Explaining Legislative Leadership Delegation:
Simple Collective Action or Conditional Explanations?

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Abstract

Why are some top legislative leaders more influential than others? I test three general theories of power delegation in U.S. legislatures to help answer this question: that legislative leaders have no real power (Krehbiel 1993, 1998), simple collective action theory (Calvert 1992; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Shepsle 2006), and Conditional Party Government (CPG) theory (Aldrich and Rohde 1998, 2000; Rohde 1991; Richman 2010). Using data from Carey et al.'s (2002) survey of state legislators supplemented with state-level data, I assess these lawmakers' perceptions of the influence of their respective speakers in 48 states using varying intercept, multilevel, ordered probit models. First, I find that state representatives do believe that their speakers are influential in the legislative process. Second, legislative chambers with more re-election and internal organizational problems have more influential majority party leaders, while state-level policy challenges have no such main effects. Finally, CPG factors (majority party homogeneity and two-party polarization) have no main effects in the hypothesized direction, but they do have three-way interactive effects with two collective action factors. These results support both the simple collective action problem explanation of legislative leadership influence and that of Richman's (2010) extension of CPG theory, paralleling closely the recent findings of Battista and Richman (2011) based on completely distinct data. By applying CPG theory to the state legislatures, it becomes a more general and richer explanation of leadership and party power in U.S.-style legislatures than its original application in the U.S. House suggested.

Why do members of U.S.-style legislatures voluntarily give up significant control over lawmaking to the top majority party leader in their respective chambers? American lawmakers arrive at the capitol after each election as constitutional equals, with much more personal power and freedom of action than their counterparts in most parliamentary systems (Loewenberg 2011). But on what is usually the first vote of the session, the Senate president and the speaker of the House—or whatever title the elected leader of the majority party has in a chamber—are typically given significantly more control over the legislative process and outcomes than any other member. This delegation of power poses a significant puzzle to legislative scholars. Indeed, the questions of a.) how much power a sovereign group delegates to a leader or leaders, and b.) under what conditions this is done, are among the most significant in political science (Bendor, Glazer, and Hammond 2001; Calvert 1992; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991).

More specifically, the delegation of legislative power is also one of the central questions in an important and long-standing theoretical debate. One line of argument claims that parties, leaders, and other legislative institutions have no impact on legislative output; rather, this output is determined solely by the median preferences of members of a chamber (Krehbiel 1993, 1998; Schickler 2000). On the other hand, some arguments admit the impact of parties and leaders, explaining delegation of power to them as a principal-agent problem within a collective action context (Olson 1965). A legislature can only act as a collective, so if every lawmaker pursued his/her goals without regard to his/her colleagues or the chamber as a whole, it is quite possible that nothing would be accomplished. Without some coordination of effort, even the personal goals of many lawmakers would not be accomplished (Calvert 1987, 1992; Shepsle 2006). Public policy questions aside, then, it is rational for lawmakers (principals) to cede a portion of their authority to leaders (agents) to better meet some of the formers' personal goals. The principal-agent problem, then, is just how much authority rank-and-file members should delegate to their leaders and how to control these leaders once they have been so empowered. Leaders need to be strong enough to solve the legislature's collective problems, but not so strong that they could

push the body's decisions too far from the ideal policy that it would produce in the absence of such leaders.

A second-order question in this literature concerns the conditions under which lawmakers are willing to delegate more or less of their authority to their leaders. Simple collective action theory suggests that a group's problems will unconditionally encourage it to resort to using leaders and other institutions to solve them (Calvert 1987, 1992; Dewan and Myatt 2008). But some legislative scholars have suggested that the extent of this delegation can depend on certain political conditions, such as the level of policy agreement within the majority party and the divergence between the two parties (Aldrich 1995; Rohde 1991; Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Richman 2010). While these simple collective action and Conditional Party Government arguments are not logically exclusive, the extent to which they reflect behavior in U.S.-style legislatures can tell us much about how these complex institutions represent citizens' values.

I use the variation in the power of speakers of state Houses of Representatives to examine these fundamental questions.[1] Beginning with Richard Clucas's (2001) seminal work on the subject, many scholars have used the state legislatures to test and generalize theories of delegation that were largely developed in studies of the U.S. Congress. State legislatures have the same basic institutional constraints and incentive structures as Congress, but with significant variation in the collective problems and political conditions that are hypothesized to affect leadership power delegation (Squire and Hamm 2005). These state bodies allow scholars to explore this process by changing the research question slightly from "why do legislators delegate power to their leaders?" to "where and when do legislators delegate more or less power to their leaders?" This literature has made significant strides with this approach (Clucas 2001, 2007,

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[1] Even though the lower chamber of every state legislature is not called a House of Representatives, I use that generic term for these chambers for convenience throughout this paper.

2009; Battista 2011; Richman 2010; Battista and Richman 2011); Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011).

This paper helps to resolve some of the questions that have arisen in this literature and to consolidate some of the gains made in it. First, I discuss the illusive concept of power as it relates to legislative leaders, differentiating between leadership "tools," the institutions with which leaders are formally empowered, and leadership "influence," the actual control that leaders have over the legislative process. I use a 2002 survey of state lawmakers (Carey et al. 2002) to operationalize leadership influence as lawmakers' perceptions of their majority party leader's control over the process. I use varying intercept, multilevel, ordered probit models of these perceptions of members of 48 state Houses of Representatives to test hypotheses drawn from the three theories of leadership power delegation. I find, first, that state House speakers are held by their colleagues to be quite influential, but that this perceived influence varies systematically among states and lawmakers. Second, I find that majority leaders have the most influence when problems relating to their respective chambers' internal organization and member goals are highest; state-level policy problems have no such main effects. Third, while the two Conditional Party Government theory factors—majority party homogeneity and two-party polarization—have no discernible main effects, I find evidence supporting Richman's (2010) interactive interpretation of CPG theory. Indeed, my results closely parallel those of two other recent studies of leadership delegation that were each based on a completely distinct dataset (Battista and Richman 2011; Richman 2010). By applying CPG theory to the state legislatures, it becomes a more general and richer explanation of leadership and party power in U.S.-style legislatures than its original application in the U.S. House suggested. These findings have implications not only for the literature on legislative leadership power, but for the study of collective action and principal-agent theory generally.

Legislative Leadership Power—Influence vs. Tools

Before developing hypotheses of legislative leadership power delegation more fully, let us pause to consider one of the most slippery concepts in both politics and the study thereof—power. Political scientists have long recognized that power is a difficult concept to understand, and even more difficult to operationalize (Dahl 1968). But in the legislative leadership power literature, scholars have tended not to consider their conceptual dependent variable very closely. Indeed, Battista's (2011) recent paper is the first to do so, with surprising empirical results. While typically treated interchangeably in this literature, at least two fundamentally different concepts are involved here: powers and power.

First, leadership "powers" are formal rules designed to give top leaders control of a legislative chamber or caucus. To avoid the confusion so often found in this literature, I call these legislative leadership "tools." Leadership tools are adopted as a matter of rule[2] by a chamber and bestowed on a specific office. They are structured institutions, relatively exogenous[3] to the process, robust, and persistent (Shepsle 2006), including, for example, a leader's authority to appoint members of standing committees and refer bills to those committees, and to determine the order of debate and consideration on the floor of the chamber, among other specific grants of authority. According to collective action and Conditional Party Government theories, giving leaders this authority helps the legislature do its work by controlling the flow of legislation and assuring that the process runs smoothly. Studies have shown that these tools can, in fact, give leaders the ability to influence the policy output of a chamber (Cox, Kousser, and McCubbins 2010; Kanthak 2009; Jenkins 2008; Lazarus and Monroe 2007; Hasecke and Mycoff 2007).

On the other hand, when we speak of legislative leaders having "power" in the legislative process, we are typically referring to something that is qualitatively different than these tools. At

[2] Some legislative leadership tools are constitutional, such as the U.S. House speaker's position in presidential succession. But it is far more common for leadership tools in both the state legislatures and Congress to be found in a chamber's rules.
[3] Calvert (1995) argues that there are no exogenous institutions, and indeed, legislative leadership tools are established through the legislative process, for the most part. However, there is little loss of generality in treating them as exogenous in this context.

issue here is something probably more akin to a leader's "influence" than his/her formal tools. Leadership tools are policy instruments established intentionally to solve a collective action problem, but a leader's influence refers to his/her ability to control the outcome of some aspect of the process. Thus, while leadership tools are relatively easy to define and operationalize, at least in part, leadership influence is difficult even just to define conceptually. The classic definition of influence is the ability of A to compel B to act such that B would not have done so in the absence of A's actions (Dahl 1968). Such counterfactuals are notoriously difficult to observe in a natural setting. And just as important in this context, lawmakers' preferences often overlap with those of their leaders, making it difficult to identify legislative behavior where leadership action was determinative (Jenkins 2008). Furthermore, while tools and influence have a clear hypothetical causal direction -- tools are supposed to cause influence-- tools are not the only factors that can cause influence. A leader's knowledge, skills, and abilities can affect his/her legislative influence, as can informal norms of deference to (or defiance of) the majority leader (Dewan and Myatt 2008). As political institutions, leadership tools are significant, but at root, we care at least as much about leadership influence itself because of what it means both for public policy and for theories of legislative leadership and party control.

Battista (2011) recently examined the difference between legislative leadership influence and tools empirically. He compares two operationalizations used more or less interchangeably in the state-level literature: Clucas's (2001) index of state House speaker tools and a state-level aggregation of perceived leadership influence gathered in a survey of state lawmakers (Carey, Niemi, and Powell 2000; Clucas 2007, 2009).[4] Battista demonstrates not only that these measures are only weakly correlated, but even that regressing them on the same variables can yield very different substantive results. His explanation for these worrisome findings is that tools and influence are two dimensions of a broad underlying concept of leadership power. But I believe

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[4] Both the indicators Battista used were measured in 1995.

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that leadership tools and influence are better thought of as fundamentally distinct, if hypothetically related, concepts.

Most studies of legislative leadership power focus on the causes and effects of leadership tools, whether certain specific tools (e.g., Hedlund et al. 2009, Cox, Kousser, and McCubbins 2010, Hasecke and Mycoff 2007, and Lazarus and Monroe 2007) or an index of several powers (Clucas 2001). While this approach makes theoretical sense in testing theories of power delegation, an exclusive focus on these tools has its weaknesses, even assuming that tools and influence are tapping the same root concept. A given tool does not necessarily have the same impact on legislative leader influence in every state, whether due to norms and traditions, the existence of other tools, a leader's personal style, or other reasons. Indeed, the existence of a tool merely defines the upper bound of a leader's ability to control that aspect of the legislative process (Battista 2011). For example, a leader may have the authority to move people from committee to committee during a session, but he/she may rarely do so because of informal political constraints. In addition, indices of leadership tools may fail to include specific formal powers that are important in one or more state; some tools may just be difficult to assess consistently across the states, like a leader's ability to control office space, parking, extra pay for lawmakers, and so forth. Of course, any social or political indicator is open to critique. My argument is that testing theories of legislative leadership power also with models that explain influence will enhance our understanding of the process and the robustness of the literature.

The most straightforward way to assess leadership influence is to survey those familiar with the legislative process[5]--members of the chamber itself. Lawmakers are intimately interested in that process, and they have more access to every aspect of it than any other category of person. Lobbyists, legislative staff, and statehouse journalists also have strong interest in, and good access to, the legislative process, giving them insight into a leader's influence (Moncrief and

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[5] Battista and Richman (2011) use roll call votes to assess party and leadership influence on that aspect of the legislative process more directly.

Thompson 2001). A few such actors in each state may even have a better understanding of leadership influence than rank-and-file lawmakers, but as groups, they undoubtedly do not. Of course, there are also shortcomings with operationalizing leadership power as perceived influence (Battista 2011). I analyze lawmakers' perceptions of their majority leader's influence at the individual level to test my hypotheses of leadership power. As discussed below, I deal with the potential problems with this measure by using multilevel models and controlling for individual-level biases in their responses.

Legislative Leadership Influence—When and Under What Circumstances?

The first question to ask about legislative leadership influence over lawmaking is whether, in fact, it exists. Krehbiel (1993, 1998) has developed only the most recent of several early spatial models of the U.S. legislative process that lead to the conclusion that it does not. In his model, the two layers of majority-rule voting in lawmaking— legislative elections and roll call voting on the floor of a chamber—drive the process, so that legislative institutions like parties, leaders, and committees cannot bias its output from reflecting the will of the chamber floor's median voter. On the other hand, the "new institutionalism" writers discussed below argue that leaders can have an impact on the process, for example, by strategically setting the legislative agenda (e.g., Aldrich and Rohde 2000, Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991, and Cox and McCubbins 2005). I assess whether legislative leaders have influence in the legislative process in two ways, admittedly neither being direct nor logically ironclad. First, I simply assess lawmakers' responses to an inquiry about the influence of their own speakers, using Carey and colleagues' 2002 survey of state representatives. Second, I argue that if this perceived leadership influence is systematically affected by factors in line with the theories discussed below, then these reports are not just random, but offer some support for both the existence of leadership influence and those theories.

Next, consider these new institutionalism theories of the legislative process in which the parties and leaders do play a significant role. Regarding leaders, these theories are based on the idea that a.) a legislature faces a collective action problem, which b.) motivates its members to establish a principal-agent relationship with leaders from among their colleagues to help the body solve that problem (Calvert 1992; Bendor, Glazer, and Hammond 2001; Clucas 2001). Beyond these generalities, debate exists about which collective action problems initiate this authority delegation and whether such delegation is universal or conditional (Lazarus and Monroe 2007).

What problems might a legislature face that would be sufficient to motivate its members to cede some of their authority to leaders? Two categories of such problems can be hypothesized: the macro-level policy problems a state faces, and problems generated from the internal logic of the legislature. These potential causes of leadership influence each imply a different motivational force behind legislative organization and perhaps a different set of priorities for lawmakers.

The solution of a state's macro-level policy problems falls into the constitutional remit of the legislature. Such "policy challenges" (Richman 2010) are the manifest job of the legislature. The more problems a state has, and the more complex its political and policy environment, the more difficult is the collective job of the legislature (King 2000; Mooney 1995; Battista and Richman 2011). If legislative leaders are empowered to help their chambers solve these macro-level problems, then more such challenges would lead to more influential majority leaders (Binder 1996; Cooper 1977; Richman 2010). To test this hypothesis, I include measures of state-level unemployment rate in 2002 and population density[6] based on the 2000 Census in my model of perceived leadership influence, two broad indicators of the problems facing a state and the complexity of its policy-making environment.

On the other hand, the collective problems that give rise to leadership power may be driven more by a legislature's internal organization and the personal goals of its members than by

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[6] Population density is measured as 1000 people per square mile in a state at the time of the 2000 U.S. Census.

the state's problem environment. For example, the difficulty of any group's collective action is increased, almost by definition, by the size of that group (Dewan and Myatt 2008). So just as the relatively small U.S. Senate typically relies less on organizational structure (strong committees and leaders) than does the large U.S. House of Representatives (Smith 2005), the more members in a legislative chamber, the stronger its majority leaders can be expected to be. Legislative turnover is another factor that can complicate a legislature's collective job (Moncrief, Niemi, and Powell 2004). More new members means that the relationships that facilitate the legislative process are more fragile, more freshmen have to be trained more often, and institutional knowledge is less deep and/or broad, all of which make lawmaking more difficult. Thus, legislative turnover is expected to be positively related to majority leader influence.

Likewise, major institutional change in a legislature can also disrupt relationships and cause complexity. The most significant such reform in state legislatures in the recent decades was the limits some states placed on the number of terms their lawmakers could serve in a chamber (Kurtz, Cain, and Niemi 2007). Term limits came in two phases—its initial adoption (via citizen initiative, for the most part) and then its implementation often a decade later as members of a chamber were first restricted from running for re-election (Mooney 2009). These two phases of the reform could affect the collective action calculus differently (Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011), so I include in my models a dummy variable for states that had adopted the reform by 2002 but had not yet implemented it and another for states that had implemented it by then. 2002 was in the middle of the term limits phase-in period, so in my dataset, 10 states had implemented the reform, while six states had adopted them but not yet implemented them.[7] The logic of collective action suggests that term limits will increase the influence of legislative leaders.

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[7] As of April 2002, when the Carey et al. survey was administered, LA, MO, NV, OK, UT, and WY had adopted legislative term limits but not yet implemented them, while AR, AZ, CA, CO, FL, ME, MI, MT, OH, and SD had already implemented them (Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011; Mooney 2009).

A final internal organizational factor I consider is the size of the minority party in a chamber. Much research has examined the impact of this factor on the power of parties and leaders, with mixed theoretical and empirical results (Clucas 2007). Some argue that the closer the balance between the two parties in a chamber, the more power the majority party is given (by the majority party members, of course), because small majorities are more cohesive and homogeneous and need to secure most of their votes in order to pass legislation (Dion 2001; Hedlund et al. 2009; Patty 2008; Jewell and Whicker 1994). But other scholars argue that as a minority's size increases, the majority party and its leaders are weakened since only a few defections can lead to legislative losses (Martorano 2004; Battista 2009; Binder 1996; Ripley 1969). I test these hypotheses by including in my model the percentage of seats held by the minority party in a legislative chamber.

In addition to these organizational challenges, the scope of a chamber's collective action problem is also affected by lawmakers' ability to meet their personal goals, especially the goal of re-election (Mayhew 1974; Arnold 1992). Most obviously, the more re-election competition lawmakers face, the more they need the assistance of a strong leader to help them keep their jobs (Herron and Theodos 2004; Jewell and Whicker 1994). I include in my models an indicator of average district-level, two-party competition in a state from 1996 to 2000 to test this hypothesis (Klarner 2012; Holbrook and Van Dunk 1993). In addition, the level of professionalism in a legislative chamber may also affect a lawmaker's goal achievement calculus. Early scholars of the subject worried that members of a more professional legislature would chafe under strong leadership, thus diminishing the authority they would wish to delegate (Rosenthal 1998; Jewell and Whicker 1994; see also Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991, 43, on this relationship in Congress). On the other hand, professionalism suggests a greater salary and closer attachment to their positions by incumbents, thereby making these seats more valuable. Thus, members of more professional legislatures may be more likely to relinquish authority to leaders in exchange for re-election help. While the results of empirical tests of these hypotheses have been mixed (e.g.,

Clucas 2001, 2007, 2009; Richman 2010; Battista 2011), the logic of collective action delegation implies a positive relationship between leadership power and legislative professionalism. I include the log of Squire's (2007) professionalism measure for 2003 in my model to test this hypothesis.

In addition to these hypothesized simple impacts of collective action problems, an important line of scholarship argues that the political context in a chamber conditions these effects on legislative leadership power delegation. Aldrich and Rohde's Conditional Party Government (CPG) theory identifies two conditions under which parties, and by extension, party leaders, are given more deference and power in Congress: homogenization and party polarization (1998, 2000; see also Rohde 1991, Aldrich and Battista 2002, and Clucas 2009). While a leader needs to be strong enough to facilitate a group's collective action, this power leads to the potential for the leader to bias the group's decisions significantly from the median preference of the group. The extent of this decision-making bias -- or "agency loss" (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Shepsle 2006)-- is a function of two things: 1) the difference between the group's median preference and the leader's preference, and 2) the extent of the leader's influence over the decision. Therefore, if a group's members' preferences are homogeneous, they can give their leader more power since they know that regardless of who in the group is chosen to lead, his/her preferences will not be far from the group median. In addition, the more polarized the preferences of two parties in a legislative chamber are, the more incentive lawmakers have to empower their respective parties and leaders. As the difference between the median preferences of the two parties increases, so do the negative consequences of one party losing out to the other party in a legislative vote. In such a legislature, leaders can be empowered to battle the other party and maximize the cohesion and resources of their own respective parties.

Richman (2010) adds two important theoretical nuances to the basic CPG argument. First, he argues that the party homogeneity that really matters in the chamber leadership delegation calculus is that of the majority party (Cox, Kousser, and McCubbins 2010; Battista

2009). While the formal powers of state legislative majority party leaders are determined, for the most part, by chamber-level rules passed by resolution at the beginning of a legislative session, in such organizational voting, even the most heterogeneous majority party typically votes together (Whicker and Jewell 1994; Rosenthal 1998). Thus, the preferences of the majority party determine these rules, and so only its homogeneity matters.

But Richman's most theoretically significant contribution to the CPG literature is his taking seriously the "conditional" in Conditional Party Government theory, moving beyond thinking about just the main effects of party polarization and homogeneity. CPG implies that these conditions should have a nonlinear effect on the delegation of power to leaders and party through their interactions with other factors. Most basically, the theory suggests that a combination of both increased two-party polarization and greater majority party homogeneity will encourage majority party members to empower their leaders. To the extent that either of these conditions does not exist, there will be more agency loss. But more important, these conditions merely facilitate a principal-agent solution to a collective action problem, they do not in themselves guarantee one (Richman 2010; Battista and Richman 2011). That is, both the CPG conditions and a collective problem must exist for lawmakers to delegate voluntarily some of their constitutional authority to one of their colleagues acting as leader. Even if the majority party is homogeneous and the parties are polarized, if the legislature does not face significant collective problem, there is no reason why its members should cede authority to their leaders.

I test for the simple and interactive CPG hypotheses as follows. First, I include in my models the inverse of the standard deviation in each state of the majority party members' responses to a seven-point ideology question as a measure of that party's preference homogeneity, and I include the absolute difference of the medians of the two parties' respondents in a state to this question as a measure of the party polarization. Second, I include the two-way interaction of these majority party homogeneity and party polarization indicators and the three-

way interactions of these CPG variables with each of the collective action problem indicators discussed above.

Methodology

To test my hypotheses of the delegation of power to legislative leaders, I use data from Carey and colleagues' 2002 survey of state lawmakers, supplemented by state-level data. My dependent variable is a measure of a legislator's perception of his/her majority party leader's influence, based on the following question:

"What do you think is the relative influence of the following actors in determining legislative outcomes in your chamber?" Item: "Majority party leadership."[8]

The response options range from 1 ("no influence") through 7 ("dictates policy"). In a state legislature's lower chamber, "majority party leadership" refers to the top majority party leader, typically called the "speaker" of the chamber, and the leadership team that is closely associated with the speaker (Jewell and Whicker 1994). State-level aggregations of lawmakers' responses to this question have been used successfully in other studies of leadership power (Clucas 2007, 2009; Battista 2011), and Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty (2011) used these data at the individual level, as I do.

As an indicator of true speaker influence, these perceptions undoubtedly have certain biases (Battista 2011). To help control for these, I include in my regression models three individual-level factors that may cause such misperceptions. First, a lawmaker may feel that his/her speaker is more influential when that leader's decisions and actions go against that lawmaker's own preferences, as a rationalization of the outcome with which he/she disagrees (Jost 1995; Kay, Jimenez, and Jost 2002; Taylor and Brown 1988). In particular, minority party members may rationalize the policy outputs of their chamber that they oppose by blaming the

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[8] In addition to majority party leadership, Carey et al. (2002) also assessed the influence of minority party leadership, committee chairs, the governor, legislative staff, civil servants, interest groups, and the mass media.

influential speaker. Second, women lawmakers tend to be more cooperative and willing to compromise than their male colleagues, who tend to be more confrontational (Reingold 2000; Kathlene 1994). Thus, female lawmakers may feel especially put upon by legislative leaders, biasing their perceptions of speaker influence upwards. Finally, a response to this survey question of influence could also be affected by a systematic tendency to report that any actor in the political system is more or less influential, that is, a response set by the lawmakers answering it (Paulhus 1991). Without an objective standard against which to compare actors in answering this survey question, some legislators' overall standard may be higher or lower than others (Battista 2011; Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011). To control for these factors, I include indicator variables for gender and minority party status, as well as a respondent's average answer to the parallel survey questions about the influence of seven other actors in their respective state political systems (see Footnote 8).

I also include in my models four state-level factors that may affect a lawmaker's perception of his/her speaker's influence but that do not relate to my delegation hypotheses. First, I control for the formal tools with which leaders have been endowed by their colleagues. As discussed earlier, leadership tools and leadership influence are two very different things, but there is good reason to expect them to be related. I include in my models an updated and modified version of Clucas's (2001) speakers' tools index, which includes indicators of a speaker's official control over five key aspects of the legislative process in 2002: committee chair appointment, committee member assignment, the appointment of other legislative leaders, bill referral to committees, and control over legislative staff (Mooney 2010). Second, a speaker's tenure in office may affect his/her influence in lawmaking. The longer a speaker serves, the more time he/she has to consolidate power and to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities that can increase his/her influence (Whicker and Jewell 1994; Rosenthal 1998). I control for this potential

effect by including the natural log of the number of consecutive years that the then-current

speaker had served in that position as of 2001.[9]

A state governor's strength may also affect the perception of a speaker's influence,

although conflicting hypotheses exist here. If control over lawmaking is a zero-sum game, then

when the governor is stronger, the speaker must be weaker, and vice versa. However, there is

evidence of a synergy between a governor and the legislature such that their influence may be

positively correlated (Dilger, Krause, and Moffet 1995; Ferguson 2003). I control for any such

effect here using Beyle's (2004) index of gubernatorial tools. Finally, the states of the old

Confederacy have historically had weak political party systems, large majorities in their

legislatures, and weak legislative leaders (Key 1949). As such, these states are sometimes treated

differently in studies of legislative leadership power (e.g., Battista 2011 and Clucas 2007). But in

recent decades, most of these states have developed a vigorous Republican Party, increasing the

relevance of legislative party and leaders in their policymaking processes (Hayes and McKee

2008). Recent studies of state legislative leadership power have tried various approaches

regarding the South, with mixed results.[10] I adopt the cautious approach of including a dummy

variable for lawmakers from the 11 states of the old Confederacy to control for any effect here.

Two factors determined the estimation strategy for my regression models of speaker

influence. First, since my dependent variable is a seven-level ordinal variable with the cases not

evenly distributed in those categories (see Figure 1), I use ordered probit regression. Second,

since my data are gathered at both the individual and state levels, I use a varying-intercepts

multilevel model to account for the potential intraclass correlation among respondents from the

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[9] Among the 48 House speakers in my data set, this tenure ranged from one to 20 years.
[10] For example, in recent studies of legislative leadership power, Clucas (2007) drops the southern states in one study, says a South dummy is not statistically significant in another (Clucas 2001), and finds a dummy to have a negative estimated coefficient in a third (Clucas 2009). Battista (2011) runs his models with and without the southern states, while Richman (2010) does not even control for the South.

same state (Primo, Jacobsmeier, and Milyo 2007; Hoop 2002).[11] Indeed, the raw state-level

intraclass correlation in my data set is 0.196, and with an average cluster (state) size of almost 40

respondents, taking into account this violation of the IID assumption could significantly bias the

variance estimates for the estimated coefficients in the model (Gelman and Hill 2007;

Steenbergen and Jones 2002). In addition, respondents from Washington and Nebraska were not

included in my analysis. Nebraska has no lower chamber, and in 2002, the Washington House

was locked in a partisan tie causing ambiguity about who was the "majority party" leader during

the survey period. Finally, to interpret the estimated main effects of the collective action problem

variables appropriately in the interactive models, I center these variables around their means

(except for the dummy variables) in the data used throughout these analyses.

Results

First, consider Krehbiel's (1993, 1998) hypothesis that parties and their leaders are not

influential in the legislative process. Figure 1 displays the raw responses to the question of

majority party leadership influence, the dependent variable in later analyses. Clearly, the

members of these 48 Houses of Representatives believe that their speakers are influential. The

modal response to this question was a six out of seven ordinal categories, and the distribution of

the responses is heavily skewed to the left. While not irrefutable proof of leadership influence,

these data demonstrate that lawmakers certainly believe that their speakers matter in the

legislative process. In addition, as will be seen in Table 1, my regression analyses of this variable

support the new institutionalism hypotheses, suggesting further that these responses have

explainable patterns. As such, these data fail to support the Krehbiel hypothesis that legislative

leaders are not influential.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

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[11] I estimated my models in Stata using the oprobit link of the gllamm command, indexed on the states, with robust standard errors.

Table 1 holds the results of various specifications of my varying intercepts, multilevel, ordered probit model of perceived majority leadership influence. Model 1 contains only the main effects of the simple collective action problems and Conditional Party Government party factors, along with the individual- and state-level controls. The estimated coefficients for the simple collective action problem variables suggest that a speaker's influence is indeed increased by the intensity of these problems. But not just any collective problems have this effect. The two macro-level public policy problem variables in the model, state unemployment rate and population density, have no discernible impact on leadership influence at conventional levels of statistical significance. On the other hand, six of the seven variables assessing internal legislative problems and goals do appear to affect the dependent variable, all but one of these in the hypothesized direction. Only the size of the minority in the chamber has no statistically significant estimated effect. This may be explained by the mixed forces that have been hypothesized to be at work here (Dion 2001; Hedlund et al. 2009; Clucas 2007; Martorano 2004; Battista 2009), although we see below that this variable does have a conditional effect on speaker influence. Each of the other estimated effects is positive (except for term limits implementation, discussed below), supporting the simple collective action hypothesis (Calvert 1992; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Shepsle 2006; Dewan and Myatt 2007). Larger chambers and those with more turnover are more difficult to organize, making the job of the body harder; where there is more political competition and legislative professionalism, the difficulty and stakes of re-election are higher. As these difficulties grow, lawmakers need more help to accomplish their collective and individual goals, and as a result, they appear willing to give up more of their authority and freedom of action to their leaders. These analyses suggest strongly that legislative leadership empowerment is a reaction to internal institutional problems and personal goals rather than about fixing the problems of the state.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The estimated coefficients for the two term limits variables in Model 1 support this simple collective action problem interpretation, but they also give insight into how lawmakers have reacted to this reform (Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011). The estimated effect of the adoption of term limits, prior to implementation, on speaker influence is positive and statistically significant. Perhaps lawmakers who were originally elected under the pre-term-limits regime anticipated that the reform would make their job more difficult, whether by increasing uncertainty in the process or by threatening their ability to continue their political careers, thus inspiring them to empower stronger leaders to help with these problems (Mooney 2009). But once the reform is finally implemented, lawmakers elected under the new regime appear to need even less influential leaders than in those states without any exposure to term limits at all. Perhaps the initial fears of term limits' impacts were overblown, or perhaps these term-limited lawmakers simply care less about the collective problems of the chamber (Little and Farmer 2007). Sorting out these results requires further research.

These estimated main effects of the Conditional Party Government variables in Model 1 yield two interesting interpretations. First, neither of these coefficients is statistically significant in the hypothesized direction. Thus, the simplest CPG hypotheses that majority party homogeneity and two-party polarization encourage strong leaders are not supported by these data (Rohde 1991; Aldrich and Rohde 1998, 2000). Second, the estimated effect of majority party homogeneity is actually statistically significant in the opposite direction than CPG theory would suggest. That is, the more heterogeneous the majority party in a chamber, the more influential the speaker is thought to be, ceteris paribus. Clearly, concern over agency loss is not the driving force here. However, this result is entirely consistent with the interpretation that leadership influence is driven by internal collective action problems. The more heterogeneous a majority party, the harder it is to achieve its collective goals, especially the goal of developing a clear and consistent brand label on which its members can run in the next election (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005;

Cox, Kousser, and McCubbins 2010).[12] So a more heterogeneous party needs stronger leaders to set the agenda and generally control its disputatious caucus. Thus, this is another piece of evidence supporting the conclusion that legislative leadership influence is driven by the body's internal legislative problems and its members' personal goals.

Models 2 and 3 reflect Richman's (2010) extension of Conditional Party Government theory, testing his hypotheses of the interactive impacts of the majority party homogeneity and two-party polarization. Importantly, the point estimates and precision of the main effects are changed little by the addition of these interactions, showing my interpretations of Model 1 to be robust. In neither Model 2 nor 3 is the estimated two-way interaction of these factors statistically significant. Model 3 follows Richman's logic fully, adding nine three-way interaction terms, one for each of the collective problem variables interacted with both two-party polarization and majority party homogeneity.

The results in Model 3 offer some support for Richman's interactive interpretation of CPG theory. Two of the nine estimated three-way interaction effects are statistically significant at conventional levels. Interestingly, these are the interactions with two of the three problem variables whose main effect on majority leader influence was not statistically significant— population density and minority size. Both of these variables are estimated to have a positive effect on leader influence—as hypothesized by the simple collective action theory of legislative organization—but only in chambers that have both a more homogenous majority party and more polarized parties. Thus, as Richman (2010) argued, it is not just majority homogeneity or two-party polarization alone that cause a chamber to empower its majority leader, nor even the interaction of these two factors. Together, these two factors merely set the conditions under which legislators might resort to a strong leader, if significant problems arise to warrant such delegation. In addition to the state-level policy challenges that Richman found to affect leadership power in

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[12] This hypothesis also applies to the minority party, but I am only modeling the effects on majority party leadership in this paper.

this way,[13] Model 3 shows that an internal organizational challenge (minority size) also has such a conditional effect. The questions of why only these two variables have this interactive CPG effect and why they also do not have a discernible main effect need to be pursued in future research. Perhaps one or more of these affects leadership influence differently under different conditions, thereby cancelling out its average influence.[14] In Model 4, I trim out all the non-statistically significant interactions, along with state unemployment, and the results are sustained, with the two-way interaction of the CPG variables also now statistically significant in the hypothesized direction.

In addition to the variables testing my hypotheses of leadership influence delegation, five of the seven control variables have statistically significant estimated effects consistently across these models. Each of the individual-level controls has a strong and easily interpretable estimated coefficient. Three of the four state-level controls do not behave as predicted, but given their strong theoretical rationale, I retain them in all the models. Of particular interest, once I control for all the other factors in the model, speakers' formal tools will have no discernible impact on their perceived influence.[15] This supports Battista's (2011) important result that legislative leaders' tools and influence are less directly related than has been assumed in this literature. Finally, the fact that majority leaders in the South are seen as more influential by their colleagues than are those elsewhere, ceteris paribus, suggests that the major party realignments in that region in the past generation have significantly changed the legislative leadership dynamic there (Hayes and McKee 2008).

Conclusion

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[13] Richman (2010) used speakers' formal tools as his dependent variable.

[14] Thanks to Jesse Richman (private communication) for this idea.

[15] Re-estimating my models using Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty's (2011) operationalization of leadership tools returned the same results.

This paper contributes to the excellent literature that uses the empirical leverage provided by the 50 states to explore explanations of legislative behavior and organization developed by scholars of Congress.[16] Beginning with Clucas's (2001) seminal study, several scholars have used state legislatures in this way to test and expand upon theories of legislative leadership power, using various operationalizations and approaches (e.g., Clucas 2007, 2009; Richman 2010; Battista 2011; Battista and Richman 2011). With one exception (Miller, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2011), these studies have done this with state-level data, using dependent variables that were either leadership tools indices, aggregations of perceived influence, or indicators of party impacts on roll call voting. By using individual-level data on lawmakers' perceptions of their leaders' influence, while controlling for potential biases and using the appropriate statistical techniques, I was able to explore this phenomenon from a different perspective, testing a greater range of theoretically relevant and control variables. My analyses are important for what they tell us not only about legislative leadership delegation, but also about legislative organization and principal-agent relationships more generally.

Why do U.S. state legislators voluntarily give up some of their autonomy and authority to their majority party leader? My analyses support the relatively simple explanation that legislators empower their leaders as agents to solve their collective problems (Calvert 1992; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005; Shepsle 2006). But importantly, the problems that these leaders are empowered to help solve are by and large not the broad public policy problems facing the state. Rather, it is the more internal dynamics of a legislature that drive leadership delegation. Leaders are stronger when lawmakers' seats are insecure and valuable and when their chamber is large, with high turnover and a diverse majority party. These factors reflect the immediate, nuts-and-bolts concerns of legislators on a day-to-day basis, both in the capitol and on the hustings. Lawmakers must deal with these problems before tackling their state's policy

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[16] In addition to the literature on legislative leadership power, this has been done successfully in studying roll call voting (e.g., Jenkins 2008 and Wright 2007) and committee organization (e.g., Battista 2006 and 2009, Hedlund et al. 2009, and Prince and Overby 2005), among other topics.

21

problems. Thus, rather than basing a theory of legislative organization on higher order concerns about public policy problem solution, a simpler self-interest explanation may suffice here, as it does for some other aspects of legislative behavior (Mayhew 1974; Arnold 1992). This may provide a more general lesson for understanding principal-agent relationships—look to the principal's most proximate goals and problems first.

I also find some support for Conditional Party Government theory (Aldrich and Rohde 1998, 2000; Rohde 1991), especially Richman's (2010) interactive interpretation of it. Some collective action problems appear to encourage the delegation of power to leaders only when certain political conditions exist within a legislature, namely, when the majority party is more homogeneous and the two parties are more polarized. Why some collective problems have this conditional effect on leadership influence while others have a more consistent effect is a subject for future research. The fact that state-level policy challenges had only an interactive effect may be revealing. For example, given the internal imperatives of the legislative institution, leaders may be useful in meeting the basic internal collective action challenges regardless of the political context. But legislative responses to public policy problems may be influenced more by the character of lawmakers' policy preferences, thus leading them to be more likely to be contingent on the political context.[17] But most important, my results support Richman's (2010) interactive extension of CPG theory, which argues that party homogeneity and polarization do not by themselves increase leadership power, but rather merely provide the context in which collective problems can be dealt with by developing a strong principal-agent relationship with leaders. Indeed, taken together with Richman's 2010 study and his recent article with Battista (Battista and Richman 2011), this paper provides very strong support for this contention. These three studies test this hypothesis with completely distinct datasets, units of analysis, and conceptualizations and operationalizations of

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[17] Thanks to Jesse Richman (private communication) for this insight.

leadership power, but they each find support for the three-way interaction interpretation of CPG theory. These studies not only use state legislatures to provide an out-of-sample test of CPG theory, which was originally developed to explain congressional organization, they provide significant cross-validation among themselves.

The original conception of Conditional Party Government theory may well have been less general and subtle because it was designed to explain a single institution, rather than the U.S.-style legislative process, in general. By rethinking the theory with respect to the states and using the significant variation in legislative leadership power there, this important theory has been more fully developed and more validly tested.

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TABLE 1: State House Speaker Influence—Testing Collective Action and Conditional Party Government Hypotheses

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Simple Collective Action Problem Variables: State-level policy problems				
Population density	.249	.146	-.207	.002
	(.316)	(.315)	(.389)	(.365)
Unemployment rate	-.056	-.068	-.108	
	(.060)	(.057)	(.058)	
Simple Collective Action Problem Variables: Internal legislative problems and goals				
Minority size	-.003	-.003	-.002	-.005
	(.007)	(.006)	(.007)	(.007)
Chamber size	.0028**	.0020**	.0030**	.0024**
	(.0007)	(.0007)	(.0008)	(.0007)
Legislative turnover	.015*	.0142*	.015*	.013*
	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)	(.006)
Political competition	.023**	.021*	.020**	.022**
	(.006)	(.010)	(.007)	(.005)
Legislative professionalism (log)	.351**	.393**	.542**	.388**
	(.129)	(.105)	(.122)	(.085)
State legislative term limits-- adopted	.438**	.428**	.475**	.448**
	(.136)	(.135)	(.154)	(.120)
State legislative term limits—implemented	-.424*	-.454*	-.424*	-.359*
	(.201)	(.199)	(.192)	(.158)
Conditional Party Government variables				
Polarization of legislative parties	-.009	.050	-.102	.052
	(.084)	(.101)	(.147)	(.098)
Homogeneity of majority party	-.671**	-.691**	-.861**	-.766**
	(.190)	(.170)	(.163)	(.196)
Homogeneity*Polarization		.714	1.105	1.031*
		(.544)	(.965)	(.491)
Homogeneity*Polarization* Population density			.006*	.004*
			(.003)	(.002)
Homogeneity*Polarization* Unemployment rate			-.617	
			(.807)	
Homogeneity*Polarization* Minority size			.133*	.130*
			(.066)	(.057)
Homogeneity*Polarization* Chamber size			.006	
			(.019)	
Homogeneity*Polarization* Legislative turnover			.016	
			(.051)	
Homogeneity*Polarization* Political competition			.065	
			(.067)	
Homogeneity*Polarization*			-2.17	

29

Legislative professionalism (log)			(1.284)	
Homogeneity*Polarization* Term limits—adopted			.845 (1.464)	
Homogeneity*Polarization* Term limits—implemented			.924 (1.543)	
Individual-level controls				
Minority party member	.429** (.079)	.428** (.079)	.430** (.081)	.429** (.080)
Woman legislator	.256** (.068)	.256** (.067)	.257** (.067)	.255** (.067)
Influence response bias	.468** (.046)	.469** (.046)	.469** (.046)	.468** (.046)
State-level controls				
Speaker tools	-.038 (.053)	-.055 (.060)	-.092 (.063)	-.026 (.042)
Speaker tenure (log)	.156 (.088)	.147 (.089)	.116 (.102)	.138 (.077)
Governor tools	.265 (.145)	.325* (.146)	.444** (.171)	.348* (.151)
South	.298* (.139)	.304* (.142)	.414** (.139)	.337* (.144)
Cut points				
Cut 1	-.485 (.502)	-.295 (.506)	.047 (.595)	-.096 (.588)
Cut 2	-.102 (.508)	.088 (.508)	.430 (.605)	.286 (.597)
Cut 3	.315 (.537)	.504 (.535)	.846 (.632)	.702 (.622)
Cut 4	.749 (.542)	.938 (.541)	1.281 (.638)	1.137 (.629)
Cut 5	1.652 (.551)	1.841 (.549)	2.184 (.648)	2.040 (.641)
Cut 6	2.741 (.557)	2.930 (.555)	3.273 (.657)	3.129 (.650)
Level 1 (individual) units	1937	1937	1937	1937
Level 2 (state) units	48	48	48	48
State-level random-intercept variance (SE)	.0663 (.0261)	.0611 (.0256)	.0470 (.0242)	.0576 (.0263)
PRE	.229	.229	.218	.232

*= $p<.05$; **=$p<.01$ (two-tailed)

Cases: Individual state representative, responding to Carey et al. 2002 survey.

Dependent variable: Survey question z12.1: "What do you think is the relative influence of the following actors in determining Legislative outcomes in your chamber? Item: "Majority party leadership." Response options: 1 ("no influence") through 7 ("dictates policy").

NOTES:
- These models were estimated as varying intercept, multilevel, ordered probit models, using the `gllamm` command in Stata, with the `oprobit` link and the states as clusters. Robust standard errors are in parentheses below the estimated coefficients.
- Cases in the modal category: 35%
- Respondents from 48 states are included. Nebraska is excluded because it has no lower chamber, and Washington is excluded because its House had a partisan tie in 2002.

FIGURE 1: Lawmakers' Perceptions of Speaker Influence
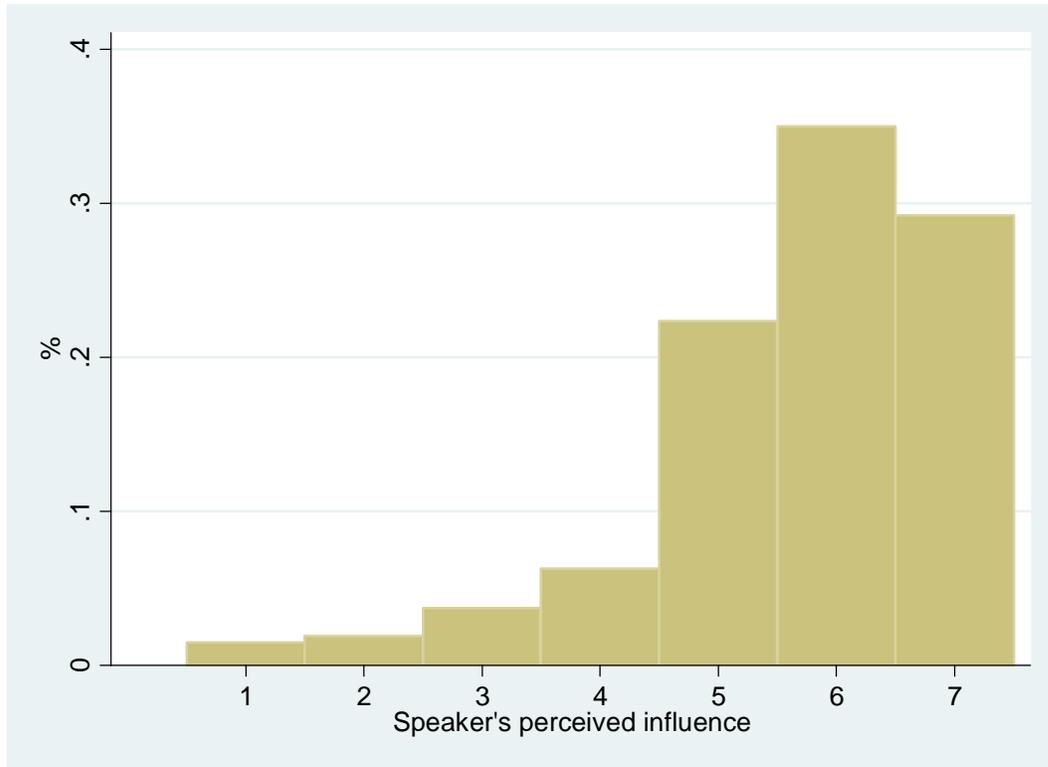
This histogram represents the responses of the 1937 state representatives used in the analyses in Table 1 to the question: "What do you think is the relative influence of the following actors in determining legislative outcomes in your chamber?" Item: "Majority party leadership" (Carey et al. 2002). The scale ranges from 1 = "no influence" to 7= "dictates policy."