

**Party Dominance in 18 Countries:
The Role of Party Dominance in the Transmission of Political Ideology**

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Abstract

Using OLS regression with World Values Survey data across 18 OECD countries, I make two major arguments. Firstly, if a dominant party is ideologically congruent with an individual, its dominance enhances the effect of its left/right placement on the self-placement of the individual. If incongruent, greater dominance only inhibits this effect. Secondly, if people find the dominant party ideologically congruent, as their political awareness increases, the effect of that party's left/right placement rises monotonically. If incongruent, the effect of party ideology first rises and then falls back. Therefore, party dominance leads ultimately to increasing ideological polarization between the dominant party's supporters and opponents. This implies that the proportional vision of political representation is more effective than the majoritarian vision. It also implies that, embedded in democratic theory, the ideal of a mature democracy shared by a highly involved and participatory public seems to be deeply flawed after all.

This paper examines how dominant parties influence the process whereby parties' left/right stance affects individuals' left/right self-placement in industrialized democracies. Using World Values Survey data across 18 OECD countries, I argue that party dominance acts as a moderator in the ideological transmission process, enhancing a party's ability to transmit its left/right ideological stance to its own supporters, but inhibiting its ability to do so to other people, leading ultimately to increasing ideological polarization between the dominant party's supporters and opponents. Therefore, Pempel's argument that dominant parties have the ability to shape the ideological and policy agenda of an entire country (1990b) proves not wholly accurate: dominant parties cannot shape agenda beyond their own supporters. Actually, as a party becomes more dominant in a country, it can ideologically further antagonize people who are not its supporters, rather than swaying their political opinion around to its side. Based on this polarizing effect of dominant parties, I further argue that the proportional vision of political representation, which takes into consideration the opinion not only of the supporters but also the opposition, is more effective than the majoritarian vision, which substitutes the opinion of supporters for the whole society (Powell, 2000). The first section of the paper defines and measures party dominance. The second section utilizes Zaller's theories (1992) and offers two hypotheses about how dominant parties affect the ideological beliefs of the public. The third section explains data and measurement. The fourth section discusses the findings and shows that both hypotheses are supported by the data analysis. The last section concludes, speculates on this study's implications for theories of political representation and offers proposals for future studies.

1. Defining and Measuring Party Dominance

So what is party dominance and how to measure it? We can get a flavour of what political scientists traditionally expect of party dominance by briefly looking at some of the arguments in the literature. Duverger's interpretation is probably the most frequently quoted, both for broaching the subject and for its eloquence: "a party is dominant when it is identified with an epoch, when its doctrines, ideas, methods, its style, so to speak, coincide with those of the epoch" (1959: 275-80). Sartori, on the other hand, offers the pithy definition whereby a party "is dominant in that it is significantly stronger than the others" (1976: 193). Definitions of this kind are helpful in giving a rough idea of what a dominant party looks like but not very easy to measure. Nevertheless, based on definitions such as those by Duverger and Sartori, plus exemplar cases of dominant parties in the empirical world, such as *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) in Italy and *Socialdemokratiska Arbetarepartiet* (SAP) in Sweden, a general idea of dominant parties can start to take some shape. A clear message is that a party is dominant only if it is very strong and preferably stronger than any other party in the party system. Then, what dimensions of party strength should be included in my definition of party dominance?

In the not extensive literature on party dominance in liberal democracies, Pempel's edited volume (1990a) is a rare example of offering clearly measurable indicators of a party's strength in determining its degree of dominance. Pempel's multidimensional definition of party dominance takes into consideration a wide range of party strength indicators: seats,

votes, bargaining position, government duration and policy influence (1990a: 2-5). Another set of measurable indicators of party dominance is offered by Boucek (1998). Boucek dimensionalizes party dominance into electoral, parliamentary and executive dominance. Different from Pempel, who focuses on the empirical representation of party dominance, Boucek delves deeper into the causes behind such dominance to emphasize its institutional and strategic prerequisites. For example, Boucek approaches electoral dominance through the mechanical effects of electoral systems, the partisan manipulation of electoral laws and the strategic reaction of opposition parties. In the same vein, the indicators Boucek recommends for measuring party dominance partly stem from the electoral systems literature: the effective number of electoral and legislative parties, the relation between these two numbers, and an “advantage ratio” given to the dominant parties as a bonus from the electoral system.

I rely on the Pempel rather than the Boucek indicators to measure party dominance for the purpose of this paper. First of all, the Boucek indicators distinctively lack a dynamic element. Party dominance means much more than the vote and seat advantages conferred by electoral laws to one party at one point in time. It is largely meaningless to talk about party dominance without a longitudinal perspective. The longitudinal dimension of dominance is captured in Pempel’s indicators (government duration). Furthermore, my paper is more concerned with the effect rather than the cause of party dominance. Boucek’s heavy emphasis on the cause of party dominance, such as electoral systems, is therefore not very suitable for this paper’s substantive objectives. However, I also make some changes to Pempel’s indicators of party dominance before applying them to empirical cases. I eliminate the dimension of “policy influence” from Pempel’s indicators. Policy influence is arguably more of an indirect rather than direct representation of a party’s strength, such as seats, votes or years spent in government. It is itself a huge leap of faith to automatically assume strong partisan influence on public policy when it comes to dominant parties. Actually it is theoretically more interesting to regard a party’s policy influence as a dependent rather than independent variable in examining the effect of party dominance. Just as this paper examines how a party’s degree of dominance affects its influence on public opinion, it is equally interesting theoretically to question if party dominance really relates to partisan influence on public policy. Before this question is satisfactorily answered, partisan influence on public policy should not be regarded as a direct indicator of party dominance. In my paper, party dominance will be measured by the following indicators: votes, seats, years spent in government and coalitional bargaining strength.

2. The Effect of Party Dominance on Ideological Transmission

There are many theoretical possibilities about the effect of party dominance on the characteristics of parties and the general public. Dominant parties can be the integrators of national interest (Pempel, 1990a: 16), masters of clientelism (Shalev, 1990: 115), manipulators of national identity (Chu, 1999: 86), guarantors of the fundamental safety of the nation’s democracy (Giliomee and Simkins, 1999: 3), consensus-builders (Pontusson, 1990: 61) or polarizers (Krauss and Pierre, 1990: 228-229), flexible adapters or rigid conservatives (Krauss and Pierre, 1990: 253). Party dominance can turn the public into holders of authoritarian attitudes (Schlemmer, 1999: 287), advocates of interventionist

states (Jesudason, 1999: 155), promoters of the welfare state and rapid economic growth (Krauss and Pierre, 1990: 232), but yet holders of low expectation for government performance or even economic conservatives (Inoguchi, 1990: 196-199). Obviously many of these theories are self-contradictory, and most of them remain untested. In this paper I only focus on one aspect, which leads back to the original Duverger argument: the role of dominant parties in shaping public agenda. Long-term dominance by a political party can make a country different from others. It provides the party in question “with a continuous opportunity to pursue its historical agenda...shape its own following” (Panebianco, 1988: 4, cited in Pempel, 1990a: 6-7). The party can reshape the entire political profile of the country: symbols, values and public expectation (Pempel, 1990b: 336), and the dominant party’s view becomes the consensus of the whole society (Giliomee and Simkins, 1999: 37). It is therefore clear that scholars from Duverger onwards all emphasize that greater party dominance enhances the party’s ability to influence or sway public opinion. This leads to the central research question for this paper: how effective is party dominance in enhancing a party’s ability to transmit its political ideology to ordinary people?

Values and ideologies come in many forms. In order to keep the paper reasonably comparative across a large number of liberal democracies, I need to find some political value or ideology that occupies more than an insignificant part of ordinary people’s own battery of political predispositions in most countries. Left/right self-placement is one excellent candidate. The precise meaning of left and right is inevitably different for different countries, and the materialism/postmaterialism distinction increasingly crosscuts the traditional left/right division. Nevertheless, the left/right self-placement is still one of the most frequently measured ideological indicators of public opinion. From the perspective of party manifestos, Budge et al. (1987) also demonstrate that the left/right spectrum still works as the most significant ideological cleavage in differentiating political parties in advanced liberal democracies. What this paper sets out to do, therefore, is to see how party dominance helps (or impedes) in transmitting the left/right placement of parties to the left/right self-placement of individuals.

Two questions remain. First of all, does people’s left/right self-placement influence that of parties or the other way around? Secondly, isn’t ideological left/right placement largely exogenous, determined by long term sociological factors (Knutson, 1995) and usually presumed as being a constant? For the first question, it is important to keep in mind that, compared to individual citizens, political parties are aggregate level variables. Political parties as aggregates take ideological cues not from any specific individual but from the general public as a whole. In other words, if all individuals’ ideology is aggregated before being analyzed, there will indeed be a non-recursive relationship between party ideology and individual ideology. However, as long as I keep the unit of analysis at the individual level, which is also the appropriate strategy for World Values Survey data, the causal path from individual ideology to party ideology should be treated as non-existent. With regard to the second question, even if sociological factors might “lock in” people’s ideological self-placement, it is conceivable that individuals do update their political beliefs by internalizing political messages sent from parties. Zaller provides an excellent framework as to how such internalization of political messages takes place

through a *resistance axiom*: “people tend to resist arguments that are inconsistent with their political predispositions...to the extent that they possess the contextual information” (1992). This *resistance axiom* is also the foundation for this paper’s theories about the effect of party dominance on left/right ideological transmission.

Within the framework of the *axiom*, Zaller offers three scenarios where, as long as there is sufficient contextual information, individuals actually utilize such information to reject political messages from parties incongruent with their own political predispositions (1992: 121). These three scenarios are: *partisan resistance*: individuals refuse to internalize a political message if they are provided with information cues helping them to recognize that this message comes from an incongruent political party; *inertial resistance*: individuals who already possess a large amount of existing schemas use such schemas to wash out any incongruent message they happen to already internalize, and *countervalent resistance*: individuals internalize schemas directly opposing those coming from the incongruent parties, again neutralizing the influence of any incongruent message they accidentally internalize. Therefore, the transmission of party left/right placement to individual self-placement depends on the directionality of the party in question: whether the party in question is ideologically congruent with the individual or not. Borrowing a term from the directional theory of issue voting, this means distinguishing, in the mind of each individual, between messages from parties who are “on our side” and those who are not (Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989).

If people find the dominant party ideologically congruent with their own political predispositions, the relationship between party dominance and ideological transmission should be straightforward. The more dominant the party becomes the more likely people will accept its messages. On the other hand, if the party is ideologically incongruent, a different process takes place. Now, the more dominant the party becomes, the greater its penetration of mass communication and political discourse channels, and the more contextual information it creates. According to Zaller’s *resistance axiom*, the availability of such contextual information is the crucial factor in activating the three forms of individual resistance against a dominant but ideologically incongruent party: *partisan resistance*, *inertial resistance* and *countervalent resistance*. The more dominant presence of the party helps an individual to realize the incongruent nature of the party’s political messages and resist the internalization of such messages (*partisan resistance*). After recognizing the incongruent nature of the dominant party, the individual has increasing incentives to activate existing schemas (*inertial resistance*) or actively internalize schemas countervalent against the messages of the dominant political party (*countervalent resistance*), so that any incongruent political message accidentally internalized is neutralized. Therefore, based on Zaller’s three dimensions of *resistance axiom*, the first hypothesis of the paper is as follows:

H1: If the dominant party is ideologically congruent with an individual, its dominance will enhance the effect of its left/right placement on the self-placement of the individual. If the party is ideologically incongruent, greater dominance only inhibits this effect. Interacting with party ideology, party dominance is a moderator in the process of party ideology influencing individual ideology.

However, party dominance is not the only moderator in this process. Another such moderator is the political awareness of the individual. Zaller uses the distinction between *mainstream* and *polarization effects* (1992: 98-102) to analyze the role played by political awareness. In a *mainstream effect* scenario for people, the dominant party sending the political messages is “on their side.” Zaller argues that since people find these messages from an ideologically congruent party convincing, the persuasive effect of these messages will increase monotonically with people’s political awareness. In a *polarization effect* scenario, the situation is more complex. Now we have people for whom the dominant party is no longer “on their side.” For people with a minimum level of political awareness, they have little access to political messages from the incongruent dominant party any way. For those with a maximum level of awareness, they have a lot of contextual information to utilize any one of the three forms of *resistance axiom* mentioned earlier. Therefore, a curvilinear relationship between political persuasion and awareness emerges. Moderately aware individuals will be more susceptible towards political messages from the ideologically incongruent dominant party than people on both ends of the awareness scale. *Polarization effect*, therefore, means that a moderate level of political awareness among the public is more effective in enhancing the dominant party’s political discourse than both high and low levels of political awareness. Based on Zaller’s *mainstream and polarization effects*, the second hypothesis of the paper is as follows:

H2: If people find the dominant party ideologically congruent, as their political awareness increases, the effect of that party’s left/right placement on their own self-placement will rise monotonically. If the party is ideologically incongruent, with increasing political awareness the effect of party ideology should first rise and then fall back. Interacting with party ideology, people’s political awareness is a moderator in the process of party ideology influencing individual ideology.

I test these two hypotheses in a multiple regression setup where the dependent variable is an individual’s left/right self-placement. The crucial predictor is the left/right placement of the dominant party. Two important moderators are the degree of party dominance and the political awareness of the individual. Other necessary predictors, such as socio-economic status, are also included. For individuals who do not find the most dominant party ideologically congruent, they probably will find some other parties ideologically congruent. For these individuals, I use the party they intend to vote for as a proxy for the one party they find ideologically most congruent. I also include as an additional predictor the left/right placement of this ideologically most congruent party, and include this party’s degree of dominance as an additional moderator. This is because for individuals who do not agree ideologically with the dominant party, their political attitudes should be influenced not only by the most dominant party but also by their own party (the party with which they feel the closest political affinity). Next I explain how each variable in the regression analysis is measured and the relevant data.

3. Data and Measurement

The Dependent Variable

In order to measure the left/right self-placement of individuals across different countries, I use the 1993 wave of the World Values Survey, which covers 18 highly industrialized democracies.¹ I use variable V248 of the survey, which asked a question about left/right self-placement on a 10-point scale.

The Moderators

In order to measure the degree of party dominance for each party, I rely on Pempel's indicators of party dominance (1990a). Since party dominance is a longitudinal concept, an appropriate timeframe within which to calculate party dominance is necessary. As noted earlier, the dependent variable is measured with data from the 1993 wave of World Values Survey, which completed data collection in the early spring of 1993. I preserve temporal correspondence by measuring party dominance between 1973 and 1992 inclusive. I choose a 20-year period because if the timeframe is set too short, not enough time accumulates to generate sufficient amount of political dominance for any party. On the other hand, if the timeframe is set too long, further into the past I will come across increasing problems of disappearance of parties or changes of party systems. Furthermore, as party dominance is traced further to the distant past, its influence on people's answers to that specific World Values Survey in the early 1990s probably also recedes further. In the 18 liberal democracies I arbitrarily only examine parties which had garnered on average at least 10 per cent of the votes in general elections in the 20-year period. It makes little sense to talk about party dominance for parties which cannot even win a nontrivial number of votes in elections.

Within this timeframe of two decades, I examine Pempel's indicators of party dominance: votes, seats, duration of government and coalition bargaining strength. The vote indicator of party dominance is tapped by the *average* vote percentage obtained by a party after each parliamentary election. Theoretically of course this indicator is bounded between zero and one. The seat indicator is similarly tapped by the *average* seat percentage obtained by a party after each parliamentary election. Theoretically this indicator is also bounded between zero and one.² The chronological indicator is tapped by the ratio between the *average* number of *continuously* governing years for a party and the whole period (20 years).³ The average number of continuously governing years is obtained through dividing the total number of continuously governing years for the party by the number of continuously governing periods. Theoretically the maximum situation is where the average number of continuously governing years is 20, and the ratio is one. The minimum situation is of course zero. So this indicator is also bounded between zero and one. Finally, the bargaining strength indicator is tapped by the ratio between the total number of years in coalition government for a party and the whole period (20 years). Time spent in coalition government is an indicator of bargaining strength because if a party stays in coalition consistently, it very likely implies that the party holds an advantageous coalitional bargaining position, since coalitions cannot be made without the party. Again, this indicator is bounded between zero and one. For countries without coalition experience, of course the indicator has a value of zero.⁴ Computation of Cronbach's α ($\alpha=0.654$) indicates that the four indicators cannot be combined into one single composite index. Rather, the more suitable approach is to combine votes and seats ($\alpha=0.978$, and correlation=0.971) into one index of party dominance, and then combine

the government duration and bargaining strength indicators ($\alpha=0.781$, and correlation=0.641) into another. When a party's value on the dominance index is the sum of the vote and seat indicators, I call it party dominance on the electoral dimension. When the index is the sum of government duration and bargaining strength indicators, I call it party dominance on the governmental dimension. Since the party dominance index on each dimension is a sum of two indicators bounded between zero and one, the value of these indexes is bounded between zero and two. The multiple regression analysis is therefore run separately for the two different dimensions of party dominance. For all the parties examined, their values on each of the four separate indicators of party dominance, plus the composite dominance index on both dimensions, are represented in Table 5 in Appendix A.

The other important moderator is the political awareness of the individual, tapped in World Values Survey by variable V241, a four-point scale measure of political interest. I recode this variable so that V241=1 indicates no interest at all, the lowest level of political awareness. Political awareness, therefore, is a dummy variable in the multiple regression analysis, with the reference category being the lowest level of awareness.

The Predictors

The most important predictor is the left/right placement of the dominant party. In each party system the dominant party can be identified as the one with the highest party dominance index value, either on the electoral or the governmental dimension. I use Hubert and Inglehart's expert survey on party left/right placement (1995). This survey was done relatively close to the 1993 wave of the World Values Survey, so it reasonably fits my period of examination. Other similar expert surveys either do not use a 10-point scale (Laver and Budge, 1992; Laver and Hunt, 1992) or are too early to match the World Values Survey data (Castles and Mair, 1984). Another important predictor, specifically for individuals who do not find the dominant party ideologically congruent, is the left/right placement of the party with which these individuals feel the closest political affinity. This brings up the question of how to judge whether an individual finds a party ideologically congruent or not. Unfortunately, no questions were asked in the 1993 World Values Survey about partisan preference or affinity. The closest proxy is vote preference (for a general election tomorrow). In other words, if people intend to vote for a party, they very likely do find that party ideologically congruent. Finally, variable V363, a 10-point scale measure of income level is included as a socio-economic predictor of an individual's left/right placement.

The World Values Survey data for the 18 countries are divided into two parts, one where the respondents find the dominant party ideologically congruent and the other where the respondents find another non-dominant party ideologically congruent. Multiple regressions have to be run separately for these two groups of respondents, because the predictors included are different. For those people who do not find the dominant party ideologically congruent, an extra predictor and moderator are included: the left/right placement and the degree of dominance for the party, which, though not the most dominant in the country, is ideologically congruent with the respondents. Two

dimensions of party dominance, interacting with two types of respondents, result in four regression analyses and outputs in total.

4. Findings and Discussion

First of all, as Appendix B explains in greater detail, Extreme Bound Analysis demonstrates that the estimators for all four regressions are *very* robust, given the very large number of combinations of Z variables used in performing Extreme Bound Analysis. This also boosts our confidence in the paper's findings to a great extent.

The first hypothesis of the paper suggests that party dominance should have effect in opposite directions depending on whether the respondents find the dominant party ideologically congruent. This stems from Zaller's three applications of the *resistance axiom: partisan, inertial* and *countervalent resistance*. The regression results nicely support both the hypothesis and Zaller's principles. We first consider party dominance measured on the dimension of seats and votes. As the output in Table 1 indicates, for respondents who do not find the dominant party ideologically congruent, the impact of party ideology on individual self-placement is about three times greater for the non-dominant but ideologically congruent party than for the incongruent dominant party. When party dominance is measured on the governmental dimension, Table 2 shows a similar result, only more clearly. The coefficient for the congruent party is now more than 10 times greater than the coefficient for the incongruent but dominant party. Even more fascinating results lie in the interaction terms. On the governmental dimension of party dominance, the dominance-ideology interaction term unfortunately drops out of statistical significance for the incongruent party, as shown in Table 2. However, on the electoral dimension of party dominance, Table 1 shows that the dominance-ideology interaction term indeed generates a *positive* coefficient for the congruent non-dominant party but a *negative* coefficient, twice as great, for the most dominant but incongruent party. Therefore, political dominance of the congruent party enhances its ideological impact on individual left/right self-placement, but for the incongruent party, its dominance serves to restrain its ideological impact. This is exactly what is predicted in the first hypothesis. The first hypothesis also suggests that if respondents find the most dominant party ideologically congruent, this party's degree of dominance enhances its ability to transmit its ideological placement to the respondents. This again is confirmed in Tables 3 and 4, on both dimensions of party dominance, as seen in the positive coefficients for the dominance-ideology interaction terms. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the paper, together with Zaller's *resistance axiom*, is well supported by evidence from the data.

Insert Tables 1 through 4 about here

The second hypothesis of the paper emphasizes the difference between monotonic or curvilinear changing patterns for the impact of the dominant party's ideology as the political awareness of the public increases. If respondents find the dominant party ideologically congruent, as their political awareness increases, the effect of party ideology rises monotonically, according to Zaller's *mainstream effect* scenario. If the dominant party is ideologically incongruent, a curvilinear pattern of first rising and then falling effect of party ideology should be expected, according to Zaller's *polarization*

effect scenario. At different levels of the dummy variable for political awareness, the coefficients for party ideology can be obtained. This is done by adding the coefficients for the awareness-ideology interaction term at various levels of political awareness to the coefficients for party ideology when political awareness belongs to the reference category. Following this procedure, from Table 1 we can see that, on the electoral dimension of party dominance, the coefficients for party ideology are in turn 0.684, 0.619, 0.654 and 0.748 for the congruent non-dominant party as we move from the politically least aware to most aware respondents.⁵ This offers weak support for Zaller's *mainstream effect*: for the congruent party greater political awareness indeed boosts the impact of party ideology, but the rise of such impact is not really monotonic. A similar conclusion can be drawn by examining the governmental dimension of party dominance, as Table 2 implies that as political awareness increases the coefficients for party ideology are in turn 0.696, 0.645, 0.683 and 0.795 for the congruent party. Support for Zaller's *mainstream effect* is clearer if one examines Tables 3 and 4. Here respondents already find the dominant party ideologically congruent. From Table 3 we can see that as political awareness of the respondents increases, the coefficients for the dominant party's ideology are respectively 0.547, 0.551, 0.562 and 0.58. When party dominance is measured on the governmental dimension as in Table 4, the coefficients are in turn 0.494, 0.497, 0.511 and 0.547. Therefore, if the dominant party is ideologically congruent, there is indeed a monotonic increase in the impact of the party's ideology as the political awareness of respondents increases.

For the dominant but incongruent party, on the other hand, the respective coefficients for party ideology are 0.217, 0.270, 0.251 and 0.166 in Table 1 with increasing levels of political awareness. This offers strikingly clear support for the paper's second hypothesis and Zaller's *polarization effect*. For the dominant but ideologically incongruent party, rising political awareness first boosts the impact of party ideology but then depresses it. As Table 2 shows, such curvilinear pattern is also clearly observed on the governmental dimension of party dominance, where the coefficients for the dominant party's left/right placement are respectively 0.046, 0.076, 0.053 and -0.062 as the political awareness of respondents increases. The second hypothesis of the paper, together with Zaller's *mainstream and polarization effects*, is strongly supported by evidence from the data. Therefore, both hypotheses of the paper are supported, on both dimensions of party dominance.

To sum up the discussion, whether it is the electoral or governmental dimension of political dominance, data from the 18 advanced liberal democracies ultimately support the following core theories:

- (1) If people already find the dominant party in the party system ideologically congruent with their own political predispositions, the party's dominance enhances its ability to transmit its left/right placement to people's left/right self-placement. For these people, the more politically aware they become, the more effective the dominant party becomes in transmitting its party ideology, so the effectiveness of party political persuasion increases monotonically with increasing levels of political awareness.

(2) If people find the dominant party ideologically incongruent, the party's dominance inhibits its ability to transmit its left/right placement to people's left/right self-placement. For these people, as their political awareness increases, the effect of the dominant party's ideology on their left/right self-placement first increases than decreases, resulting in a curvilinear pattern.

5. Conclusion and Speculation

So in light of the paper's examination of 18 countries, is dominance really "a question of influence" (Duverger, 1959: 308)? Does the dominant party shape the entire political profile of the country, including its values, symbols and expectations (Pempel, 1990b: 336)? What is the implication of my findings for theories of political representation? My answer to Duverger's claim is that dominance is indeed a question of influence, but it is a positive influence for the dominant party only for part of the general public, those people who already find the dominant party congruent with their own political predispositions. For the rest of the public, the influence of party dominance is actually negative, as greater dominance makes it even harder for the dominant party to sway political attitudes. This in turn leads to the rejection of Pempel's claim: a dominant party indeed shapes political profiles, values, symbols and expectations, but only for people already sharing its political beliefs. For other individuals, the dominant party will only push them further and further away the greater its political dominance. Contrary to Giliomee and Simkins (1999), *the dominant party's view will never become the consensus of the society*. This paper's theories probably to some extent explain why, in a country with long-term dominance of a single party, we sometimes find large opposition parties that are relatively extreme in ideology. The right-wing Liberal Democratic Party in Japan, for example, faced a large and un-reformist socialist party, and the centrist DC in Italy found itself in the centre of "polarized pluralism" (Sartori 1976). Another interesting theoretical implication stems from my paper's finding that, if the public find a party ideologically incongruent, the effectiveness of the party in swaying public opinion has a curvilinear relationship with the public's political awareness. This implies that, despite politicians' constant lamentation of the political apathy of the general public, a politically very acute and sensitive public is just as difficult to deal with as a public with absolutely no interest in all things political. In other words, unless every one in a society agrees with the governing party or parties, which is not possible in a free democracy, a very high level of political awareness has the potential to polarize the country into diehard supporters and opponents of the government. Embedded in democratic theory, the ideal of a mature democracy shared by a highly involved and participatory public seems to be flawed in design after all.

In addition to implications for democratic theory, my paper's arguments also offer a perspective on the search for an appropriate system of political representation. The conclusion that the dominant party's view will never become the consensus of the society obviously casts doubt on the effectiveness of governing parties alone as instruments of political representation. Powell distinguishes between the majoritarian and proportional visions of representative democracy, and demonstrates that left/right ideological congruence between individuals and parties is better achieved in the latter than in the former systems (2000). My conclusion indirectly corroborates Powell's theory: given that

parties have the potential to polarize public opinion into those who regard them as “on our side” and those not, electoral systems that focus only on the winning side of the public (majoritarian) inevitably overlook the preferences of those on the losing side. On the other hand, the proportional representational systems, through bargaining, power-sharing in government and, most crucially, the constructive role opposition parties play in the policy-making process, manage to take care of both supporters and opponents and achieve a closer congruence between parties and general public opinion. My conclusion corroborates Powell’s arguments only indirectly because I approach the issue from the perspective of public opinion, whereas Powell does so by examining the congruence between party policy and voter policy preference. This raises a possibility for future research. If the dominant party cannot shape the agenda for public opinion, what about the agenda for public policy?

The more dominant a political party is, the more access it is bound to have to the policy deliberation process. A crucial difference between the cases of public policy and public opinion is that for the former, the influence of party dominance is comparatively less dependent on the process of political discourse and persuasion. Government policy cannot disregard public opinion, but clearly there is much more to public opinion when a party in government is in the process of policy deliberation. Actually it is not unusual to find political parties pursuing unpopular policies once in government. In the realm of public policy, it is possible that party dominance has more leeway to exercise its influence. Therefore, Duverger’s vision about the influence of the dominant party is probably more realistic on public policy than on public opinion. As noted in the first section of the paper, it is theoretically more interesting to regard a party’s policy influence as a dependent rather than independent variable in examining the effect of party dominance.

Klingemann et al. distinguish between three possible mechanisms through which political parties exercise their policy influence: the agenda, mandate and ideological models (1994). The authors find that both the mandate (holding office) and ideological (congruence between a party’s and government policy’s ideological stance) models predict poorly the partisan influence on public policy. For most countries in their study it is the agenda model that delivers best results. The agenda model tries to measure the correspondence between party programmes and overall government policy, regardless of whether the party is in government or not. If there is indeed a close correspondence between a party’s programme and the public policy agenda of the country, this would be a perfect description of parties shaping public policy agenda. Can this congruence between party programme and national policy agenda be influenced by the dominance of the party in question? The Klingemann et al. agenda model can be interpreted as follows:

$$E_i = a + b_1 P_i^1 + b_2 P_i^2 + \dots + b_n P_i^n + e \quad (1994: 65) \quad (1).$$

where E_i = the percentage of expenditures emphasized in national policy for country i ;

P_i^n = the percentage of expenditures emphasized in the party programme of party n for country i .

Both E_i and P_i^n were calculated by Klingemann et al. using content analysis as part of the Comparative Manifestos Project. What this model implies of course is that for each party in country i , there is a different coefficient for its party platform. Why should party programmes for each party have a different impact on the final policy emphasis of the national government? One possible reason is that different parties have different degrees of dominance. I can tentatively re-specify the agenda model as :

$$E_i = a + b_1 \sum^n D_k \times P_i^k + b_2 C + e \quad (2).$$

where D_k = the dominance index value (either on the electoral or governmental dimension) for the k -th party in country I ;

C = a categorical predictor which distinguishes between different policy areas;

all other variables being defined as before.

The interaction between each party's programme and their dominance index value, summed for all parties, serves as a new predictor in equation (2). Of course the impact of party programme in shaping public policy agenda can also be affected by the nature of the policy itself. Some policy areas are simply less amenable to big overhauls than others, and this is why the categorical predictor C is included to distinguish between different policy areas.

This paper already offers data for calculating D_k . Measurement for E_i and P_i^k can be calculated with data from the Party Manifestos Project. This new agenda model of partisan policy influence has the potential for a continuing project in explaining the role of party dominance in the process of political representation.

Appendix A

Table 5
Indicators of Party Dominance and Indexes of Party Dominance

	Votes	Seats	Party Dominance Index on the Electoral Dimension	Government Duration	Bargaining Strength	Party Dominance Index on the Governmental Dimension
Austria						
OVP	0.403	0.41	0.813	0.3	0.3	0.6
SPO	0.47	0.479	0.949	1	0.5	1.5
Belgium						
CVP	0.303	0.334	0.637	1	1	2
BSP	0.269	0.298	0.567	0.225	0.45	0.675
PVV	0.185	0.197	0.382	0.225	0.45	0.675
Canada						
CON	0.394	0.506	0.9	0.4	0	0.4
LIB	0.375	0.376	0.751	0.25	0	0.25
NDP	0.185	0.108	0.293	0	0	0
Denmark						
S	0.324	0.333	0.657	0.3	0.05	0.35
KF	0.144	0.149	0.293	0.55	0.55	1.1
V	0.135	0.139	0.274	0.5	0.55	1.05
France						
Gaullist	0.253	0.285	0.538	0.4	0.4	0.8
PS	0.298	0.351	0.649	0.25	0.15	0.4
UDF/CDS	0.185	0.156	0.341	0.1	0.25	0.35
PCF	0.159	0.105	0.264	0.1	0.1	0.2
Finland						
SDP	0.243	0.267	0.51	0.45	0.9	1.35
KESK	0.193	0.208	0.401	0.4	0.8	1.2
KOK	0.216	0.219	0.435	0.3	0.3	0.6
VAS	0.14	0.141	0.281	0.3	0.35	0.65
Germany						
CDU/CSU	0.46	0.474	0.934	0.55	0.55	1.1
SPD	0.388	0.398	0.786	0.45	0.45	0.9
Ireland						
FF	0.452	0.477	0.929	0.25	0.2	0.45
FG	0.324	0.346	0.67	0	0.5	0.5
LP	0.111	0.111	0.222	0	0.5	0.5
Italy						
PCI	0.275	0.289	0.564	0	0	0
DC	0.348	0.378	0.726	1	0.85	1.85
PSI	0.117	0.12	0.237	0.217	0.65	0.867

	Votes	Seats	Party Dominance Index on the Electoral Dimension	Government Duration	Bargaining Strength	Party Dominance Index on the Governmental Dimension
The Netherlands						
CDA	0.324	0.333	0.657	0.6	0.6	1.2
PvdA	0.315	0.327	0.642	0	0.45	0.45
VVD	0.181	0.185	0.366	0.45	0.45	0.9
Japan						
LDP	0.459	0.523	0.982	1	0.125	1.125
Communist	0.095	0.005	0.1	0	0	0
Socialist	0.201	0.218	0.419	0	0	0
Norway						
DNA	0.38	0.433	0.813	0.25	0	0.25
H	0.253	0.268	0.521	0.25	0.2	0.45
KrF	0.102	0.112	0.214	0.15	0.2	0.35
Portugal						
PS	0.295	0.331	0.626	0.1	0.15	0.25
PSD	0.267	0.312	0.579	0.65	0.25	0.9
PCP	0.152	0.136	0.288	0	0	0
Spain						
PSOE	0.384	0.457	0.841	0.5	0	0.5
PP	0.184	0.196	0.38	0	0	0
IU	0.076	0.041	0.117	0	0	0
UCD	0.153	0.18	0.333	0.2	0	0.2
Sweden						
SAP	0.43	0.442	0.872	0.375	0	0.375
M	0.193	0.199	0.392	0	0.3	0.3
C	0.161	0.169	0.33	0	0.35	0.35
FP	0.104	0.106	0.21	0.3	0.35	0.65
Switzerland						
SP	0.221	0.238	0.459	1	1	2
FDP	0.227	0.247	0.474	1	1	2
CVP	0.201	0.21	0.411	1	1	2
SVP	0.111	0.117	0.228	1	1	2
United Kingdom						
CON	0.407	0.524	0.931	0.7	0	0.7
LAB	0.344	0.415	0.759	0.25	0	0.25
LIB	0.195	0.027	0.222	0	0	0
United States						
DEM	0.54	0.613	1.153	1	0	1
REP	0.44	0.386	0.826	0	0	0

Appendix B

Table 6

Extreme Bound Analysis for Multiple Regression of Left/Right Self-Placement for Respondents Ideologically Incongruent with the Dominant Party, When Party Dominance is Measured on the Electoral Dimension (n=7347)

	beta	t	p-value	0.95	C.I.	VIF
min	-0.232	-10.028	0.000	-0.277	-0.187	3.3
max	-0.045	-3.130	0.002	-0.073	-0.017	5.47

Variable to be tested is the interaction between party dominance and party ideology for the dominant but non-congruent party, variable always remaining in the model is the ideology of the congruent party, and the repressors used in combinations are all remaining predictors in the model. Results are at .95 confidence level and the maximum VIF is 10. A total of 126 combinations of four repressors from the Z vector are used.

Table 7

Extreme Bound Analysis for Multiple Regression of Left/Right Self-Placement for Respondents Ideologically Incongruent with the Dominant Party, When Party Dominance is Measured on the Governmental Dimension (n=7905)

	beta	t	p-value	0.95	C.I.	VIF
min	0.042	3.378	0.001	0.018	0.067	6.8
max	0.053	4.019	0.000	0.027	0.079	1.91

The variable to be tested is the interaction between party dominance and party ideology for the dominant but non-congruent party, the variable always remaining in the model is the ideology of the congruent party, and the repressors used in combinations are all remaining predictors in the model. Results are at .95 confidence level and the maximum VIF is 10. A total of 126 combinations of four repressors from the Z vector are used.

Table 8

Extreme Bound Analysis for Multiple Regression of Left/Right Self-Placement for Respondents Ideologically Congruent with the Dominant Party, When Party Dominance is Measured on the Electoral Dimension (n=5742)

	beta	t	p-value	0.95	C.I.	VIF
min	0.076	2.836	0.005	0.024	0.131	3.34
max	0.085	3.115	0.002	0.031	0.138	3.37

Variable to be tested is the interaction between party dominance and party ideology, variable always remaining in the model is party ideology, and repressors used in combinations are all remaining predictors in the model. Results are at .95 confidence level and the maximum VIF is 10. A total of four combinations of three repressors from the Z vector are used.

Table 9

Extreme Bound Analysis for Multiple Regression of Left/Right Self-Placement for Respondents Ideologically Congruent with the Dominant Party, When Party Dominance is Measured on the Governmental Dimension (n=5184)

	beta	t	p-value	0.95	C.I.	VIF
Min	0.095	12.824	0.000	0.080	0.109	2.4
Max	0.102	12.393	0.000	0.086	0.118	1.3

Variable to be tested is the interaction between party dominance and party ideology, variable always remaining in the model is party ideology, and repressors used in combinations are all remaining predictors in the model. Results are at .95 confidence level and the maximum VIF = 10. A total of four combinations of three repressors from the Z vector are used.

End Notes

¹These countries are: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States.

²Vote and seat indicators of party dominance are calculated based on data from Mackie and Rose (1991), *Parties and Elections in Europe: the Database about Elections, Parties, and Political Leaders in Europe*. <http://www.parties-and-elections.de> (March 19, 2004), *Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the German Bundestag*. <http://electionresources.org/de/> (March 19, 2004), *Japanese Politics Central*. <http://jpcentral.virginia.edu/Elections.htm> (March 19, 2004) and Stanley and Niemi (2000).

³The emphasis on *continuous* governing years is important. A dominant party has to keep its electoral or governmental strength in a continuous fashion, rather than with a lot of gaps. This is especially significant when it comes to the implications of party dominance for liberal democracies. If a party keeps winning elections in a row (such as the SAP managed to do between 1932 and 1976 or the DC did between 1945 and 1994), it leaves one to doubt the relevance of elections as a crucial institutional component of liberal democracies. The implication from such bucking of the trend of democratic commonsense potentially has large implications for the public's political attitudes, including feelings of efficacy, political interest, participation orientation and so forth. In other words, a really dominant party not only has to win a lot of elections, it also has to win them back to back.

⁴ Data about years spent in government or in coalition are obtained from Woldendorp et al. (2000).

⁵ $0.684 + (-0.065) = 0.619$; $0.684 + (-0.03) = 0.654$, and $0.684 + 0.064 = 0.748$. All other coefficients for party ideology at different levels of political awareness are calculated using the same method.

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Table 1
Multiple Regression of Left/Right Self-Placement for Respondents Ideologically Incongruent with the Dominant Party, When Party Dominance is Measured on the Electoral Dimension (n=7347)

Predictor	Estimate
Ideology of the Congruent but Non-dominant Party	0.684(0.025) ^c
Ideology of the Incongruent but Dominant Party	0.217(0.033) ^c
Dominance-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party	0.122(0.017) ^c
Dominance-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party	-0.233(0.025) ^c
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party (1) ⁵	Dropped
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party (2)	-0.065(0.026) ^b
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party (3)	-0.03(0.024) ^c
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party (4)	0.064(0.028) ^b
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party (1)	Dropped
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party (2)	0.054(0.028) ^c
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party (3)	0.034 (0.026)
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party (4)	-0.051(0.029) ^b
Socio-economic Status	0.003 (0.007)
Constant	1.412(0.148) ^c
R^2	0.362
Adjusted R^2	0.361
N	7347
Mean VIF	5.97

a p<.1
b p<.05
c p<.01

Table 2
Multiple Regression of Left/Right Self-Placement for Respondents Ideologically Incongruent with the Dominant Party, When Party Dominance is Measured on the Governmental Dimension (n=7347)

Predictor	Estimate
Ideology of the Congruent but Non-dominant Party	0.696(0.025) ^c
Ideology of the Incongruent but Dominant Party	0.046(0.026) ^a
Dominance-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party	0.066(0.015) ^c
Dominance-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party	0.012 (0.016)
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party (1)	Dropped
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party (2)	-0.051(0.027) ^a
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party (3)	-0.013 (0.025)
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Congruent Party (4)	0.099(0.030) ^c
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party (1)	Dropped
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party (2)	0.029(0.025)
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party (3)	0.006 (0.024)
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Incongruent Party (4)	-0.108(0.028) ^c
Socio-economic Status	0.028(0.007) ^c
Constant	1.049(0.137) ^c
R^2	0.358
Adjusted R^2	0.357
N	7905
Mean VIF	7.03

a p<.1
b p<.05
c p<.01

Table 3
Multiple Regression of Left/Right Self-Placement for Respondents Ideologically Congruent with the Dominant Party, When Party Dominance is Measured on the Electoral Dimension (n=5742)

Predictor	Estimate
Ideology of the Dominant Party	0.547(0.032) ^c
Dominance-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party	0.078(0.029) ^c
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party (1)	Dropped
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party (2)	0.004 (0.014)
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party (3)	0.015(0.013) ^c
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party (4)	0.033(0.015) ^b
Socioeconomic Status	-0.003 (0.009)
Constant	2.165(0.100) ^c
R^2	0.202
Adjusted R^2	0.201
N	5742
Mean VIF	2.31

a p<.1

b p<.05

c p<.01

Table 4
Multiple Regression of Left/Right Self-Placement for Respondents Ideologically
Congruent with the Dominant Party, When Party Dominance is Measured on the
Governmental Dimension (n=5742)

Predictor	Estimate
Ideology of the Dominant Party	0.494(0.020) ^c
Dominance-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party	0.100(0.008) ^c
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party (1)	Dropped
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party (2)	0.003 (0.014)
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party (3)	0.017(0.013) ^c
Awareness-Ideology Interaction for the Dominant Party (4)	0.053(0.016) ^c
Socioeconomic Status	-0.019(0.10) ^a
Constant	2.494(0.101) ^c
R^2	0.219
Adjusted R^2	0.219
N	5184
Mean VIF	1.68

a p<.1

b p<.05

c p<.01