

# **More Democracy – Less Accountability? Why Intra-Party Democracy Cannot Constrain a United Leadership**

## **ABSTRACT**

Whether leaders can be held accountable is important for democratic governance, particularly as there is a global trend to make the decision-making processes of political parties more inclusive. We argue that party elites have a strong leverage to influence the rank-and-file and public-office holders in party referenda if the leadership is united, whereas mid-level leaders are the most resilient. Leadership unity is regularly reinforced by the occurrence of election cycles and coalition governments. We conduct an unprecedented two-wave panel of 3,388 party leaders of the German Social Democrats before and after the party referenda in 2013 and 2018 on forming a coalition with the Christian Democrats. The results reveal that the leadership can substantially influence vote choice, while the mid-level leadership rejected the coalition at relatively higher numbers. The referenda were overwhelmingly supported by all strata, suggesting that a united leadership can employ intra-party democracy for their own benefit.

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## 1. Introduction

Politicians need a mandate from their party to be able to run for public office. As party members are more enthusiastic and knowledgeable about politics than the general population, Page (2009: 149) proposes that “a focus on policy makers and citizens leads us away from causes of party behavior that may be rooted in the nature of party activists.” Indeed, some studies of intra-party politics suggest that the preferences of political activists might be key in understanding parties’ policy positions, often relying on the Downsian (1957) spatial framework to explain the constraints on party leaders imposed by the median party or faction member (Aldrich 1983; Schofield and Sened 2005; Adams et al. 2006; Budge et al. 2010; Schumacher et al. 2013).

By contrast, scholars in the tradition of Robert Michels’ (1915) Iron Law of Oligarchy argue that party elites have the organizational, informational, and charismatic resources to insulate themselves from the demands of party members and shape the party’s agenda (Kirchheimer 1966; Panebianco 1988; Katz and Mair 1995, 2009; Katz 2001; Blyth and Katz 2005). Political career positions are assumed to have a distinct impact on party members’ programmatic positions. In May’s (1973) *Law of Curvilinear Disparity*, career considerations of party members cause distinct disparities in the party’s strata: The national party leadership and public office holders have made a career out of politics, which induces them to follow a moderate, vote-maximization strategy, whereas the mid-level party office holders are more radical, as they are motivated by ideological convictions rather than electoral concerns.

While there has been an almost hegemonic acceptance of the Iron Law of Oligarchy in the abstract, the literature on party organization has broadly rejected the Law of Curvilinear Disparity or produced mixed results (Kitschelt 1989, 2000; Herrera 1992; Herrera and Taylor 1994; Iversen

1994; Norris 1995; Narud and Skare 1999; Kennedy et al. 2006; Loxbo 2013; Gauja and Jackson 2016; Van Holsteyn et al. 2017; Kölln and Polk 2017; Faucher and Boy 2018). Kitschelt (1989, 2000) argues that both moderates and radicals should be interested in acquiring leadership positions, therefore making it unlikely that one of these groups generally dominates an organizational level of a party.

Previous studies on intra-party democracy are either based on convenience samples or on broader population samples. The samples were often collected at national conferences of political parties, yielding a biased subset of the active members of political parties, which could distort the results. The studies are often limited to a single point in time, and only a few of them attempted to study preference distributions and stability within parties over time. No study so far, however, was able to evaluate whether preference disparities within political parties matter for important decisions, and whether the leadership can shape these preferences. Thus, the empirical evidence on preference disparities and their consequences for intra-party processes remain inconclusive.

We return to Michels' original subject of study – the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) – to provide a methodological blueprint for studying the preference distribution and their effects on political behavior over two federal elections. We utilized the process of the SPD party referenda in 2013 and 2018 by conducting two representative two-wave large-N surveys unprecedented in the study of intra-party politics: In 2013 we initiated a first survey among 1,785 SPD party officers directly after the national election but before the leadership was unified. A second survey directly after the party referendum was conducted with 649 previous participants. We followed the same procedure in 2018 with 2,231 participants in the first wave, of whom 941 participated in the second wave. Based on our two-wave survey design, we are able to answer the

following question, which has shaped the debates on democratic accountability since Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy:

*Is there a preference disparity in political parties and can the party leadership successfully shape these preferences?*

Based on previous studies and theoretical considerations on democratic accountability, we should not see preference disparity in the SPD – particularly not over time. The party did not meet any of Kitschelt's (1989) three necessary conditions for preference disparity: A salient cleavage was not underrepresented by the party system, the SPD is not a loose party organization, and the exit costs are relatively low – suggesting that dissatisfied party members would leave. Moreover, the SPD suffered devastating election losses and previously promised their supporters to go into opposition, as the coalition was unpopular among members. Thus, revealing leadership autonomy and preference disparities for such an unlikely case repeatedly over a four-year period would have implications for its validity beyond the SPD.

We offer a novel theoretical explanation for *when* the party leadership is able to shape the preferences of its members, and *which* strata is the most resilient to these persuasion attempts. We argue that party leadership unity is a key conditional aspect for the existence and persistence of preference disparity within a political party.

A united party leadership enjoys a high degree of autonomy to control the intra-party agenda-setting process, which can be used to blackmail party members by highlighting that resisting the leadership could have negative electoral consequences for the party. This gives rise to preference disparity within a party similar to May's (1973) Law of Curvilinear Disparity, because the rank-and-file and public office holders are the most likely to be persuaded by a unified

leadership; the former due to limited alternative information, the latter due to career considerations. By contrast, mid-level party office holders are less likely to be affected by the blackmailing potential of the unified leadership because their position does not directly depend on election results.

We also argue that the leverage of a united leadership within a political party is more frequently present than the literature currently assumes. First, the repeated occurrence of election cycles fosters party unity because voters value parties with a cohesive appearance (Greene and Haber 2015). Second, a united party leadership is a crucial factor for governing parties to sustain cabinets (Saalfeld 2008). Instead of limiting the power of leadership, inclusive means to foster intra-party democracy, such as party referenda, may actually increase the power of a unified leadership, as such measures tend to diminish the influence of the more critical mid-level leadership on the party's decision-making process. As intra-party democracy also strengthens the legitimacy of the decision, critics are more likely to accept the result and remain party members.

Our empirical analysis of the two referenda that were crucial for the party's future confirms the substantial influence by a united leadership on the vote choice, as support for a 'yes' vote generally increased by 30.6 percentage points. We also reveal a durable preference disparity in the SPD: Party office holders were significantly more left-wing, rejected the grand coalition at relatively higher numbers, and were less likely by 5.9 percentage points to follow the recommendation of a unified leadership. However, they were not more likely to be dissatisfied with intra-party democracy or the referendum, suggesting that the referenda have not turned them into sore losers.

The implications of the repeated existence of leadership autonomy and preference disparity is relevant for the broader study of democratic politics. Our findings suggest that recent trends by political parties to embrace more membership participation in internal processes (Scarrow 2015) have the potential to actually increase the leverage of the higher leadership, while mitigating potential backlash from members over programmatic decisions. Election cycles and cabinet survival tend to regularly endow the party leadership with blackmail potential against its critics. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the leadership can be fully independent of programmatic concerns, because leadership unity cannot be sustained without programmatic appeals (Ceron 2012).

The article proceeds as follows: We discuss the findings and methodology of previous studies on preference disparity in political parties. This is followed by our contribution on why disparities within parties is conditional on leadership unity, and why a united leadership is able to shape preferences of their members. We also discuss why direct democratic means may fail to limit the power of a united leadership but actually strengthen it. The subsequent section provides qualitative evidence for the United Leadership Hypothesis by describing how leadership unity was achieved in the SPD and how the united leadership influenced the SPD referenda. The next session presents our sampling design, which is followed by the empirical analysis and the concluding section.

## **2. Studying preference disparity in political parties**

One of the most prominent work on intra-party politics is Michels' (1915 [1911]) classical study of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) before World War 1. According to Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy, the material self-interest of party leaders provides them with a strong

incentive to support the political status quo at the expense of the more radical agenda desired by party activists. Intra-party democracy fails to constrain party leaders because the inevitable process of hierarchical bureaucratization in mass organizations enables the leadership to dominate the democratic process in a political party (Kitschelt 2000: 152-3).

<<< **FIGURE 1** >>>

Extending Michels' seminal work, May (1973) introduces a universal Law of Curvilinear Disparity between the national party leadership, party office holders at the middle level, and the rank-and-file. Figure 1 shows the expected curvilinear disparity of preference for the different strata. Strong ideological beliefs induce the middle level party office holders to contribute to election campaigns and to volunteer for often unpaid regional or state party offices. Consequently, they are the most radical and more politically active than the typical rank-and-file party member. Radicals holding party offices tend to be more concerned about the purity of party principles than about adopting vote maximization strategies. Hence, they will be more likely to have their beliefs and principles be in line with their political behavior. By contrast, the higher leadership and public office holders in parliaments have made a career out of politics. They are more interested in keeping or acquiring offices and political power.<sup>1</sup> Maximizing these goals tends to require moderation during general elections. Thus, the party elite tend to adopt an electoral strategy appealing to the moderate, median voter. The rank-and-file supporters are also more moderate as they do not tend to be ideologically motivated. Their willingness to engage in politics tends to be

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<sup>1</sup> The Cartel Party Hypothesis also shares some similarities with the Laws by Michels and May. The proponents of the Cartel Party Hypothesis argue that mainstream parties in Western Europe have started to act like a cartel that deviates from the preferences of their voters and from their party members (Katz and Mair 1995, 2009; Katz 2001; Blyth and Katz 2005). The incentive to form a cartel is the result of an increasing specialization of the political career path that is supposed to increase the cost of losing power for politicians. The cooperation with other mainstream parties would provide self-interested politicians access to state subsidies in an environment of declining membership.

occasional, depending on specific political issue, which is in their rational interest (May 1973: 136; Kitschelt 1989: 401-2).

Kitschelt (1989) finds a curvilinear disparity in the Belgian green parties. However, he contends that the disparity was not universal, but a special case that depended on exogenous conditions: The party organizations were loosely coupled and the previously underrepresented post-material dimension became salient. Earlier case studies do not seem to reveal a preference disparity within parties beyond Kitschelt's (1989) special case (Herrera 1992; Herrera and Taylor 1994; Iversen 1994; Norris 1995; Narud and Skare 1999; Kennedy et al. 2006; Loxbo 2013).

#### <<< **TABLE 1** >>>

A key problem in the study of preference and attitude distribution within political parties has been surveying party members. Researchers frequently made use of party activists or convention delegates (Herrera 1992, Herrera and Taylor 1994, Norris 1995, Narud and Sakre 1999). This approach looks at a subset of party members that is especially involved (activists) or in key roles in the decision-making process for their party (delegates). These individuals are part of an elite within their party. Only more recently have studies emerged that looked at parties more holistically and tried to include all party members in their surveys (Gauja and Jackson 2016; Van Holsteyn et al. 2017; Kölln and Polk 2017; Faucher and Boy 2018). The findings of these studies have been mixed. While there is not much support for May's specific curvilinear distribution of preferences, preference incongruences between different party strata appear to be frequent.

Faucher and Boy (2018) provide a study most similar in comprehensiveness to ours. In cooperation with the party Europe Ecologie Les Vertes (EELV) in France, they conduct an online survey with 12,551 responses from party members and affiliated and non-affiliated supporters.



They construct different dimensions and find distinct differences between normal party members and elected party officials on their value and issue dimensions, which did not follow May's curvilinear disparity. Almost all of the studies so far have, however, were snapshots of preference distributions within a party leading up to an election. Only Van Holsteyn et al. (2017) examined the stated preference of party members up to three-times over roughly a ten-year period, finding only slim evidence for a curvilinear disparity. Table 1 summarizes the previous studies on preference disparity.

Our contribution provides a unique insight into the internal affairs of parties by utilizing the dynamic aspects of actual intra-party decisions: The study is based on two large representative samples of party leaders in 2013 and 2018. In both instances, participants were asked on their stated and revealed preferences before and after a referendum on forming a government coalition that was crucial for a party's future. Consequently, it becomes possible for the first time to evaluate the leverage of the leadership to influence party members and whether this influence applies uniformly across all party strata.

### **3. The United Leadership Hypothesis**

We argue that the party leadership shapes the political behavior of party members and that there is also a preference disparity for different party strata in the presence of leadership unity. Leadership unity ensures that the party elite speaks with one voice and that the elite members support each other. It provides the leadership with the ability to shape the procedure and the timing of intra-party decision-making, and bestows them with blackmail potential if the leadership can credibly communicate that a deviation from their goals will harm the party.

Leadership unity does not exclude the possibility that programmatic appeals are considered. To the contrary, programmatic appeals and promises could foster leadership unity: In order to build robust leadership unity, different factions could try to reach an agreement that takes all factional programmatic preferences into account (Budge et al. 2010; Ceron 2012). Additionally, programmatic appeals could also strengthen the blackmail potential, as the united leadership could frame an issue in a way that suggests that a desired programmatic outcome can only be achieved if party members support the leadership.

Leadership unity is not universal but likely to be regularly present in intra-party politics due to two factors. First, party cohesion is an important valence issue in elections: Parties that present themselves incoherently to the public and that make headlines through internal quarrels are often punished by voters at the ballot box (Carey 2007). Voters tend to perceive parties as more competent if they appear to be cohesive (Greene and Haber 2015). As unity consequently improves the electoral prospects of a party, the leadership has an incentive to settle any differences, particularly before elections or crucial policy decisions (Ceron 2012). In turn, leadership unity fosters agenda-setting power, as there are no influential critics left that could veto procedures preferred by the leadership. It also implies that the leadership has control over official party channels to distribute critical information, such as party newspapers or homepages. The agenda-setting power ensures that the party leadership should be able to frame disunity in a way that maximizes the blackmail potential. The leadership could highlight that the perceived disunity will harm the electoral prospect of the party. The blackmail potential is fostered by the regular occurrence of election cycles, for which the incentive for leadership unity is the highest.

Second, our argument suggests that a unified leadership of a governing party enjoys a high degree of blackmailing potential to convince party members that intra-party opposition could lead

to a governing crisis and negative electoral consequences for the party in a snap election. Saalfeld (2008) finds that among 420 cabinets that existed in 17 West European countries between 1949 and 1999, 57 (13.6 percent) were terminated due to intra-party conflicts. But only six (1.4 percent) of these cases occurred when the party leadership was unified.<sup>2</sup> The study of cabinet survival illustrates the importance of leadership unity for placating recalcitrant party members. If the leadership is united, it appears to be unlikely that intra-party opposition can terminate a government that the leadership supports.

The agenda-setting and blackmailing powers of a unified party leadership appear to be strengthened at the expense of the mid-level leadership precisely if parties embrace more participatory means. Plebiscitarian procedures, such as membership referenda, allow parties to signal to the public that they care about the opinion on the rank-and-file to attract new members. Moreover, they also legitimize the outcome and silence disgruntled party members, who otherwise would leave the party if a controversial decision is not backed by a majority of the membership (Biezen and Piccio 2013: 29; Jun 2018).

However, the unified party elite has the communication resources to unilaterally inform the membership before upcoming intra-party elections. Consequently, the inactive party members tend to receive most of their information from the party leadership. By contrast, party office

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<sup>2</sup> None of these six cases do appear to be falsifications of our theory. Three occurred in the early years of party competition, including the 1982 split-offs of the Spanish Union of the Democratic Centre, which itself was a merger of dozens of parties in 1977. Three prime ministers survived intra-party opposition by reforming the coalition (Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg), and the cabinet of SPD Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was not ultimately terminated by intra-party conflict but by the defecting FDP in 1982. The most relevant case is the intra-party conflict of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in 1986, which formed a governing coalition with the Social Democrats (SPÖ). The moderate FPÖ leadership of Norbert Steger was successfully challenged by the more radical Jörg Haider, which induced the SPÖ to end the coalition and to call snap elections – a measure which was pronounced as a credible threat before the leadership contest. However, the blackmail potential of the old FPÖ leadership was rather low, as their previous election results were mediocre. By contrast, Haider was successful with his populist agenda before in the state election of Carinthia in 1984 (16 percent), and the FPÖ under Haider increased its national vote share in the 1986 election from 5.0 to 9.7 percent (Heinisch 2016: 21).

holders, who also tend to be more politically sophisticated than the rank-and-file, are relatively overrepresented at party congresses. At such events, communication is a mutual process, which makes it easier for critics to challenge the leadership (Katz and Mair 2009: 761). In fact, prior research also shows that intra-party inclusiveness of the rank-and-file in the candidate-selection process increases the power and leeway of the national party elite at the expense of party factions and regional party office holders (Katz 2001; Rahat et al. 2008; Kenig 2009; Hazan and Rahat 2010; Ceron 2012; Spies and Kaiser 2014).

Particularly, intra-party referenda could strengthen the leeway of a unified leadership. For instance, opponents of the Euro insurance fund failed in a 2011 membership referendum of the governing Free Democratic Party (FDP), which was induced by membership petition. The entire party leadership supported the Euro rescue measures. The leadership held about 200 intra-party events, highlighting that a ‘no’ by the rank-and-file would lead to the resignation of the party leader, Philipp Rösler, and jeopardize the coalition with the Christian Democrats (Carstens 2011). The leadership succeeded even though the party lost parliamentary representation in several state elections in 2011, and had fallen from 14.6 to about 4 percent in polls since the coalition was formed in 2009. Analyzing intra-party referenda in Belgium, Wauters (2009) also finds that such plebiscitarian procedures were used by the united party leadership to weaken internal opponents.

The discussion suggests that a unified leadership possesses the agenda-setting power and information channels particularly in intra-party referenda to inform the membership that not following the leadership agenda would have negative consequences for the party:

*A united party leadership substantially influences party members to follow its recommendation in a party referendum.*

Our United Leadership Hypothesis also predicts that the effect of leadership unity differs across party strata in the following way:

- The *inactive rank-and-file* is susceptible to the suggestions of the party leadership, as they tend to be impressed by its blackmail potential, and have only limited access and motivation to gather alternative information apart from the official partisan news.

- *Party members with a public office* will also tend to support the party leadership. Although they have the political sophistication to access critical information, their career tends to be strongly affected by blackmail potential. Their political career could be harmed by antagonizing a unified higher leadership, or by electoral defeat, which would reduce the number of available public offices.

- *Party office holders at the middle level (district, regional, state)*<sup>3</sup> also have the political sophistication and motivation to access critical information. But they are relatively less affected by the blackmail potential, as their often unpaid position does not directly depend on success at the ballot box. They tend to be more likely involved in cross-regional party organizations, focusing on substantive topics. Party office holders are therefore in a network that allows them to exchange ideas and information. Thus, they are the group within the party that has the strongest potential to resist the national leadership.

These individual career considerations ensure that the party strata tend to resemble the distribution of May's Law of Curvilinear Disparity. Regarding the voting behavior in a party

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<sup>3</sup> There appears to be no disagreement in the literature on the moderate position of local or low-level party leaders. According to Kitschelt (1989), the lowest tier puts more emphasis on local affairs, and mostly consists of pragmatists.

membership referendum, the following specific hypothesis concerning revealed preference disparity can be derived from the discussion of the United Leadership Hypothesis:

*Holding a party office makes party members relatively less likely to follow the recommendations of the party leadership in their political behavior.*

The SPD is a particularly relevant case for evaluating the existence of preference disparity, because the SPD does not meet any of the three conditions that Kitschelt (1989) considers to be necessary for the Law of Curvilinear Disparity to hold: First, there was no new polarization on policy dimensions that was previously underrepresented in the SPD. Second, the SPD did not have a loose party organization. Gaining party office is important for SPD members to get into public office. In our dataset, middle-rank party office holders are about 36 percent more likely to have a public office. Third, the institutional exit costs for party members are low. Germany is a multi-party system with a 5-percent threshold of parliamentary representation. When former SPD Chancellor Gerhard Schröder implemented the controversial Hartz-IV labor-market deregulation, disgruntled and ideologically more radical members left for the *Wahlalternative Soziale Gerechtigkeit*, which later became part of The Left. Similarly, post-materialists have the Greens as an alternative exit option, more centrist members the CDU, etc. Thus, finding a preference disparity over time in such an unlikely case would have implications beyond the SPD, as it would suggest the broader applicability of the Law of Curvilinear Disparity.

#### **4. The SPD party referenda in 2013 and 2018**

Following the 2013 and the 2017 federal elections, the SPD made its participation in government conditional on the result of membership votes on the coalition treaty. The SPD had

suffered severe electoral defeats in both instances – 2017 was even the worst result in the history of the Federal Republic. The strategy to make the coalition agreement conditional on a membership vote had three functions: First, by their decision to enter into coalition negotiations, the SPD signaled to the population that they were a responsible party that cared about the political stability of Germany. Second, by making the coalition conditional on their members' approval, the SPD tried to secure the support of their rank-and-file, signaling that they would not “sell out” for power. Third, the membership referendum improved the leverage of the SPD in the coalition negotiations, as core elements of the SPD's election program needed to be put into the treaty in order to receive the support of the SPD membership (Bukow 2013; Hilmer 2014).

In 2013, the SPD entered coalition negotiations with the CDU/CSU as a junior partner – a constellation which the SPD entered in 2005, leading to their (then) worst election result in the subsequent 2009 national election. No other coalition constellation was possible or politically viable. In the scenario of a snap election due to the SPD's decision to go into opposition, the SPD was running the risk of being perceived as an irresponsible element of instability by voters, and suffering an even worse election result (Hilmer 2014; Sturm 2014). The higher SPD leadership unanimously supported the coalition with the Christian Democrats and so did 192 of their 193 newly elected members of parliament. Initial critics such as the popular prime minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Hannelore Kraft, changed their mind completely and even campaigned for an affirmative vote in the party referendum. Only the party's youth organization, the Jungsozialisten (Jusos), recommended a ‘no’ vote in the referendum (FAZ 2013).

In the aftermath of the 2017 election, the circumstances of entering into coalition negotiations were different. On election night, SPD frontrunner and party leader Martin Schulz declared that the SPD would leave the grand coalition and go into opposition. However, the

coalition negotiations between the Christian Democrats, FDP, and the Greens failed, and public opinion polls predicted a further decline in a snap election for the SPD. The decision of the SPD to make a U-turn and to conduct coalition talks with the CDU/CSU was significantly influenced by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier – who was the 2009 SPD frontrunner (Faas and Klingelhöfer 2019: 923). The SPD formally entered into coalition negotiations after 56.4 percent of delegates supported the decision at a party convention in January 2018. Remarkably, all 45 members of the party leadership as well as other prominent party figures were in favor of negotiations (Bellinghausen 2018). As in 2013, the SPD made the grand coalition conditional on the affirmative vote of the party's members to appeal to the delegates. The Jusos were again the only major critic of the grand coalition within the SPD.

The outcomes of both referenda were not clear in the beginning of the coalition talks. A representative opinion poll shortly after the 2013 federal election revealed that 64 and 70 percent of SPD members and party officers rejected the grand coalition – while 57 percent of SPD voters supported it (Stern 2013). Similarly, the support among SPD members was 36 percent for the grand coalition, and 50 percent among SPD voters before the negotiations began (Berliner Zeitung 2017; Infratest Dimap 2018). Anecdotal evidence from newspaper reports based on interviews at local party meetings initially suggested a tight race between coalition supporters and opponents in both years (Medick 2013, Steppat 2018). As about 80-90 percent of votes were expected to come from inactive members, the outcome was considered to be uncertain (Bewarder et al. 2013).

In both negotiations with the CDU/CSU, the SPD leadership succeeded in including several of its core campaign promises into the coalition treaty, but also in terms of gaining access to important offices (Sturm 2014; Faas and Klingelhöfer 2019). The general reservations against the coalition substantially dropped after the party leadership announced the results of the coalition



negotiations.<sup>4</sup> Shortly after the announcement of the coalition contract in February 2018, Schulz had to resign as party leader over his aspiration to become Germany's foreign minister. The mayor of Hamburg, Olaf Scholz, became the interim party leader until a party convention in April 2018 elected the designated new party leader, Andrea Nahles, who was then the party's parliamentary leader. While Schulz's demission reveals elite conflicts over offices, leadership unity on supporting the grand coalition remained untampered. In November 2013, 52 percent of the population were satisfied with the coalition agreement – among SPD voters the number reached 64 percent. The support was 43 percent in the population and 60 percent among SPD voters in February 2018 (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2013, 2018).

The SPD campaigned on this success and the party's responsibility to provide stability in Germany in regional conferences (Spiegel 2013, Tagesspiegel 2018). In these conferences, the SPD leadership put a strong emphasis on their success in the negotiations with the Christian Democrats, and critical opinions were not featured prominently (Deutschlandfunk 2013; Welt 2018). The leadership contended that their programmatic agenda can only be enacted if the membership votes 'yes' in the referendum. The SPD leadership also highlighted the repercussions of a 'no' vote for the party. Then party leader Sigmar Gabriel proclaimed in 2013 that the referendum will be decisive for the party's future "for the next 20, 30 years" (Jacobsen 2013); Then General Secretary Nahles announced that there is "no plan B" in the case that the rank-and-file rejects the coalition agreement, which probably would have implied that the SPD leadership resigns (Monath 2013). Naßmacher and Blumenberg (2019: 12) describe that the SPD also went "without a plan B" into the 2018 referendum. In both referenda, the membership essentially also

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<sup>4</sup> The party's MP Johannes Kahrs summarize this change in party members' opinion by stating that he initially expected a 50:50 race. After the coalition negotiation, Kahrs predicted an affirmative vote of about 80 percent (Rothenberg 2013).

had to vote on the leadership's future, and they were made aware that a 'no'-vote would have caused a major leadership crisis (Jun 2018: 949-50).

The party members were required to cast their votes via postal voting in both referenda. The voting documents received by each party member also included a flyer by the SPD leadership in favor of the coalition agreement in 2013 and a support letter in 2018. No critical information by opponents was part of these official documents. Similarly, the official SPD referendum website contained no opposition voice. The voting procedure bestowed the SPD leadership with a strong leverage to affect the opinion of the rank-and-file relatively to voting in the local associations of the party, where the relative turnout of more active party members would have been higher (Werdermann 2013). The success of this narrative in the campaign of the leadership is evident in polls conducted among party members showing that "preventing new elections" and "taking on responsibility" were the core motivators for voting in favor of the coalition agreement (Steppat 2018). The party leadership received the support it campaigned for in both referenda. 75.96 percent of the members supported the coalition agreement in 2013, and 66.02 percent supported it in 2018.

The discussion shows that leadership unity existed for both referenda, even though the circumstances of the coalition negotiations and the process of forming leadership unity were different. A leadership conflict emerged 2018 over offices, but left the support of all leaders for the grand coalition intact. In both instances, the initial membership support was low and improved substantially after the completion of the coalition negotiations. The united leadership used their agenda-setting power to shape the election campaign and the voting process. The leadership also made use of their blackmail potential by highlighting that a 'no' vote has dire consequences for the party.

## **5. Empirical section**

### **5.1 Sampling strategy and data description**

We utilized the national election and the SPD referendum to conduct a two-wave survey in 2013 and 2018. The survey invitations were sent out via email to members of the SPD who met one of the following conditions: Holding a party office in the SPD or Jusos at one of the three lowest organizational levels of the party (*Ortsverein*, *Kreisverband*, and *Unterbezirk*), or being a member of a local parliament (*Gemeinderat* or *Stadtrat*). The email addresses of these individuals were obtained from all websites of the organizational units of the SPD and the Jusos as well as for the Bundestag, the federal parliaments, and all district parliaments of Germany.

The first survey was sent out in October 2013 – a month after the 2013 national election and before the referendum, which took place between 6-12 December 2013. This survey included 55 questions about coalition preferences, political preferences and attitudes, socio-economic data and perception of the electoral campaign of the SPD, using the online survey software Qualtrics. In total, 5,154 party office and public office holders were invited, of which 1,785 or 34.6 percent completed or partly completed the questionnaire.

The second wave of the survey was sent out to all 892 participants of the first wave who indicated that they were willing to answer further questions. These survey participants received an email one day after the party referendum. The second survey had a few questions on the voting decision in the referendum, and provided summary results of the first wave after completion, as an incentive for first-wave respondents to participate in the second wave. It was answered by 649 or 72.8 percent of the participants.

The first wave of the second survey was sent out on 3 January 2018 shortly before the CDU/CSU and SPD started their pre-coalition talks. The questionnaire had a similar design in terms of items and length as its predecessor and was conducted on the online survey platform Unipark. 2,231 of the 6,875 invited SPD party officers or 32.5 percent participated in the first wave. The referendum lasted from 20 February to 2 March 2018, on which day 1,489 prior participants received an invitation for the second wave. 941 of them participated in the survey, yielding a response rate of 63.2 percent. 342 respondents participated in the 2013 and 2018 surveys.

The empirical analysis consists of two parts. First, we evaluate on the party-level whether there was a preference disparity in the SPD in terms of referenda vote, left-right placement, and intra-party satisfaction. Second, we conduct an OLS regression analysis on the influence of the united leadership campaign on vote choice and whether party office holders were relatively more resistant to the persuasion attempts by the united party leadership in favor of the grand coalition. The regression analysis is based on the following equation:

$$Vote\ Choice_{it} = \alpha\ United\ Leadership\ Campaign_{it} + \gamma\ Party\ Office_{it} + \delta\ Party\ Office\ Resistance_{it} + \sum_{j=0}^M \beta_j X_{ijt} + \varepsilon_{it} \text{ with}$$

$i = 1, \dots, 3,388$  (number of participants);  $t = 1, \dots, 4$  (number of surveys);  $j = 0, \dots, M$  (number of other independent variables) and the error term

where the dependent variable equals one if a participant stated an affirmative vote choice on the grand coalition. The variable United Leadership Campaign is a period dummy, which equals zero at the first wave before the coalition negotiations, and one at the second wave after the united leadership campaign. Party Office refers to leading party position in the *Kreisverband* or

*Unterbezirk*. The independent variable of interest is the interaction term between the United Leadership Campaign dummy and the Party Office dummy, which we call Party Office Resistance. The other independent variables can be distinguished into four categories: Career variables, programmatic variables, satisfaction variables and key demographics.; Public Office refers to those respondents who are elected to a *Gemeinde-* or *Stadtrat* or *Kreistag* at the local and district level. Positions on the state or national level qualify as higher positions, thus party positions in the *Bundesverband* or *Landesverband* constitutes a Higher Party Office, and being a member of a *Landtag*, the *Bundestag*, or the European Parliament is coded as a Higher Public Office.

The variable Career Aspiration is based on an item asking respondents whether they have the desire to run for a higher office in the future. Answer options were “Already hold a higher public office (1),” “Yes, definitely (2),” “It is possible if there is the right opportunity (3),” “Not at the moment, but I wouldn’t exclude it for the future (4),” “No, I’m not interested (5).”

The programmatic variable Left-Right Placement is based on the self-placement of respondents on a left-right dimension ranging from 0 (very left-wing) to 10 (very right-wing). In 2013, the left-right dimension is estimated by the average self-placement in political space from 0 to 10 for the dimensions economic policy-making, way of life, immigration, and EU. The next item asked respondents whether they considered the Hartz-4 reforms initiated under the chancellorship of Gerhard Schröder to be necessary. The labor market deregulation reforms caused an internal conflict at the time and have remained controversial within the SPD. Answer options ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Campaign Satisfaction refers to an item asking respondents about their opinion on the SPD’s election campaign in the national election with answer options ranging from “very

dissatisfied” to “very satisfied.” Intra-Party Satisfaction is an additive index based on six items, which pertain to satisfaction of internal party processes. The respondents had the options to choose whether they are satisfied on how the SPD is performing on the following tasks: efforts to recruit new members, involvement of members in programmatic decisions, and in the nomination of candidates, division of the party in different factions, and cooperation with other social groups. The index was divided by six in order to range between zero and one. The next items asked respondents how much they like the SPD’s frontrunner (Peer Steinbrück in 2013 and Schulz in 2017) and chancellor Angela Merkel on a scale from 1 (strongly dislike) to 11 (strongly like).

The demographic variables are membership in party’s youth organization, the Jusos, age, gender, and education level. Furthermore, state dummies are used to control for the regional origin of the respondents, and dummies for the 2018 referendum and panel participation are also included. The regression analysis is based on clustered standard errors on the individual level to account for heteroskedasticity.

## **<<< TABLE 2 >>>**

In contrast to previous intra-party research, our sample design attains a relatively high level of representativeness because all associations and parliamentarians were invited, which is unprecedented in the study of party activists. We are able to compare the characteristics of the participants of the first and second wave of both surveys. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables from both surveys. In the first wave of the first survey, 23 percent of participants supported the grand coalition. This support increased to 53.9 percent in the second wave. The second survey also saw a strong increase in the support for the grand coalition from 32.7 percent in the first wave to 56.9 percent in the second wave. The descriptive statistics also reveal that

participants of the second wave were significantly more left-wing. But, most importantly, second-wave respondents did not differ significantly from the first wave in their initial support for the grand coalition in the 2013 survey (22.6 percent) and in the 2018 survey (34.3 percent). The fact that second-wave respondents did not differ in their initial coalition support but were relatively more left-wing makes the confirmation of our argument more difficult. The second-wave participants were further away from the CDU/CSU programmatically. Thus, they were supposed to be less likely to follow the leadership's recommendation to support the grand coalition. As our sample strategy generates a large-N sample and as different response rates are known, it is possible to use different weighting techniques and control variables to evaluate whether the empirical results are robust to potential biases.

## **4.2 Empirical analysis**

The data collected during the SPD referendum allows for a comprehensive assessment of the relevance of career considerations in intra-party politics.<sup>5</sup> The Figures 2 and 3 show the support of public office holders, party office holders, and respondents who held both positions for the grand coalition in the first and second wave for the 2013 and 2018 referenda. Respondents who hold a public office were most supportive of the grand coalition in both waves as well as for both referenda: In 2013, the support of public office holders was initially 26.6 percent and increased to 73.7 percent. In the referendum of 2018, support of public office holders was 41.3 percent in the first wave and increased to 64.4 percent in the second wave – thus closely resembling the overall

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<sup>5</sup> The results for the figures and various model specifications for the section are shown in tabular form in Appendix Tables 1-2.

referenda results. Among participants who held public and party offices the support was 23.6 (31.1) percent in the first wave of 2013 (2018), going up to 52.6 (58.3) percent in the second wave. The support was the lowest for party office holders: In the first wave of 2013 (2018), the support for the grand coalition was 21.8 (26.8) percent, increasing to 44.5 (50) percent at the time of the second wave.

#### <<< FIGURES 2 AND 3 >>>

A t-test of means shows that the support for the grand coalition among party office holders was significantly lower at the 95-percent confidence level than the support by public office holders and the general membership in both referenda. As suggested by the United Leadership Hypothesis, these respondents were significantly more likely than all other groups to vote ‘no’ in the referendum. But were they also relatively more radical?

#### <<< FIGURE 4 >>>

Figure 4 shows the programmatic self-placement of public office holders, party office holders and those with both positions in political space on various policy issues in 2013 and on a left-right dimension in 2018. We can see that party office holders were the most left-wing on all dimensions. The average placement of party office holders on the four dimensions economy, way of life, immigration, and EU was 3.18 in 2013, while it was 3.77 for public office holders and 3.65 for respondents with both offices. In 2018, the average left-right self-placement of party office holders was 3.13, 3.39 for respondents with both offices, and 3.52 for public office holders. The self-placement of party office holders was significantly different at the 95-percent confidence level from public office holders, thus suggesting that party office holders were relatively the most radical party strata within the SPD.



**<<< FIGURE 5 >>>**

Figure 5 shows the average intra-party satisfaction of different SPD office holders over time. We can see that – in tandem with the electoral decline of the SPD – the average intra-party satisfaction significantly decreased for public office holders from 49.2 percent in 2013 to 38.1 percent in 2018. A similar significant development from 44.1 to 38.4 percent occurred for respondents with both offices. By contrast, the average satisfaction for party office holders remained stable with 41.9 percent in 2013 and 41.2 percent in 2018, which is statistically indistinguishable from the other strata.

**<<< FIGURE 6 >>>**

Considering the support of each strata for conducting a referendum, Figure 6 shows that all of them overwhelmingly supported it for both referenda. For public office holders, the support was 88.8 percent in 2013 and 89.9 percent in 2018; the support stood at 90.4 percent in both years for respondents with both offices, and the support among party office holders was 93.4 percent in 2013 and 90.4 percent in 2018. None of these changes nor the differences between the groups appear to be statistically significant.

**<<< FIGURE 7 >>>**

Moving to the second part of the empirical analysis, Figure 7 graphically shows the regression results of the main model in order to evaluate whether party office holders were more resistant against the unified leadership campaign, while controlling for other career, programmatic, satisfaction, and demographic variables. The positive coefficient for United Leadership Campaign indicates that the support for the grand coalition has on average increased by 30.6 percent from

the first to the second wave of the 2013 and 2018 referenda, which is significant at the 95-percent confidence level. This suggests that the united leadership campaign had a decisive influence on vote choice. While Party Office appears to be insignificant in the fully specified model, the interaction term Party Office Resistance significantly decreases the support for the grand coalition by 5.9 percent. In addition, intra-party satisfaction, support for the Hartz-4 reforms, liking the SPD frontrunners and Chancellor Merkel, and a right-wing position within the SPD are significantly associated with supporting the grand coalition across both waves, suggesting that the programmatic concerns and positions of respondents also influenced their vote choice.

The first part of the empirical analysis suggests that party office holders were less supportive of the grand coalition before and after both referenda. They were also the most left-wing strata of the party. Yet, they strongly supported the referenda and their intra-party satisfaction levels did not decline. The former suggests a preference disparity in the SPD, while the latter could explain why this disparity is able to persist over time, as there is no evidence that party office holders became dissatisfied and left the party. The second part of the empirical analysis indicates that the united leadership campaign strongly influenced vote choice in the desired direction of the leadership. Moreover, party office holders were less likely to change their opinion in support of the grand coalition, as suggested by our hypothesis.

## **6. Conclusion**

On the prospect of elite control by the general public, Zaller (1992: 8-9) noted that “when elites uphold a clear picture of what should be done, the public tends to see events from that point of view.” We argue in a similar vein concerning intra-party democracy: If party elites are united in

their goals, the party tends to follow them, because voters favor parties at the ballot box that present themselves as a unified team. A unified party leadership tends to be endowed with the agenda-setting power and information channels in order to highlight that a deviation from their agenda by the rank-and-file would have negative consequences for the party.

We argue that leadership unity does not affect all party strata equally. The rank-and-file and members with public offices or political career ambition are strongly affected by it; in the former case due to lack of alternative information, in the latter due to negative career consequences. By contrast, the position of mid-level party leaders is hardly affected by leadership unity, making them the most resilient to persuasion attempts by the high leadership. Our United Leadership Hypothesis does not rule out ideology, as programmatic considerations and appeals are likely to be pivotal in unifying the leadership.

The SPD referenda on joining a coalition with the CDU/CSU were an ideal testing ground, because the SPD suffered devastating election losses and a coalition with the CDU/CSU was unpopular among the membership. Yet, the SPD leadership unified in support of the grand coalition, emphasizing that a ‘no’ vote would have disastrous consequences for the party. A unique two-wave survey of up to 3,388 participants before and after the 2013 and 2018 referenda appear to confirm our theory. The leadership substantially convinced all strata of party members to vote in favor of the coalition agreement. Respondents with a mid-level party office were the least likely to vote affirmatively, leading to a curvilinear disparity in the SPD with the mid-level party leaders as the most resilient and the most left-wing on political preferences. Yet, they were not less satisfied with their party and strongly supported the referenda, suggesting that the process of the referenda increased the legitimacy of the decision. As a consequence, the preference disparity in the SPD can persist, as the internal opposition does not become discouraged and exit the party.

While our case study of the German Social Democrats has by design only limited generalizability, there are some general implications that go beyond the SPD: First, our study provides a methodological innovation for future researchers to study preferences and political behavior of different types of party members over time. Second, the SPD was an unlikely case for a confirmation of the United Leadership Hypothesis based on the caveats by previous studies. SPD members confirmed the grand coalition in an atmosphere of a disappointing election result and bad memories on the previous grand coalition. Furthermore, the SPD did not meet any of the three exogenous conditions outlined by Kitschelt (1989), which were considered to be necessary for a preference disparity to hold.

The detection of preference disparity under such unfavorable conditions suggests that the United Leadership Hypothesis should have a wider applicability in party politics, particularly as there has been a general trend towards adopting more direct democratic practices within political parties (Scarrow 2015). We argue that it is not just a special case due to the regular occurrence of elections and the desire of governing parties to sustain cabinets. Elections and cabinet survival provide considerable incentives for party elites to unify, and endow the leadership with blackmail potential against deviant party members. An intra-party referendum may fail to constrain the leadership as a hypothetical median voter does in a Downsian world, as the united leadership shapes the agenda-setting, campaign, and voting processes within a party to influence the rank-and-file. The participatory measures have also internal benefits for the united leadership, as they increase the general legitimacy of the decision, while the risk of failing is low.

The United Leadership Hypothesis can be tied back to the Iron Law of Oligarchy. An oligarchy, however, only works if all the actors work together. This may be a too strong assumption given that the internal power struggle consists of complex interactions of multiple actors. By

contrast, an oligopoly may be the more appropriate concept. An oligopoly is in competition, but there are shared interests on limiting the consequences of competition. Similarly, leaders might be diverse in their ideological background and goals, and they may compete over offices. But they have shared interest in preserving access to power. As long as the oligopoly at the top of a party is able to unify behind common goals, our study suggests that the leadership will be able to control the preferences of the party.

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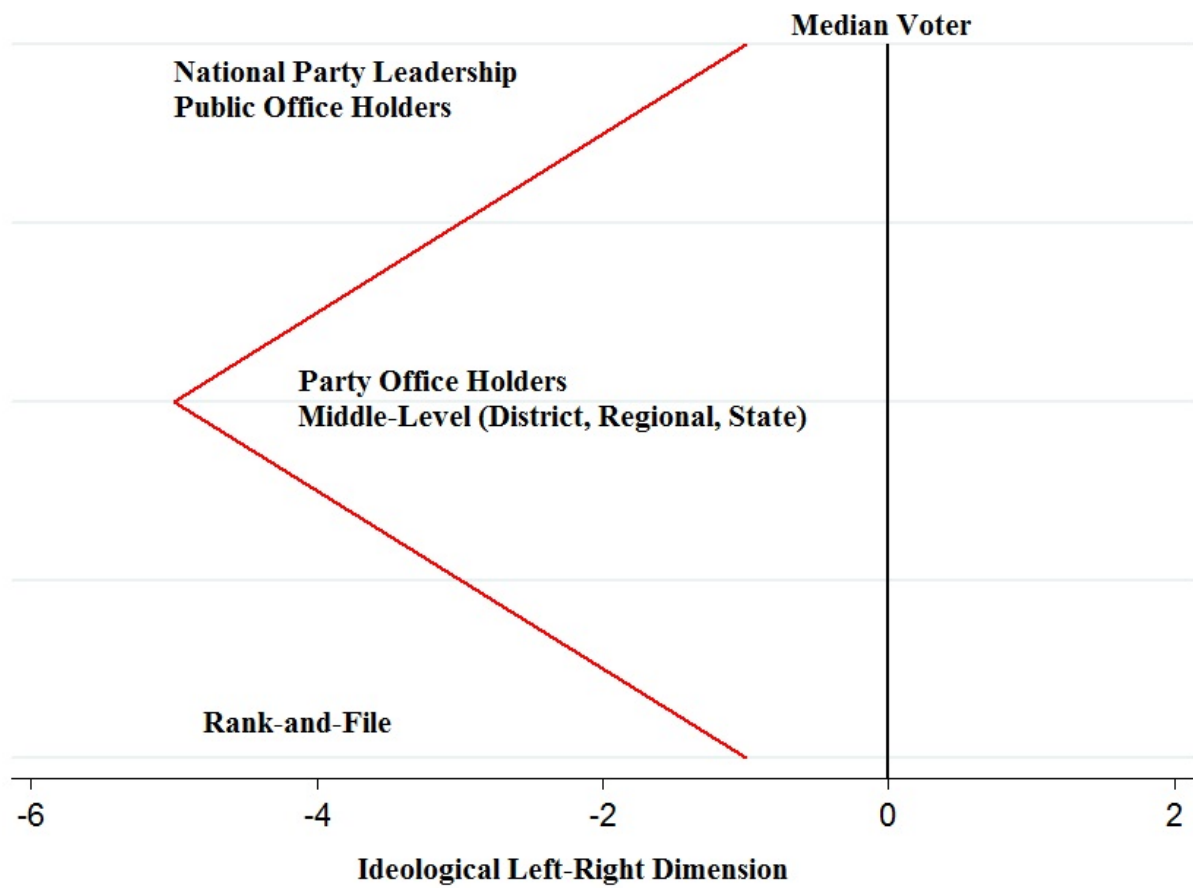
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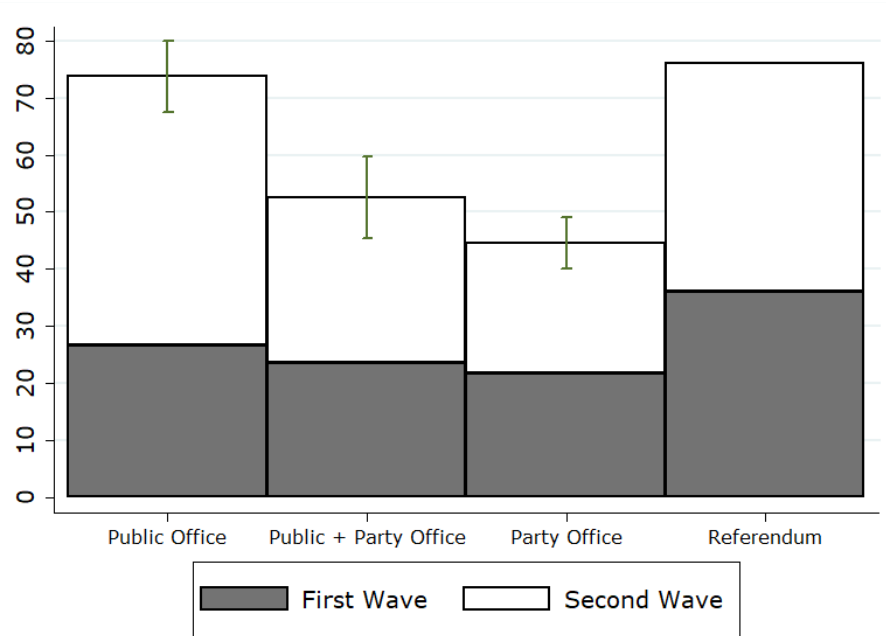


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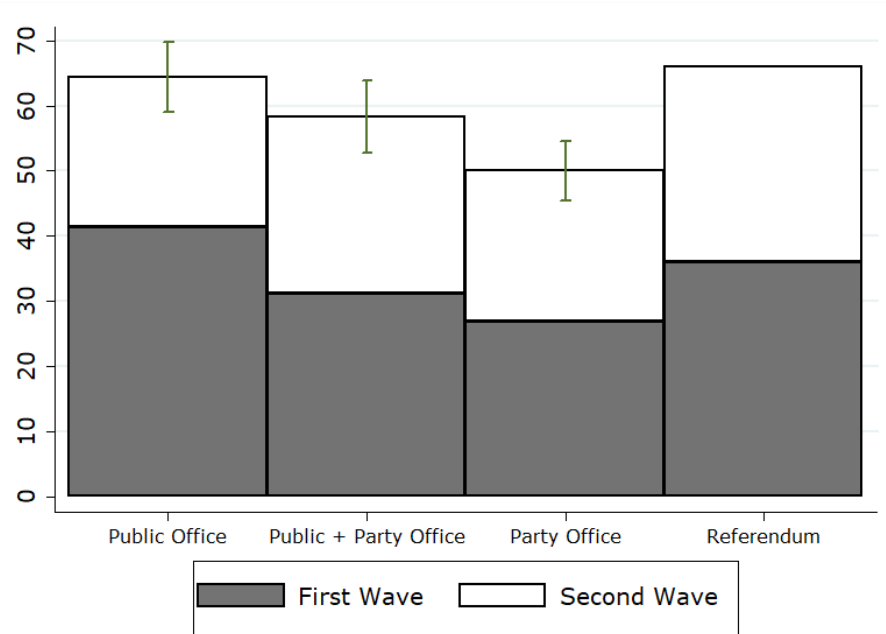


**Figure 1: Ideological distribution according to May's Law of Curvilinear Disparity**



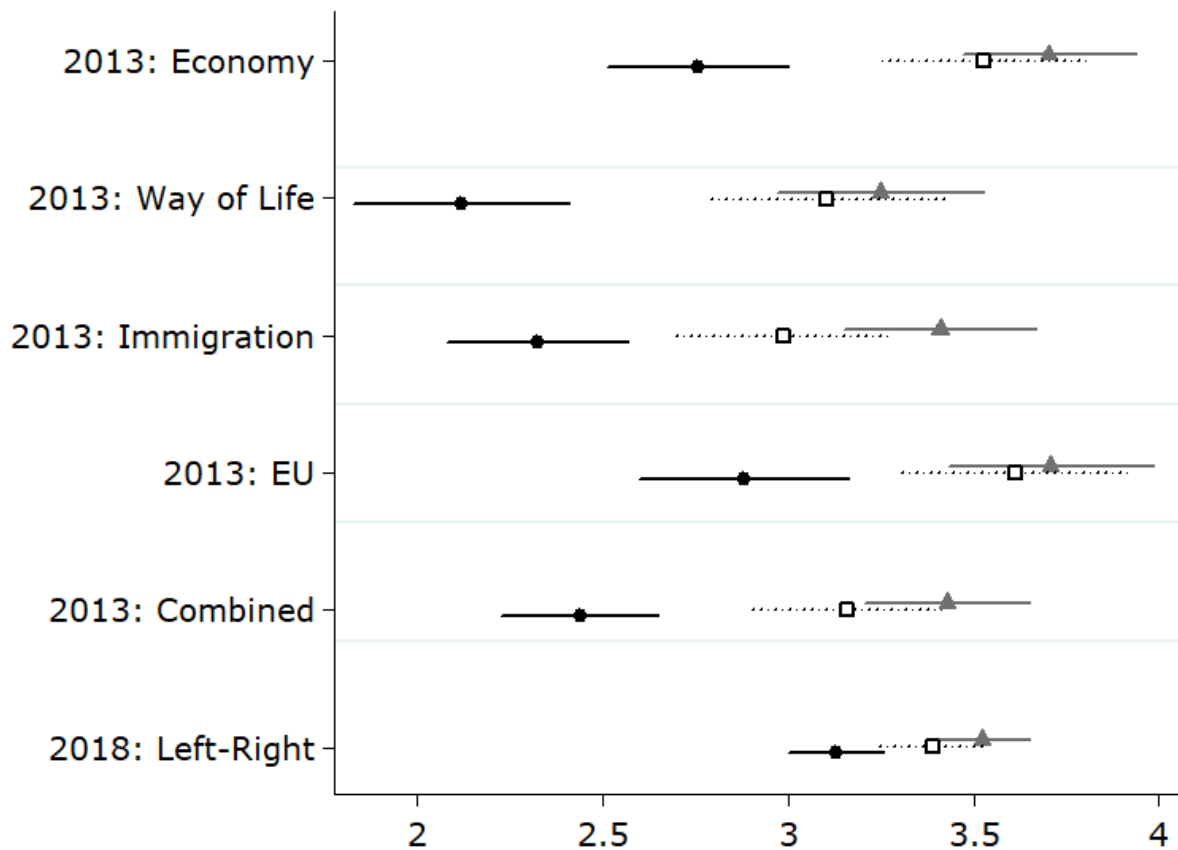
**Figure 2: Support for the grand coalition of SPD office holders in 2013 in percent**

*Note:* Error bars give 95-percent confidence interval. First wave of referendum refers to a representative opinion poll of SPD members after the national election (Stern 2013). The second wave of referendum is the referendum result.



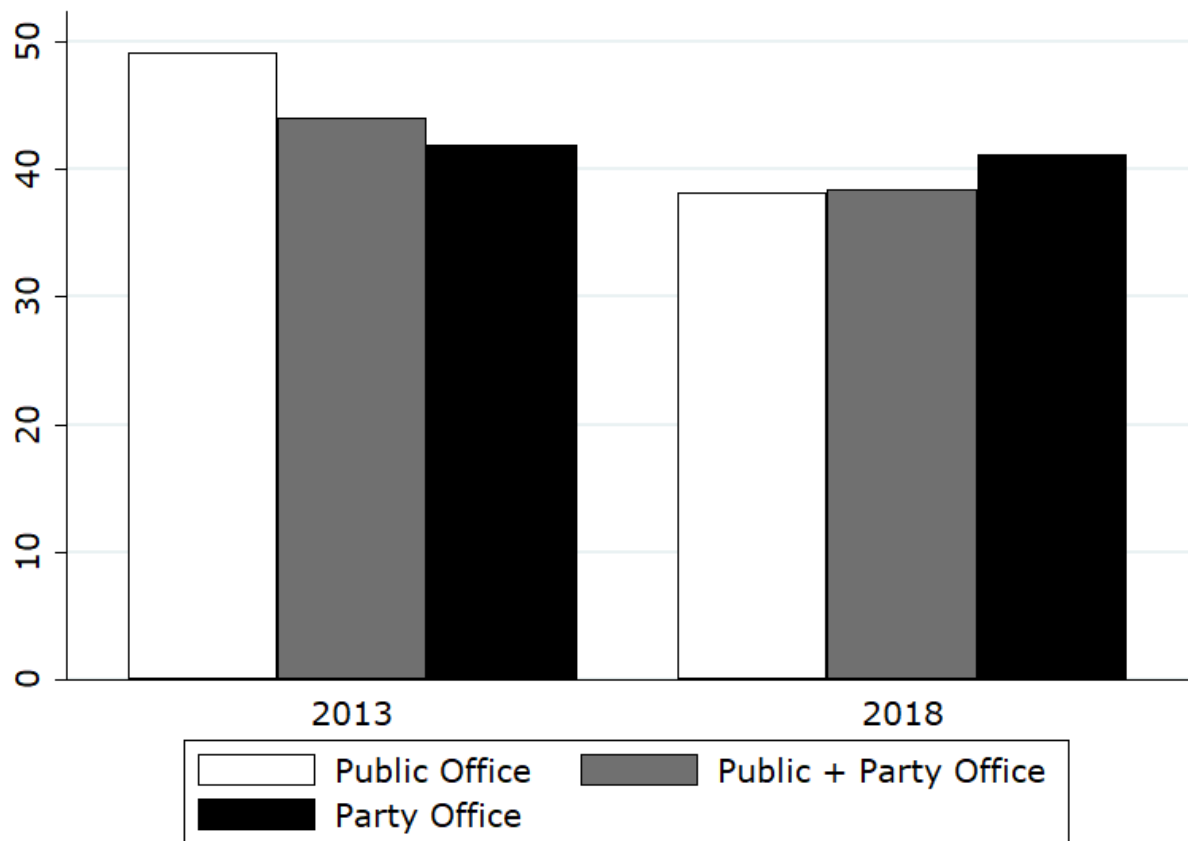
**Figure 3: Support for the grand coalition of SPD office holders in 2018 in percent**

*Note:* Error bars give 95-percent confidence interval. First wave of referendum refers to a representative opinion poll of SPD members after the national election (Berliner Zeitung 2017). The second wave of referendum is the referendum result.

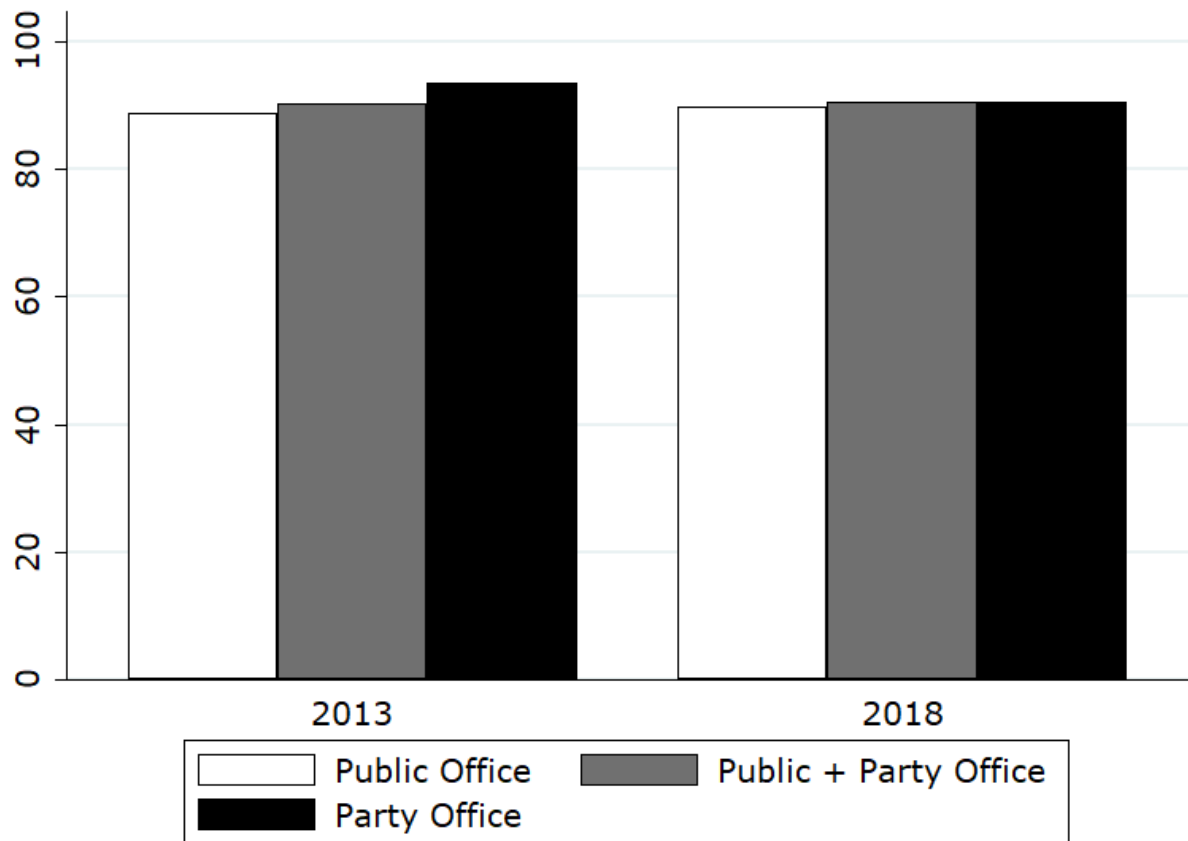


**Figure 4: Self-placement of SPD office holders in political space**

*Note:* Error bars give 95-percent confidence interval. Public office holders (gray triangle), party office holders (black circles) and party and public office holders (white squares with dotted black lines).

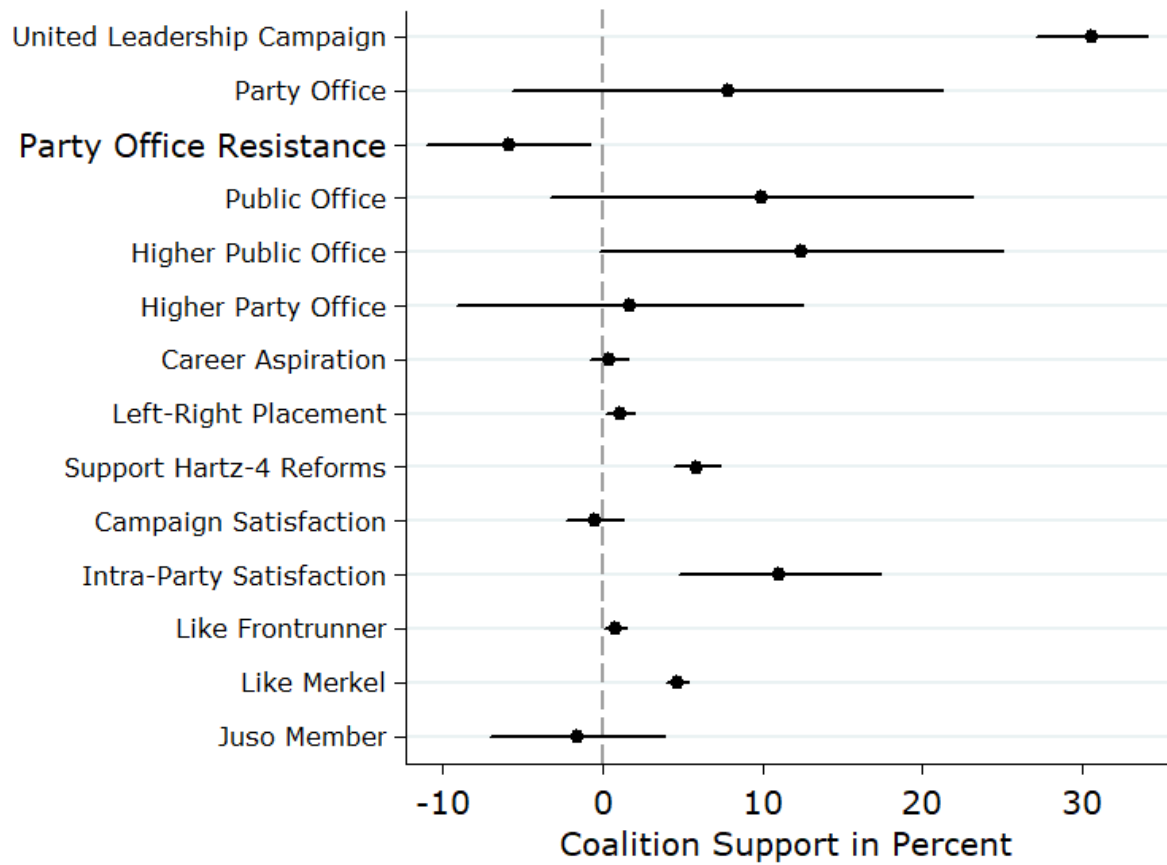


**Figure 5: Average satisfaction with intra-party democracy of SPD office holders in percent**



**Figure 6: Average referendum support of SPD office holders in percent**





**Figure 7: Regression analysis to explain support for grand coalition**

*Note:* Error bars give 95-percent confidence interval. Figure based on model 5 of Appendix Table 1

**Table 1: Survey of previous studies on the validity of preference disparity in political parties**

Author(s)	Country	Parties	Type	Large-N	Waves	Disparity
Kitschelt (1989)	BE	Agalev and Ecolo	Niche	No	1	Mixed
Herrera (1992)	USA	All	Main	Yes	1	Not test
Iversen (1994)	NL DK, UK, BE, DE	All	Both	Yes	1	Mixed
Herrera and Taylor (1994)	USA	All	Main	Yes	1	No
Norris (1995)	UK	Labour, Conservative	Main	Yes	1	Mixed
Narud and Skare (1999)	NO	All	Both	Yes	1	Mixed
Widfeldt (1999)	SE	All	Both	No	3	Mixed
Kennedy et al (2006).	IE	Labour	Main	No	1	Mixed
Loxbo (2013)	SE	SAP	Main	No		No test
Gauja and Jackson (2016)	AU	Green	Niche	Yes.	2	No test
Kölln & Polk (2017)	SE	FP, MP, S, V, KD, M, FI	Both	Yes	1	Yes
Van Holsteyn et al. (2017)	NL	CDA, D66, CU, GL, SGP, PvdA, VVD	Both	Yes	1	No/Mixed
Faucher and Boy (2018)	FR	Europe Ecologie Les Vertes	Niche	Yes	1	No

Note: Large-N: Study has more than 1,000 respondents.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics**

	Min	Max	First survey 2013		Second survey 2018	
			First wave	Second wave	First wave	Second wave
Coalition Preference for CDU/CSU	0	1	0.230 (0.421)	0.539 (0.499)	0.327 (0.469)	0.569 (0.495)
Party Office	0	1	0.598 (0.490)	0.557 (0.497)	0.362 (0.481)	0.381 (0.486)
Public Office	0	1	0.389 (0.488)	0.427 (0.495)	0.593 (0.491)	0.591 (0.491)
Higher Public Office	0	1	0.008 (0.088)	0.006 (0.076)	0.040 (0.197)	0.015 (0.122)
Higher Party Office	0	1	0.015 (0.122)	0.022 (0.147)	0.043 (0.204)	0.038 (0.191)
Career Aspiration	1	5	3.325 (1.232)	3.234 (1.205)	3.423 (1.444)	3.442 (1.439)
Left-Right Placement	0	10	3.045 (2.167)	2.718 (2.058)	3.216 (1.671)	3.045 (1.570)
Support Hartz-4 Reforms	1	5	3.392 (1.202)	3.388 (1.228)	3.388 (1.099)	3.375 (1.101)
Campaign Satisfaction	1	5	2.864 (1.034)	2.894 (1.024)	2.020 (0.693)	2.009 (0.704)
Intra-Party Satisfaction	0	1	0.446 (0.272)	0.441 (0.269)	0.394 (0.255)	0.384 (0.246)
Like Frontrunner	1	11	8.090 (2.583)	8.217 (2.513)	7.793 (2.196)	7.932 (2.135)
Like Merkel	1	11	3.785 (2.517)	3.545 (2.342)	4.645 (2.232)	4.590 (2.196)
Juso Member	0	1	0.244 (0.430)	0.313 (0.464)	0.170 (0.375)	0.198 (0.399)
Age	17	86	46.13 (17.06)	44.95 (17.42)	51.52 (14.89)	50.98 (15.34)
Gender	0	1	0.225 (0.418)	0.179 (0.384)	0.300 (0.459)	0.267 (0.443)
Education	1	9	5.955 (2.090)	6.239 (2.014)	6.399 (2.026)	6.414 (1.966)

*Note:* Standard deviation in brackets.

## Appendix

**Appendix Table 1: Point estimates of SPD office holders for Figures 2-6**

	<b>Public Office</b>	<b>Public + Party Office</b>	<b>Party Office</b>
<i>Support for Coalition Figures 2-3</i>			
<b>2013 First Wave</b>	26.57% [22.60, 30.54]	23.59% [19.45, 27.73]	21.75% [17.43, 26.07]
<b>2013 Second Wave</b>	73.68% [67.37, 80.00]	52.58% [45.49, 59.67]	44.51% [40.02, 49.00]
<b>2018 First Wave</b>	41.26% [37.27, 45.24]	31.07% [27.06, 35.08]	27.50% [23.79, 31.21]
<b>2018 Second Wave</b>	64.38% [59.10, 69.65]	58.28% [48.23, 59.08]	50.00% [45.37, 54.63]
<i>Figure 4</i>			
<b>2013: Economy</b>	3.86 [3.59, 4.13]	3.54 [3.21, 3.87]	2.79 [2.51, 3.08]
<b>2013: Way of Life</b>	3.38 [3.06, 3.71]	3.07 [2.69, 3.44]	2.19 [1.84, 2.55]
<b>2013: Immigration</b>	3.50 [3.20, 3.80]	2.95 [2.61, 3.29]	2.42 [2.12, 2.72]
<b>2013: EU</b>	3.82 [3.50, 4.14]	3.63 [3.26, 4.00]	2.91 [2.58, 3.24]
<b>2013: Combined</b>	3.77 [3.56, 3.98]	3.65 [3.42, 3.88]	3.18 [2.98, 3.38]
<b>2018: Left-Right</b>	3.52 [3.39, 3.65]	3.39 [3.24, 3.53]	3.13 [3.00, 3.26]
<i>Figure 5</i>			
<b>2013: Intra-Party Satisfaction</b>	49.18% [46.43, 51.94]	44.06% [41.48, 46.64]	41.86% [38.84, 44.89]
<b>2018: Intra-Party Satisfaction</b>	38.13% [36.13, 40.13]	38.35% [36.35, 40.36]	41.16% [39.12, 43.21]
<i>Figure 6</i>			
<b>2013: Support for Referendum</b>	88.84% [85.88, 91.80]	90.37% [87.37, 93.38]	93.43% [90.77, 96.10]
<b>2018: Support for Referendum</b>	89.85% [87.54, 92.16]	90.40% [87.98, 92.82]	90.42% [88.09, 92.75]

Note: 95-percent confidence interval in brackets.

**Appendix Table 2: Regression analysis to explain support for grand coalition, tabular results of Figure 7, Model 5**

	1	2	3	4	5
United Leadership Campaign	0.300*** (16.99)	0.299*** (17.26)	0.302*** (17.50)	0.308*** (17.23)	0.306*** (17.22)
Party Office	-0.082*** (5.47)	-0.029* (1.77)	0.005 (0.89)	0.078 (1.11)	0.079 (1.15)
Party Office Resistance	-0.056** (2.19)	-0.056** (2.19)	-0.059** (2.33)	-0.059** (2.23)	-0.059** (2.24)
Public Office			0.086 (1.43)	0.108 (1.55)	0.099 (1.48)
Higher Public Office			0.190*** (3.21)	0.125* (1.91)	0.124* (1.93)
Higher Party Office			-0.061 (1.26)	0.020 (0.34)	0.017 (0.31)
Career Aspiration				0.011* (1.90)	0.004 (0.70)
Left-Right Placement				0.011** (2.52)	0.011** (2.34)
Support Hartz-4 Reforms				0.059*** (8.14)	0.059*** (7.99)
Campaign Satisfaction				-0.012 (1.44)	-0.004 (0.50)
Intra-Party Satisfaction				0.122*** (3.84)	0.111*** (3.43)
Like Frontrunner				0.010*** (2.89)	0.008** (2.29)
Like Merkel				0.048*** (13.69)	0.046*** (13.02)
Juso Member				-0.131*** (6.76)	-0.017 (0.59)
Age		0.005*** (11.42)	0.005*** (11.26)		0.004*** (5.75)
Gender		-0.025 (1.50)	-0.025 (1.49)		-0.029 (1.59)
Education		0.013*** (3.41)	0.012*** (3.33)		0.009** (2.18)
2018 Sample Dummy		0.047*** (2.75)	0.047*** (2.76)		0.008 (0.39)
2013 and 2018 Samples Dummy		0.015 (0.69)	0.013 (0.59)		0.004 (0.19)
Federal State Dummies	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
N	5,348	5,118	5,118	4,117	4,031
Participants	3,388	3,209	3,209	2,430	2,377
R-Squared	0.0803	0.1308	0.1341	0.2140	0.2338

Notes: \*  $p \leq 0.10$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ . Absolute t-values in parentheses.