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E-mail: BerghahnUK@aol.com

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The Center for German and European Studies

German Politics and Society

247 Moses Hall #2316

University of California at Berkeley

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Toeing the Line

Institutional Rules, Elites, and Party Discipline in Post-Wall Berlin

Louise K. Davidson-Schmich

Department of Political Science, University of Miami

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc provided students of Germany and eastern Europe with unprecedented opportunities to investigate the attitudes and values of those socialized under communism. Extensive mass and elite opinion studies have documented that after decades of rule by an all-encompassing political party imposing iron discipline, eastern Europeans distrust political parties as well as party discipline.¹ Students of eastern Germany have found similar patterns, both at the mass² and elite³ levels. Eastern German politicians and their voters clearly are skeptical of strict party discipline and united in their belief that common interests should outweigh partisan concerns when legislation is made. These attitudes differ sharply from western German opinion, which is more supportive of both parties as a whole and party discipline in particular.⁴

These well-established findings raise, but fail to answer, a significant question: Do eastern and western Germans' contrasting attitudes actually matter in terms of legislative voting patterns? On the one hand, eastern parliamentarians' skepticism of parties may cause them to eschew disciplined legislative voting. Instead, they may rely on broad cross-party agreements to make public policy. On the other hand, German unification introduced political institutions to the five new Länder and East Berlin that require disciplined parties. Parliamentary government and competitive elections provide strong incentives for eastern German party caucuses (*Fraktionens*) to vote as united blocs around distinctly partisan platforms.⁵

Now that a decade has passed since unification, it is possible to build on the aforementioned opinion surveys and determine whether

attitudinal differences translate into contrasting political behavior in the two halves of the united country or whether identical formal political institutions have led to a convergence of elite behavior. The development of party discipline in eastern Germany is important for the consolidation of democracy there. When nonpreferential electoral lists are used, German voters have no way to hold accountable individual politicians who do not vote with their party caucus. If voters are to be able to reward or punish elected officials, parties must vote together as united blocs when government decisions are made.

This article examines both eastern and western Berlin elites' attitudes toward party voting and their actual voting behavior at the local level. I find that, despite formal institutional incentives to do so, members of eastern Berlin *Praktiken* practice party discipline less often than their western counterparts do. There are, however, differences among eastern party families. Although the Socialist Unity Party (SED) practiced iron discipline, its successor, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), is significantly less disciplined than the noncommunist parties represented in eastern Berlin localities today. This characteristic sets the PDS apart from the other eastern European postcommunist parties, which are today more disciplined than the other parties in the region.⁶

My findings are developed in four steps. First, I examine Berlin's political institutions and the incentives that these rules provide for the practice of party discipline. Second, I outline several points at which these incentives for party discipline may fail in eastern Berlin. Third, using three different tests, I compare party voting across Berlin. Finally, I conclude by analyzing the results of these tests.

I. Institutional Incentives for Party Discipline

Post-wall Berlin is an excellent case with which to compare how eastern and western German elites respond to identical institutional incentives for party discipline. The city-state of Berlin is divided into twenty-three districts (*Bezirke*), twelve of which lie in the west and eleven in the east.⁷ These districts are self-governing and responsible for maintaining local schools and infrastructure, as well as for providing a range of social services, recreational, and cultural opportunities. The

political, legal, and administrative structures, as well as the electoral laws in place, are identical for all districts. Each district is governed by a 45-member legislative assembly (*Bezirksverordnetenversammlung* or BVV) and a five-member executive council (*Bezirksamt*). The politicians and political parties who campaign for and hold these local offices have had quite different past experiences. In the west both politicians and their parties have over forty years' experience with democratic local politics, while in the east they are relative newcomers to this system of government. Berlin thus provides an ideal location in which to compare the reactions of eastern and western party caucuses to institutional incentives for party discipline.

The frequent practice of party discipline across Berlin is likely because Berlin's local governments provide three key incentives for parties to vote as united blocs when votes are taken in the assembly and its committees.⁸ First, politicians in Berlin are elected via a proportional representation system that uses party lists. Voters must vote for parties, and they cannot alter the rank ordering of candidates on the ballot. Party members nominate candidates for places on electoral lists and are unlikely to give the nomination to someone who has consistently gone against his own party. Further, a voter has little incentive to vote for a party whose caucus does not stand together in a united bloc when in government because she cannot predict what that party will do in office.⁹ It is thus in politicians' own interest to follow the party line when in government.

Second, Berlin's local executives are made up according to the partisan balance in district assemblies. The members of the executive are allotted portfolios of bureaucratic departments to oversee based on the strength of their party in the assembly. Individual council members (*Bezirksstadträte*) must be approved by a majority of the assembly, however. If a party does not stand together in the assembly, it could see its council members lose their administrative portfolios or even be voted out of office. Both possibilities will cause a party to lose influence and make it difficult for it to make decisions in the interest of its constituents.

Third, the assembly's committees also allow disciplined caucuses to influence local policy in favor of their constituents. Committees review and amend proposals made by the executive and make recommendations to the legislature about which proposals to accept.

The partisan composition of these committees is determined by the partisan balance in the assembly, with all parties being represented on each committee. If party groups do not have coherent issue stances, it will be difficult for their members to know what position to represent in committee meetings. These members may not be taken seriously by the other committee members since their caucus' support for their proposals is not guaranteed. Similarly, if parties do have coherent issue positions but are unable to enforce discipline, they have no guarantee that their representatives on committees will act according to the wishes of rest of the *Fraktion*, reducing the chances that committee decisions will represent the caucus' wishes. Without discipline, a party's ability to influence policy through district committees is limited, again reducing the attractiveness of a given party to voters. Thus, if a party hopes to influence local policy, exercise executive control, and be reelected, it must stand together when votes are taken.

The design of Berlin's local government structures makes it logistically feasible for party caucuses to respond to these incentives for party discipline.¹⁰ Local assemblies contain a total of only forty-five members and committees a maximum of thirteen members; when this study was conducted, caucuses ranged from a minimum of four to a maximum of twenty-seven members. As a result, practicing party discipline in Berlin does not require coordinating the opinions of a huge number of caucus members. Instead it is a process of a small group of actors coming to consensus. Local party caucuses meet at least once a week to discuss their positions on local issues, giving them ample time to develop a party line. Furthermore, the rules governing debate in local assemblies and committees allow *Fractionen* to call for a time-out before votes are taken. This enables parties to coordinate their actions even if a new, unexpected, or suddenly controversial issue comes to a vote. Lastly, votes in Berlin assemblies and committees are taken by a show of hands, allowing party members who for some reason still may be unclear about their caucus' issue position to determine this position and to vote along with the rest of their party. Thus not only are there institutional incentives for political parties across Berlin to vote in a disciplined manner, there are logistical opportunities for politicians to develop and communicate their party's issue positions.

Even if some party members disagree with the rest of their caucus' stance, local institutions provide caucus leaders with mechanisms to force even reluctant members to toe the party line. Because votes are taken by a show of hands, it is easy for other caucus members to detect who is defecting from the party's position.¹¹ These politicians can be punished in a number of different ways. Most drastically, other party members can bump them down or remove them from the party's electoral list in the next election.¹² Even if defectors remain in office, however, the party leadership can remove them from their choice of committee assignments.¹³ Because many people get involved in local politics because of their interest in a particular issue—local schools, sports, or cultural life, for example—removal from the schools, sports, or culture committee because of noncompliance with the party line would take away a large part of their motivation for being in local politics in the first place. Other politicians become active in local political life because they view it as a stepping stone to a higher, more lucrative, political office. These people have a strong incentive to toe the party line because otherwise they could lose their chances for career advancement.¹⁴ Finally, the frequent face-to-face interaction among Berlin party caucuses provides ample opportunities for normative sanctions against those who have defected from the party line.¹⁵

In addition to strong incentives for parties to vote in united blocs, Berlin's local institutions offer both opportunities for practicing party discipline and mechanisms to enforce it. Thus there are strong institutional pressures on all party caucuses in eastern and western Berlin to practice party discipline when voting in local assemblies and committees. Similar institutions are in place at the national level in Germany; when votes are taken in the *Bundestag*, parties vote as united blocs almost 100 percent of the time.¹⁶

II. Why Institutional Incentives May Fail in Eastern Berlin

Even though politicians (especially party leaders) may recognize the advantages of practicing party discipline, these opportunities to develop a party line and to punish defectors may not be enough to

ensure that caucuses always vote as united blocs. Disciplined voting may not occur for three reasons. First, although there are multiple opportunities for caucuses to meet and establish a party line, there is no guarantee that a party group's members will be able to agree on an issue stance in such meetings. If party caucus members have a broad range of policy preferences—that is, a low level of intraparty cohesion—even Berlin's many logistical opportunities to practice party discipline may not be enough for a party to agree how to vote.¹⁷ Politicians may well recognize the importance of party voting both in terms of policy and of reelection, but they may not agree on which policy stances are most advantageous for the party. Second, many of the mechanisms for enforcing party discipline involve withholding committee assignments, places on the party list, or higher party offices from politicians who deviate from the party line. If, however, parties have problems finding people to run for local office or serve on committees (which creates a small candidate pool), threats not to reappoint defectors from the party line may lose their credibility. Thirdly, the above-mentioned possibility of normative sanctions against defectors will only work if there are norms within the party group favoring party discipline.

Where these three factors—a low level of intraparty cohesion, a small candidate pool, and normative opposition to party discipline—are in place, party voting will be unlikely, despite strong incentives for party caucuses to vote as a united bloc.¹⁸ In this section I argue that all three of these factors occur more often in the eastern than in the western half of Berlin, reducing the likelihood of disciplined voting in eastern *Bezirke*. The above factors exert varying amounts of influence on the four party families present in eastern Berlin, however. These parties included the Christian Democrats (CDU), Social Democrats (SPD), the Alliance 90/Greens, and the former communist Party of Democratic Socialism. The Greens and the PDS are expected to be less disciplined than the *Volksparteien*. The sections below illustrate this variance and its origins.

Intraparty Cohesion

In terms of intraparty cohesion, numerous investigations conducted across the five new Länder have found stark ideological divisions among eastern members of the same political parties.¹⁹ Eastern Berlin

parties are no exception. These divisions should make it difficult for eastern Berlin *Fraktionen* to practice discipline.

To understand the origin of eastern parties' weak internal cohesion, it is necessary to examine the experiences of these party organizations and their individual members during the communist era and during the transition period following the fall of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The collapse of communism discredited not only the SED's leadership but also that of its ally, the East German CDU, leading to sweeping leadership changes in these parties. Additionally, as Honecker's regime crumbled, Social Democratic and Green organizations began to emerge (or reemerge). Thus, at the time the Berlin Wall fell, political parties in eastern Berlin were either just forming or in disarray. The reform of the block parties and the creation of new branches of western German party organizations accelerated with unification, however. The merger of the two German states brought with it the introduction of a proportional representation electoral system requiring party lists for western-dominated federal and state elections. To compete, all four of the party families studied here built local organizations across eastern Berlin within three years of unification.

This quick creation of local party organizations left two main legacies that reduce the intraparty cohesion of eastern Berlin caucus members today. First, because eastern parties either were established at the time of unification, or were suddenly thrust into a completely different political environment, these parties did not have much time to establish clear stances on local issues with which to attract members. Because members joined parties before the organizations had had a chance to establish stances on *Bezirk* issues, people with quite different political views entered the same party organizations. As a result politicians with extremely different ideological views and issue positions often found themselves in the same party group. This makes it difficult for eastern Berlin party caucuses to agree on policy issues and vote as united blocs.

In contrast, because western parties have had decades to develop and represent positions on a wide range of local issues, new members of western Berlin party organizations join cognizant of where their caucus stood on the issues in the past, as well as which constituents it represented. Furthermore, members generally join because they agree

with the party's stances on the issues. As a result, party members have relatively cohesive policy preferences, making disciplined voting more likely in western Berlin caucuses than in eastern ones.

These differences are well illustrated by the accounts two different Berlin politicians give of why they joined their respective parties. One western politician explained that, after years of involvement in a local renters' association, he decided to join the Greens because they had been so helpful in working with his association to protect local citizens from rising rents due to gentrification and commercial development. He became active in Green politics and eventually ran for office because he wanted to get more involved with the party's work in controlling development and representing renters' interests.²⁰

A member of an eastern district council gave a quite different account of joining his party. He joined the East German Christian Democrats in the 1970s to show his opposition to the SED; this opposition to the communist party grew so strong that during the final days of the GDR he became active in the grass-roots opposition group, New Forum, which eventually became part of Alliance 90. Some members of the New Forum criticized him for having ever joined the East German CDU, however, and wouldn't allow him to deliver a public speech on their behalf. Thus he cut his ties to this emerging party. At this point, he reported, "Since my political role models were always Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt I decided to go to the SPD." The local Social Democrats were so disorganized, however, that he quit this party too. After having exhausted two other possibilities, he rejoined the CDU where he has remained since they nominated him for public office.²¹

This politician is typical of many eastern politicians in that he joined his party after 1989 by process of elimination. An organization composed of members who join for idiosyncratic reasons or because of what the party stands *against* rather than *for* will have a much less cohesive membership than one composed of members united around a ideological worldview or political goals. This low cohesion is likely to translate into low levels of party voting.

A second legacy of the quick development of eastern Berlin party organizations—a lack of senior party leadership—also works to limit the internal cohesion of these bodies today, complicating party voting. The 1989 purges of the CDU and SED party leadership

eliminated most senior members of these parties. Similarly, because Alliance 90/Green and Social Democratic party groups were only founded as the Berlin Wall fell, most members of these parties joined at roughly the same time. Thus no party inherited senior figures who could socialize new members into the party's norms or issue stances. This lack of guidance by experienced party authorities makes it even more difficult to establish cohesive issue stances in party organizations whose membership already hold very diverse ideological views. Furthermore, in eastern *Bezirke*, there are very few veteran party members with the authority to set party policy or help resolve disputes among diverse caucus members.

In order to determine the seniority of party leaders across Berlin, I conducted a mail survey of local assembly members across Berlin. The sample included all budget committee members from each *Bezirk*, or approximately one-quarter of all elected local officials. This sample reflects the most senior *Fraktion* members in Berlin, since caucuses usually choose their most experienced or highest ranking members to serve on budget committees. Similarly, because committee seats are filled based on the partisan proportional make-up of the district assembly, the sample mirrors the partisan composition of Berlin's district governments.²² One hundred and forty-seven budget committee members returned their questionnaires—a response rate of 56 percent.

The survey found westerners to have significantly more experience in local assemblies than their eastern counterparts; westerners had served an average of 8.1 years, whereas the average easterner had spent only 4.8 years serving in the local assembly. Moreover, western caucus members had served from a minimum of one to a maximum of thirty years, indicating the presence of senior as well as new caucus members. In the east, in contrast, there was much less variance in the length of time local officials had held office; no one had served for more than seven years and almost half of the easterners surveyed had joined their caucus in the same year—1995. Thus, in western *Bezirke*, caucuses led by veterans of local politics with decades of experience are more likely to come to internal agreement than a diverse group of eastern newcomers who have not yet established issue positions or decision-making rules. These united western *Fractionen* are expected to be better able than eastern party groups to take advantage of Berlin's institutional incentives to practice party

discipline. Intraparty cohesion is not the only point at which eastern and western Berlin caucuses differ, however.

Candidate Pool Size

Recall from above that a small candidate pool makes it difficult for party leaders to discipline recalcitrant caucus members because leaders cannot credibly threaten to remove dissenters from their committee assignments or from the next electoral list. Virtually all studies of eastern German political parties find lower party member/officeholder ratios there than in western branches.²³ Similar problems are present in Berlin where media accounts often highlight a dearth of candidates and even officeholders in eastern localities.²⁴

In order to assess Berlin local parties' candidate pools and politicians' attitudes toward party discipline, I conducted personal interviews with 38 local caucus members. I interviewed at least one politician from every *Fraktion* represented in three western and four eastern district assemblies. These seven districts were selected as interview sites because they are representative of Berlin as a whole; they varied both in terms of partisan majorities and in terms of inner-city (poorer) versus suburban (more affluent) locations. Interviewees were chosen because, after participant observation of local decision making, they were identified as playing leading roles in their caucuses.

When I asked western caucus leaders how their parties chose candidates for office, they—like their federal-level counterparts—reported a number of strategic considerations, including loyalty to the party.²⁵ They sought lists that would have regional balance, gender balance, candidates with active involvement on local issues, and people who have worked hard campaigning for the party.²⁶ In contrast, eastern politicians mentioned much more basic considerations when putting together a party list. Most were more concerned with finding candidates willing to run and able to serve than with finding candidates representative of and loyal to the party's issue stances. Many stressed the difficulty of finding candidates at all. As one Alliance 90 member lamented, "Because of our limited membership we take who we can get; we have to make compromises."²⁷ Often parties in eastern Berlin had to resort to candidates who were not even party members in order to fill their lists.

The small size of eastern candidate pools influences discipline in two main ways. First, the dearth of candidates reduces the chances

that a party's elected officials will hold views representative of its membership or even similar views at all, making eastern party organizations much less ideologically cohesive than their western counterparts. Second, when candidates chosen to run for office have not previously been loyal to the party or even joined the party, they may have little incentive to stick with the party once in office. Eastern parties' struggle to find candidates reduces the credibility of caucus leaders' threats to remove renegade *Fraktion* members from committees or electoral lists, making the enforcement of discipline difficult.

These problems finding candidates spring from forty years of communist rule. First, four decades of dictatorship by the all-encompassing Socialist Unity Party meant coercion to join party-sponsored youth groups, unions, and other organizations. These experiences created in eastern Berliners both a distrust of political parties and an unwillingness to join organizations like parties. In contrast, western Berliners have had decades of experience with democratic political parties that represent their constituents. As a result, they are both more trusting of parties and more willing to join such organizations than their eastern counterparts. Eastern citizens often view the freedom *not* to participate in parties and political life as one of the biggest freedoms they have gained since unification. This legacy limits the number of eastern Berliners who today are willing to join local party organizations, let alone run for office.

A second legacy of the communist period in eastern Germany has been a large-scale discrediting of people directly involved with East Germany's regime. The noncommunist party organizations in Berlin have banned former members of the SED from joining their ranks today. Further, most GDR-era officeholders from any party are today considered non-electable. As a result, many eastern Berliners who might otherwise have the political ambition or skill to run for public office are eliminated from consideration, further narrowing eastern Berlin party organizations' pool of potential candidates and complicating a caucus leader's task of disciplining *Fraktion* members.

Norms and Discipline

Normative sanctions can also be used to deter or punish defectors from the party line. Where caucus members have strong norms favoring cooperation with the party's position, politicians may vote with

their *Fraktion* even when they disagree with its stance. Here again, however, there are strong east-west differences. Studies of politicians across Germany find normative opposition to party discipline among eastern elites; many associate democracy with a lack of party discipline.²⁸ Attitudes toward party discipline may differ across parties, however; Alliance 90/Greens and PDS *Fraktionen* do not officially practice party discipline, making normative opposition to discipline more likely among politicians from these party families.

In order to assess Berlin politicians' attitudes toward party discipline, I asked interviewees what they thought should be done with caucus members who disagreed with the rest of their party's stance. Because those interviewed were party leaders, it is likely that they were more supportive of discipline than other *Fraktion* members. Nonetheless, sharp differences in attitudes were found across Berlin. Virtually all western CDU and SPD respondents expressed few qualms about trying to hold dissenting caucus members to the party line. They accepted discipline as a fact of political life:

Once we've taken a vote on an issue inside our *Fraktion's* room, we always represent a united front outwardly. Sometimes it takes poking and prodding to get people to follow along, but they do.²⁹

We vote along party lines. Other members of the party may not understand all that goes on in the budget committee, but they must follow us. That's the way it's done [at the Land level] in Berlin and in Bonn. It has to be this way—we have only a narrow majority and need all the votes of our *Fraktion*.³⁰

Because their caucuses do not officially practice party discipline, western Berlin Greens were less likely to wholeheartedly support pressuring other caucus members to toe their party's line. As one politician put it, "There is no hierarchy... everyone can vote the way they want and even though we only have six members in our caucus there are sometimes very different votes on a given issue."³¹ Nonetheless, Green politicians in some western districts admitted that if a split within their party caucus would cost it the vote on an important issue, the *Fraktion* thought twice about whether or not to rein in renegade members. For example, one member of the Kreuzberg assembly reported:

It is traditional for the Greens not to have *Frakonzszenang* but since we are the biggest *Fraktion* and the mayor is a Green, we have to be sure

our budget passes. Some people in our party can vote against it—but not eight or nine people [out of the seventeen-member caucus]. This year we allowed four people to vote against the budget and give speeches [protesting budget cuts] in the assembly. But the rest of the people had to go along or the budget would not have passed.³²

In contrast to their non-Green western counterparts, eastern Berlin politicians from all party families indicated their opposition to the concept of party discipline. This was especially true among former communists; like the Greens, the PDS officially eschews the practice of party discipline. However, most eastern politicians interviewed agreed with one CDU member who recoiled and answered "No, no, no!" when asked whether he favored requiring dissenting members to vote in a disciplined way:³³

A Social Democrat: "No we are not like the state caucus. Our *Fraktion* does not practice party discipline... we allow people to vote as they want and speak out in the assembly meeting."³⁴

An Alliance 90 Member: "We have no party discipline."³⁵

A Christian Democrat: "What I think, I say, even if it goes against my party caucus."³⁶

A former communist: "For the PDS, party discipline is absolutely, definitively ruled out."³⁷

What accounts for eastern and western Berliners' diverging attitudes toward the practice of party discipline? I believe eastern politicians' distaste for party discipline stems from their experiences with the SED's iron discipline. As a result of their life experiences, those eastern Germans who do join parties and get elected to public office are often unwilling to compromise their beliefs for the sake of party unity.

Local citizens who today have a clean enough slate to be elected spent the preunification period either avoiding political life or not becoming too closely associated with the SED and its allies. Some contemporary eastern Berlin politicians never joined any political party during the GDR era. These people resisted joining a party to better their careers or to improve their access to scarce resources. Politicians in this category often stressed their unwillingness to follow the communist party line as the reason they had refused to join a political party under the former regime. For example, the head of an eastern Social Democratic party caucus recalled that during the GDR era he had consistently been pressured to join the communist party

and represent its stance to his subordinates in a local factory. Because he did not want to be forced to toe the party's line, he became very active in competitive sailing. His athletic commitments provided him with a handy excuse to decline party involvement.³⁸

Other eastern officials currently holding office did indeed join the SED or one of the other GDR-era parties but avoided taking leadership positions or holding public office before 1989. For example, one current member of an eastern district council entered the East German CDU in 1973 after this party—for the first time in GDR history—publicly disagreed with the communists over the issue of abortion and refused to follow their order to ratify a liberal abortion law. This politician said he joined the CDU not because he opposed abortion, but because the party had acted as a “corrective” to the all-encompassing discipline of the SED. As a member, he consistently refused to become active or hold leadership positions because he feared being forced to agree with the communist party.³⁹ Politicians who were party members during the GDR era but who still are eligible to run for office today either refused to toe their party's line in the past or never became too closely associated with their party.

These experiences have left a legacy of strong opposition to party discipline in eastern *Bezirke*, which is not present in western Berlin. In the west, candidates for local office usually are chosen because of their loyal service to their political party—not because of their opposition to it!

Expectations

Most eastern politicians thus express little support for disciplining party members who do not vote with the rest of their caucus, while such disdain for party discipline is not present among western politicians. In addition, western party caucuses have stronger intraparty cohesion and larger candidate pools than their eastern counterparts. These factors should make party voting more frequent in western than in eastern Berlin assemblies. Because Alliance 90/Green and PDS *Fractionen* do not officially discipline their members, these caucuses are expected to have lower rates of disciplined voting than the CDU and SPD.

III. Empirical Evidence

I examined these expectations in three ways: directly observing votes cast, surveying politicians about their voting behavior, and asking local experts about their impressions. Use of my own and others' observations helps reduce the bias and uncertainty that any single type of data collection could create. I found that eastern Berlin party organizations vote somewhat less often in a disciplined manner than their western counterparts. However, the difference is most remarkable with regard to the former communists—a finding that sets the PDS apart from other postcommunist parties in eastern Europe.

Direct Observation

Discipline in voting can be observed directly when party group members are called upon to make decisions either in legislative or committee meetings. Ideally, a large database of roll call votes would be used to test the above hypotheses. Unfortunately, votes taken in Berlin's district-level government institutions are not taken as roll call votes.⁴⁰ In order to determine whether parties vote as disciplined blocs, I had to personally observe the votes being taken. The number of possible observations I could make was limited by the fact that each district's assembly and committees meet at roughly the same time as all the other *Bezirke*. I observed at least one public meeting in all but one of Berlin's districts and systematically measured party discipline by recording the results of 164 votes taken in a subset of seven western and six eastern *Bezirke*. (A list of the meetings is available from the author.)

These thirteen districts are representative of Berlin as a whole in terms of legislative partisanship and inner-city versus suburban location. In the west I focused on four CDU majority assemblies and three SPD/Green assemblies. In the east votes were counted in three CDU/SPD and three PDS majority assemblies. Similarly, the meetings were distributed across eight poorer inner-city *Bezirke* and five more affluent suburban districts. This variance allowed me to control for any influence the partisan majority or the income-level of the district may have on party voting. For example, it may be easier for a party caucus to agree on how to solve a local problem in an affluent area with few problems than it would be in an area where resources are scarce and difficulties abound.

In addition, I made sure the meetings covered a range of topics so as to eliminate any bias in voting that a single issue might create. For example, parties may be willing to allow dissent over mundane administrative questions or low-profile political issues, but will likely be concerned that their members join ranks over high-profile political issues. One-third of the meetings observed were committee meetings and the other two-thirds were of the entire assembly. The votes taken involved issues ranging from routine administrative matters such as the decision to place an "under construction" sign on a bike path to serious political questions such as budgeting, zoning, assigning children to schools, and renaming streets named by communists or fascists.

Finally, to reduce any bias reelection concerns might have on party voting—for example, immediately before an election a party may try to close ranks and present a united front to voters—I observed meetings across the electoral cycle. While half of the meetings were held in 1997, in the middle of the electoral cycle, 30 percent of the meetings occurred only a year after an election (1996) and the remaining 20 percent were held in 1998, two months before a federal election and a year before Berlin's state and local elections.

I measured whether parties voted as united blocs or whether their members split in their stances on the issues at stake. If one or more party members voted differently than the rest of the caucus, including abstaining from a vote when the *Fraktion* as a whole did not abstain, I counted that party's vote as undisciplined. The decision to include abstentions among the defections was made because, in most instances, the person abstaining publicly announced that she was abstaining because she disagreed with her party. The decision to count single defections as breaks with discipline was made because most such defections occurred in committee meetings where the defectors claimed that other party members who were not on the committee agreed with their stances. Furthermore, there were only six instances in which only a single party member broke from the rest of the caucus—the rest of the time parties were even more divided. Ideally, I would have included a measure of precisely the number of deputies defecting from their caucuses. However, because individual votes were not recorded and observations had to be made in real time as voting occurred, such an exact measure was not possible.

I count decisions reached by a unanimous vote in a separate category. I do so because it was impossible to tell in such votes whether politicians were going along with their party in a disciplined manner or whether they were individually reacting to a valence issue. For example, many unanimous votes were on procedural or ceremonial issues, such as sending a wreath to the funeral of a dead former mayor, where all party group members likely agreed without having to try to coordinate their actions. Across Berlin, about one-third of the votes taken by local governments were unanimous; there were no statistically significant east-west differences in this regard.

The other votes taken involved the more serious political issues mentioned above. In terms of these non-unanimous votes, significant east-west variance was observed. (See Table 1.) In western Berlin, 97.5 percent of non-unanimous votes taken featured all parties voting as disciplined blocs. This figure plummeted to 17.8 percent in the eastern half of the city, a statistically significant difference. Instead, in eastern Berlin 64.4 percent of non-unanimous votes taken feature one party that did not practice discipline and 17.8 percent feature two or more parties that did not vote together as a bloc. In the west, only 2.5 percent of such votes involved one party not voting in a united fashion, and absolutely no votes involved any other party splitting. Eastern Germans not only have different attitudes toward political parties and party discipline, then, these attitudes also translate into political behavior, leading eastern assemblies and committees to employ significantly different decision-making procedures than their western counterparts.

Table 1: Party discipline as exhibited in district legislative and committee meetings

	Percentage of non-unanimous votes in which all parties practiced party discipline*	Percentage of non-unanimous votes in which one party did not practice party discipline*	Percentage of non-unanimous votes in which two or more parties did not practice party discipline*
Western Districts (N = 78)	97.5%	2.5%	0.0%
Eastern Districts (N = 28)	17.8%	64.4%	17.8%

Source: Author's observations.
* East-West difference significant at the 1.025 Level

Table 2 shows the partisan variation in party voting. In western Berlin, Christian Democrats and Social Democrats voted in a united fashion 100 percent of the time. Green caucuses in that half of Berlin, as expected, voted together less often than other western parties, but they did stand together as a united bloc 97.4 percent of the time. These differences among western CDU, SPD, and Green caucus's rates of disciplined voting were not statistically significant.

Table 2: How often was discipline practiced by individual parties?

	SPD	CDU	Greens/A90	PDS
West (N = 78)	100.0%	100.0%	97.4%	NA
East* (N = 25)	92.0%	80.0%	80.0%	48.0%

Percentage of all non-unanimous votes in which a given party voted as a bloc.

Source: Author's observations.

*ANOVA analysis finds significant differences among partisan rates of party voting ($p \leq 0.02$).

All party families represented in eastern Berlin had lower rates of discipline than their western counterparts; further, an ANOVA analysis of partisan variance found significant differences among the frequencies with which eastern Berlin parties practiced discipline. As expected, the SPD and CDU had the highest rates of disciplined voting: 92 percent and 80 percent respectively. Alliance 90 caucuses, as was anticipated, had a lower rate of party voting than the Social Democrats; however, *Bündnis 90* caucuses voted en bloc in 80 percent of votes taken at the local level—at the same rate as did the CDU. Perhaps the CDU had a lower rate of party voting than the SPD due to limits on the Christian Democratic candidate pool; many GDR-era party members may be discredited from running for office due to their previous activities. Finally, the PDS had the lowest level of party voting. While the direction of this finding is consistent with the above hypothesis, its magnitude is startling. The former communist caucuses voted together only 48 percent of the time. Part IV discusses this finding in more detail.

While none of the eastern party families voted in a disciplined manner as often as any western party, even the Greens, the differences between eastern and western branches of the same party were

not statistically significant. This result is clearly not expected by the discussion above; however, it may be explained by the nature of the test used. Counting formal votes taken in eastern Berlin biases the sample toward situations where party-line voting is likely to occur. Easterners tended to take formal votes only when relatively clear-cut partisan differences existed, reaching cross-party consensus at other times. Formal votes were more than twice as likely to be taken in meetings of western politicians than in eastern meetings (an average of 6 and 2.75 votes per meeting, respectively).

Self-Reporting

In order to assess whether the votes I observed were representative of decision making in Berlin localities, I included in my aforementioned survey of *Bezirk*-level politicians a question about these actors' experiences with party discipline in their district. No clear formal institutional rule for local committee decision making exists in Berlin, so I investigated what norms for decision making have evolved. Respondents were asked, "In general, how are committee decisions reached in your district?" Politicians were told to choose from the following answers: through caucus voting (each caucus votes together), through individual voting (each caucus member votes as he feels fit), or through consensus decision making. The results are presented in Table 3. Across Berlin fewer than 5 percent of respondents reported the predominant use of consensus decision making. At first glance this result may appear surprising, given that easterners were less likely than westerners to take formal votes on issues. I believe the low percentage of easterners mentioning consensus occurred because politicians were more likely to remember divisive majority votes than less controversial, consensus votes.

Table 3: Committee decision-making styles

	Caucus Voting*	Individual Voting*	Consensus
West (N=83)	87.5%	8.75%	3.75%
East (N=64)	57.1%	38.1%	4.8%

Source: Author's survey.

* East-West difference of means significant at the .010 level.

There were statistically significant east-west differences in the other two categories, however, supporting the expectations outlined above. The vast majority of western politicians (87.5 percent) reported that their committees made decisions using caucus voting. Among eastern politicians this figure dropped to 57.1 percent. Instead, almost 38.1 percent of eastern politicians reported individual voting; winning majorities were made up of individuals voting as they saw fit, rather than by caucus members voting as a bloc. In western Berlin, in contrast, this figure was only 8.75 percent. The significant differences in eastern and western politicians' committee decision-making styles offer more support for the hypothesis that low intraparty cohesion, small candidate pools, and norms against party discipline influence easterners' political behavior despite formal institutional incentives for party voting.

Expert Witnesses

To further test my hypotheses, I consulted "expert witnesses"—people who in their professional lives have occasion to observe political decision-making in districts across Berlin. Three were party activists and bureaucrats from western Berlin who started working in the eastern half of the city after unification to help develop parties and public administration there. The fourth was a journalist from the *Bezirke* section of the *Berliner Morgenpost* newspaper who was employed to cover local politics across Berlin. I asked these observers how they believed the frequency of disciplined voting compared in eastern and western Berlin. All of these expert witnesses agreed that party groups voted in a disciplined manner much less often in eastern committees and assemblies than in western ones.⁴¹

Thus these three sources of data—direct observation, self-reporting, and expert witnesses—all suggest that despite the identical institutional incentives to regularly practice party discipline in both halves of Germany's capital, eastern caucuses do so less often than their western counterparts. Recall from the direct observation data, however, that PDS party groups have had considerably more difficulty adapting to these institutions than other eastern parties. The following discussion examines why this is the case.

IV. The Undisciplined PDS

While both Green and PDS caucuses oppose party discipline in theory, there are stark differences between the way these *Fractionen* vote in practice. When Green caucuses realize a lack of party discipline can cost them an important vote, caucus members seem willing and able to vote as a united bloc. This is not the case for the PDS, however. This finding is particularly surprising because the PDS is such a powerful party in eastern Berlin. In contrast to the Bundestag and the Berlin *Abgeordnetenhaus*, where the former communists are in an isolated minority unable to influence vote outcomes, the PDS has executive majorities and is only one or two votes short of a legislative majority in the districts of Hellersdorf, Hohenschönhausen, Lichtenberg, and Marzahn. If party members there were to vote together as western Greens do, they would have a high probability of winning assembly votes. Why, unlike the Greens, are former communists unable or unwilling to discipline themselves? This question becomes especially intriguing when the communist party's highly disciplined past is taken into consideration. Why are the heirs to the disciplined SED now unable to discipline themselves? I believe the three factors outlined above—low intraparty cohesion, small candidate pools, and norms against discipline—exert a particularly strong influence over the Party of Democratic Socialism.

The former communists' great electoral successes in the eastern *Bezirke* have created a dilemma for the party. The Berlin PDS contains a split between hard-line, Marxist Platform members and moderate members whose policies more closely resemble Social Democratic or Green stances. These divisions can be illustrated by examining the PDS position on local budgeting, the most important local issue at the time this study was done. During this period, the CDU/SPD Land government ordered the districts to implement extensive budget cuts or lose control of their discretionary spending. Hardliners within the PDS, such as Hellersdorf Mayor Uwe Kleit, urged the party to defy state calls for budget cuts, especially to social programs, by actually increasing local spending in such areas. This group believed that it was better for the PDS to protest cuts to social spending and lose control over their finances than to submit to the CDU/

SPD state government. Other, more pragmatic members of the former communists, such as Lichtenberg Mayor Wolfram Friedersdorf, called on the party to play by the state's rules in order to preserve what discretion they did have over their limited funds. The split between those wishing to work within the system and those wishing to challenge it made it very difficult for PDS caucuses to coordinate their voting on a number of issues. The electoral victories that have put the PDS in a position to actually implement policies in many districts have forced a confrontation between these two camps. Moderate members of the party, who may have gone along with headline positions when the party had no chance of implementing them, have begun to balk when faced with actually implementing (and paying the price for) extreme policies. Such strong ideological splits were not as prevalent in the other three party families represented in eastern Berlin, making their chances of agreeing on a party line higher.

Similarly, while all eastern Berlin parties have difficulty finding party members to run for local office, this problem seems especially acute for the PDS. The difference can be seen in the composition of eastern Berlin executives, where non-party members fill 37 percent of the PDS's seats; in contrast, for the Alliance 90, CDU, and SPD this figure is 0 percent. These latter parties' ability to find party members to run for public office may stem from their proximity to western Berlin. Noncommunist political parties have the possibility of enhancing their candidate pools by drawing on party members from western districts to fill offices for which no appropriate eastern party member can be found.

Furthermore, because the noncommunist parties' state and national-level organizations are dominated by disciplined westerners, eastern Berlin party members seeking career advancement beyond the local level must also vote with their caucuses if they are to get ahead. In contrast, the former communists' undisciplined state-level leadership does not provide incentives for upwardly mobile *Bezirk*-level politicians to toe a party line. Because PDS caucus leaders cannot credibly threaten to remove dissenting caucus members from their posts or deny them promotions, PDS *Fractionen* are less likely than other caucuses to vote in a disciplined manner.

In addition to being extremely split on local issues and not having a large, disciplined western branch, there may be electoral reasons for

the former communists to shun party discipline. The association of party discipline with the dictatorship of the communist party among politicians and voters poses a dilemma for the Party of Democratic Socialism.⁴² If the PDS were to follow present-day institutional incentives and force its caucus members to toe a party line, voters and the PDS' political opponents might be convinced that the party had not changed much from its totalitarian past. As a result, the PDS has pledged not to practice discipline; this move is calculated to send a strong signal to others about the party's democratic nature.⁴³ Not adopting the "western" practice of party discipline has an additional electoral benefit for the PDS. It helps the former communists reinforce their electoral niche as a uniquely "eastern" political party. These electoral factors strengthen PDS members' normative opposition to party discipline, making the former communists unlikely to rein in recalcitrant caucus members, even if it costs them a specific vote.

V. Conclusions

Studying the frequency with which party discipline is practiced across Berlin contributes to social scientists' understanding of both German and comparative politics in several ways. First, it confirms the findings of other scholars of eastern and western German elites. Like Bürklin, Rohrschneider, and Yoder, I find that eastern elites have significantly different attitudes than their western counterparts, especially *vis-à-vis* parties, party discipline, and confrontational partisan politics. Similarly, like Linnemann and other scholars of individual German political parties, I observe a higher degree of ideological divisions within eastern *Fractionen* than within western caucuses.⁴⁴ Finally, as all of these authors do, I find that eastern Germans' skepticism of political parties makes it difficult for eastern party elites to recruit both members and candidates.

Rather than simply echoing these well-established findings, however, I go a step further. While the above studies find significant differences in elite attitudes across Germany, they do not measure what political behavior—if any—results from these beliefs.⁴⁵ On the one hand, these attitudinal differences may cause divergent elite behavior. For example, legislative voting across Berlin may differ due to

easterners' contrasting attitudes toward partisan decision making. On the other hand, however, these attitudinal differences may be outweighed by institutional incentives for party discipline, leading to convergence in legislative voting behavior. If this were the case, the attitudinal variation observed by so many scholars would have little substantive impact. In this article, I have investigated what difference varying elite and mass attitudes actually make in terms of elite political behavior.

The data examined here suggest that the introduction of western German political institutions to eastern Berlin has not brought a complete convergence in elite political behavior across the city-state. Thus the evidence presented here offers a broader lesson for comparative politics: even in the face of strong institutional incentives, diverging elite values *do* matter for elite political behavior. Eastern Berliners' normative opposition to disciplining dissenting caucus members, the dearth of people willing to run for public office in eastern *Bezirke*, and the broad range of opinions within caucuses there have made it difficult for eastern *Fraktion*en to act on institutional incentives for party discipline.

Some caucuses are more able than others to respond to these incentives, however. Of all the party families represented in eastern Berlin, the Party of Democratic Socialism is by far the least disciplined. This finding represents a third contribution of this article. I show that in contrast to its predecessor and in contrast to the other communist successor parties studied by, for example, Haspel, Morlang, Remington, and Smith, the PDS has difficulty disciplining its members. That other communist successor parties are more disciplined than their competitors, while the PDS is less disciplined than the other German parties, has in a large part to do with the nature of the former communists' opponents. While the PDS faces organized and established western German parties, other postcommunist parties often face only newly formed, weakly organized proto-parties. It is these latter parties' inability to coordinate their actions that accounts for the comparatively high discipline of the postcommunist parties elsewhere in eastern Europe. The PDS's difficulty with discipline stems not just from its comparison to disciplined western German parties, however; it also has to do with factors unique to the PDS. The Basic Law's requirement that parties support the

democratic constitutional order provides an incentive for today's PDS to distance itself from its highly disciplined predecessor. Ideological divisions within the party regarding the extent to which the PDS should oppose the united German political and economic system also make it difficult for the former communists to agree on a party line. Finally, the aging party has extensive problems recruiting both new members and untainted candidates eligible for public office.

In addition to contributing to social science literature, my findings also raise some concerns about the functioning of democracy in eastern Berlin. Political parties are a vital part of all representative democracies, especially parliamentary systems with PR electoral rules.⁴⁶ The legislative voting behavior of elected officials influences both the capability of the party system to provide voters with clear-cut policy alternatives and the ability of voters to hold parliamentarians accountable for their actions.⁴⁷ Party caucuses that do not practice discipline when in government jeopardize these aspects of democracy. Because eastern Berlin party caucuses cannot always discipline their members, local assemblies sometimes find it difficult to pass legislation. For example, during the 1990s several eastern assemblies failed to agree on an annual budget. The fiscal decisions that were made were often not easily attributable to a specific party or parties. Party lists, however, do not give Berlin voters a mechanism to reward or punish individual elected officials for the stances they took while in government. In addition, voting for one undisciplined party over another cannot be used by voters as a way in which to send their elected representatives a signal about their preferred policies. Eastern Berliners' attitudes toward political parties and party discipline, then, do have an influence beyond opinion polls; they shape the very functioning of democratic political institutions there.

Notes

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5. David P. Conradt, *The German Polity*, 6th ed. (White Plains, NY, 1996), 185; Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, and Peter Mair, *Representative Government in Modern Europe* (New York, 1995).
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8. Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, "Aufbau und Aufgaben der Berliner Bezirksverwaltung," 1992, 29.
9. Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, *Seats and Votes* (New Haven, 1988), 55-56; Gallagher et al (see note 5).
10. Landeszentrale; *Bezirksverordnetenversammlung (BVV) Prenzlauer Berg von Berlin, Gedenkordnung der Bezirksverordnetenversammlung Prenzlauer Berg von Berlin*, 13 March 1996, 21.
11. For more on monitoring and party discipline see Gary W. Cox and Matthew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leashmen: Party Government in the House* (Berkeley, 1993).
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13. For more on committee assignments and party discipline see David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House* (Chicago, 1991). Cox and McCubbins (see note 11).
14. For more on career advancement and party discipline see Gary W. Cox, *The Official Secret* (New York, 1987), 25. Gallagher et al (see note 5).
15. For more on norms and party discipline see Malcolm E. Jewell, "Attitudinal Determinants of Legislative Behavior: The Utility of Role Analysis," in Allan Kornberg and Lloyd D. Musolf, eds, *Legislatures in Developmental Perspective*, (Durham, NC, 1970) and Simon Hix and Christopher Lord, *Political Parties in the European Union* (New York, 1997), 142 and 153.
16. Conradt (see note 5), 185.
17. For more on party cohesion and party discipline see Rohde (see note 13).
18. Because each of these variables works in tandem to make discipline unlikely, it is difficult to evaluate their independent effects. A small candidate pool may not stop a very cohesive party with a normative predisposition to practicing discipline from voting as a bloc. Similarly, a huge candidate pool may not help a party with low cohesion and an antipathy toward discipline find candidates willing to toe the party line.

19. M. Rueschemeyer (see note 4); Linnemann (see note 4); Dieter Segert, "The East German CDU: An Historical or Post-Communist Party?," *Party Politics* 1, (October 1995): 589-98; Jens Bastian, "The Enfant Terrible of German Politics: The PDS Between Nostalgia and Democratic Socialism," *German Politics* 4, (August 1995).
20. O. Ayanoğlu, Green member of Kreuzberg district budget committee, interview by author, 1997.
21. Martin Federlein, Pankow district council member for finance (CDU), interview by author, 14 May 1997.
22. However, the Greens (the smallest party) are somewhat over-represented because each party is guaranteed at least one seat on every committee, regardless of how small the *Fraktion* is.
23. Barbara Donovan, "Volksparteien ohne Volk: Germany's New Party System, 1989-1999" (paper presented at the 95th Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, GA: 2-5 September 1999); Susan Searrow, "The Paradox of Enrollment: Assessing the Costs and Benefits of Party Memberships," *European Journal of Political Research*, 25 (April 1994): 41-60; Linnemann (see note 4); M. Rueschemeyer (see note 4); Olivo (see note 2). The one exception to this finding involves the Party of Democratic Socialism. In many areas, including Berlin, this party's member/office holder ratio is higher than that of western parties. This is due to the party's many GDR-era members who remain on party rosters. Despite this large membership, however, the PDS is still plagued by a lack of party members willing and/or able to run for office. Ninety percent of the PDS' members joined the party before 1989 and many held leadership or other incriminating positions during the communist period, making it particularly difficult for the PDS to find acceptable candidates for public office. Furthermore, two-thirds of PDS members are pensioners, likely ruling out many potential candidates simply for health reasons (Bastian, [see note 19], 101).
24. See "Alle Parteien in Not: Zum Superewahltag fehlen Kandidaten," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 August 1998; "SPD: 550 Mitglieder, 400 Kandidaten," *Berliner Morgenpost*, 4 August 1998.
25. For more on the selection of *Bundestag* candidates, and these candidates' chances of election, see Bernhard Wessels, "Germany" in Pippa Norris, ed., *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies* (Cambridge, 1997), 76-97.
26. Peter Senfleben, SPD member of Reinickendorf district budget committee. Interview by author, Berlin, 3 February 1997. Hella Dunger-Löper, SPD member of Wilmersdorf district budget committee, interview by author, Berlin, 27 February 1997; Peter Olenberg, Green member of Wilmersdorf district budget committee, interview by author, Berlin, 4 February 1997. Dietmar Nobiling and Wolfgang Sadowski, CDU members of Wilmersdorf district budget committee, interview by author, Berlin, 5 February 1997.
27. Kathrin Thierfeld, Green member of Pankow district budget committee, interview by author, Berlin, 18 February 1997. For other accounts of the difficulties of finding suitable candidates see Klaus Witting, SPD member of Köpenick district budget committee, interview by author, Berlin, 26 May 1998; and Petra Schauf, CDU organizer in Prenzlauer Berg and Charlottenburg, interview by author, 1998. For interviewees discussing the need to take non-party members for their electoral lists see Christian Bollensdorff, Green member of Lichtenberg district budget committee, interview by author, Berlin, 3 April 1997; Michael van der Meer and Klaus Lederer, PDS members of Prenzlauer Berg district budget committee, interview by author, Berlin, 19 February 1997.
28. Yoder (see note 3); Hager (see note 3).
29. Nobiling (see note 26).
30. Mr. Betcke, CDU, Reinickendorf, interview by author, Berlin, 17 February 1997.
31. Herbert Mücke, Green member of Tempelhof district budget committee, interview by author, Berlin, 6 February 1997.
32. Ayanoğlu (see note 20).
33. Mr. Segenitz, CDU member of Mitte district budget committee, interview by author, 1998.
34. Witting (see note 27).
35. Thierfeld (see note 27).
36. Peter Kandelhardt, CDU member of Hellersdorf district budget committee, interview by author, 1997.
37. van der Meer (see note 27).
38. Witting (see note 27).
39. Federlein (see note 21).
40. BVV Prenzlauer Berg, (see note 10), 19 and 21.
41. Klaus Merken, SPD citizen deputy on Pankow district budget committee, retired director of Reinickendorf and later Pankow district budget offices, interview by author, Berlin, 1997; Matthias Köhne, SPD budget expert, interview by author, Berlin, 1998; Hansa Klein, newspaper reporter, *Berliner Morgenpost* "Bezirke" section, interview by author, Berlin, 1997; Schauf. (See note 27)
42. For elite examples see Günter Bärwolff, PDS head of Prenzlauer Berg district assembly, interview by author, 1996; and Mr. Fritsche, PDS member of Pankow district budget committee, interview by author, 1997. For examples of voter sentiment, see endnote 2.
43. Gero Neugebauer, and Richard Stöss. *Die PDS: Geschichte, Organisation, Wähler, Konkurrenz* (Opladen, 1996).
44. For divisions within the SPD see for example M. Rueschemeyer (see note 4), within the CDU see for example Segert (see note 19), for the PDS see for example Bastian (see note 19), and for Alliance 90 see for example Olivo (see note 2).
45. Yoder briefly addresses this topic, but fails to provide precise measures of, for example, party discipline across the eastern states (Yoder [see note 3], 142-49).
46. Leon D. Epstein, "The Scholarly Commitment to Parties" in Ada W. Finifter, ed., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Washington, DC, 1980).
47. G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability, and Violence* (Cambridge, 1982).