

Formal Power, Perceived Power, and Conditional Party Government

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Abstract

Two consistent problems in research on legislative leaders have been measuring leader power with only formal powers and estimating legislators' preferences. A leader can have formal powers that (s)he is informally constrained in the use of, and a leader can have few formal powers but nonetheless exert influence through informal powers and personal skill. While conditional party government argues that polarized preferences leads to stronger leaders, finding estimates of preferences that are causally prior to leader influence has been difficult. I compare state house leadership power as measured by formal powers held by the leaders to leadership power as perceived by legislators themselves. The connection between institutional power and perceived power is surprisingly weak, implying that formal powers may not be a useful guide to actual power. Using preference estimates derived from survey responses rather than votes, I find that aspects of conditional party government influence leader power, but sometimes in the opposite of the predicted direction.

What determines the power of legislative leaders? Why do we see power wax and wane, and formal powers given and taken away? Given the centrality of parties to our understanding of legislatures, it is unsurprising that students of legislatures have spent a vast amount of effort debating what drives the role and strength of parties in Congress and, to a lesser degree, state legislatures.

The answers from the literature are mixed, and center in two areas. One group of articles and books argues that a primary component is the relative strength of the majority and minority parties, though different authors take different positions as to what effect relative strength should have on the powers of the chamber leadership or the rights of the minority party against the chamber leadership. Binder's (1996, 1997) work and Dion's (1997) fit most closely here. ? Another set of authors argue, primarily on the basis of principal-agent theory, that the configuration of legislators' ideal points is important in predicting leadership power. Conditional party government (Rohde 1991, Aldrich and Rohde 2000) is a clear example of this argument, to which Krehbiel offered his "where's the party" or preferenceship critique. (Krehbiel 1993, 1999, 2000, Snyder and Groseclose 2000) —WORK BIANCO AND SENED, AND NEW COX/MCCUBBINS INTO THIS—

All of these theories suffer from some serious inferential limitations, at least insofar as their empirical testing is concerned. One problem is that nearly all of this work, which theorizes over abstract legislators, conducts empirical tests only on the U.S. Congress, but this has been remedied in recent years as state legislative scholars have taken up the challenge of predicting leadership powers across states. (Clucas 2001, Martorano 2004, Clucas 2007) ?

A larger problem is that the dependent variable we are primarily interested in – leadership power – is for most of history inherently unmeasurable. In the U.S. House setting, we do not have any means to directly, accurately, and precisely assess the power held by Reed or Cannon and compare it to the power held by Wright or Gingrich. Instead, the best that we can normally achieve is to analyze the ebb and flow of formal, written powers (or, conversely, formal minority rights), studying the data that are available instead of the data we might wish were available. But written or formal power might not correlate strongly with actual power, since power is a notoriously slippery concept. (Bachrach and Baratz 1963) ? Is a leader who has extensive formal powers specified in the rules of the chamber powerful? Maybe, but such a leader might well be restrained in the use of

his or her powers. For example, 36 of 49 state lower chambers give their leaders the formal power to make all committee assignments for all legislators of every party. (Clucas 2001, 326–327,335) However, leaders given such a power are probably not expected to appoint members at their whim, or to choose the slate of committee assignments that gives them, personally, the highest utility. Rather, leaders are probably expected to pay substantial attention to majority members’ requests for committees, and to largely ratify the minority party’s requests about its members’ assignments, and leaders might face sanctions if they substantially violate these expectations. —THIS NEEDS CITATION – IS IT IN JEWELL AND WHICKER?— Likewise, it is possible for a leader’s primary base of power to lie in norms or effective rules that are less formal than the chamber’s or caucus’s written rules, or for a leader’s base of power to lie primarily in his or her own skills at persuasion or heresthetic (see Riker 1986 generally). ? So in principle, it should be possible to see a leader with many formal powers be actually weak, and a leader with few formal powers to be actually strong.

A second larger problem deals with estimating legislator preferences to analyze conditional party government. (Rohde 1991, Aldrich and Rohde 2000, Aldrich, Rohde, and Tofias 2004) This theory holds that leader power is, in part, a function of the separation between parties and the homogeneity of the majority party – when the majority is more unified, a leader can be trusted with greater power, and when the parties are more strongly polarized, there is a greater incentive to suppress the minority. —CITE, PREF. AN A/R PIECE— A simple, straightforward test of this theory to use the degree to which legislator preferences are polarized to predict leader power – are polarized preferences connected to stronger leaders, or not? However, such a test requires underlying data that can be used to estimate preferences. The most common data, roll-call votes, are problematic because they occur after party influence, if any, has taken place. That is, if we use roll-call votes to estimate preferences and observe polarized parties in association with strong leaders, it might well be the strong leaders causing (in part) the apparent polarization. This is closely related to Krehbiel’s “Where’s the party?” critique, in which he argues that distinguishing the effects of partisanship from “preferenceship” is difficult and that proponents of the strong-party thesis have not done so. (Krehbiel 1993, 1999, 2000, Snyder and Groseclose 2000)

In this paper, I partly address these problems by examining several different measurements of

leadership power in state lower chambers in 1995. I use both an index of state lower-chamber leader formal powers (Clucas 2001) and two estimates of leader power derived from a 1995 survey of state legislators (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 1995, Clucas 2007) that asked several questions about the power of various actors in the legislative process. Taking a multifaceted approach to understanding leadership power offers several advantages. Most prominently, it allows the direct comparison of a legislative leader's formal powers and the power of the leadership as perceived by the membership themselves. It also allows a more nuanced understanding of the possible role that conditional party government might play in legislative life. Further, I use different responses from the same survey to construct estimates of legislator preferences that are not based on votes and that are, or at least should be, causally prior to party influence. This allows direct assessment of conditional party government at the cost of being somewhat limited by sample-size problems.¹

In a sobering finding, formal powers and perceived powers are only weakly related to each other. Overall, an index of formal powers is at best a marginally statistically significant predictor of leadership power as perceived by legislators, and the relationship is particularly weak if, following Clucas's (2007) study, southern states are excluded. Variables derived from the conditional party government thesis have mixed success. The distance between parties is positively associated with both formal leader power and perceived power, at least for some measures. However, the majority party's homogeneity does not predict formal leader power, and more homogeneous majorities are connected to perceived-weaker leaders, while conditional party government would predict the reverse. Professionalization is associated with stronger leaders using all measures, but this association is only sometimes statistically significant at standard levels.

Literature and Theory

Arguably, the article that sparked the stream of research explaining the ebb and flow of leadership power was the decline-of-parties argument put forward by Brady, Cooper, and Hurley (1979). They

¹Another approach, taken by —CITE—, is to use only heavily lopsided roll-call votes which would be unlikely to be whipped by party leaders to estimate preferences. However, even if party influence is less present in these votes, they are still votes that are causally posterior to all of the influences that interpose themselves between preferences and votes.

examined several indicators of party strength and interparty conflict in the U.S. House between 1887 and 1968 and found a strong decline in party strength over this period (386). Further, they asserted that party strength is related to the homogeneity of the majority party, there measured by region (390). Their notion that characteristics of the party caucus affect the power given to their leader has continued throughout this literature.

More recently, Binder found that rules changes limiting minority rights were associated with stronger and more active minority parties, and negatively associated with the fractiousness of the majority party. That is, when the minority finds an ally in some faction of the majority, the House is more likely to extend or expand minority rights. (Binder 1996, 17) Binder also argues that larger majorities should more tightly restrict their minority parties. —CITE W/ PAGE—

—DION—

Schickler (2000) found that U.S. House rules changes benefiting the majority party were more likely when the median voter had shifted nearer the majority median, with majority homogeneity and interparty heterogeneity being secondary concerns.

State legislative scholars have also looked at variation in formal rules across time and cross-sectionally. Using a general principal-agent approach to analyzing leader power across states, Clucas (2001) constructed an index of lower-house leaders' formal powers in 1995 and found that Squire's (2000) professionalization index was not a predictor, but that a simpler categorization of legislatures into categories of "career," "springboard," and "dead-end" was. He further found that a state's political culture and the Holbrook-VanDunk (1993) index of competition were statistically significant predictors of leaders' formal powers.

Martorano (2004) examined aspects of formal leadership power in 23 state legislatures from 1955 to 1995. A central point of her article is resolving the disagreement over the role of majority size in leader power. Martorano found that smaller majority parties are associated with greater minority-party rights, consistent with Binder's argument. (65) She further found that professionalization was not a significant predictor, and that joint rules favor minority parties more strongly than do rules for single chambers. (65)

Aldrich and Rohde's conditional party government theory proposes that leadership strength is

endogenous and depends in part on two factors. (Rohde 1991, Aldrich and Rohde 2000, Aldrich, Rohde, and Tofias 2004) First, they argue, we should expect stronger, more vigorous leadership when the majority party is more homogeneous, or more internally unified. Second, we should expect more vigorous leadership when the ideological or policy-preference space between the majority and minority parties is larger. (Aldrich and Rohde 2000, 2–3) One way to consider this is that as the distance between parties increases, so does the minority’s incentive to obstruct the majority’s bills, and the majority might want to place constraints on the voting process to limit the minority’s opportunities to do so. However, the leadership can take the same tools that they use to constrain minority legislators and apply them to members of the majority in order to secure outcomes the leaders favor and some rank-and-file majority legislators do not. As the majority party becomes more homogeneous, the incentive for the leader to restrain majority party members in this way diminishes, so the rank-and-file should be more willing to entrust their leaders with these potentially hazardous powers.

This is, at base, a principal-agency argument. As such, it is related to other principal-agent theories of parties such as the Cox-McCubbins procedural cartel model. (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005) Cox and McCubbins envision party government as being unconditional in fact but conditional in nature. To them, the majority party retains strong procedural advantages irrespective of its internal homogeneity, but the degree of homogeneity influences whether leadership acts to change policy in the direction of the majority median or to protect existing policies that resulted from earlier policy shifts. (Cox and McCubbins 2005)

—VOLDEN AND COAUTHOR LSQ RECENT—

While all of these models have proven contentious, the conditional party government theory has been particularly so. Krehbiel (1993, 1998, 1999, 2000) argued that conditional party government suffers from theoretical defects and an observability problem. He wrote that conditional party government predicts that party leaders will be strong precisely when they are least needed, when the majority party can most easily prevail through simply voting their own preferences, and weakest when the need for party leadership in voting is greatest. (Krehbiel 1999, 34–35) He also argued that there are serious observational equivalence problems in trying to distinguish partisan-

ship from simple “preferencenesship” and in distinguishing between competing accounts for the same observed facts. (Krehbiel 1999, Krehbiel 2000)

In all of these works, the gap between power in principle and power in practice remains. We might generally expect changes in “real” power to follow changes in institutional power – that is, if we see a change in legislative rules, we might assume that there were some real consequences to those changes (else, why would legislators allocate valuable time and resources towards achieving those changes?). However, we might also expect for “real” power to fluctuate even when formal institutional power does not. So while we should expect studies of legislative leaders’ formal powers to generally capture real changes in leader power, there might be other unobserved and largely unobservable changes that they miss. In this paper, I try to sidestep the inferential problems of assessing leader power through formal written rules and estimating pre-partisan legislator preferences by using survey responses of state legislators as underlying data. This allows me to examine leadership power as experienced by the members themselves, and to construct estimates of preferences that should be logically prior to strategic concerns introduced by parties and leaders. Of course, power as experienced by the members is also not “real” or “true” leadership power, but only that – power as felt by other legislators.

This is not the first piece to use non-vote preference data. Wright and Schaffner (2002) used legislator responses on Project Vote Smart’s National Political Awareness Test —CITE— to estimate state legislators’ preferences, finding that the lack of parties in Nebraska resulted in weak associations between legislator preferences and legislator votes. More recently, Clucas (2007) measured leadership power in the states with a measure derived from the same survey response that I use, finding that professionalization and —SUMMARIZE—. However, Clucas did not (in this article) take the next step of examining the connection between formal powers and perceived powers, and did not attempt to test predictions derived from the conditional party government thesis.

Overall, then, existing theory presents us with several competing possibilities, but agrees on a few key variables. Both Binder’s theory and Dion’s theory agree that the size of the majority party should help predict leadership power, but Binder argues that larger majorities should have stronger leaders, since they do not fear losing control of the chamber and consequently living under

the rules similar to those now in play, and Dion argues that larger majorities should have weaker leaders since they should be less cohesive. Conditional party government argues that the preference cohesion of the majority party and the ideological distance between the parties should predict leader power. Clucas's work indicates that professionalization should once again be considered as a predictor of legislative life in the American states.

In this paper, I focus on just these variables – professionalization, majority size, and preference polarization. These variables are certainly not the whole story of variation in leader power. I use such small models primarily because the cross-sectional data that are available strongly limit the number of observations. With as few as 32 observations, or even 25 in some unreported reference models, every degree of freedom matters, so I focus tightly on variables that have a strong theoretical connection.

Dependent variables

The conceptual dependent variable of this paper is leader power. I take a multifaceted approach and operationalize this variable in three different ways. The first way is with formal powers. Here, I simply use Clucas's (2001) index and its components as reported.

I also use two measures derived from Carey, Niemi, and Powell's 1995 survey. While their goal was to study the effects of term limits on state legislators and legislatures, the survey also included a set of questions asking legislators how much power various actors had over the legislative process. These actors include the majority party leadership, the minority party leadership, committee chairs, the governor, legislative staff, the bureaucracy and civil servants, interest groups, and the mass media. Legislators were asked to rate each of them on a 1–7 scale running from "No Influence" to "Dictates Policy." Responses to these questions can be used to construct several possible measures of the perceived power of leaders. Most obviously, we can simply use the mean response to the "Majority party leadership" question. Alternatively, we could use the fraction of respondents who rank "Majority party leadership" as a most powerful actor; this is the approach Clucas (2007) takes. The fractions I use might differ slightly from those used by Clucas – I include legislators

who rate the majority leadership in a tie for most influential; Clucas's text implies but does not directly state —CHECK THIS— that he counts only those legislators who rate the majority leadership higher than all other actors.

Both of these measures provide some estimate of the power of majority party leaders as perceived by the legislators in that chamber. However, perceived power is not the same thing as true power. Legislators might be mistaken about how much power their leaders have, especially if they are relatively inexperienced politically. And legislators might be inclined to rate their leaders as more powerful if their leaders have tried to exert their influence over them, or if they have been prevented from doing something that they wished to do in the legislature. Also, if a legislative leader is particularly skilled at persuasion or heresthetic, members might think of their leaders as *powerful* when external observers might instead consider them merely *skillful* or *talented*. So, there remains some gap between what is measured here – how powerful legislators think their leaders are, or how powerful legislators think their leaders are relative to some other actors – and the elusive goal of true power. The assertion here is not that these measures are true power, or necessarily that they are even a superior measure to formal powers, but only that these measures provide a window into an additional aspect of leadership power.

While my contention is that it leads to some real advances in understanding the power of legislative leaders, there are some real costs to using survey data to measure leader power and to estimate legislator preferences. One price lies in small samples. Carey, Niemi, and Powell's survey was sent to only a random sample of legislators, and of course not all legislators responded. One resulting problem is response bias; Carey, Niemi, and Powell include a probability-weight variable to help counteract this. Another problem is simply small samples, which drop as low as two. To deal with this, I exclude the smallest samples, including only those states whose samples include either ten members, or 25%, whichever is smaller, from each party. Doing so gives me a nonrandom sample of 41 of the 49 state lower chambers, 32 of which are non-southern. The smallest majority-part sample is seven of the 25 Democrats in Nevada, and the smallest minority sample is three of the twelve Republicans in Hawaii. The second price is that using these data limits me to a purely cross-sectional analysis of a phenomenon that should run both in cross section and time series. This is at present

fundamentally insoluble, since a time series of state legislative surveys does not exist, and even if the data collection process were begun immediately it could not bear fruit for twenty or more years as a reasonable number of sessions built up. A final cost to using survey data is that the survey questions might not be exactly what one would wish, especially when the survey was conducted by others in pursuit of unrelated research questions. In particular, Clucas (2007) notes that the survey question on majority leadership, which asks respondents to rate the “Majority party leadership” rather than asking directly about the chamber leadership, might cause unreliable responses in southern chambers that have only a brief history of two-party competition and meaningful party leadership qua party leadership. (Clucas, 7) Clucas notes that several southern chambers that, by long-standing reputation, have strong leaders received very low perceived-leadership scores. Clucas’s response is to omit the south from his analysis. Taking no position on this apparent anomaly, I report results both for all states and with the south excluded. An alternative would be to interact a southern-state dummy with the other explanatory variables to allow the coefficients to vary between south and nonsouth; doing so does not substantively alter my conclusions but does burn more degrees of freedom.

Independent variables

Some of the variables I include are standard to state legislative analysis or have obvious content. I use Squire’s (2000) professionalization index for 1995. This index compares each state legislature’s pay, session length, and staff support to those of Congress. I also include majority size, which is simply the percentage of the chamber in the majority party. In practice, the raw majority size was never a significant predictor. Reasoning that there might be some threshold that must be reached to trigger an effect, I instead use two dummies: one taking the value one if the majority party holds at least 60% of seats but less than 70%, and another if the majority party holds at least 70%. The reference category is then those chambers with majority sizes in the fifties. These might be thought of as medium, and large majorities, with small majorities the reference. In 1995-96, the Indiana House was tied with 50 Republicans and Democrats, but Democrat John Gregg was the

sole Speaker and the chamber is counted as having a Democratic majority.

I include two variables that are important in the conditional party government thesis: the distance between parties and the homogeneity of the majority party. Of course, doing so requires estimates of preferences. Carey, Niemi, and Powell's survey offers useful variables for this as well. First, the survey asks legislators how liberal or conservative they are on a seven-point scale. Second, the survey asks legislators to agree or disagree with policy statements on abortion, school prayer, taxation, and the death penalty, using a five-point scale. Finally, the survey asks several questions about who the legislator sees as his or her supporters in elections, listing social groups such as labor unions, business owners, farmers, pro-life, pro-choice, and so on. A legislator who sees the Christian Coalition, gun owners, and pro-life groups as his or her strongest supporters can be expected to differ from a legislator who sees strong support from environmentalists, gun control supporters, and pro-choice groups. A very small number of respondents (1–2%) count both pro-life and pro-choice groups, or gun owners and gun-control advocates, among their strongest supporters.

My approach to integrating these into a single estimate of preferences is to code the survey responses as "votes" and input them into NOMINATE to produce estimated ideal points in a unidimensional space. In practice, any factor-analytic or dimension-reduction technique could be used. However, NOMINATE has two distinct advantages. First, legislative scholars are familiar with its output, strengths, and shortcomings. Second, missing data are treated simply as votes that were not cast, allowing me to keep more observations in each chamber. This is important given the sometimes small sample sizes in each chamber. Wright and Schaffner (2002) use a similar approach, converting NPAT responses into "votes" and using the resulting NOMINATE scores.

Some of the questions, such as the policy statements, contain multiple options for respondents. In these cases, I converted each response into a set of votes to capture the full variation within each response, asking essentially "Was your response at least as large as 1, or 2, or 3?" If a question asks respondent legislators to place their opinions about school prayer or abolishing the death penalty on a five-point scale, then NOMINATE uses four "votes" to estimate preferences, since all respondents who answer offer a response at least as large as the minimum. A respondent who

answers “1” receives four no “votes,” and a respondent who answers “3” receives “votes” of yes (for “2”), yes (for “3”), no (for “4”), and no (for “5”).

I then use these estimated ideal points to calculate the conditional party government variables. Because all legislators faced the same set of questions, the resulting scores should be directly comparable across chambers. The inter-party distance is simply the distance between party mean NOMINATE scores. Using means rather than medians in this case allows for the averages to be weighted by response probability. I measure majority homogeneity as simply the standard deviation of majority party NOMINATE scores. Since the scores are comparable across chambers, there is no need to standardize by dividing by the chamber standard deviation (see Aldrich, Berger, and Rohde 2002 or Aldrich, Rohde, and Tofias 2004).

The data open multiple possible venues for relevant variables to affect leader power. First, a variable might affect a leader’s formal powers, but not necessarily his or her perceived power. Second, a variable might affect a leader’s perceived power without any necessary connection to his or her formal powers. And of course, a variable can affect both.

Results

Formal and perceived power compared

Figure One displays scatterplots of the speaker formal power index versus the two measures of perceived power. “Average Perceived Power” is simply the chamber’s average response to the perceived-power question. “Frac Rating Highest” is the proportion of legislators in each chamber who rated the majority leadership as at least as powerful as all other actors. Figure Two repeats the display with southern states excluded. Visually, a few characteristics are obvious. First, there is *some* relationship between formal and perceived power. Second, that apparent relationship weakens when the south is excluded, though as we will see, the data for the nonsouth is far more explicable using multiple regression. Third, it is obvious that the data are sometimes heteroskedastic.

Table One presents some statistics from bivariate OLS regressions of different perceived-power

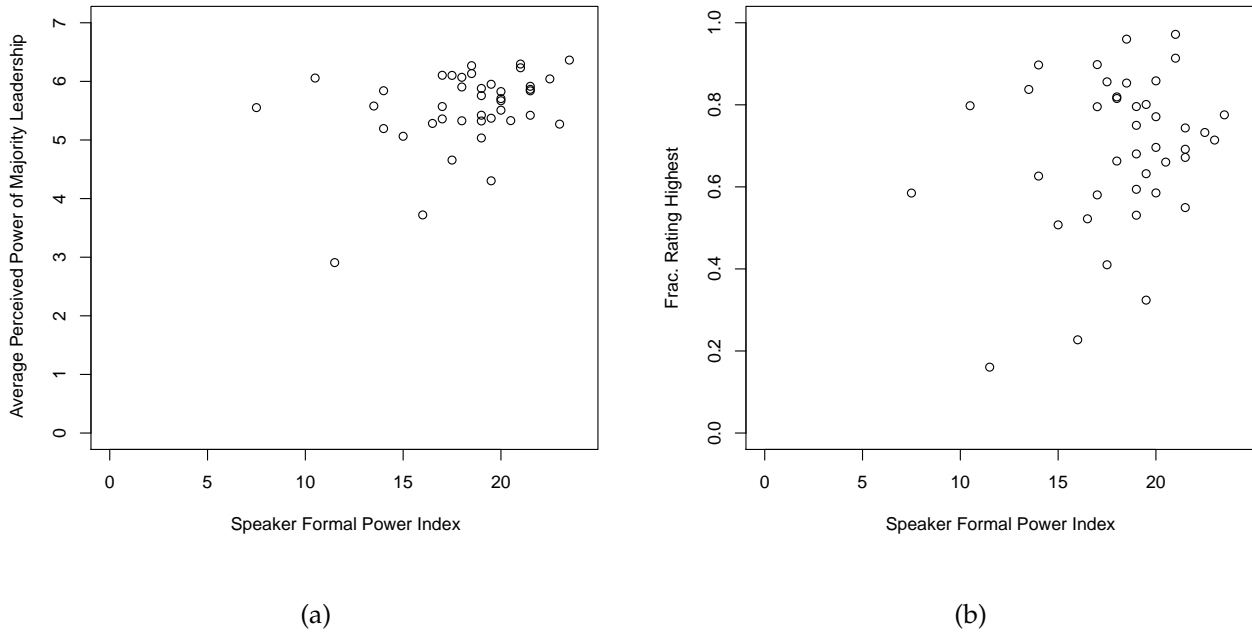


Figure 1: Comparisons Of Formal And Perceived Power (All Sampled Chambers)

measures against Clucas's index of speakers' formal powers. Each row represents a different regression, reporting the coefficient on the Clucas index, its standard error and p-value, and the R^2 of the regression, but not the constant or F-statistic. I use Huber-White robust standard errors whenever a Cook-Weisberg test indicates heteroskedasticity. The p-values from the Cook-Weisberg test are either well under 0.05 or over 0.4. Sample sizes are 41 with the south and 32 without.

What these results tell us is that formal powers are at best a marginal tool for predicting the perceived power of legislative leaders. This is clearly evident in the p-values for the different regressions, which never cross even a 0.10 standard. When the south is included, the effect is near traditional standards of significance (and would meet a one-tailed level of 0.10), but when the south is excluded following Clucas's logic, there is clearly no connection. This lack of relationship continues if we break Clucas's index into its component subindices of appointment power, committee power, resource control power, procedural power, and tenure ability. With the south included, none of these variables predicts any measure of perceived leader power with a two-tailed p-value

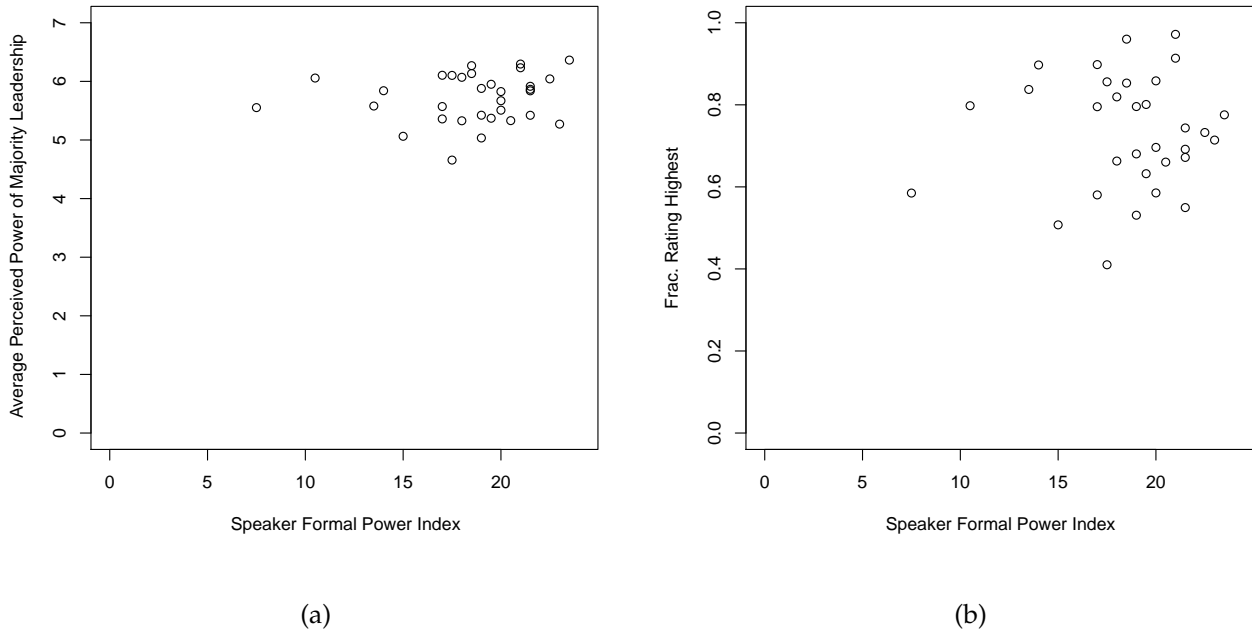


Figure 2: Comparisons Of Formal And Perceived Power (South Excluded)

of 0.10 or better, using robust standard errors where heteroskedasticity is indicated. Excluding the south, the ability of leaders to have long tenures in office increases average perceived power with a two-tailed p-value of 0.100, but no other coefficient reaches that standard.

This is a sobering finding. Clucas's rating system used to create his index is clear and sensible. We should be confident that his index really does capture variation from chamber to chamber in how much formal power is allocated to the speaker. We should also have some confidence that the different survey-based measures usefully tap into different aspects of how strong state legislators think their leaders are. That is, I am not arguing that one measure or both are wrong, or that one is superior to the other. Rather, I assume that both measures capture their object with reasonable accuracy and precision. Both the index and the survey date from 1995, so there is no temporal mismatch as often plagues state legislative research. So even though the previous authors seem to have done everything right, there is still at best a barely discernible relationship between the two kinds of measure. At best, I find effects significant at a one-tailed 0.10 level, and surely we would

Table 1: Predicting Perceived Power With Formal Power

DV	Coef.	SE	$p > t $	R^2
SOUTH INCLUDED				
Average Perceived Power*	0.067	0.044	0.138	0.111
Frac Rating Highest*	0.013	0.009	0.167	0.056
SOUTH EXCLUDED				
Average Perceived Power	0.018	0.022	0.419	0.022
Frac Rating Highest	0.002	0.007	0.800	0.002

*SE is robust

expect ex ante that two aspects of something as fundamental as leadership power should be more closely and clearly related than that. That the actual power formally given to the leader at best barely detectably predicts his or her power as seen by the other legislators is disturbing. Of course, this study is entirely cross-sectional as the data exist only for 1995, and it is possible that a cross-sectional time-series study, if the data existed, would have found stronger connections between formal and perceived powers.

Predicting formal and perceived power

To briefly recap, I use four underlying variables to predict the formal and perceived power of state legislative lower-chamber leaders: professionalization (Squire 2000), dummies for medium and large majority size, the distance between the party mean NOMINATE scores, and the standard deviation of the majority party's NOMINATE scores. As a reminder, note again that the NOMINATE scores are not derived from actual roll-call votes. Instead, they are derived from a set of survey responses about legislator preferences and legislators' supporters that should be causally prior to votes. In models including the south, I also include a dummy for southern states. In all regressions, Cook-Weisberg tests for heteroskedasticity returned $p > \chi^2$ values of 0.15 or less, so I use robust standard errors throughout.

Table 2 presents the results of the six regressions. Given the large number of coefficients being

presented, coefficients with two-tailed p-values of 0.15 or better are in boldface; I chose this level as some variables with coefficients significant only at 0.15 or better merit discussion, and because several variables are significant at levels slightly greater than a two-tailed 0.10.

Overall, the results are surprisingly consistent in that variables only rarely switch signs – what is positively associated with great formal power in all chambers is also positively associated with perceived power with the south excluded. What varies tremendously from regression to regression is whether a variable’s coefficient is significant and the model’s overall fit.

Professionalization is positively associated with leader power in all regressions. However, it is statistically significant only for average perceived power, and otherwise does not even approach standard levels. Substantively, the effect is relatively small. Recall that the average perceived power variable lies along a one to seven scale. Shifting the average up one unit would require increasing professionalization from nearly zero to one, or changing from a legislature that receives no pay, has no staff, and never meets to the U.S. House itself.

Majority size is statistically significant only for average perceived power, where it is associated with stronger leaders. While the individual coefficients for the majority size dummies are not significant, a joint F-test reveals the dummies to be significant together. If we use only a dummy for majorities of 70% or greater, the resulting coefficient is significant at a 0.01 level whether the south is included or excluded, and the coefficient indicates that large-majority chambers have leaders perceived to be about a third of a category higher than smaller-majority chambers. This effect is somewhat robust to changes in the value of “large.” For any majority size of 65–75%, the relevant dummy’s coefficient is significant and has approximately the same coefficient as that reported. However, recall that the raw majority-size variable is never statistically significant, which certainly limits the inferences that can be drawn from it. As such, these results offer no great support for either Binder’s or Dion’s position with regards to majority size and the suppression of the minority party. It offers at best weak support for Binder’s argument, though readers should recall that Martorano (2004) also found support for Binder’s claims (and not for Dion’s) in her time-series cross-sectional work examining changes in formal rules.

The inter-party distance, one aspect of conditional party government, performs the best of all

Table 2: OLS Regressions of Speaker Power Measures

<i>DV / IV</i>	South Included			South Excluded		
	Coef.	SE	$p > t $	Coef.	SE	$p > t $
SPEAKER POWER INDEX						
Constant	14.842	2.754	0.000	14.014	3.644	0.001
Professionalization	1.038	3.713	0.782	1.713	3.683	0.646
Medium maj. size	-0.794	1.063	0.460	-0.792	1.211	0.519
Large maj. size	-1.854	1.786	0.307	-1.779	1.869	0.350
Inter-party distance	10.975	5.526	0.055	12.145	6.440	0.071
SD of maj. ideal points	1.495	8.642	0.864	2.708	11.326	0.813
Southern state	-2.258	1.192	0.067			
F (6,34) / F(5, 26)	2.20		0.067	1.62		0.190
R^2	0.217			0.202		
AVERAGE PERCEIVED POWER						
Constant	4.695	0.616	0.000	4.239	0.346	0.000
Professionalization	0.967	0.421	0.028	1.042	0.332	0.004
Medium maj. size	-0.234	0.251	0.359	-0.047	0.177	0.793
Large maj. size	0.228	0.238	0.343	0.328	0.211	0.133
Inter-party distance	1.551	0.979	0.122	2.051	0.620	0.003
SD of maj. ideal points	1.399	1.807	0.444	2.205	0.746	0.007
Southern state	-0.768	0.392	0.058			
F (6,34) / F(5, 26)	3.88		0.005	18.65		0.000
R^2	0.421			0.473		
FRAC. RATING HIGHEST						
Constant	0.385	0.194	0.056	0.227	0.124	0.080
Professionalization	0.105	0.178	0.558	0.107	0.141	0.455
Medium maj. size	-0.025	0.063	0.690	0.028	0.058	0.633
Large maj. size	0.053	0.068	0.443	0.083	0.070	0.247
Inter-party distance	0.463	0.315	0.151	0.674	0.239	0.009
SD of maj. ideal points	0.734	0.492	0.145	0.997	0.340	0.007
Southern state	-0.201	0.090	0.032			
F (6,34) / F(5, 26)	2.33		0.054	7.97		0.000
R^2	0.358			0.357		

variables. It is always associated with stronger leaders. It is significant at a two-tailed 0.10 level for four of the six regressions, and for the other two it is significant at around the 0.15 level. If the south is excluded, then the inter-party distance is always significant at the 0.10 level or better, and twice at the 0.01 level. Substantively, running the inter-party distance from its observed minimum to maximum corresponds to an increase of average perceived power of 0.77, or about three-fourths of a category, if the south is excluded and 0.58 if the south is included. The same shift corresponds to an increase of formal power of four to four and a half points and to an additional 17–25% of the chamber rating the majority leadership as a most powerful actor, depending on the south's inclusion. These findings lend some credence to the idea that polarized preferences breed stronger leaders, or that legislators give greater power to their leader when the opposition party has a greater incentive to obstruct legislation. This is especially true since the preference estimates I use should be at least much closer to “actual” or “true” preferences than those generally used, since the underlying data are anonymous survey responses and not public votes of any kind or public statements of policy positions or beliefs.

However, the results for majority homogeneity are diametrically opposed. Majority homogeneity has no discernible relationship with the formal powers held by state speakers. Looking at perceived strength, majority homogeneity is associated with *weaker* leaders. That is, as the spread of majority-party ideal points becomes larger, legislators perceive their leaders as being stronger. Precisely what is going on here is not clear, as this observation is consistent with several causal stories. First, it might be that conditional party government is simply wrong, and that homogeneous parties do not grant their leaders greater powers, but this is inconsistent with the findings about inter-party distance. Second, it might be that while more homogeneous parties are willing to grant their leaders more power, such grants are unnecessary owing to the very same homogeneity. That is, the results here are consistent with both the conditional party government story, in part, and Krehbiel's preferenceship critique, in part. A third possibility is that we are observing an artifact of the difference between “true” power and perceived power. It seems reasonable that rank-and-file members in a legislature with a more heterogeneous majority party might more frequently find themselves constrained by the majority leadership than in a chamber with a naturally cohesive ma-

majority – that is, that leaders in such a chamber might be called upon to use whatever tools they have on a more frequent basis. This might cause legislators to rate the majority leadership more highly in states with heterogeneous majorities, even though their leaders might have no more power or even less power, but merely more frequently and obviously exercised power.

Conclusions and discussion

The primary goal of this paper was to use survey data to open a new window what the power of legislative leaders looks like, and what its covariates are. My expectation when assembling the data was that perceived power would act like a “purged” version of formal power, shifting slightly to capture some of the more extreme differences between written rules and governing norms. This is obviously not the case, given the surprising finding that there is very little connection between the formal powers of leaders as stated in the legislative rules and their power as experienced by their fellow legislators. One conclusion, such as it is, is that such a puzzling finding bears more explanation, which I will discuss later. A second conclusion, or at least admonition, that falls from this finding is that we should be careful not to extend our inferences beyond their immediate evidence. This is not to say that Binder, Dion, Martorano, or other researchers in this subfield have overextended their inferences; indeed, they are commendably careful not to. Rather, the implication is only that as readers, we should avoid the temptation to extend the reach of their results beyond the particular type of power being measured. While we might want to extend Binder’s or Dion’s results from formal powers to actual powers, this can result in false inference. Results about formal powers inform us about only that: formal powers. Perceived power might provide different results, and actual power on the ground, if we could somehow measure it, might provide yet other results.

The second major contribution this paper offers is to provide both support and serious challenges for both the conditional party government thesis and its preferenceship critique through the use of preference estimates that are not even indirectly derived from roll-call votes. While there almost certainly remains measurement error, and while this study is plagued by small samples of legislators in some chambers, the anonymous survey based estimates I use here should be substan-

tially closer to being “pure” preferences instead of the “as-if” preferences we more commonly must make do with. Support for conditional party government flows from the consistent and strong effects of inter-party distance – greater polarization is linked to both more formally powerful speakers and speakers who are perceived to be more powerful. The challenge comes in the majority homogeneity findings – where they are significant, they are strong and in the wrong direction. The more the majority’s ideal points come together, the weaker legislators think their speaker is, and there is no effect on formal powers. Further, there was no apparent interactive effect between the two in unreported regressions using such a term. A possible answer is that the legislators are simply wrong, especially if they are relatively inexperienced politically and are comparing their speakers to leaders in non-legislative areas of life such as business, but that does not speak to the lack of effect on formal powers. A second possible explanation is that there are two sides to grants of power to leaders, the willingness to give power, and the power necessary to be effective. Conditional party government, and the Brady, Cooper and Hurley paper which started the flow of research, places great emphasis on the willingness to grant authority, but less on the need for power to be actually exercised. —LOOK AT VOLDEN—

Likewise, the preference constellation findings offer support to, and challenge, Krehbiel’s preference critique of conditional party government. Here, I have found that majority homogeneity is linked to apparently weaker leaders. This is somewhat consistent with a majoritarian position that if the majority is homogeneous, it needs less leadership power to get its way. —CITE KREHBIEL W/PAGE — However, the finding that chambers that “need” more powerful leaders actually have leaders that at least appear to be more powerful is inconsistent with the broader sweep of Krehbiel’s critique, which also argues that parties are relatively unimportant as independent actors in legislative life. Also, inter-party differences are positively associated with leaders’ perceived power, and with their formal powers. This is inconsistent with a causal story about legislators simply voting their own preferences.

Taken together, the two findings can be combined into a single conjecture about need for leadership. That is, the strongest leaders are found in chambers where the party centers are widely separated, but the majority is scattered. This is precisely the recipe for a strong demand for lead-

ership. The wide inter-party distance means that there should be some large number of majority legislators who are strongly disinclined to allow the minority to have their way. On the other hand, a heterogeneous majority implies that at least some majority legislators should be relatively close to minority legislators and so might be induced to help roll the majority from time to time. This combination – enough relatively extreme legislators to slide the majority’s mean farther away, and enough moderate legislators to stretch the majority’s standard deviation – is exactly the set of circumstances where the majority party might try to institute strong leadership, perhaps over the objections of their moderate fringe.

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