Who’s in Charge? The Party Leader, Legislative Institutions, and Party Preferences*

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No, seriously, this is a draft

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Abstract
How do political parties make decisions? Typically, scholars have focused on the formal party leader—the person who, in parliamentary systems, is in effect the party’s candidate for Prime Minister—as the key actor. Powerful party leaders face a conundrum, however. If their parties are to govern or even to participate in the legislative process, they must delegate to agents. These agents—ministers, spokespersons, important committee members, or even unranked members who are recognized experts in specific policy areas—have their own policy preferences and priorities and, absent the threat of discipline, cannot be expected to toe a party line distinct from those preferences. At the same time, if being promoted within the party requires loyalty to the party line, no backbencher has incentive to reveal his preferences until he is in a position to use them to influence policy making or position taking. But agents who are forced to toe a policy line far from what they would like are unlikely to put a lot of effort into their service, as they gain little in policy terms from it. One solution is to give agents full leeway to set the party position in their issue areas (cf. Laver and Shepsle 1996), but then leaders have little to do and less policy influence. I resolve this dilemma using a formal model of party leadership that relies on incomplete information about the leader’s preferences to induce backbenchers sincerely to reveal their own preferences; the leader then can use information about backbencher preferences to choose agents who will define a party line close to—but not identical to—her own (cf. Kam et al. 2010).

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1 Introduction

What do party leaders do? The conventional wisdom tells us that party leaders do as their title implies—they lead. That is, they set party policy priorities; they cajole, threaten, and otherwise herd party members into line in support of those priorities; they promote members to positions in government, on committees, and in the public eye; and they ensure that those party agents all push the leader-established party line. The party leader, in this view, has real power in the party and, at least for some parties some of the time, over legislation. The problem is that this view both is not entirely consistent with evidence (Kam et al. 2010) and is theoretically problematic.

The theoretical problems arise from three sources. First, students of parties typically assume that party leaders and their agents care not about policy but about power and office rents (which can include extra pay for holding specific party or legislative office). If policy is unimportant, however, then the whole question of what the party leader does is irrelevant and party discipline and unity are unnecessary. If party members, leaders included, do care about policy, by contrast, then, second, no party agent can commit to push for any policy but that defined by his own ideal point (cf. Laver and Shepsle 1996; Osbourne and Slivinski 1996). The leader might appoint people to be party agents, but they act on their own behalf, not the leader’s. And third, it is unreasonable to expect homogeneous preferences among party members; they might be closer to each other than they are to members of other parties, but that still can allow for a great deal of variation. Together, these premises raise the question of what benefit party agents, whether the titular “party leader” or ministers or some other variant of spokesperson, realize from their positions.

I suggest an alternative that builds on the assumption that politicians care about policy and allows titular leaders and other agents alike to benefit in policy terms from their positions. Basically, I argue that party leaders set the party position by choosing party agents, who then define party preferences according to the same logic that Laver and Shepsle (1996) argue makes it impossible to differentiate between the allocation of ministries in a government coalition and the definition of coalition policy. My argument, which builds on a policy-making rule that induces potential party agents sincerely to reveal their policy preferences (Heller 2014), suggests that party leaders’ ability to shape party positions hinges on their ability—admittedly somewhat constrained—to choose other party agents. Those agents, in turn, can and are expected to use their positions to shape party
policy in line with their own preferences.

To make the case for policy-motivated actors collectively defining and sustaining a unified party position, I begin with a brief sketch of the political-science perspective vis-à-vis the role of party leaders. Following that, I lay out my argument and show how a party leader who cares about policy as well as the party’s success and her position in the party (cf. Cox and McCubbins 1993; Müller and Strøm 1999; Strøm 1990) can make appointments that build on individual party members’ policy preferences to set an incentive-compatible (i.e., discipline-free) party position in line with her own preferences. The argument relies on the leader being able to discover potential agents’ sincere preferences. I then explore some of the objections to and empirical implications of my argument in Section 4. Section 5 concludes.

2 Lit review

Party leaders receive remarkably little scholarly attention. For the most part, where there is literature that examines the role of party leader, it is as leaders in government—the prime minister and, perhaps, cabinet ministers—not of parties. This is not to say that party leaders are ignored; rather, they are viewed through the prism of their relationship to or desire for government office (see in particular Strøm 1994; and cf. Benedetto and Hix 2007).

Scholarly attention to prime ministers focuses primarily on their ability to manage followers and achieve government goals. To this end, scholars look at their ability to command loyalty among the majority rank and file (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999; Laver 2006; Huber 1996a; b; Giannetti and Laver 2005) and to ensure that their colleagues in government pull together to the same end (see, e.g, Dewan and Myatt 2010; Laver 1999; Saalfeld 2000; Strøm 2004). Keeping the rank and file in line is relatively unproblematic, because party leaders (or which the prime minister certainly is one) have tools for maintaining discipline and, importantly, because ambitious backbenchers should toe the line set by their leaders out of self-interest (Hu and Heller 2011; Hu 2013). Moreover, leaders might not always need or want to keep every member on task all the time (Kam 2009). That said, keeping cabinet ministers—party leaders in their own right (Heller 2013)—in line might not be so easy.

The problem is that if politicians care about policy then it is hard to imagine that ministers
or anyone else in a position to affect policy outcomes or (for members the opposition) what their parties stand for would not use the influence that position gives them. Laver and Shepsle (1996) solve the problem for prime ministers by implicitly answering the question of whether delegation can be managed in the negative. Dewan and Hortala-Vallve (2011) treat delegation similarly, but suggest that the prime minister’s ability to alter ministerial jurisdictions in scope, budget, and dimensionality, means that she should be able to pull policy toward her own ideal point by letting ministers maximize their preferences in a game of her own design (cf. McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1989; 1987). And if that doesn’t work, the prime minister still has tools to manage discipline (Dewan and Myatt 2010; Indridason and Kam 2008; Kam and Indridason 2005).

Discussion of the prime minister’s travails in dealing with other members of government translates fairly well to thinking about party leaders. Parties, at least those that have or realistically aspire to legislative influence, have spokespersons, ranking committee members, cabinet ministers (or ministers-in-waiting), each of whom is in a position to affect what the party does, what (for parties with legislative influence) legislation looks like, and how voters perceive their party. A key difference between parties and coalitions in this regard is that coalition members might have some incentive to ensure that voters see them as distinct from one another, where parties are more likely to suffer from the perception of internal conflict. The concern that colleagues might want to keep a close eye on what party agents are doing (Thies 2001; Martin and Vanberg 2011) thus falls by the wayside. In order to make sense of what party leaders do, however, it is important to specify what they want.

Politicians, prime ministers included, often are viewed as interested primarily either in office policy (cf. Strøm 1990). If the party leader is interested in policy and the up-and-coming members of the party who take jobs as party agents—spokespersons and the like—are interested in power, then there is no problem. They get power by dint of their roles and they do what their leader wants (see Figure 1). If the agents’ ambitions turn on achieving policy goals and their leader just wants to hold on to power, then she abdicates all policy authority to them (cf. Laver and Shepsle 1996; 1999) and they collectively, each in his own jurisdiction, define the party position. If both just want power and are unconcerned with policy, it is hard to say what should happen, though in the spirit of principal-less agents having to decide for themselves I would hazard that one or the other or both will discover that s/he harbors policy preferences. The real problem arises when
both are policy motivated. The important aspect of holding office is the ability to influence at least the party’s policy positions, and if the leader forces the agent to to her line the agent might find the rewards of office, or even the party, unsatisfactory (Heller and Mershon 2008). If, on the other hand, agents get to do what they want it then is unclear what the leader gets out of the deal (but see Dewan and Hortala-Vallve 2011).

Figure 1: Leaders, Agents, and Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Tension</td>
<td>Abdication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent Power</td>
<td>Loyal Agent</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The problem is even worse than it seems. If politicians care about policy as well as office and the trappings of power, as I assume they do, they have every reason to hide their preferences until they are in a position to make them count Hu and Heller (2011); Hu (2013). The reasoning is straightforward: a leader who cares about policy shouldn’t want to promote backbenchers who would seek to move the party position away from where she has set it, so backbenchers should evince affinity for the leader’s positions until after they are promoted at which point they can do as they wish. They might be constrained by the possibility of punishment, but some degree of agency loss is inevitable, particularly as old leaders retire. I argue in the next section that the problem can be ameliorated—the party leader and agents alike can exploit their positions to influence the party’s policy stances—by breaking policy down into its constituent dimensions (cf. Shepsle 1979; Laver and Shepsle 1996) so that the leader can appoint agents to jurisdictions in which they have free rein, but in such a way that their combined output benefits the leader (cf. Dewan and Hortala-Vallve 2011).
3 Building Party Policy

The view of party leaders as captains steering their party ships by the compass of their own goals fits nicely with the language. Leaders lead, and as long as they manage to keep party members in line behind them, their parties navigate safely. They are leading individuals with their own preferences, however. In order to ensure that the party stays on course, they need either to wield discipline convincingly or to let each agent set her own course.¹

The problems with relying on discipline are three. First, the leader has to be able to credibly commit to punish deviations from the party line (Laver1999). Second, the punishments must be severe enough to deter agents who might feel particularly motivated to advance their own preferences over those of their party. This implies either knowing agents' true preferences (and hence knowing what it will take to deter any given individual) or threatening maximum punishment for any transgression. If punishment is costly to exact, then the latter is inefficient; but if the leader knows agents' true preferences up front, it would be easier to pick agents for specific jurisdiction whose preferences approximate her own. Party policy would not be at her ideal point exactly, but it would be close, and the leader would not need to worry about monitoring agents or dedicating resources to maintaining the threat of punishment.

Third, it seems reasonable to expect that anyone—party leaders and agents alike—who takes on extra duties for the party should expect to be rewarded for their efforts. It is possible that payment might be purely monetary (cf. Heller and Shvetsova 2012), but to the extent that agents care about policy at all they should want to influence it. And their roles as agents puts them in position to do just that (VanDusky-Allen and Heller 2014). Where discipline precludes policy benefits, moreover, agents might find that the party is not sufficiently rewarding (Heller and Mershon 2008).

If politicians care about policy, a party that exercises policy influence has to allow its agents to contribute to party positions and help define the party label. They will do so in any case, whether through intraparty decision-making processes or as a consequence of agency loss, and incorporating their preferences behind closed doors is better for the party than risking degradation of the party

¹Throughout, I refer to the individual who formally holds the title of party leader as the “leader” or “party leader.” I refer to other party agents, such as ministers, spokespersons, and ranking committee members, whose activities affect public perceptions of the party or the content of party-influenced legislation generically as agents (who occupy party-controlled offices). I refer to backbenchers—the party’s legislative rank and file—simply as “members,” departing from the usual usage that identifies party members as activists and supporters in the voting population.
label if they deviate publicly from the party line (VanDusky-Allen and Heller 2014; Heller 2013). Defining party positions and translating them into legislative debates and policy making day to day are in principle separate, however, which creates a conundrum: unless those who define the party position also are charged with implementing it, there is a very real risk of agency loss; but if the position members reveal at the position-definition stage affects the likelihood that they will be chosen as a party agent, then they have a strong incentive to misrepresent their own preferences to maximize their chances of being selected as agents (Hu and Heller 2011; Hu 2013), at which point they can use their positions to influence voter perception of the party label or policy outcomes (or both) through legislative activity. The key, as I argue below, is to combine agent selection and position definition into a single choice managed by the party leader.

3.1 The party leader’s preferences and party policy

Suppose the titular party leader, $\ell$, has ideal point $x_\ell = (x_{1\ell}, x_{2\ell}, \ldots, x_{j\ell}, \ldots, x_{m\ell})$, defined for each dimension $j$ of the $m$-dimensional policy space $R^m$. The leader essentially has three distinct but closely related objectives: to set party policy $x_p$ as close as possible to $x_\ell$; to retain her place as party leader; and to maximize the party’s influence over policy outcomes, thereby moving outcomes as close as possible to $x_\ell$ (cf. Cox and McCubbins 1993, 125–128). I assume that $x_\ell$ is an induced ideal point that grows from $\ell$’s “raw” preferences and internalizes both the need to do well in elections and to present an attractive face to potential coalition partners that underpin policy influence, so $\ell$’s objective function is defined only by her (induced) ideal point and the desire to remain party leader.\(^3\) (Table 1 provides a summary of notation.)

Holding on to the position of party leader requires setting party policy such that no challenger can credibly promise to improve on it for some critical mass of party members. The leader has an advantage in this, since she can set the party position not at her own ideal point, but rather at a point that beats the ideal points of potential challengers. Party policy, in other words, is determined in practice not by the leader’s ideal preferences directly, but rather by the preferences of those whom she chooses to represent the party—party agents—as ministers, committee chairs, or publicly visible spokespersons (Heller 2013; and cf. Laver and Shepsle 1996; 2000). Challengers

\(^2\)“Raw” preferences are desires untinged by strategic considerations or practical constraints.

\(^3\)Party members, whether leaders, candidates for leadership, or backbenchers, can differ with respect to what policy positions would most benefit the party electorally and for coalition formation.
for the leader’s office cannot commit to a specific party position, as they do not have a team of agents illustrating what they would do if selected to lead the party, and thus can only offer their own ideal points, \( x_{c_\ell} \).

Let a leadership challenge be successful if it earns the support of a majority of voting members of the party and assume that voting party members evaluate leader and challenger policy positions dimension by dimension, so that a leader who were to set policy at the dimension-by-dimension median would be unbeatable. Finally, let voting members evaluate challenges by comparing \( x_{c_\ell} \) and \( x_p \) dimension by dimension in terms of their summed utility over all relevant dimensions. Voter \( i \) thus prefers \( x_{c_\ell} \) to \( x_p \) if \( \sum_{j=1}^m (u_i(x^{j}_{c_\ell}) - u_i(x^{j}_{p})) > 0 \). Note that if there is a candidate whose ideal point lies at the intraparty dimension-by-dimension median (call it \( x_\mu \)) this method identifies that candidate as the Condorcet winner within the party.

A leader who promises to set party policy at \( x_\mu \) is not a priori credible, for two reasons. First, she has to find agents to carry the policy into legislative debate and, for parties (e.g., government parties) with influence over policy outcomes, into policy; and those agents will set policy as close to their own ideal points as possible. And second, unless \( x_\ell = x_\mu \), the leader herself has incentive to move policy toward \( x_\ell \). One solution, as Heller (2013) shows, is to promote party agents to specific policy jurisdictions and let their ideal points define party policy. To do that, however, leaders must

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( C^\ell )</td>
<td>The set of candidates ( c_\ell^i ) for the position of party leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( c_\ell^i )</td>
<td>A candidate for party leader, ( c_\ell^i \in C^\ell )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( C^\alpha )</td>
<td>The set of candidates ( c_\alpha^i ) for party-controlled positions with policy influence; ( C^\ell \subset C^\alpha )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( c_\alpha^i )</td>
<td>A candidate for a party-controlled position with policy influence, ( c_\alpha^i \in C^\alpha )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( x_\ell )</td>
<td>The ideal point of ( c_\ell^i \in C^\ell )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^m )</td>
<td>The ( m )-dimensional policy space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( j )</td>
<td>A single policy dimension ( j \in R^m )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( x_{c_\ell}^j )</td>
<td>The declared ideal point of ( c_\ell^i \in C^\ell )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( x_{c_\alpha}^j )</td>
<td>The ideal point of ( c_\alpha^i \in C^\alpha )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \alpha^j )</td>
<td>The agent selected to represent the party on the ( j )th dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( x_{\alpha^j}^j )</td>
<td>The ideal point of the ( c_\alpha^i \in C^\alpha ) chosen to represent the party on the ( j )th dimension in ( R^m )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( x_p )</td>
<td>The party’s policy position in ( R^m, x_p = (x^{1}<em>{\alpha}, x^{2}</em>{\alpha}, \ldots, x^{j}<em>{\alpha}, \ldots, x^{m}</em>{\alpha}) )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( x_\alpha )</td>
<td>The party’s day-to-day policy position as translated into legislative activity by party agents, ( x_p = x_\alpha \rightarrow x_{c_\alpha}^j = x_{\alpha^j}^j \forall j, c_\alpha^i ).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
know agents’ preferences.

3.2 Party agents’ preferences

Candidates for party agent, like candidates for leader, care about both policy and agent office. If the party leader picks agents directly to set policy as close to her own ideal point as possible, agent candidates should hide their true preferences until after they are selected (Hu and Heller 2011; Hu 2013). At that point, they can and should be expected to move policy in their jurisdictions toward their own ideal points (see Heller 2013); the leader might not like it, but unless the agents’ revealed ideal point is egregiously far from her own there is little she can do about it, as any other choice of agent would be equally random. A leader who wants to maintain control not only over the stated policy position (i.e., the party manifesto) but also over how that position is communicated every day can do so only if she knows what members who seek to be agents want. Members can be motivated to reveal their true preferences if it is known a priori that those preferences will define party policy positions (Heller 2014), but problems crop up if there is any disconnect between defining policy and implementing it.

Heller (2014) shows that setting the party position as the dimension-by-dimension median of party-member ideal points yields sincere preference revelation by members. The basic logic of the argument is that the only way any individual can change the location of the median on a single dimension is to declare a position farther than the true median from his own ideal point. If the declared party position translates directly to party legislative activity (whether influencing outcomes or in opposition), a member who misrepresents his ideal point in this way induces a dimension-$j$ median that also is farther from his ideal point. Doing so therefore is counterproductive, so members have a dominant strategy to reveal their ideal points sincerely.

There is a problem, however. If the party leader is going to select members to define part policy, why wouldn’t she select members whose ideal points are closest to her own? And even if she cannot—if she is constrained to define party policy not identical (or nearly so) to her preferred policy—why wouldn’t members with ambitions to positions of influence misrepresent their preferences to maximize their prospects for promotion, at which point they would be free to implement policy closer to their own ideals? Even a credible threat of punishment for defectoring from the party line would allow some leeway for agency loss, leading to a potentially costly disconnect
between declared party positions and the positions the party takes in the legislature day by day (VanDusky-Allen and Heller 2014).

The solution comes in three parts. First, the leader’s *objective function* induces her to choose agents (whose ideal points, to reiterate, define party policy and who are charged with carrying that policy through in the legislature) to set party policy predictably different from her ideal policy. Second, while the degree of difference between the leader’s ideal point and party policy under her command is predictable, where she will seek to locate actual policy on any given dimension is not. Consequently, members who misrepresent their preferences in order to improve their chances of being promoted risk inducing party positions farther from their ideal points than they otherwise would be. And third, a candidate for party agent who misrepresents his ideal point, is selected, and then implements his true ideal point makes the party position thus defined vulnerable to leadership challenge which, if successful, implies the replacement of all or most agents as well as the leader. Any gain from such misrepresentation thus is likely to be ephemeral; and the new leader’s party position easily could make the strategic erstwhile agent worse off.

I lay out the strategic considerations underpinning the role of the party leader in both inducing agent-candidates to reveal their sincere preferences and setting the party’s policy positions in Section 3.3 below. I proceed by backward induction to identify the role of party leader in terms of a Nash equilibrium that guarantees party-label coherence, i.e., that the party’s official position matches its position in the give-and-take of legislative procedure. I assume incomplete information and symmetrical Euclidean preferences in multidimensional space where each dimension is orthogonal to the others.

### 3.3 The game

The game consists of five steps (see Figure 2) and begins when candidates $c_i^\ell$ for party leader presenting their policy preferences to the party selectorate. The party selectorate, which could be composed purely of party members in the legislature, extra-legislative party activists, or both, includes many individuals who in equilibrium have no reason to reveal their true preferences. Candidate leaders therefore cannot confidently target their appeals to the party median or any particular $k$th member of the selectorate. The selectorate selects a leader $\ell$ from among the candidates.

Once selected, $\ell$ has to select party agents to represent the party position in the legislature.
To this end, candidates declare their policy preferences to the leader, who selects agents $\alpha$ from among the candidates and assigns them responsibility for specific policy jurisdictions. The $j$th-dimension ideal point $x_{\alpha}^j$ of the agent assigned to dimension $j$ thus defines the overall party position $x_p = (x_{\alpha_1}^1, x_{\alpha_2}^2, \ldots, x_{\alpha_j}^j, \ldots, x_{\alpha_m}^m)$. After $x_p$ is established, each member of the party, including those who were unsuccessful candidates for leader, decides whether to challenge $\ell$.

Figure 2: Sequence of Moves

Players are rational, so no member will challenge the incumbent leader if they know they would lose. Given incomplete information, however, losing challenges are possible as long as the selectorate’s preferences, i.e., the location of the selectorate dimension-by-dimension median $x_\mu$, are not known. In the event that some member does challenge for the leadership, the challenge is successful if the selectorate prefers the challenger ideal point $x_{c\ell}$ to $x_p$ dimension by dimension—that is, if $\sum_{j=1}^m u_{c\ell}(x_{c\ell}^j) - u_\mu(x_p^j) > 0$. Otherwise, the incumbent leader $\ell$ retains her position.\(^4\)

Given the selectorate’s decision rule with respect to leadership challenges and the party leader’s desire to remain in office, the leader’s choice of agents to define and represent the party position is constrained by the ideal point of potential challenger closest to $x_\mu$, i.e., $c_\ell^\ell : \min_{x_c} \sum_{j=1}^m |x_\mu^j - x_{c\ell}^j|$.

\(^4\)I assume that the tie-breaking rule gives the advantage to the incumbent.
\( \ell \) does not have to set \( x_{c_{\ell}} \) on every dimension, as long as it beats it on average. \( \ell \) thus chooses some agents such that \( u_{\mu}(x_{\ell}^j) > u_{\mu}(x_{c_{\ell}}^j) \) and some for which the opposite is true. Which inequality will hold on any given dimension \( j \) is a function of \( x_{\ell}^j \), \( \ell \)'s beliefs about the likely locations of \( x_{c_{\ell}}^j \) and \( x_{\mu}^j \), and the overall constraint that \( u_{\mu}(x_p) \geq u_{\mu}(x_{c_{\ell}}) \). Moreover, because ideal points might not be evenly distributed on any particular dimension, the leader’s optimal choice for agent on some dimensions might be farther from what the leader believes to be the selectorate’s dimensional median than is the leader’s own dimensional ideal point. That is, there might be some dimensions \( j \) such that the leader’s choice for agent is farther than \( \ell \) from \( \mu \). Specifically, \( k \in \{ \ell < \mu \rightarrow [\ell - 1, \mu], \ell > \mu \rightarrow [\mu, \ell + 1] \} \).

Because the selectorate’s dimension-by-dimension median is not known, a leader can only infer its location from the sample of ideal points she does know, i.e., those of her fellow candidates for the leader position and of candidates for party agent. Her best guess for the position of the potential challenger she has to beat comes from the same sample. Thus, where \( \hat{\mu}^j \) is the sample median for dimension \( j \), the most that any candidate for agent can expect is that the leader’s choice for agent will be \( \alpha^j \in [\hat{\mu}^j, k] \). For notational simplicity in what follows I do not distinguish between the true and sample medians unless necessary for clarity.

**Proposition 1.** If \( \ell \)'s choice of dimension-\( j \) agent is some \( c_{\ell}^j : x_{c_{\ell}}^j \in [x_{\mu}^j, x_k^j] \), agent candidates will reveal their ideal points sincerely.

**Sketch of Proof of Proposition 1.** Suppose, without loss of generality, that \( \ell^j \) is to the right of \( \mu^j \) (i.e., \( \ell^j > \mu^j \)). Consider individual \( i \) who declares candidacy for party agent and reveals \( x_{c_i}^j \).\(^5\) If selected to be the party’s agent agent on dimension \( j \), \( \alpha^j \), \( i \) can implement any policy he wants. There is no exogenous requirement that \( x_{c_i}^j = x_i \).

i. If \( i \) is not selected, either \( x_{\alpha}^j \geq x_{c_i}^j \) or \( x_{\alpha}^j < x_{c_i}^j \).

- If \( x_{i}^j < x_{\mu}^j \) and \( x_{\alpha}^j \geq x_{c_i}^j \), then whether \( x_{c_i}^j = x_i \) is irrelevant because it does not change the final location of \( x_{\alpha}^j \).
- If \( x_{i}^j < x_{\mu}^j \) and \( x_{\alpha}^j < x_{c_i}^j \), then \( x_{c_i}^j \neq x_i \) and \( x_{\alpha}^j \mid x_{c_i}^j > x_{\alpha}^j \mid x_i \) and \( u_i(x_p \mid x_{\alpha}^j) < u_i(x_p \mid x_i) \), so \( i \) would have been better off revealing his true preferences.

\(^5\)Note that “implement” here refers to the party’s day to day positions in the legislature, not necessarily actual legislative output—though for parties with legislative influence, implementation affects the content of legislative output.
ii. If $i$ is selected, either $x_{ci}^j = x_i^j$ or $x_{ci}^j \neq x_i^j$.

- If $x_{ci}^j = x_i^j$, $i$ sets $x_p^j = x_i^j$, maximizing his influence over and utility for the party policy position.

- If $x_{ci}^j \neq x_i^j$, $i$ either can set $x_{\alpha i}^j = x_{ci}^j$ or $x_{\alpha i}^j = x_i^j$.
  - If $x_{\alpha i}^j = x_{ci}^j$, the party policy position remains where the leader set it and $\alpha^j$ retains his agent role, but (a) $x_{\mu i}^j |_{x_{ci}^j} > x_{\mu i}^j |_{x_i^j}$, so $u_i(x_{\alpha} |_{x_{ci}^j}) < u_i(x_{\alpha} |_{x_i^j})$; and (b) the fact that $\hat{\mu} |_{x_{ci}^j}$ is biased potentially increases the probability of a costly leadership challenge.
  - If $x_{\alpha i}^j = x_{ci}^j$, so that $u_i(x_p |_{x_{ci}^j}) < u_i(x_{\alpha})$: (a) every member of the party pays cost $z \leq |u_{\mu i}(x_{\alpha}^j) - u_{\mu i}(x_{ci}^j)|$; (b) updated information about $x_i$ increases the risk of a leadership challenge; (c) if $|x_p - x_{\alpha}| > |x_p - x_{\ell}|$; $u_\ell(x_{\alpha}^j) < u_\ell(x_{\alpha} |_{x_{ci}^j})$, $\ell$ immediately replaces $i$ as agent so that $i$ earns no non-policy benefits\(^6\) and $u_i(x_{\alpha}^j) = \theta(u_i(x_i^j) + u_i(x_{\alpha} \setminus x_i^j)) - z + (1 - \theta)(u_i(x_{\alpha}), \alpha^j \neq i)$.

\[\square\]

What constrains the party leader to set $x_p$ close to $x_\mu$ is the possibility of a challenge, all else equal. A leader who was not worried about challengers would be free to set $x_p$ as near to $x_\ell$ as possible,\(^7\) but the selectorate can do better than that. If the selectorate chooses as leader the leader candidate whose ideal point most closely approximates $x_\mu$, no challenger can beat that. This yields Proposition 2.

**Proposition 2.** The selectorate does not choose the leader candidate whose ideal point $x_\ell$ is closest to $x_\mu$.

**Sketch of Proof of Proposition 2.** Suppose the contrary, so the selectorate chooses $\ell : \min \sum_{j=1}^{m} |x_\ell^j - x_\mu^j|$ and recall that *candidates* for leader can compete only on their ideal points, while incumbent leaders compete on $x_p$ as defined by their choice of agent. $\ell$ can only set $x_p = x_\ell$ if there are appropriate agents, i.e., $\exists x_{ci}^j = x_\ell^j \forall j$. Otherwise she sets $x_p^j = x_{kj}^j : k^j \in [{\mu^j, \ell^j + 1}] \forall j$ to minimize

\(^6\)Heller and Shvetsova (2012) find evidence that party leaders and others who hold party-controlled offices often earn extra pay for their efforts.

\(^7\)The leader cannot set $x_p = x_\ell$ unless she can find $\alpha^j : x_{ci}^j = x_\ell^j \forall j \in R^m$, which is unlikely on the face of it. Moreover, a leader with an unchallengeable ideal point would not provide agent candidates with incentive to reveal their true preferences; they would instead declare preferences identical to $x_\ell$ (Hu and Heller 2011; Hu 2013), making the leader’s choice of agents essentially random.
\[\|x_p - x_\ell\|, \text{ so } E(x_p^j) \neq E(x_\ell^j) \forall j, \text{ but } u_\mu(x_p) = u_\mu(x_\ell) + \epsilon, E(\epsilon) = 0. \]

If, by contrast, the selectorate chooses \(\ell: \exists c_\ell^{j^*} \rightarrow \sum_{j=1}^m u_\mu(x_p^j) < \sum_{j=1}^m u_\mu(x_\ell^{j^*}),\) then in order to avoid a successful leadership challenge \(\ell\) has to set \(x_p : \sum_{j=1}^m u_\mu(x_p^j) > \sum_{j=1}^m u_\mu(x_\ell^{j^*}).\) So the selectorate is better off not choosing as leader a candidate \(c_\ell^{j^*}\) such that \(\max_{x_\ell^{j^*}} \sum_{j=1}^m u_\mu(x_\ell^{j^*}).\)

Which candidate the selectorate will choose is beyond the scope of this inquiry. However, because leader candidates know that the selectorate will not pick the candidate closest to its dimension-by-dimension median, any candidate \(c_\ell^{j^*}\) should misrepresent her preferences only if she believes that her ideal point is closer to \(x_\mu.\) Otherwise, because all candidates \(\ell\) not selected to be leader enter the pool of agent candidates, who reveal their preferences sincerely as shown in Proposition 1. The final step in the analysis thus is summed up in Lemma 1, presented without proof.

**Lemma 1.** Members who compete for the office of party leader will will reveal their true preferences when they declare their candidacies.

### 4 Discussion

Strøm’s (1990) insight that political actors can have multiple goals notwithstanding, political scientists tend to view politicians as interested in policy or power. If they are interested in power, then goals are indeterminant and irrelevant—and for all intents and purposes exogenous—and what matters is how well they perform on the job (cf. Kam and Indridason 2005; Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008; Dewan and Myatt 2010; 2007). If they are interested in policy, however, waiting in line for a turn at power might not make for a very rewarding career. If moving up in the party provides policy authority in increments, by contrast, ambitious party members might be able to temper their impatience.

The argument I laid out in Section 3 yields some surprising empirical implications. Primary among these is the suggestion that party leaders should be chosen specifically so that their ideal points are relatively far from the center-of-mass of the party’s policy preferences. Interestingly, this result resonates strongly with Jesse and Malhotra’s (2010) finding that party leaders in the US Congress are more extreme (albeit not too much so) than their party medians. It also is consistent
with evidence from the UK showing that ministerial appointments often appear to be far from the prime minister’s ideal point, but still within the realm of what the party as a whole might want (Kam et al. 2010).

Along with these expectations that find support in the literature, there are other conjectural implications that are worth thinking about. For instance, my argument leaves open the possibility that on any given vote the party leader might disagree with her party’s position. One way to deal with that of course is for the leader to swallow her pride and vote with the party, but because her preferences are on record in the party doing so might send odd signals. A second option is to vote her preferences, but that would signal tension within the party and probably damage the party label. Alternatively, she could simply not vote—which, interestingly, is generally the case. Party leaders often do not regularly participate in legislative voting.

Finally, what about candidate leaders and agents who did not make the cut? Their preferences now are known, so toeing the party line in order to obfuscate their preferences is pointless. There might be some value to presenting a unified party front in any case, but to the extent that some portion of unity derives from backbenchers’ desire to play their cards close to the chest that incentive no longer plays a part for failed candidates. They thus should go their own way more often than their copartisans, as Benedetto and Hix (2007) show that they do.

5 Conclusion

*This section not yet written*
References


