 1998/1999 and had a slightly lower Rice Index than the veteran parties. In sum, starting three months after the creation of the eastern Landtage, parliamentary party groups there had, on average, a very high level of voting agreement on key roll call votes, This finding is consistent with the logic of the parliamentary system and possibly with efficiency incentives.

Table Two compares the Rice Indices of opposition parliamentary party groups to those of PPGs involved in a governing coalition.

Table Two: Rice Index of Cohesion and PPG Status in Roll Call Votes 1991-2000

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governing</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difference of means between the two groups significant at t.025 level for 1996 and 2000; at t.05 level for 1991.

Source: roll call votes recorded in parliamentary transcripts.

Opposition caucuses had an average score of 0.87, significantly lower than governing party groups whose mean Rice Index was .94. These significant government-opposition differences remained throughout the decade. Further, as Table Three indicates, coalition discipline was high from the creation of these new parliaments as well.
As with the roll call votes, governing parties were significantly less likely to split than opposition PPGs. In 1991, governing parties voted en bloc in 66.3 percent of the votes whereas the figure for opposition parties was only 53.1 percent. In the remaining votes, PPGs either overtly split or their behavior was unclear in the parliamentary transcripts. As Table Five indicates, when in government in 1991, the Social Democrats (SPD) voted together slightly more often than the governing Christian Democrats (CDU), but the difference was not statistically significant, nor were significant differences among various opposition PPGs’ rates of disciplined voting found that year.

### Table Five: Non-Roll Call Disciplined Voting, By Party, 1991-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CDU</th>
<th>SPD</th>
<th>PDS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>86.6</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>92.0</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of votes in which the governing PPGs under study voted en bloc; in other votes governing PPGs were either divided or their actions unclear. ANOVA analysis finds no significant differences among party families’ voting patterns in any year in 2000 differences are significant (F.15).

Parliamentary Transcript Data

The majority of non-roll call votes taken in the parliaments under study, even in 1991, featured disciplined PPGs as well [see Table Four].

### Table Four: Non-Roll Call Party Voting and PPG Status 1991-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Governing PPGs</th>
<th>Opposition PPGs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>66.3 %</td>
<td>53.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>84.5 %</td>
<td>66.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>86.6 %</td>
<td>79.9 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of votes in which all members of a PPG under study voted together. In other votes, PPGs split or their behavior was unclear. ANOVA analysis reveals significant differences between government and opposition PPGs’ voting patterns in 1991 (F.05) and 2000 (F.10). The differences in 1996 were less significant (F.25).

Source: analysis of parliamentary transcripts.
With the exception of slight decrease in opposition SPD party groups’ discipline between 1991 and 1996, Table Five reveals that these increases took place across PPGs from all party families, with no statistically significant differences among opposition party families in the years examined. No significant partisan differences in coalition discipline were observed in 1991 and 1996. In 2000, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) entered government for the first time in the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Its PPG was significantly less disciplined than the veteran governing parties, the CDU and the SPD. However, the PDS’s rate of discipline was higher than that of the CDU and SPD when they first entered government a decade earlier.

The level of party voting was clearly lower on a day to day basis than in crucial roll call votes, again underscoring the important influence of the logic of the parliamentary system. In order to support their executive, governing PPGs must hold together on critical roll call votes—defections on mundane day-to-day votes pose less of a danger to the government and may be more likely to be tolerated by Fraktion leadership. Furthermore, this difference in discipline between routine and roll-call votes is not consistent with efficiency incentives. If efficiency concerns drove discipline, one would expect routine decision making to be particularly disciplined, as a lack of party voting could bog down everyday parliamentary work; on the rare occasion of a roll-call vote, parliament could better tolerate a break from discipline. In addition, both efficiency and electoral incentives would apply equally to members of governing and opposition PPGs. But, here again, we see consistent differences between the two types of parliamentary party groups—a finding consistent with the logic of parliamentary government.

Qualitative Empirical Evidence

Discipline did consistently rise over the course of a decade, however, so it is possible that efficiency or electoral incentives did exert an additional influence on legislative voting over time, serving to drive an initially high level of party voting even higher. One way to assess this possibility is to ask parliamentarians themselves why their PPGs became more disciplined between 1990 and 2000. In the summer of 2001 I interviewed the whip (parlamentarische(r) GeschäftsführerIn), or other leading representative, of all PPGs in four of the five eastern German state parliaments.

These interviews show that eastern German legislators clearly recognize the logic of a parliamentary form of government. When asked to explain his role as a whip, one MP said his first and most important job was to ensure party discipline, because otherwise his party “could just pack up and leave” government. His counterpart in his party’s coalition partner agreed, stressing “we can’t govern if we are divided.” A decade following the creation of eastern Germany’s state parliaments, interviewees did not recall efficiency incentives for adopting party discipline. Although plenary sessions in 1990 often lasted from 10:00 AM to 11:00 PM, rather than the much briefer sessions common today, in interviews deputies attributed these lengthy sessions to the high volume of legislation in the first electoral period.

Finally, some interviewees did give electoral reasons for becoming more disciplined in the mid- to latter-1990s. The Social Democratic whip in Saxony observed that her party realized ... also expressed his desire to avoid giving a “chaotic impression” to voters after constituents complained about his PPG’s low level of discipline in the first electoral period. The Social Democratic whip in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern justified his current role in keeping his party group disciplined by saying this was a ... whips also mentioned that the second round of elections had presented their parties with the opportunity to rid their PPGs of deputies who had perpetually dissented in the first electoral period.

However, while PPG leaders recognized the need for discipline to succeed in competitive elections as well as their ability to use such elections to weed out undisciplined MPs, interviewees whose caucuses were in the opposition did not strive to create a disciplined PPG to the extent that whips of governing caucuses did. One whip observed the difference in his PPG’s attitude toward party discipline between the time it was in the opposition and when it supported a
minority government. He attributed his caucus’s initial low discipline to the fact that he knew it “didn’t make much of a difference” the way his PPG voted whereas the “difficult process” he had to go through to get his caucus to toe the line was “nerve wracking.” In next electoral period, however, when his party supported a minority government “it did make a difference” the way his PPG voted and they had “a pistol at [their] breast” to unite around a party position.36 Similarly, another whip described a “process” whereby his PPG learned to be disciplined when it entered government after serving one term in the opposition.37 Finally, a third whip whose PPG entered government after eight years in the opposition mentioned that his “MPs now must learn to hold back” because as members of a governing coalition “they can’t just say whatever comes to mind.”38 Parliamentarians’ different experiences with party voting as members of the opposition and members of the parliamentary majority clearly underscore the logic of parliamentary government’s primary influence over the emergence of party discipline in the eastern Landtage.

Conclusions

Experts on the Bundestag and other established western European parliaments have hypothesized that three different institutional mechanisms are responsible for the high level of party voting observed in these legislatures. The mechanisms include the logic of parliamentary government as well as efficiency and electoral incentives. The creation of new legislatures in eastern Germany following the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the rise of party voting within these legislatures, offers an experimental setting in which to observe the causes of disciplined voting. The evidence presented here shows that a high level of party voting appeared almost instantly after the creation of these parliaments. Nevertheless, governing PPGs were more often disciplined than their opponents. Although the level of discipline continued to rise over time, differences between governing and opposition PPGs remained. This suggests that the need to keep an executive in office was the primary motivator of party voting. Efficiency concerns, the opportunity for parties to weed out dissenting MPs at election time, and the need to do so in order to present a distinct image to voters, had secondary effects on party voting.

These findings not only make empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of German politics and political science more generally, they also help solve two important puzzles. The data presented here bring to light new empirical evidence about the evolution of party discipline in German state legislatures following German unification, processes hitherto rarely measured given the time-consuming nature of data collection. The results clearly document the emergence of this established western European practice in a postcommunist context. The findings provide additional empirical evidence to support the rational choice explanation of the origins of party voting and help adjudicate among three competing hypotheses within this tradition. In contrast to previous rational choice work, this study allows for an assessment of the causal influence of three different institutional explanations for the origins of party discipline in parliamentary systems. Of the need to support the executive branch, the need for efficiency, and the need to win competitive elections, the former exerted the most influence over party voting in this study.

This finding helps explain the puzzle of why the western German practice of discipline was so successfully transferred to the new Länder. After decades of rule by a communist party practicing iron discipline, many eastern Germans and eastern Europeans were distrustful of political parties and skeptical of party discipline at the time of democratization.39 Furthermore, many of the new MPs had been professionals including doctors, teachers, veterinarians, and engineers prior to 1989.40 They were trained to seek pragmatic, technical solutions to problems rather than to engage in partisan debates. Interviews in the early 1990s found deputies in the eastern Landtage favoring consensus decision-making rather than partisan competition.41 As a result, many authors expected eastern German and European political elites to be “less likely to be motivated by organizational loyalties and commitments, and ... correspondingly more likely to resolve conflicts ... by engaging in short-term mergers and alliances with other parties” rather practicing party discipline.42
a majority of German citizens would prefer to see parliamentary deputies vote their own opinion rather than the party line and calls for the use of referenda have increased in recent years. Despite mounting opposition to party discipline in western Germany society, however, parliamentary parties remain highly disciplined as they do in the legislatures under study here.

Why did discipline emerge in post-communist eastern German Landtage and not in the post-communist Russian Duma? The data presented here easily explain these divergent outcomes. In contrast to the German Länder, Russia adopted a semi-presidential system with a very strong president. A lack of discipline in the Duma does not cause executive branch instability the way it would in Germany. Thus, although both countries use similar mixed electoral systems, only German MPs seem highly motivated to practice party voting. Both Russian and eastern German MPs experienced a need for legislative efficiency, but in semi-presidential Russia this was achieved by strong committees rather than PPGs.

Finally, the importance of party discipline to maintaining the executive branch in a parliamentary system also helps explain the puzzle of the persistence of party voting in contemporary Germany. As indicated above, eastern MPs did not initially seem attitudinally predisposed to voting with their PPGs. In western Germany as well, citizens and politicians alike appear increasingly opposed to party discipline. In 1984 over 150 members of the Bundestag called for reforms giving individual members of the legislature more independence from their parties. Outside of the federal legislature, the rise in postmaterialist values and education among western Germans in recent decades has led to the widely-documented phenomenon of *Parteiverdrossenheit* or dissatisfaction with political parties. The electoral success of the Greens, who promised to make deputies independent from the party’s leadership, to hold public party caucus meetings, and not to practice party discipline, illustrates attempts even in western Germany to move away from powerful legislative parties. Opinion polls show that

Notes

1. Thanks to Karin Hummel, Jason Niggley, Markus Thiel, and Ralf Winterbauer for research assistance. Thanks to Ben Bishin and to anonymous reviewers for helpful suggestions.


6. The same is true of Berlin’s state parliament and it is therefore excluded from the analysis presented here.


13. Patzelt, (see note 3), 327.

14. Ibid.


16. Patzelt (see note 3), 325.


18. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh, *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective* (London, 1988); Bowler, Farrell, and Katz (see note 3); Gallagher, Laver, Mair (see note 9), 288-89; Saalfeld (see note 2), 49; Patzelt (see note 3), 329; Landolf Scherer, *Der Letzte* (Berlin, 2000), 14-15.

19. German MPs holding a constituency seat are nominated by their local, rather than state, party organization. As a result, there may be times when local interests clash with the position of a deputy’s PPS. In such cases, an MP may have a reelection incentive not to toe her party line. Such occurrences are likely to be very rare, however, and should not greatly reduce the overall level of discipline in German state parliaments—just as they have not diminished party voting in the Bundestag.


21. Davidson-Schmich (see note 8).

22. Patzelt (see note 2).


24. Coding was done by the author and two native German graduate students. Inter-coder reliability was ensured by each researcher analyzing the first transcript from all five parliaments each year under consideration and meeting to come to a consensus about the proper coding of each vote. Questionable votes in subsequent transcripts were similarly discussed before codes were recorded.

25. Scores were calculated by taking the absolute value of the number of yea’s minus the number of nays and abstentions, divided by the total number of yea’s, nays, and abstentions. Abstentions were counted as defections because interviews with whips indicated they are so interpreted. Deputies not voting were excluded from the analysis because it was not possible to determine if they were missing due to absence from the legislature on a given day or because they willfully missed a vote rather than toe their party’s line. The latter does not appear to be the case, however. Analysis of the U.S. Congress finds that electoral considerations provide certain legislators—for example those with diverse constituencies or marginal seats—with incentives to avoid taking positions in roll call votes. See David R. Jones, “Position Taking and Position Avoidance in the U.S. Senate.” *Journal of Politics* 65, no. 3 (2003): 851-63. In the German case, MPs with constituency seats may have incentives to avoid taking their party’s position on a controversial issue if it would negatively impact their districts. This is precisely the kind of issue for which German opposition parties call roll call votes. In contrast, deputies elected on a party list do not face voter scrutiny of their individual voting patterns and therefore have fewer incentives to avoid publicizing their position on an issue which might harm a particular region. Conversely, MPs with direct mandates may be more careful to attend roll call votes in order to be later able to claim credit for something that was indeed the result of deputies’ strategic action, one would expect to find significant differences in these two types of MPs’ absence from roll call votes. Analysis of roll call votes, however, revealed no statistically significant differences in the absence rates of these two types of MPs’ absence from roll call votes. In Brandenburg, deputies with direct mandates were twice as likely to miss a vote as their counterpart from a party list whereas MPs from Thuringia with direct mandates were twice as likely to attend a vote than deputies elected from a party list. These inconsistent patterns suggest that absences are not motivated by the desire to avoid taking a position or to claim credit, but by deputies’ illness, travel, and other commitments. For example, in the state of Brandenburg, the deputy who consistently missed the most roll call votes in the period examined was Lothar Bisky, who was simultaneously the national chair of the PDS and likely missed votes while attending party-related functions elsewhere in Germany.

27. Governing PPGs include single party majorities, participants in a minority government, and parties in governing coalitions. Opposition parties are those that neither govern nor tolerate a minority government.

28. This score was calculated in the same way as the Rice Index for individual parties except it took into consideration the voting behavior of all deputies in PPGs involved in the coalition as opposed to just one PPG. The average result in 1991 was driven by the particularly low level of coalition discipline present in Saxony-Anhalt that year. When Saxony-Anhalt is removed from the analysis, the average figure rises to 0.95, virtually the same as in other years.

29. In order to consistently measure developments over the three legislative periods, this analysis includes only the three parties present in every electoral period: the Christian Democratic Union, the Party of Democratic Socialism, and the Social Democratic Party.

30. These states included Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxony, and Saxony-Anhalt. I also interviewed representatives of parties once represented in these parliaments but not elected to the Landtag in the third electoral period. A complete list of interviewees is available from the author; interviewees are identified here by their party affiliation and state. The interviews took a semi-structured format; the section of the interviews relevant here concerned the development of party discipline since 1990. Rather than tape recording the interviews, a practice which in previous research distracted some eastern MPs, I took detailed interview notes. The quotes presented in the text are drawn from these records which are also available from the author upon request.

31. Interview, SPD, Brandenburg.

32. Interview, CDU, Brandenburg.

33. Parliamentary transcripts from the early months of the new legislatures do indicate a lack of discipline at times slowed the work of the Landtag and MPs did complain about these inefficiencies at the time. See, for example, the parliamentary transcript from the state of Saxony, the first legislative period, session 17, page 945, the parliamentary transcript from the state of Saxony-Anhalt, the first legislative period, session 24, agenda item 13, and the parliamentary transcript from the state of Brandenburg, the first legislative period, session 6, page 1866. That whips do not recall this a decade later, but remain very well aware of the logic of parliamentary government, however, suggests that the need to maintain an executive in office exerted a stronger impact on their legislative behavior than did efficiency concerns.

34. Interview, CDU, Saxony-Anhalt.

35. Interviews, CDU, Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt.

36. Interview, PDS, Saxony-Anhalt.

37. Interview, SPD, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

38. Interview, PDS, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.


41. Yoder (see note 39), 130-31.

42. Mair (see note 38), 16.


47. Sobyanin (see note 42), 194.

48. Haspel (see note 14).

49. Schüttemeyer (see note 12), 40.


51. Conradt (see note 2), 191; Davidson-Schmich (see note 8); Patzelt (see note 2); Saalfeld (see note 2), 50.