

COHESION AND CANDIDATE SELECTION IN PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

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COHESION AND CANDIDATE SELECTION IN PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

Summary

Previous literature has argued that MPs selected by party elites in a central and exclusive way are more disciplined than those belonging to parties with more inclusive and participative mechanisms of candidate selection. This hypothesis has been usually tested measuring the existence of voting blocs in parliamentary groups (taken for granted that voting blocs are the result of party discipline) and party rules on candidate selection (ignoring how selection process takes place). By using data from a survey to a representative sample of Spanish members of parliaments, we study the impact of candidate selection on how cohesion in parliamentary groups is built. Results show that where nomination for the electoral list rests on party elites, decisions are imposed through discipline. On the contrary, parliamentary group cohesion is achieved through deliberative processes of decision-making in more decentralised and inclusive groups.

Keywords: Party Discipline - Elite Selection - Representation - Parliamentary Elite - Party Cohesion

Cohesion in parliamentary groups is a crucial element for political stability in parliamentary democracies, government and legislative efficiency, and government's accountability (Carey 2007, Field and Siavelis 2008). Parliamentary group cohesion is the result of MPs in

a group voting similarly and it may be built and maintained through the imposition of the leadership (party discipline) or through a more deliberative approach.

Previous works have theorized that control of the design of electoral lists is one of the key elements on disciplining parliamentarian's behaviour. MPs are expected to be more loyal to those parties where the party elite is in charge of candidate selection. However, empirical evidence on this relationship is still limited (Carey 2007, Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Hix 2004). Following the thesis of Rahat and Hazan (2001), in this article we inquire about the effects of candidate selection processes on cohesion in parliamentary groups by analysing how decisions are taken, whether by imposition of the leadership or through a more deliberative approach inside parliamentary groups.

We focus on Spain as a case of a constellation of similar parliamentary democracies that have achieved a high level of intra-party cohesion (Sánchez de Dios 1999; Field 2011, 2013). Empirically, we rely on data from a survey to a representative sample of 580 Spanish MPs.¹ Theoretically, we contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between candidates' selection and internal processes of decision making, and its consequences for political representation in parliamentary systems.

¹ CIS, study 2827.

I. Selection and cohesion

Özbudun (1970) defines party cohesion as “the extent (...) [to which] group members can be observed to work together for the group’s goals”. Internal cohesion in parliamentary groups may be achieved through different ways, ranging from imposition of decisions by the leaders, to a consensus built after open deliberation. Cohesion in parliamentary groups is expressed and observed in the same fashion—all members voting the same, producing voting blocs. However, there is a relevant problem in the literature dealing with this topic. Previous works studied party unity using indexes of cohesion based on intra-party voting homogeneity (Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999; Carey 2007; Hix 2004; Krehbiel 2000; Sieberer 2006). Rice’s is one of the most used of these indexes.² Yet, as voting blocs are the rule in most European parliamentary democracies and party dissent is rarely expressed in voting, the use of Rice’s index hides the real decision-making processes (and dissent) behind the final voting usually observed.

In order to avoid this problem, we understand that cohesion is the result of internal practices of parliamentary groups. Consequently, rather than focusing on voting outcomes, we analyse how decisions are taken in parliamentary groups. For that purpose, we use survey data on parliamentary elites, where MPs were asked how final decisions on voting are built, whether by the leadership or by deliberation and consensus or agreement. As results show, this method becomes a useful tool in order to get accurate information on how internal cohesion is built in parliamentary groups.

² The index (Rice 1925) measures the absolute difference between the proportion of party members voting in favour of an initiative and the proportion of party members voting against. It ranges from zero (half of the group voting against and half in favour) to one (bloc voting). The index may be applied whenever individual votes can be identified.

There are many structural factors determining how cohesion in parliamentary groups is achieved: type of democratic regime³ (Carey 2007; Diermeir and Feddersen 1998; Shugart 1998), party system⁴ (Kornberg 1967; Best 1995; Lundell 2004; Sieberer 2006), the use of closed and blocked lists (Bowler *et al.* 1996; Carey and Shugart 1995; Carey 2007; Hix 2004), State decentralization (Czudnowski 1975; Hermens 1972; Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Bowler *et al.* 1996⁵; Mainwaring 1999), or even internal party rules⁶ (Depauw and Martin 2008).

Although these factors have attracted the attention of many scholars, the study of the effects of candidate selection is still poorly developed (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Rahat and Hazan 2001; Depauw and Martin 2009). And yet, control over the candidate selection process is one of the most powerful tools for a party to achieve and maintain internal cohesion within the parliamentary group (Carey 2007; Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Hix 2004). Thus, in this paper we inquire about the effects of candidate selection procedures on the ways decisions are made within parliamentary groups so that internal cohesion is built and maintained.

As Field and Siavelis (2008) remark, candidate selection is a diverse phenomenon with a variety of procedures and effects. The most significant theoretical contribution on candidate selection for legislatures is that of Rahat and Hazan (2001) model based on two specific

³ Previous works have demonstrated that MPs are less disciplined in presidential democracies than in parliamentary democracies.

⁴ “In a highly polarised party system, the distance (whether psychological or political) between the parties may be so wide as to deter members from wanting to defect” (Bowler *et al.* 1999:6).

⁵ Bowler *et al.* argue that despite the fact that smaller districts generate more personal and local ways of leadership, party discipline still plays an important role.

⁶ In order to avoid ‘faction hopping’ and an excessive lack of unity, candidates in some parties sign pledges where they explicitly commit to support the general statements and vote with the party. However, these contracts do not guarantee the absence of errant deputies, and alternative ways of parliamentary control are more commonly used like fines set in internal rules or agenda control (Bowler *et al.* 1999; Carey 2007)

elements: centrality and exclusiveness.⁷ Centrality is understood as the territorial level at which MPs get selected or designated⁸ (with participation of national, regional or local party members). Exclusiveness refers to the size of the *selectorate*,⁹ ranging from large (all citizens) to small (party leaders). These two concepts have been widely used in different works (Billie 2001; Bowler *et al.* 1999; Epstein 1980; Hopkin 2001; Lundell 2004; Pennings and Hazan 2001; Ranney *et al.* 1981).

Sometimes lacking first-hand information about the functioning of parties and/or parliamentary groups, scholars have focused on institutions (written rules and norms) to explain how electoral lists are made and approved (Carey 2007; Hix 2004; Lundell 2004). However, some researchers have demonstrated that candidate selection processes are complex and are usually the result of internal and informal negotiations in which different criteria are put forward by relevant actors (Hopkin 2001; Katz 2001). Being this the case, it seems appropriate to go beyond written rules and norms and inquire actors (MPs) about the nature of the selection process. For this purpose, different strategies can be used, such as carrying out in-depth interviews to party's selectorates or qualified informers, observing the functioning of selection committees, or interviewing those directly involved—the MPs. Findings in this article are based on survey data obtained from a representative sample of 580 Spanish parliamentarians (national and subnational level) in order to capture the perceptions of MPs on candidate selection and cohesion building within parliamentary groups. Future qualitative research could complement the findings presented in this article.

⁷ Rahat and Hazan remark that these two phenomena are correlated, although they are different concepts. In fact, we also found a very low and even negative correlation (-0.07 Pearson's correlation index) in the selected variables that measure centrality and exclusiveness (see Figure A1 in Annex).

⁸ Rahat and Hazan also introduce a second element of centralisation. This is "corporate delegation" (functional representation of some groups as Trade Unions or women).

⁹ The use of the concept "exclusiveness" also refers to the candidacy (only party members can be selected, or the process is open to all citizens). A fourth criteria considered by Rahat and Hazan is the distinction between voting and appointment.

II. The case of Spain

After 40 years of authoritarian rule, the 1978 constitution made Spain a quasi-federal parliamentary democracy in which political parties play a prominent role (Linz 1989). A multiparty system with two dominant national parties and a number of regional ones has been consolidated. Two major parties—PSOE (Socialist Party, center-left) and PP (People's Party, center-right)¹⁰—have been alternatively ruling at the national and regional level since 1982. Electoral support for these two parties has increased since the early eighties, adding to 73% of valid votes in the 2011 national elections. Smaller statewide parties, like IU (United left, created around the Spanish Communist Party) and more recently UPyD (Union, Progress and Democracy, a new born center party), have never obtained more than 11% of votes since the early eighties. The party system is also formed by a number of smaller regional parties some of which have played a prominent role (like the Basque Partido Nacionalista Vasco –PNV-, the Catalan *Convergència y Unió* –CiU- or the Canary *Coalición Canaria*) since they have sustained national governments of different ideologies (Gunther *et al.* 1988; Linz and Montero 1999).

The territorial decentralization consecrated in the 1978 constitution has had two relevant and related effects. First, it has promoted the emergence of regional party systems and the regionalisation of national ones. The creation of 17 Autonomous Communities with 17 regional parliaments and governments is a powerful institutional incentive for the creation of new regional parties competing with older ones for new regional sources of power.¹¹

¹⁰ Originally, a fusion of Christian democrat, conservative and liberal parties.

¹¹ Besides CC, CiU and PNV, some other historically relevant regionalist and nationalist parties are BNG: Bloque Nacionalista Galego (Nationalist Galician Bloc), CHA: Chunta Aragonesista (Aragon Union), EA: Eusko Alkartasuna (Basque Solidarity), EH: Euskal Herritarrok (Basque Citizens), ERC: Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia), HB: Herri Batasuna (Popular Union), NaBai: Nafarroa Bai (Yes to Navarre), PA: Partido Andalucista (Andalusian Party), PAR: Partido Aragonés (Aragonese Party), PNG: Partido Nacionalista Galego (Nationalist Galician Party), UV: Unió Valenciana (Valencian Union).

Consequently, some regions have developed their own regional party systems (primarily the Canary Islands, Catalonia, Galicia, the Basque Country and Navarra) with influential and powerful regionalist and nationalist parties at the regional level –see Table A2 in annex— (Gunther *et al.* 2004; Pérez-Nievas and Bonet 2006) with a significant presence in the national chambers. In Catalonia and the Basque Country, their main nationalist parties— CiU, a federation of a liberal and a Christian democrat party, and PNV, a center-right party— ruled the regional governments since the early eighties except for brief periods.¹² Additionally, decentralization has led nationwide parties to adopt a regional internal structure to cope with the demands of a growing regional electoral competition. In some parts, statewide parties have regional branches (the PSOE has an autonomous branch in Catalonia, the Socialist Catalan Party, and the PP was represented in Navarra by the Navarrese People's Union until 2009) but all of them have developed a regional organizational structure with a major influence in the selection of candidates for a relevant number of political positions.

Second, the combination of decentralization and democratization in a short period of time has provoked the emergence of a number of political positions open for electoral competition. For instance, since the first regional elections in 1980 (held in Catalonia and the Basque Country) until 2010, candidates have competed for 9657 seats at the regional level, national candidates competed for 2800 seats at the Congress of Deputies and 1960 at the Senate, and supranational candidates competed for 352 seats at the European Parliament. This involves, on the one hand, an intense activity within parties to select candidates for the electoral lists and, on the other hand, a growing possibility for the professionalization of multilevel parliamentary careers. Despite being a relatively young democracy,

¹² 2003-2010 PSC in Catalonia and 2009-2012 PSE-PSOE in the Basque Country.

professionalization is gaining ground in Spain (Borchert and Stolz 2011), although scholars do not agree on the extension of the professionalization of politics in Spain (Rodríguez 2011; Coller *et al.* 2014).

As in most of parliamentary democracies, Spain shows high levels of cohesion in parliamentary groups (Sánchez de Dios 1999; Field 2013). Three factors contribute to explain these high levels of cohesion—structural elements, rules of parliamentary groups, and also internal regulation of parties.

Concerning the structural elements, there are some aspects of the electoral system at the national and regional level that affect the candidate selection process and the future internal party cohesion. The combination of the D'Hondt formula, the 3% or 5% threshold and the design of 52 provincial districts were conceived to avoid an excessive fragmentation of the party system.¹³ According to the theory (Carey 2007), the provincial design of districts could generate decentralized ways of elite selection and also lower levels of party discipline. However, combined with the institutional incentives for regionalizing politics, the result has been a growing control over candidate selection processes on the hands of regional branches of national parties. Another element of the electoral system reinforces control over selection, namely, the electoral lists, which in Spain are closed and blocked in all elections but in the Senate. Closed and blocked lists leave no room for citizens to express their wishes and no incentives for candidates to approach the electors, leaving the representative function in the hands of parties.¹⁴

¹³ The effective number of parties in Congress was 2.8 in 1979, 2.3 in 1982, 2.7 in 1996 and 2.5 in 2000 (Linz *et al.* 2005: 1119); and 2.3 in 2008 (Montero and Lago 2010), when interviews took place.

¹⁴ An additional feature of the electoral system with relevant implications in the selection of parliamentary elite is the recent passage of the "Equality Act", by which from 2007 lists must contain no less than 40% nor more than 60% candidates of the same sex. This development did increase the percentage of women, although their lax implementation led men in smaller constituencies to occupy "safer positions" in the lists (Martínez and Calvo 2010).

Secondly, Parliaments and some parliamentary groups have rules that include elements of control leading to internal cohesion. Although some minor variation can be found in different chambers, the case of the Congress of Deputies¹⁵ can be taken as a good example for the lack of autonomy of MPs. For instance, every MP must be part of a parliamentary group, formed by at least 15 members.¹⁶ Furthermore, members of the same party cannot form different parliamentary groups, and individual MPs can take part in the legislative process through presenting amendments only with the authorization of the chief whip (Sánchez de Dios 1999; Standing orders of the Congress of Deputies). Also, every parliamentary group develops its own internal rules reinforcing internal cohesion. For instance, they may introduce fines in order to punish MPs disobedience or even contemplate the expulsion of an MP after taking an internal vote. Internal cohesion may also be a side effect of MPs turnover (Coller 2010) since MPs voting different from the rest of the group or not meeting the expectations of the leadership may not repeat in the electoral list. Previous works have demonstrated that only 1 out of four MPs leave Parliament “for personal reasons”, being the party who decides keeping or not the candidate in “safe positions” in the electoral list (López-Nieto 2004: 39; Uriarte 2000).

Thirdly, internal regulation of parties plays the most important role in candidate selection, promoting or hampering more inclusive and decentralised ways of elaborating electoral lists for parliaments. The Spanish territorial structure generated incentives for parties to behave isomorphically by creating regional structures from which new sources of power and leadership have emerged exerting control over candidate selection for electoral lists.

¹⁵ Standing Orders of the Congress of Deputies. Available from: <<http://www.congreso.es>>. [8 April 2014]

¹⁶ Only 5 if the party or coalition reaches the 5% of votes at national level or 15% in every constituency where the party presented a candidate.

However, candidates' selection is still quite centralised for all sorts of elections. The most inclusive processes of candidate selection are not designed for legislative elections, but for the candidates to the Presidency of the national and regional governments and to the Mayor of the main cities (Méndez-Lago 2000; Hopkin 2001).

Even in the PSOE, a party with a federal structure that has established procedures for local affiliates to participate in selecting candidates (primaries), there are mechanisms of control at provincial (Provincial Executive Commission), regional and national level, with veto power (National Executive Commission and Federal Committee, with representatives of every region). The main conservative party (People's Party, PP) and the coalition United Left (IU, created around the Spanish Communist Party) also have centralised mechanisms of control. In both cases, the electoral lists are approved by the National Electoral Committee (PP) and the Political Federal Council (IU), both veto players located at the national level, with regional representatives¹⁷.

Despite being a relatively young democracy with high levels of institutional decentralization, Spain represents a case of parliamentary democracies showing high levels of party stability. Like most parliamentary democracies in Europe, its levels of cohesion in parliamentary groups are also remarkably high, in large part due to the electoral system, internal regulation of parties and the rules of parliamentary groups. As it will be described in the next section, our data allows us to analyse how cohesion is built in parliamentary groups and the role played by practices on candidate selection. This information sheds light on the debate on party discipline and its implications on party stability and political representation in parliamentary democracies.

¹⁷ Rules regulating candidate selection for the PSOE, PP and IU. Available at: <<http://www.psoes.es>>, <<http://www.pp.es>>, and <<http://www.izquierda-unida.es>>. [8 April 2014]

III. Data and hypothesis

Beyond structural factors, internal rules of parliamentary groups, and party regulations, the relationship between how internal cohesion is achieved and candidate selection is handled needs to be empirically explored. Cohesion in parliamentary groups is the outcome of internal decision making processes that every parliamentary group goes through. Since the informal dimension of the decision making process is both relevant and not self-evident, MPs perceptions on this matter are needed. We use the database of the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research (CIS, study 2827.) with survey data from personal interviews to regional and national Spanish parliamentarians. Personal interviews were carried out between June 2009 and March 2011, based on multiple choice closed questionnaires. The large representative sample (580 MPs), overrepresents the chambers of the four distinctive regions (Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia and Andalusia, see Table A1 in annex for more details). There is also variability in the form of government in the sample (9 chambers formed by majority governments, 6 with majority coalitions and 4 with minority governments), and in the ruling party (PSOE was de formateur party in 10 chambers, PP in 6 chambers, and UPN, PRC and CC in their respective regional parliaments Navarra, Cantabria and the Canary Islands). The 580 individuals have been grouped into 30 parliamentary groups,¹⁸ including statewide parties and regional parties, and information for these groups has also been collected in order to test our hypothesis.

18 See Table A1 in annex for more details. National parties: PP (Conservative Party), PSOE (Socialist Party) and IU (created around the Spanish Communist Party). Nationalist and regionalist parties: BNG (leftist party of Galicia), CC (centre-right party of the Canary Islands), CiU (centre-right party of Catalonia), Entesa (coalition of leftist parties of Catalonia), ERC (leftist party of Catalonia), ICV (Green party of Catalonia), NaBai (leftist party of Navarra), and PNV (centre-right party of the Basque Country).

Table 1. Description of variables.

	N deputies (N groups)	Min.	Max.	Mean	S.D.
Individual level variables					
Perceived party discipline (vs. deliberation)	580	0	1	0.44	0.5
Female (vs. male)	580	0	1	0.40	0.49
Age	576	26	84	49.05	9.73
Level of autonomy	567	1	10	5.93	2.01
Contextual level variables					
Centrality	580 (30)	1.86	6.22	4.26	0.99
Exclusiveness	552 (24)*	16.70	100	69.23	14.9
National Chamber	580 (30)	0	1	0.23	0.42
Government	580 (30)	0	1	0.24	0.43

Source: CIS Database, Study 2827. Data available at www.cis.es

Note: Unweight data. Rounded percentages.

*Only parliamentary groups with more than 5 valid answers were considered to compute the indexes. Exclusiveness index for CiU in the Congress, ERC+IU+ICV in the Congress, PP and ICV groups in the Catalan Parliament, IU in Andalusia, and "other" parties in the Basque Country were not included for this reason.

Our dependent variable measures the perceived presence or absence of discussion inside the parliamentary group when deciding a vote; that is, deliberation versus discipline. It has been captured asking the following question to MPs: "Before taking a decision in your group about a vote, a) is there a general discussion, b) a few make inquiries with some members of the group and then decide, or c) the decision is taken by a few and then they communicate it to the others?". Clearly, option a) shows a deliberative, more horizontal functioning of the parliamentary group, while options b) and c) capture the idea of a vertically disciplined group in which few decide and communicate the decisions to the rest of the members, who vote accordingly. Therefore, the original variable has been recoded into a dummy variable with value 0 when the MP considers that decisions on voting in their parliamentary group are taken after a general discussion (that is, "deliberation", 56.4%) and 1 when s/he believes that only some members of the group decide (that is, "party discipline", 43,6%).¹⁹ Considering

¹⁹ Categories b and c have been collapsed in order to facilitate the interpretation and presentation of results. This decision has also been taken for methodological (so we can get a more balanced distribution of the responses) and conceptual reasons (these two last categories have a similar wording, intentionally designed to avoid the social desirability effect in answers).

the complexity of a concept such as party discipline, the questionnaire included several alternative questions related to the way decisions are taken in the parliamentary group, showing high levels of correlation with the finally selected DV.²⁰

For the selection procedures (as our independent variables), we use the centralisation and exclusiveness models set forth by Rahat and Hazan (2001). We have created two indexes. First, the *index of centrality* (1-7 range) is an adaptation of a question successfully used by Norris and Lovendusky (1995). We asked MPs to indicate on a 1 to 7 scale the relevance of different actors in their selection process –national, regional and local leaders, groups or organised factions, bureaucrats, groups of members, or relevant affiliates.²¹ The index is built from scores given to the “leaders” factor—national leaders for state-wide parties and regional leaders in regional and nationalist parties. The average score is 4.26, placing the average perception of MPs close to the centrality pole.

Some authors argue that decentralization leads to internal democratization (Billie, 2001), while others assume that decentralization only means the substitution of a more centralized party elite by more diverse local and regional oligarchies (Gallagher and Marsh 1988). However, both interpretations end with higher levels of heterogeneity in candidate selection that, according to the theory, erode party discipline. We hypothesize that parliamentary groups with MPs whose inclusion depends mainly on a central agency of the party tend to be more disciplined. On the contrary, we expect higher levels of deliberation where local agencies and heterogeneous members of the party are responsible for candidate selection.

²⁰ One of these variables uses a continuous level of measurement, allowing the respondent to express the degree of autonomy in the parliamentary group with more detail (where 1 is the total absence of capacity and 10 is total capacity of MPs to make decisions in the parliamentary group). Results of bivariate correlations available upon request.

²¹ The average obtained for different selectorates is the following: national leaders 4.2, regional leaders 5.9, local leaders 4.3, groups or organised factions 3.2, bureaucrats 1.6, groups of members 3.2 and relevant affiliates 3.0. The exact wording of the question was: “I’ll give you a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is low and 7 is high and I would like you to tell me how much power these actors and groups have in your party to select candidates for parliament?”

The *index of exclusiveness* (0-100 range) is built using the percentage of those who answered “by party leaders” and “by the structures of the party” to the following question: “In your case, how was your choice to go on the lists? I’ll give you four choices and I would like you to pick one: I offered myself; it was assumed I should be in the lists; I was offered to be part of the list—if so, by whom”.²² Table 1 shows that the average for this index is 69.23, which places the average perception of MPs close to the exclusiveness pole.

Given that leadership plays a relevant role in selecting candidates, it is expected that MPs owe loyalty to a greater extent to party leaders since the decision to be incorporated to the list or repeat as candidates depends on them. On the contrary, we hypothesize higher levels of deliberation and internal discussion in those parliamentary groups in which more inclusive ways of candidate selection are implemented.

Additionally, control variables (two at party level and three at the individual level) have been inserted in order to control for alternative explanations of cohesion building. Since our analysis includes national and regional chambers, a dummy variable has been used to distinguish these two territorial levels in the analysis.²³ The political costs of showing an image of division in Congress and Senate (national level) are higher than in the regional chambers, where political costs are not extended to national politics. Therefore, we hypothesize that higher levels of party discipline could be expected in national chambers (vis a vis regional ones) since they are the focus of media and citizens. The second macro-level control variable is also a dummy one indicating whether the parliamentary group

22 The proportion of the answers were: I offered myself (5.3 %); it was assumed I should be in the lists (11.38%); I was offered to be part of the list (80.16).

23 23% of MPs of the Congress and Senate; 77% of MPs at regional parliaments.

supports the government at the national or regional levels.²⁴ Empirical findings reflected in the literature are not conclusive on this matter. Some indicate that parties in government are more stable and cohesive (Mainwaring and Soberg 1997), while others defend that cohesion is stronger in opposition groups (Sieberer 2006), especially when they have expectations to improve their electoral results (Carroll *et al.* 2006). We hypothesize that since the initiative for legislation in Spain (and other parliamentary democracies) comes mainly from the government (Coller 2010), parliamentary groups supporting the government will be more disciplined to ensure the passing of legislation. Lastly, in order to control for personal characteristics that could affect MPs perceptions (Coller 2008), we have introduced gender, age, and also the self-perceived level of autonomy in the parliamentary group.²⁵

IV. Results

In this section, we explore the relationship between selection of MPs and different ways of achieving cohesion in parliamentary groups setting up a multivariate hierarchical regression model. Thus, we test the hypothesis stating that the way decisions are taken in a parliamentary group is affected by the way MPs are selected for the electoral lists. Therefore, party discipline, rather than deliberation, will be more common in environments in which MPs are selected in a hierarchical, centralised and exclusivist way. Contrary, where candidates are selected in more participative and decentralized processes, we can expect parliamentary groups using deliberation, rather than discipline, to make collective decisions before the vote of the group.

²⁴ 24% of the sampled MPs belong to parties supporting the government.

²⁵ Preliminary analysis (and the analysis presented in this work) demonstrated that deputies with high levels of autonomy perceive that this characteristic is generalised in the group. Additional variables were not included in the final model for its lack of significant relationship with the dependent variable and its poor contribution to the fit of the model: experience, level of education and also the “ambition” of deputies (if the MP admits that s/he would like to continue in the chamber or to be promoted vs. those who would rather exit politics or prefer to engage in local politics). Analysis available upon request.

Table 2. Decision-making in parliamentary groups (in percentages).

	Party discipline	Deliberation	TOTAL
PP National parliaments	66	34	100
PP Regional parliaments	41	59	100
PSOE National parliaments	61	39	100
PSOE Regional parliaments	43	57	100
Other parties in National parliaments	49	51	100
Other parties in Regional parliaments	38	62	100
TOTAL NATIONAL	63	37	100
TOTAL REGIONAL	41	59	100
N	268	295	563

Source: CIS Database, Study 2827. Data available at www.cis.es

Note 1: The question asked to MPs was: “Before making a decision in your group about a vote ...? There is a general discussion (group deliberation), a few make inquiries with some members of the group and then decide, or the decision is taken by a few and then they communicate it to others (party discipline).”

As every row represents a set of parliamentary groups, these groups have been weighted by its relative size in the chamber.

Note 2: “other” includes a big range of heterogeneous parties (IU -Spanish Communist Party- smaller national parties, and also nationalist and regionalist parties) in both, national and regional parliaments.

Table 2 shows that party discipline is higher at the national level (63%) and especially in the two largest parties—PP and PSOE. On the contrary, deliberation is more common at the regional level and in the regional branches of the two largest parties—59% of MPs in regional parliaments consider that voting decisions in their parliamentary groups are reached after a general discussion, while this percentage at national parliaments is only 37%. It could be argued that higher levels of deliberation can be found in smaller parliamentary groups. However, the category “others” is mainly composed of nationalist and regionalist parties which are majoritarian in their regional parliaments, which suggests that the size of the party is not determinant (multivariate analysis in next sections disaggregate by parliamentary group in order to avoid this problem).

Table 3. Indexes of centrality and exclusiveness in elite selection by party and level of government.

	Index of centrality (1-7)	Index of exclusiveness (0-100)	N
PP National	5.9	77.5	51
PP Regional	4.2	63.3	176
PSOE National	4.5	59.4	51
PSOE Regional	3.5	78.7	167
Others National	5.7	81.4	30
Others Regional	4.2	61.0	104
MEAN NATIONAL	5.3	70.5	132
MEAN REGIONAL	3.9	68.9	447

Source: CIS Database, Study 2827. Data available at www.cis.es

Note: As every row represents a set of parliamentary groups, these groups have been weighted by their relative size in the chamber.

Table 3 shows information about the perception of MPs on how centralised and exclusive is their selection for the electoral list. The first index shows the level of centrality on candidate selection. There are no significant differences between the averages at the national and regional levels, although MPs in national chambers perceive that the level of centralisation is higher—5.3 for the national parliament and 3.9 for the regional chambers on a scale 1-7. PSOE is the only party among the large national ones with formal mechanisms for affiliate’s participation on parliamentary elite selection. Consequently, the role played in their selection by the national leaders is seen as less important by socialist MPs than by PP and “other” parties.

The exclusiveness dimension does not show big differences between the national and regional levels—70.5 per cent of national MPs declare being selected by some leader or by the party body while the proportion in regional parliaments is 68.9. On average, more than two thirds of MPs perceive that the selection for the electoral lists is quite exclusive. The biggest differences are found among parties. While PP and “others” are perceived by their MPs as having very exclusive ways of selection for the national parliament (77.5 and 81.4),

these marks are much lower at the regional level (63.3 and 61.0). PSOE is the only exception since elite selection tends to be perceived as more exclusive at the regional than at the national level (78.7 vs. 59.4), perhaps as a consequence of the relevance of regional structures in this party.

Figure 1. Correlation between candidate selection and party discipline in parliaments.

Centralised selection [FIGURE 1a]	Exclusive selection [FIGURE 1b]
Pearson's correlation index centrality-discipline: 0.42.	Pearson's correlation index exclusiveness-discipline: 0.47.

Source: CIS Database, Study 2827. Data available at www.cis.es
 Note: Unweighted data. With data weighted by the relative size of the group in the Parliament, Pearson's correlations are 0.39 (centrality) and 0.43 (exclusiveness).

As expected, Figure 1 shows a positive relationship between exclusiveness and centralisation on candidate selection and the presence of party discipline in parliamentary groups. Those parliamentary groups where candidate selection is centralised²⁶, and especially those groups where this selection is held by a more reduced number of people, decision-making is less based on deliberation. On the contrary, local-based selection and more participative ways of selection are positively related to the presence of a previous discussion before voting, when the common position of the group is negotiated. Exclusive selection shows a slightly more intense linear relationship with party discipline (0.47), when compared to the strength of centralised selection (0.42).

In order to study how these two explanations merge and to avoid spurious relationships, in the following analysis we show the results of a hierarchical logistic regression. The

²⁶ National level for the three national parties (PSOE, PP, and IU) and regional level for regionalist and nationalist parties.

dependent variable is a dummy variable with value 0 when the MP considers that decisions on voting in their parliamentary group are taken after a general discussion (“deliberation”) and 1 when she/he believes that only few members of the group decide and the rest vote accordingly (“party discipline”). The independent variables at the macro-level analysis are the indexes of centrality and exclusiveness. Two control variables have been inserted specifying whether the parliamentary group belongs to a national or to a regional parliament, and whether the parliamentary group is the governing party. Finally, at the individual level, the analysis controls by gender, age and the perceived autonomy of the MP in the legislative process.

Table 4. Fixed-effects estimates for two-level logit regression on perceived decision making process at the parliamentary group.

	Empty (only individual level)	Model A (Centralization)	Model B (Exclusiveness)	Model C (National vs. regional Chamber)	Model D (Government vs. opposition)	Full model
Individual level variables						
Gender	0.02 (0.19)	0.02 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.20)	0.06 (0.19)	0.02 (0.19)	0.00 (0.20)
Age (centered)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 * (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 * (0.01)
Perceived autonomy	-0.16 *** (0.05)	-0.16 *** (0.05)	-0.18 *** (0.05)	-0.16 *** (0.05)	-0.16 *** (0.05)	-0.17 *** (0.05)
Constant	0.46 (0.46)	-0.77 (1.30)	-1.48 * (0.84)	0.08 (0.48)	0.42 (0.49)	-2.89 ** (1.17)
Contextual level variables						
Centralized selection		0.28 * (0.11)				0.29 * (0.18)
Exclusive selection			0.03 *** (0.01)			0.03 *** (0.01)
National parliament				1.04 *** (0.37)		0.41 ** (0.43)
Party in Government					0.08 (0.49)	0.27 (0.34)
Variance inter-groups	0.64	0.52	0.45	0.42	0.64	0.22
Wald (Prob. Chi 2)	13.66 (0.00)	16.93 (0.00)	22.44 (0.00)	21.40 (0.00)	13.70 (0.00)	32.62 (0.00)
Log likelihood	-365.34	-363.75	-343.04	-361.70	-365.32	-339.16
N micro	563	563	535	563	563	535
N macro	30	30	24	30	30	24

Source: CIS Database, Study 2827. Data available at www.cis.es

*p ≤ 0.1. **p ≤ 0.05. ***p ≤ 0.01. Random intercepts. Standard errors in brackets.

Dependent variable: "Perceived party discipline". Dummy variable with value 0 when the deputy considers that decisions on voting in their parliamentary group are taken after a general discussion "deliberation" and 1 when he or she believes that only certain members of the group decide "party discipline".

Table 4 shows the results of this hierarchical analysis on party discipline (value 1 of our dependent variable). We are not primarily interested on the impact of personal MPs characteristics on the dependent variable, although some variables at the individual level have been included in order to control for their effects.²⁷ In fact, neither gender nor age plays a significant role to explain how cohesion is built. However, those MPs who perceive higher levels of autonomy in their legislative actions also tend to observe lower levels of discipline in their groups.

²⁷ The number of legislatures was also inserted in previous analysis, but did not show significant differences. In the sample, 41% of the MPs were in their first legislature, 31% in the second legislature, 16% in the third legislature, 7% in the fourth legislature and 5% of the MPs had been in five or more legislatures.

Models A to D show the effect of our macro variables on the dependent variable separately. We start with the variable with the weakest effect. Confirming the inconsistent findings of previous studies, with the data showed in Model D, we cannot say that parties in government are more disciplined than those in the opposition.

However, centrality and exclusiveness in candidate selection become relevant for the explanation of the presence of high levels of party discipline (models A and B). In those parliamentary groups where the central elite plays a more relevant role, decisions are reached using more vertical procedures. On the contrary, parties with higher levels of inclusiveness and decentralization in candidate selection generate more deliberative mechanisms of decision-making in parliamentary groups.

The chamber (regional vs. national parliaments, model C) and the degree of exclusiveness are the two main factors explaining the level of party discipline inside parties. Deliberation seems more common in regional parliaments, while in national parliaments decision-making is perceived as more vertical, probably because parties want to ensure an image of unity given that they are more aware of their public image since citizens and mass media pay more attention to central institutions of representation.

The column “full model” shows the results of the four macro variables as a set, although the results should be taken with caution due to the low number of cases (24) for the number of macro independent variables (4). It seems that, as a whole, higher levels of discipline are reached in national parliaments and in parties with more exclusive and centralized mechanisms of candidate selection. Therefore, selecting candidates in exclusive and centralized ways (especially in national parliaments) promotes internal discipline of

parliamentary groups by using vertical, hierarchical methods of making decisions that are later imposed to the rest of the group who vote accordingly. Contrary, where more decentralized and larger the electorate is during the making of the electoral list, deliberative approaches to taking decisions contribute to the internal cohesion of the parliamentary group.

Conclusions

The analysis of the internal cohesion of parliamentary groups has usually been approached by exploring the effects of contextual elements such as the existence of blocked lists, districts fragmentation, or the structure of party systems. However, the effect of the ways candidates are selected for electoral lists has been poorly developed in theoretical and methodological terms, despite its importance as an unobtrusive control tool to achieve MPs alignment in parliament voting.

Previous literature usually studied voting blocs in parliamentary groups taking for granted that unity is the result of parliamentary discipline. This practice is problematic. As voting blocs are the rule in many countries (disagreement is only exceptionally translated into vote), analysing the voting results could hide the real decision-making processes (and dissent). Studying the party formal rules on candidate selection also hides the processes of negotiation in the design of the electoral lists. Our theoretical contribution, then, consists on focusing on the processes behind the formal mechanisms of both, candidate selection and cohesion building in parliamentary groups. In contrast with previous works, we use survey data on

parliamentary elites to analyse how processes of candidate selection are managed in different parliamentary groups and its effects on how cohesion is built and maintained.

Using data for a representative sample of Spanish MPs between 2009 and 2011, our findings suggest that centralisation and exclusiveness on candidate selection are related to the way decisions are taken in parliamentary groups. Testing empirically Rahat and Hazan's (2011) hypothesis, we have shown that centralised ways of MPs selection contribute to achieve party cohesion through discipline. It seems that parties restricting (or controlling) local and regional actors in the list-making process may end up with a parliamentary group in which decisions are taken by few and imposed to the rest.

The effect of exclusiveness on cohesion seems to be more prominent. When the selection of MPs is managed by leaders or from exclusive agencies of the party, decision-making and internal cohesion in the parliamentary group is reached by discipline. On the contrary, where more inclusive models of MPs selection are held, internal cohesion in parliamentary groups is achieved through deliberative procedures.

These facts show the complex relationship between selection and cohesion, most likely imposed by the party (in exclusive and central ways of candidate selection), or achieved through deliberation and consequently, agreement or consensus among members of the group (when inclusive and decentralised ways of selection are held). These findings enlighten the debate on political representation in parliamentary systems. Although voting blocs are the rule in most European parliamentary democracies and internal democracy is usually related to party divisions and institutional lack of stability, we have shown that

deliberation can equally lead to parliamentary groups to promote internal debates without eroding party unity and stability.

Further research with a qualitative approach could be developed in order to complement and shed light on the analysis of the informal processes of candidate selection. Interviewing the regional and national selectorates of parties could represent an important source of information in order to get a more accurate explanation on these informal mechanisms. New empirical observations of the Spanish case and comparative studies could also be useful to get a longitudinal, richer and more complete vision of how candidate selection and party discipline are linked in parliamentary democracies.

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Annex

Figure A1. Correlation between centrality and exclusiveness in candidate selection in parliaments.

[Figure Annex 1]

Source: CIS Database, Study 2827. Data available at www.cis.es

Pearson's correlation index centrality-exclusiveness: -0.07.

Unweight data. When data is weighted by the relative size of the group in the Parliament, Pearson's correlations is -0.03.

Table A1. Parliamentary groups included in the analysis.

National chambers (9 parliamentary groups)	N	%
CiU (Congress)	5	0.86
Entesa (Senate)	10	1.72
ERC+IU+ICV (Congress)	5	0.86
PP (Congress)	18	3.1
PP (Senate)	37	6.38
PSOE (Congress)	24	4.14
PSOE (Senate)	22	3.79
Others (Congress)	6	1.03
Others (Senate)	6	1.03
Total national chambers	133	22.91
Regional chambers (21 parliamentary groups)	N	%
BNG (Galicia)	7	1.21
CC (Canary Islands)	6	1.03
CiU (Catalonia)	14	2.41
ERC (Catalonia)	6	1.03
ICV (Catalonia)	5	0.86
IU (Andalusia)	4	0.69
IU (Other regional parliaments)	9	1.55
Na-Bai (Navarra)	6	1.03
PNV (Basque Country)	18	3.10
PP (Andalusia)	30	5.17
PP (Basque Country)	8	1.38
PP (Catalonia)	5	0.86
PP (Galicia)	23	3.97
PP (Other regional parliaments)	123	21.21
PSOE (Andalusia)	26	4.48
PSOE (Basque Country)	14	2.41
PSOE (Catalonia)	12	2.07
PSOE (Galicia)	13	2.24
PSOE (Other regional parliaments)	102	17.59
Not nationalist parties (Other regional parliaments)	12	2.07
Other parties (Basque Country)	4	0.69
Total regional chambers	447	77.05
Total national and regional chambers	580	100

Source: CIS Database, Study 2827. Data available at www.cis.es

Note: those parliamentary groups with less than 4 interviewed deputies were grouped in the category "others".

BNG: Bloque Nacionalista Galego.

CC: Coalición Canaria.

CiU: Convergència I Unió.

ERC: Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya.

ICV: Iniciativa per Catalunya - Verds.

IU: Izquierda Unida.

Na-Bai: Nafarroa Bai.

PNV: Partido Nacionalista Vasco.

PP: Partido Popular.

PSOE: Partido Socialista Obrero Español.

Table A2. Number of seats per party and chamber, 2007-2011.

	Andalusia	Aragon	Asturias	Balearic Islands	Basque Country	Canary Islands	Cantabria	Castilla-la Mancha	Castilla y León	Catalonia	Comm. Valencian	Extremadura	Galicia	La Rioja	Madrid	Murcia	Navarra	Total
Statewide parties																		
Partido Socialista (PSOE)	56	23	21	23	25	26	10	26	33	28	38	38	25	14	42	15	12	455
Partido Popular (PP)	47	30	20	29	13	15	17	21	48	18	54	27	38	17	67	29	*	490
Izquierda Unida (IU)	6	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	10	3	0	0	0	11	1	2	36
Non-statewide parties																		
Partido Aragonés (PAR)		9																9
Chunta Aragonesista (CHA)		4																4
Bloc per Mallorca				4														4
Unió Mallorquina (UM)				3														3
Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV)					30													30
Aralar					4													4
Eusko Alkartasuna (EA)					1													1
Coalición Canaria (CC)						19												19
P. Regionalista de Cantabria (PRC)							12											12
Unión del Pueblo Leonés (UPL)									2									2
Convergència i Unió (CiU)										62								62
Esquerra Rep. de Catalunya (ERC)										10								10
Compromís pel País Valencià (CPV)											4							7
Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG)													12					12
Partido Riojano (PR)														2				2
Unión del Pueblo Navarro (UPN)																	22	22
Nafarroa Bai (Na-Bai)																	12	12
Conv. de Dem. de Navarra (CDN)																	2	2

*UPN-PP.

Source: Bapolau dataset (Coller *et al.* 2014).