

LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY*

BY SAMUEL C. PATTERSON

The role of a legislative leader is one he can to some extent shape for himself within the institutional and other constraints of his position. It is not surprising, therefore, that his relationship to some major ideological questions and to the various groups he represents should be difficult to generalize. Here is a study that explores the two major hypotheses that have been discussed recently.

Samuel C. Patterson is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the State University of Iowa. He is currently making an analysis of the 1961 Wisconsin Assembly and studying the extent to which ideological differences in a legislature can be explained by differential occupational mobility.

IN recent years there has been a growing interest in the extent to which legislative leaders represent rank-and-file members of legislative bodies, and in characterization of the kinds of representative relationships uniformly observable in legislative situations.¹ This analysis seeks to explore further the "ideological" representativeness of legislative leaders in a variety of legislative situations. It seeks to investigate the leader-follower relationship on issues in an interparty context in both state and national legislative bodies. What ideological positions do legislative leaders hold? Are there uniform relationships between leadership status and "ideological" position? Here the term "leader" refers exclusively to the holders of formal positions of leadership in legislative bodies, and the term "ideology" is operationally defined in terms of cumulative scales derived from roll-call votes on specific legislative issues.² We are thus focusing upon only one sort of legislative leader, the one who is officially selected to a leadership position by election, co-option, or seniority. And we are viewing "ideology" in the very narrow sense of relative position on certain

* A part of the data presented here was gathered through the help of a grant from the Committee on Political Behavior of the Social Science Research Council.

¹ See Lester G. Seligman, "The Study of Political Leadership," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 44, 1950, pp. 904-915.

² The term "ideology" has been discussed in its broadest sense in Vladimir C. Nahirny, "Some Observations on Ideological Groups," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, 1962, pp. 397-405. Here the "content" of thought is used as the criterion of ideology, and the liberal-conservative dimensions are identified on "issue preference" grounds. For a variety of definitions and a most useful discussion, see David W. Minar, "Ideology and Political Behavior," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 5, 1961, pp. 317-331. See also Charles Farris, "A Method of Determining Ideological Groups in Congress," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 20, 1958, pp. 308-338.

scales derived from a limited number of legislative issues that appear logically to involve liberal-conservative differentiation.

The limited research bearing on the ideological position of legislative leaders suggests two hypotheses about the representative character of the leadership role in the legislative situation. One can be denominated the "middleman" hypothesis, the other, the "extremity" hypothesis. The first has been advanced principally in connection with studies of the Congress, and the latter is associated with at least one analysis of state legislative leadership.

THE "MIDDLEMAN" HYPOTHESIS

The principal statement of the "middleman" hypothesis is to be found in the recent analysis of congressional party structures by Truman. He adopts as a working assumption the notion that congressional parties perform a "mediating" function, integrating the disparities in ideological position within both parties. The hypothesis follows, he argues, that legislative leaders are likely to be "middlemen." With respect to House floor leaders, Truman writes:

Given the cleavages within both parties and the admissibility of the assumption that the legislative parties in the House, like those of the Senate, are mediate groups, one would expect to find the Floor Leaders located toward the center of their respective parties.³

In his discussion of the Senate floor leaders, Truman suggests that the leader

who accepted any degree of responsibility for the substantive actions of the party would almost certainly be a middleman, not only in the sense of a negotiator but also in the literal structural sense. One would not expect that he could attract the support necessary for election unless his voting record placed him somewhere near the center of an evenly divided party, and one would not expect him to be effective in his role unless he continued to avoid identification with one of the extreme groups within his nominal following.⁴

Matthews' data, based upon a cardinal index of liberalism-conservatism for Senators from the 80th to the 84th Congresses, appear to show that Senate leaders (elective leaders and committee chairmen) tend to occupy middle-of-the-road ideological positions. Commenting upon his findings, Matthews observes that

the recruitment of party leaders favored "moderates" in both parties. . . . The extreme ends of the ideological spectrum were under-represented among the leaders of both parties; moderate Democrats and Republicans were favored as

³ David B. Truman, *The Congressional Party: A Case Study*, New York, Wiley, 1959, p. 205.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

leaders . . . the party leaders' ideological positions tended, after their election, to shift slightly away from the political center toward the centers of gravity of their respective parties.⁵

MacRae's highly sophisticated and penetrating analysis of roll-call voting in the House of Representatives during the 81st Congress contains data relevant to the ideological position of House leaders. Comparing Democrats on a Fair Deal scale and Republicans on a Welfare State scale, MacRae found floor leaders in both parties tended to occupy positions nearer the median scores on both scales. He also found, however, that Democratic committee chairmen tended to be found at the more liberal extreme of the Fair Deal scale, and ranking Republican committee members tended to be found at the more conservative extreme of the Welfare State scale.⁶

The "middleman" hypothesis is an attractive one to many political scientists. The virtues of the congressional leadership role on the Lyndon Johnson model have been widely extolled, and notions about the mediating, negotiator, or broker role of the legislative leader in American politics are widely held.⁷ But, as MacRae has pointed out, hypotheses about the central position of congressional leaders need to be explored more extensively.⁸ It is not difficult to demonstrate, for instance, that along some dimensions of liberal-conservative voting behavior congressional leaders do not fall into median scale scores. This can be shown by comparing Senate leaders' positions on two recently derived cumulative scales related to liberalism-conservatism: Belknap's scale of seven Senate roll calls on Taft-Hartley issues during the 80th Congress, and a scale of eight issues involving the role of the Federal government in domestic policy constructed for Senators during the 87th Congress.⁹

Belknap's scale of issues associated with the Senate passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 identifies one dimension of liberalism-conservatism among Senators. It does not do violence to the term "liberal"

⁵ Donald R. Matthews, *U.S. Senators and Their World*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1960, pp. 131-132.

⁶ Duncan MacRae, Jr., *Dimensions of Congressional Voting*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1958, pp. 293-295.

⁷ Huitt has carefully described Senator Johnson's leadership tactics. See Ralph K. Huitt, "Democratic Party Leadership in the Senate," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, 1961, pp. 333-344.

⁸ MacRae, *op.cit.*, p. 295.

⁹ Belknap's Taft-Hartley scale will be found in George M. Belknap, "A Method for Analyzing Legislative Behavior," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 2, 1958, pp. 377-402. Its coefficient of reproducibility was .98. The Federal Role scale for Senators in the 87th Congress was developed by Mark Schantz in a Seminar on Legislative Parties at the State University of Iowa. It produced a coefficient of reproducibility of .94.

to assume that one of its components is pro-labor sentiment, or to the term "conservative" to assume that one of its components is hostility toward union "monopoly." Similarly, on the Federal Role scale we will assume that Senators indicating strong support for legislative proposals that involve an increase in the role of the Federal government in domestic policy can be identified as "liberals," and those who oppose expanded Federal functions can be identified as "conservatives."

In assessing the ideological position of Senate leaders on these two dimensions of liberalism-conservatism, we will include as "primary" leaders the president pro tempore, the floor leaders, and the whips. The category of "secondary" leaders will include all Senate committee chairmen or ranking minority members not included as primary leaders. The relative "representation" of Senate leaders in the range of cumulative scale types for each of these scales will be assessed by means of an "index of overrepresentation," a device utilized both by MacRae and Matthews.¹⁰ This index simply "measures the ratio of the proportion of congressmen in a given scale type who have gained positions of leadership, to the over-all proportion of such positions."¹¹ An index of 1.0 means that leaders in a given scale type neither under- nor over-represent all Senators in that scale type; an index of 2.0 indicates that a given scale type has twice the over-all proportion of individuals in the leadership category; and so on.

In Table 1 are shown comparisons of Democratic and Republican leaders' indices of overrepresentation on the Taft-Hartley, or Labor Relations, scale.¹² Note that Lucas and Barkley appear at the "liberal" end of the scale, and Vandenberg, White, and Wherry occupy "conservative" scale positions. Insofar as this particular dimension of liberalism-conservatism is concerned, Senate primary leaders do not appear to have been "middlemen." In the case of both Democratic and Republican committee, or secondary, leaders the median scale position is underrepresented, as is the "liberal" extreme, although scale position 2 contains almost twice the proportion of Democratic seniority

¹⁰ See MacRae, *loc.cit.*, and Matthews, *op.cit.*, pp. 273-274. This index appears to have been first used by students of social mobility. See Natalie Rogoff, *Recent Trends in Occupational Mobility*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1953, pp. 31-32. The index is computed as follows:

$$\text{Index of overrepresentation} = \frac{x_{ij}}{R_i C_j / N}$$

where x_{ij} = members in scale type i occupying leadership position j

R_i = number of members in scale type i

C_j = number of members in leadership position j

N = total number of members

¹¹ MacRae, *op.cit.*, p. 293.

¹² Derived from Belknap, *op.cit.*, pp. 394-396.

leaders and more than three times the proportion of Republican chairmen. Since scale position 2 is the most overrepresented ideological position for both Democratic and Republican committee leaders, it appears that, at the secondary leadership level, more moderate individuals acquire leadership positions *with reference to this specific dimension*.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF SENATE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN LEADERS AND POSITION ON THE LABOR RELATIONS SCALE, 80TH CONGRESS

Labor Relations Scale Score	Index of Overrepresentation			
	Democrats		Republicans	
	Primary Leaders	Secondary Leaders (N = 16)	Primary Leaders	Secondary Leaders (N = 15)
0 ("liberal")	Lucas	0.8		0.0
1	Barkley	1.7		1.7
2		1.9		3.4
3		0.0		0.8
4		0.9		0.0
5		0.6	Vandenberg	1.4
6 ("conservative")		1.0	White Wherry	0.9

A similar analysis on the basis of the Federal Role scale is shown in Table 2. This scale was constructed from Senate roll calls during the 87th Congress that related to the expansion of Federal functions. The scale included votes on area redevelopment, minimum wages, aid to education, electric power generation, manpower retraining, aid to migratory farm workers, and election reform. Each involved an increase in Federal functions, power, or responsibility. While this scale is obviously not independent of administration loyalty, it seems clearly to involve a dimension of liberalism-conservatism. As Table 2 indicates, Humphrey, Mansfield, and Hayden occupy the "liberal" scale positions, and Dirksen occupies the extreme "conservative" scale position. Kuchel's scale position is more "liberal" than the median position. In the case of the Federal Role scale, Republican secondary leaders tend to be overrepresented in the more "conservative" scale positions, but Democratic committee chairmen tend to be more overrepresented in the scale positions around the median.

Significant departures from the "middleman" hypothesis are evident in the data presented in Tables 1 and 2. If anything, these data seem to suggest that primary Senate leaders are more likely to occupy extreme scale positions along liberal-conservative differentia, while secondary

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF SENATE DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN LEADERS AND
POSITION ON THE FEDERAL ROLE SCALE, 87TH CONGRESS

Federal Role Scale Score	Index of Overrepresentation			
	Democrats		Republicans	
	Primary Leaders	Secondary Leaders (N = 15)	Primary Leaders	Secondary Leaders (N = 16)
8 ("liberal")	Humphrey	0.7		0.0
7	Mansfield	0.5		0.0
6	Hayden	0.0		0.9
5		1.1	Kuchel	0.0
4		4.3		0.0
3		4.3		0.0
2		0.0		1.4
1		0.0		2.2
0 ("conservative")		2.6	Dirksen	0.5

leaders appear to be more "moderate" along some dimensions than others.¹³

THE "EXTREMITY" HYPOTHESIS

The "extremity" hypothesis is suggested by data presented by MacRae for members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives for sessions in the early 1950's. This hypothesis asserts that legislative leaders will tend to occupy the extreme ends of the ideological continuum, with Democratic leaders more "liberal" than rank-and-file Democrats, and Republican leaders more "conservative" than rank-and-file Republicans. MacRae hypothesized "an overall association between legislative status and liberalism (for the Democrats) or conservatism (for the Republicans)."¹⁴ He found that the primary leaders of both parties in the Massachusetts House tended to assume the most extreme positions on a scale of liberalism-conservatism. But he found that secondary leaders (committee chairmen) tended to be less extreme. His findings are tantalizing, and encourage a similar kind of investigation for other state legislative bodies. We can present roughly comparable data for two other legislatures: for both Democrats and Republicans in the

¹³ It is interesting to note that MacRae found the reverse to be true with respect to House floor leaders and committee chairmen for the 81st Congress. He found committee chairmen were more overrepresented in the extreme scale positions, while Democratic Leader McCormick and Republican Leader Martin tended to occupy more "central" positions. See MacRae, *op.cit.*, pp. 292-295.

¹⁴ Duncan MacRae, Jr., "Roll Call Votes and Leadership," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 20, 1956, p. 552.

1957 Wisconsin Assembly, and for Democrats in the 1959 Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Data for members of the 1957 Wisconsin Assembly are presented in Tables 3 and 4 for Republicans and Democrats respectively. In this case a liberalism-conservatism cumulative scale was derived from ten issues voted on by Assemblymen during the 1957 session.¹⁵ The roll calls selected for inclusion in the scale involved issues concerning censorship, lobbying, railroad employment, political contributions by unions, maximum hours of work, racial and religious discrimination, unemployment compensation, corrupt practices, Federal aid to education (a memorial resolution), and reapportionment.

It will be noted from Table 3 that Republican leaders in the 1957 Wisconsin Assembly tended to occupy scale positions at the conservative extreme of the scale, scale positions 8 and 9 being overrepresented by primary Republican leaders. On the other hand, secondary Republican leaders as a group tended to be less extreme. Both Speaker Marotz and Majority Floor Leader Grady are located in the most "conservative" scale position.

In the case of Democratic leaders in the Assembly, the most extremely liberal scale position is overrepresented, although Minority Floor Leader Huber occupied scale position 1, and was thus not at the most extreme end of the continuum. But this analysis of Democrats has limited utility because of the large proportion of Democratic members clustered in one scale position.

The 1957 Wisconsin Assembly was highly partisan, and the two parties were relatively cohesive, a situation not unlike that to be found in the Massachusetts House of Representatives earlier in the decade. The data for the Assembly tend to be consistent with MacRae's findings in terms of the associations between leadership status and ideological position.

What would be our expectations in a legislature of the one-party type? The 1959 session of the Oklahoma House of Representatives provides an interesting contrast, and roughly comparable data are presented in Table 5. In the Oklahoma House the Democrats had an overwhelming majority, and the Republican contingent was both minute and subdued. What is more, while there were pro-Governor and anti-Governor cleavages in the House on some issues, these factions were not persistent and the cleavages were not notable.¹⁶ A scale was constructed for Oklahoma House members derived from six roll calls

¹⁵ The scale produced a coefficient of reproducibility of .95.

¹⁶ See my "Dimensions of Voting Behavior in a One-party State Legislature," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 26, 1962, pp. 185-200.

TABLE 3
COMPARISON OF REPUBLICAN SCORES ON THE LIBERALISM-CONSERVATISM
SCALE AND POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP, 1957 WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY

<i>Liberalism- Conservatism Scale Score</i>	<i>Number of</i>			<i>Total</i>	<i>Index of Overrepresentation</i>	
	<i>Primary Leaders</i>	<i>Secondary Leaders</i>	<i>Rank-and-file Members</i>		<i>Primary Leaders</i>	<i>Secondary Leaders</i>
10 ("conservative")	3	8	9	20	0.7	1.6
9	8	2	5	15	2.4	0.5
8	2	1	4	7	1.3	0.5
7		1	3	4	0.0	1.0
6	1	3	6	10	0.5	1.2
5		1	2	3	0.0	1.3
4			5	5	0.0	0.0
0-3 ("liberal")			1	1	0.0	0.0
Total classified	14	16	35	65		

Primary leaders = members of the Steering Committee, the Joint Finance Committee, and the Rules Committee.

Secondary leaders = all other committee chairmen.

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF DEMOCRATIC SCORES ON THE LIBERALISM-CONSERVATISM SCALE AND POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP, 1957 WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY

<i>Liberalism- Conservatism Scale Score</i>	<i>Number of</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Index of Over- representation</i>
	<i>Leaders</i>	<i>Rank-and- file Members</i>		
3 ("conservative")		1	1	0.0
2		1	1	0.0
1	3	21	24	1.0
0 ("liberal")	1	6	7	1.2
Total classified	4	29	33	

involving labor and welfare issues.¹⁷ These issues concerned public assistance, industrial health and safety, workmen's compensation, and unemployment compensation. In this case the liberal position involved support for labor and welfare proposals, and the conservative position involved opposition to them.

It is interesting to note, in the case of the Oklahoma House, the extent to which primary leaders tend to be more "moderate" and secondary leaders more extremely "liberal." Both Speaker Livingston and Majority Floor Leader Ogden were assigned to scale position 4. Obviously, a direct relation between leadership status and liberalism or conservatism does not hold for Oklahoma legislators.

DISCUSSION

It is pretty clear that neither the middleman nor the extremity hypothesis serves very well in predicting the ideological positions of legislative leaders. One can show that, on liberal-conservative dimensions, congressional and state legislative leaders are sometimes middlemen and sometimes occupy the ideological extremes. Hypothetical development with respect to the ideological positions of legislative leaders must be more highly refined.

It is quite possible that, on over-all indices of liberalism-conservatism such as that employed by Matthews, leaders might appear to cluster toward the median because the over-all index is a kind of average of extreme positions occupied by leaders on several, possibly unrelated, dimensions of ideology. Other attitudinal research suggests that liberalism-conservatism is a multidimensional variable. One investigator found, for instance, that liberalism-conservatism was not a unitary

¹⁷ This scale produced a coefficient of reproducibility of .95.

TABLE 5

COMPARISON OF DEMOCRATIC SCORES ON THE LABOR AND WELFARE SCALE AND
POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP, 1959 OKLAHOMA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

<i>Labor and Welfare Scale Score</i>	<i>Number of</i>				<i>Index of Overrepresentation</i>	
	<i>Primary Leaders</i>	<i>Secondary Leaders</i>	<i>Rank-and-file Members</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Primary Leaders</i>	<i>Secondary Leaders</i>
6 ("liberal")	1	9	16	26	0.2	1.5
5	5	6	12	23	1.0	1.1
4	7	6	13	26	1.3	1.0
3	3	1	5	9	1.6	0.5
2	3	0	3	6	2.4	0.0
1	1	0	2	3	1.6	0.0
0 ("conservative")	1	1	3	5	1.0	0.9
Total classified	21	23	54	98		

Primary leaders = Speaker, Speaker Pro Tempore, Majority Floor Leader, three Assistant Majority Floor Leaders, Democratic Caucus Chairman, and the Democratic members of the General Conference Committee on Appropriations.

Secondary leaders = all committee chairmen not included as "primary" leaders except the chairmen of the Committees on Engrossed and Enrolled Bills and House Administration.

dimension but rather "a complex group of relatively independent continua."¹⁸ The relative ideological positions of legislative leaders may well vary depending upon which dimension is measured; whether it relates to issues involving the welfare state, freedom of speech, the rights of racial minorities, or international issues. It may be necessary to design research so as to identify these dimensions in such a way that we can more accurately predict the conditions for relationships between leadership status and ideological position.

Insofar as our assessments of the ideological positions of legislative leaders continue to be based on "issue preferences" derived from legislative roll-call votes, situational factors are likely to be important intervening variables. Obviously, legislative leaders are also constituency representatives, and their voting behavior is apt to be affected by constituency pressures. Differences from legislature to legislature in terms of legislative-executive relationships clearly can have an effect upon the leadership recruitment process, as well as on the behavior of leaders. To suggest an illustration, the Congress ordinarily selects its own leaders independently of executive interference, but in Oklahoma selection of legislative leaders by the Governor is the more common occurrence.

In addition, ideological militancy on the part of legislative leaders may be, in part, a function of partisanship. "Liberal" and "conservative" ideological positions do not appear to be uniformly associated with leadership status, but such relationships may depend upon the extent to which there are highly homogeneous and cohesive parties in the legislature. Of the legislatures referred to here, those in Massachusetts and Wisconsin were characterized by the highest degree of party cohesion. The Congress and the Oklahoma House were less cohesive. In nonpartisan, one-party, or split-party legislatures, leaders may, along certain ideological dimensions (say, the welfare-state dimension), tend more to be recruited from among the "moderates," at least for some leadership positions. Variation in the ideological position of leaders may occur depending upon whether the leader's party is in the majority or in the minority. The data presented above suggest the possibility that this may be true, at least for secondary leaders. Majority-party secondary leaders may well take more moderate ideological positions on roll-call votes, while minority-party secondary leaders may

¹⁸ See Willard A. Kerr, "Untangling the Liberalism-Conservatism Continuum," *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 35, 1952, pp. 111-125; Leonard W. Ferguson, "A Revision of the Primary Social Attitudes Scales," *Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 17, 1944, pp. 229-241; Marvin E. Olsen, "Liberal-Conservative Attitude Crystallization," *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 3, 1962, pp. 17-26; and Gerhard Lenski, *The Religious Factor*, New York, Doubleday, 1961, pp. 187-191.

tend to take more extreme positions. No similarly uniform difference is indicated by this limited data for primary legislative leaders.

Finally, personality factors clearly must be taken into account in comprehending the effects of ideological position on the behavior of legislative leaders, and the effects of leadership roles on ideological orientation.¹⁹ It is reasonable to suppose that legislative leaders are recruited or selected to a considerable extent because they display desired personality characteristics, and some personality traits may be more significant in the recruitment process than a known ideological orientation. The interaction of personality and attitudinal factors for legislative leaders and rank-and-file members needs to be understood a great deal better than it is presently.

CONCLUSION

Two essentially contradictory hypotheses concerning the relationship between leadership status and ideological position in legislative voting have been examined. One, the middleman hypothesis, predicts that legislative leaders will be ideological moderates; the other, the extremity hypothesis, predicts that legislative leaders will tend to be more extreme ideologically than rank-and-file legislators. Data bearing on these hypotheses, fragmentary to be sure, have been presented for the 80th and 87th Congress, the Wisconsin Assembly, and the Oklahoma House of Representatives. Significant divergences from these hypotheses characterize the data, and no generally uniform relationship between leadership status and ideological position has been found. This result seems to warrant a refinement of hypotheses, taking into account the probable multidimensionality of liberalism-conservatism, situational factors, and personality characteristics.

¹⁹ See Herbert McClosky, "Conservatism and Personality," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 52, 1958, pp. 27-45, where McClosky demonstrates that "support for conservative doctrines is highly correlated with certain distinct personality patterns" (p. 38); and John B. McConaughy, "Certain Personality Factors of State Legislators in South Carolina," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 44, 1950, pp. 897-903. It is unfortunate that McConaughy's investigation has not stimulated more expansive work of this sort.