Bureaucrats as Voters:
Explaining Cross-National Variation in
Preferences for Public Sector Expansion

Abstract

Relative to their private sector brethren, do bureaucrats vote for parties that promise to expand the public sector? Prior research indicates as much in the United States, but results are highly mixed in the comparative context. No prior research has theoretically accounted for cross-national variation in this relationship. Here, we focus on actual rhetoric in parties' platforms aimed at expanding the public sector. Given the mutability of "left" and "right" labels across countries, we argue this is a more appropriate approach than the standard left-right dichotomy. We advance a collective action explanation for why bureaucrats differ from private employees in some countries, but not others. We find that the size of public sector employment substantially mediates these individuals' proclivity to identify as bureaucrats and, subsequently, cast ballots in line with that identity. We test our theory on more than 31,000 survey respondents from 51 elections across 25 countries.

Word Count: 10,100 (approx.) inclusive of all material

Introduction

Group memberships are vital to the development of political preferences (Huddy, 2013). Across a variety of sociodemographic dimensions, the field of voting behavior has demonstrated repeatedly that knowing whether an individual identifies as, for example, a particular ethnicity or as a member of the "middle class" can have profound implications for which party and the types of public policies she most prefers (Manza and Brooks, 1999; Green, Palmquist and Schickler, 2002; Giles and Hertz, 1994; Manza, Hout and Brooks, 1995). One potentially salient – though in the comparative context, relatively unexplored – group membership that might play a primary role in determining a voter's preferences over parties and policies is whether he is employed in the public or the private sector. While public-sector employees should ostensibly prefer leftist parties that will protect the very public sector in which they work, their private-sector peers should favor right-leaning ones that pursue its reduction (Blais, Blake and Dion, 1990; Blais and Dion, 1991). Recent research, however, has produced decidedly mixed results regarding the connection between employment type and electoral choice across countries (Jensen, Sum and Flynn, 2009; Tepe, 2012).

In this manuscript, we take a cross-national view and ask: do public sector employees prefer political parties that talk about expanding the size and scope of the public sector more than do their private sector brethren? Perhaps more interestingly, does this public-private difference in preferences vary in magnitude across countries and what factors might account for this variation? Answering these questions is important for our understanding of voting behavior because bureaucrats are a unique class of voter; indeed, they are the only type of voter who is directly employed by the very governing apparatus they are attempting to influence with their ballot. Being able to theoretically account for variation across countries in the preference differences between public- and private-sector workers – as no prior study has yet undertaken – constitutes a major step forward in integrating theories of group membership (Huddy, 2013) with theories of "bureau voting" (Blais, Blake and Dion, 1990; Corey and Garand, 2002). Our empirical contribution is to show that differences between public-

and private workers exist in some countries, but not others. Our theoretical contribution is to advance an explanation for this cross-national variation that hinges on notions of collective action and group identity. That is, we venture the hypothesis that the overall size of the public sector substantially mediates any individual bureaucrat's proclivity to, first, perceive "bureaucrats" as constituting a politically effective voting bloc, and, secondly, to self-identify primarily as a "bureaucrat" and embody that identity's preference priorities in the voting booth.

This paper departs from previous research on this question in a number of productive ways. First we question whether left-leaning parties necessarily or uniformly support public-sector expansion across country contexts and that rightist parties, in turn, actively attempt to limit and reduce the public sector. Recent scholarship in comparative politics has demonstrated that notions of "left" and "right" mean different things in different countries (Tavits and Letki, 2009; Zechmeister, 2006) and, thus, measuring whether a bureaucrat voted for a leftist party can in some cases serve as a rather poor proxy for that voter's specific preferences regarding public sector expansion. To resolve this dilemma, we move away from framing the research question in terms of bureaucrats' support for "left" and "right" ideologies and instead employ data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) that reflects whether a party explicitly endorses or opposes various types of public sector policies.[1] This allows us to test whether public-sector workers systematically (and specifically) differ from private-sector workers in their support for parties that profess a desire to both expand the scope of social and educational services and also avoid reducing the ranks of the civil service.

Secondly, we demonstrate that the public-private distinction between voters is only salient in some country contexts, but not others, and explain this variation in terms of group

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[1] This distinction turns out to be less than semantic. The three indicators of "public sector expansion" rhetoric we use are correlated with a left-right party indicator variable at, respectively, $r = -0.04$, $r = -0.24$, and $r = -0.31$ (where communist, green, and social democratic parties are considered "leftist" and all other parties are considered "rightist").

dynamics. Although previous research has not connected the size of a particular public sector to the behavior of its employees, group coordination inevitably faces collective action problems related to group size (e.g. Olson, 1965; Ostrom, 1990, 2000). To demonstrate that public employees' policy preferences systematically vary according to context, we consider how the effect of employment varies as a function of the size of the public sector within which a government employee participates. We use data from four modules of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) survey to show that the public sector must be sufficiently large before public workers begin to see themselves as a politically efficacious voting bloc.

Third, our empirical tests focus on the rhetoric presented in 473 party manifestos and the vote choices of more than 31,000 individual voters across 51 elections in 25 countries across Western and Eastern Europe and other culturally anglican countries. This is, to the best of our knowledge, the most extensive investigation of the differences between public and private employees. While other studies have empirically modeled differences across country contexts (e.g. Jensen, Sum and Flynn, 2009; Tepe, 2012), no previous study has attempted to *theoretically* account for these differences.[2] Ultimately, our results indicate that public-sector workers differ from their private-sector brethren when the overall size of the public sector is large – as a percentage of total employment in the country – but not when it is small. This relationship is robust to a number of specifications of our key outcome concept: voters' preferences over parties that emphasize expansion of the public sector rhetorically in their party manifestos. Despite the persistence and statistical significance of these findings, however, we note that their substantive effect is fairly minimal, even where public- and private-sector workers are at their most different. We take up the ramifications of this consideration as well as avenues for future research in the concluding section.

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[2] Our research differs from these scholars' in that we focus on party rhetoric rather than ideological position and prioritize the explanation of – rather than simply accounting for – cross-national variation. However, our thinking here is very much indebted to Jensen, Sum and Flynn (2009) and Tepe (2012) as important first ventures into the comparative context.

Public Sector Employee Preferences

Prior theoretical efforts focusing on the distinction between public- and private-sector employees have dealt with three dependent variables: turnout rates, attitudinal orientations, and actual vote choice. For present purposes, our primary interest concerns, broadly, the particular parties and candidates that public-sector workers support on election day and, specifically, whether or not these are systematically different than those that private-sector workers prefer. Although the attitudinal orientations and turnout rates of these two groups are worth studying on their own merits, the actual electoral choices of these individuals are perhaps the most compelling component of the various theories focusing on the public-private cleavage. How and why bureaucrats vote for certain parties is worth investigating because this behavior offers the most stringent test of the general theoretical principle that public sector "membership" actually matters. Indeed, unless government employees are actively voting for candidates and parties that advocate expanding the public sector, then whether or not these individuals are more attitudinally in favor of expansion or vote with greater frequency than their private sector counterparts will not ultimately impact public policy.

The Classic Argument

We begin with the basic hypothesis that public sector employees are more likely to vote for left-leaning parties than their private sector counterparts (Blais, Blake and Dion, 1990), which is premised on the interrelationship between self- and group-interest. While prior literature on the behavior of government employment does not necessarily make this distinction, the language used to describe the motivations of public-sector workers often links these two forms of interest. As Corey and Garand (2002) write, "bureaucrats can reasonably expect that their votes may contribute to an increased level of *personal* and *bureau* benefits," (p. 262, emphasis added) which draws on Niskanen's connection between an individual's job and the success of the larger unit – "bureaucrats who do not maximize their budget will have an unusually short tenure" (Niskanen, 1971, p. 41).

Although interest is fundamental to *human* behavior (Kim, 2014), decades of social psychology research draw interesting distinctions between the potential differences that arise between these two concepts in their relationship to *political* behavior specifically (see Huddy, 2013, for a review).[3] However, in the case of the public-sector employee, a "social dilemma" – or a situation in which collective interests may be at odds with private interests – appears to be noticeably absent in that personal and group interests closely align. Thus, the salience of the degree to which a government employee's job (self-interest) is intimately tied to the sustenance of the public sector (group-interest) should trigger collective political action as a function of electoral threat[4] from right-leaning political parties and candidates that seek to reduce the size and scope of government and its services.[5] This logic results in the well-known hypothesis that we should observe systematic differences in the ideological character of the parties supported by public- and private-sector employees.

In the comparative context, we expect, however, that simply discretizing the ideological leanings of political parties into "left" or "right" categories obscures a great deal of variation in the specific positions these parties adopt on the policy question bureaucrats most care about: whether to expand or contract the public sector. Indeed, because the left-right dichotomy utilized in prior research is simply a blunt approximation of the policy positions

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[3] Primarily, the major difference is that self-interest often has a circumscribed effect on policy support (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010; Sears and Funk, 1991), while group-interests are "central" to politics (Huddy, 2013).

[4] The cohesion process inherent in group formation is often greatest when group members feel or share a common fate (Simon and Klandermans, 2001), which is critical to relative deprivation theories of group behavior (Gay, 2006).

[5] This connection between electoral and policy outcomes is integral – in fact, the notion that policy outputs are a function of government composition fundamentally underscores why public-sector employees would be threatened by right-leaning candidates and parties and should, instead, prefer candidates and parties of "the Left."

that these parties *might* hold on public sector expansion, it is not clear whether government employees actually vote for parties that support their interests. As recent scholarship in comparative politics has demonstrated, notions of "left" and "right" mean different things in different countries (Tavits and Letki, 2009; Zechmeister, 2006). It could very well be the case, after all, that in a country with an already sizable welfare state, *all* parties – regardless of ideological orientation – will have to stake out rhetorical positions in favor of public sector expansion. In order, then, to more appropriately capture whether or not public-sector employees prefer parties that explicitly profess expanding the public-sector, we turn to the rhetorical statements parties make in their election manifestos in the course of campaigning for office. These manifesto texts convey vital information about parties' positions on a variety policies, including statements related to expansion of the welfare state and education (typically the two largest components of the aggregated "public sector") as well as statements advocating for "government efficiency" (typically indicative of preferences to contract the extent of public employment). Although we discuss our outcome variable in greater detail later on, a brief elucidation of the concept here is useful theoretically.

Using data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) to distinguish party policy preferences (Volkens et al., 2013), we consider three specific areas of policy statements that should be especially relevant and attractive to public sector employees (Werner, Lacewell and Volkens, 2011).[6] First, parties often talk about the need to introduce, maintain, and expand both public social services and social security schemes. We consider party positions regarding these preferences "welfare state expansion" sentiments. In addition, a second set of policy statements considers the degree to which parties advocate broadening the scope and availability of publicly-funded educational services, otherwise labelled "educational expan-

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[6] Although the CMP has been criticized as being imprecise (Benoit and Laver, 2007), the CMP team has performed tests that establish its high level of reliability (Budge and Pennings, 2007; Klingemann et al., 2006). Additionally, the CMP is still the database with the most extensive coverage across cases and years.

sion." A third area of policy statements concerns "administrative efficiency," or the degree to which a party wants to restructure or reduce the civil service. Individually, we argue that public-sector workers should prefer parties that profess pro-welfare and pro-education expansion statements and should avoid parties that desire to reduce the size of the civil service. Combining these three areas of policy statements into a cohesive or collective set, we operationalize a concept we call *expansion rhetoric* which is comprised of both pro-expansion and pro-contraction statements in a party's election platform:

$$expansion\ rhetoric = [welfare\ expand + education\ expand] - government\ efficiency$$

The CMP codes the percentage of statements in a party's manifesto that rhetorically pertain to each of the terms in the equation above. By combining them into our *expansion rhetoric* concept, we have constructed a metric where larger (more positive) numbers indicate that, on balance, a party is espousing a more pro-expansionist orientation toward the public sector while smaller (more negative) numbers indicate that a party, on balance, favors contracting the public sector.[7] There is a great deal of variation in *expansion rhetoric* across parties, ranging from 40% of a party's manifesto being devoted to more pro-expansion than pro-contraction statements (at the maximum end of the scale) to 23% of a party's manifesto devoted to more pro-contraction than pro-expansion statements (at the minimum end).[8] Thus, the classic line of theorizing would suggest that, ceteris paribus, a public sector employee would prefer a party espousing a higher level of *expansion rhetoric* in its platform than would a private sector employee.[9]

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[7] The CMP codes statements into 56 distinct categories, but the three we use here are the only ones that directly map into the latent concept of *expansion rhetoric.*

[8] As noted earlier, this rhetoric is very poorly correlated with any party's general left-right ideological orientation.

[9] In the empirical section, we explore a number of alternative specifications of the expansion rhetoric concept, although we note here that hundreds of scholars have previously relied

The Mediating Role of Group Size

Although public-sector employees' unique coincidence of self-interest with group-interest seems to be a likely motivator for differentiating the types of parties they would prefer on election day, there are still two unresolved matters within this straightforward theoretical story. The first is one of collective action or group size: why would a single bureaucrat, acting alone, perceive himself to be in possession of a politically efficacious vote in favor of public sector expansion? Much like the classic vote decisiveness dilemma at the heart of the voter turnout paradox (Blais, 2000, 2006), there is an inherent collective dimension to voting in favor of government expansion (Ostrom, 1990). While well-defined group memberships often promote collection action, we here run into the second unresolved matter: why would a bureaucrat prioritize her public-sector identity over, say, her ethnicity, class membership, or religious affiliation? Much work in the political science of identity selection argues that group identities are inherently subjective and individuals select their primary identification in response to environmental incentive structures (Horowitz, 2000; Penn, 2008; Shayo, 2009; Turner et al., 1987). Here, we argue that group size – or the share of a country's employees who are publicly employed – heavily mediates the extent to which a public-sector employee is likely to perceive himself primarily as being a bureaucrat; identify with the goals of bureaucrats, as a group, regarding public sector expansion; and vote differently than private sector employees based upon this issue.

The literature on the political preferences of public sector employees is virtually silent about whether and what conditions may facilitate or condition their mass behavior, although we can glean several intuitions from the broader collective action literature. In the context of inter-group behavior, both Pareto (1927) and Olson (1965) argue that smaller groups are better suited to coalesce than larger groups. As a prodigious literature has demonstrated in

on this data in the same way. That is, complicated (or latent) manifesto-level concepts tend to be operationalized by weighing competing rhetorical statements that – taken together – provide a multifaceted measure of the latent concept.

the interim, however, the relationship between effective collective action and group size is considerably more complex (e.g. Esteban and Ray, 2001; Pecorino, 2009; Marwell and Oliver, 1993). In fact, a substantial literature finds that, under certain conditions, larger groups beget greater collective action. Oliver and Marwell (1988), for example, argue that "when a 'social' solution to the collective dilemma is required, what matters is the relationship among the possible contributors in the critical mass, not the relationship among everyone in the interest group" (p. 6). Further, if larger groups have access to more resources, then the probability for collective action should be higher. Elsewhere, Levine and colleagues (Levine, Cassidy and Jentzsch, 2010; Levine and Crowther, 2008) also find a positive relationship between group size and collective behavior and demonstrate that larger group sizes can facilitate prosocial behaviors when group memberships are particularly salient.

Our argument regarding the conditional effect of group size on the collective electoral behavior of public-sector employees is premised on the notion that an elected official who hails from a pro-expansion party is a non-excludable good that has a high degree of jointness of supply (Ostrom, 1990). In other words, every public sector worker should benefit – at minimum indirectly – from the election of officials belonging to one of these parties because these individuals should protect the size of the public sector. Further, because larger groups have greater resources to leverage their organizational capabilities – and because the costs of voting do not vary with group size insofar as public sector size does not meaningfully assist or discourage turnout – group size should have a positive effect on the likelihood that public-sector employee vote choice significantly differs from that of private-sector workers (Oliver and Marwell, 1988).

A separate literature on group identity selection points to a second reason why group size should mediate bureaucrats' preferences over expansion: larger group sizes should also prime bureaucrats to more strongly identify with the group, thereby internalizing political parties' manifesto-based expansion rhetoric into their vote decisions. That is to say, as the number of bureaucrats in a country expands, then all bureaucrats will be more likely to prioritize their

identities as bureaucrats rather than as members of a particular ethnic, religious, language, or income group. This is due to the fact that social identities are inherently subjective and individuals' selection of identities is dependent on the broader situational context that surrounds them (Bates, 2006; Melson, 1971). Furthermore, empirical and theoretical work on the selection of identities has demonstrated that individuals are rational in this respect and tend to prioritize their identities in line with the potential utility they expect to gain from identifying with certain groups over others (Horowitz, 2000; Penn, 2008, 2009). As the ranks of the public sector swell, then, and they become more politically efficacious, more bureaucrats should choose to prioritize that particular identity over others.[10]

The foregoing discussion brings us to our novel theoretical contribution to this literature. We contend that the relationship between the individual vote choices of government employees and the size of the public sector should be one in which larger public sectors manufacture stronger collective voting behaviors. Specifically, we hypothesize that the positive effect of an individual's public-sector employment status on her support for pro-government expansion rhetoric in party platforms should increase as the overall size of the public-sector increases. Like prior work in this area, our outcome of interest is a vote choice model, but one that selects parties based on their expansion rhetoric rather than their left-right positions. Unlike

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[10] This intuition dovetails nicely with a closely related literature on ethnic group size, political institutions, and individuals' proclivities to to prioritize in-group sympathies with out-group antipathies. Characteristic of this line of thinking is work by Habyarimana et al. (2007, 2009), who find that in institutional settings where large groups are required in order to gain political power, smaller groups have incentives to set aside their differences (i.e. de-prioritize their unique identities) and work together. As a group grows in size, however, and can stand on its own politically, then it will be more prone to see itself as a distinct group and act accordingly. This line of thinking parallels work by Penn (2009), who explores how groups sizes, preferences, and institutions prime citizens to see themselves as being either ethnically distinct or more similar members of the same nation-state.

prior work, we condition this vote choice upon the broader context in which an individual voter is considering how to cast his ballot.

There are two competing theoretical stories that might cut against the relationship we posit above and we address each of these in turn. The first alternative theoretical explanation for cross-national differences in bureau voting would be that – rather than public-sector employees supporting more expansion as the size of the public sector expands – it is actually *private*-sector employees who support *less* expansion more forcefully as the size of the public sector expands. This dynamic among private citizens could be motivated, for example, by their mounting resentment or a general sense that the country's resources are becoming disproportionately allocated. In supplementary models not reported here, however, we fail to find any evidence for this intuition. Theoretically, we would argue that this is due to the private sector being markedly more heterogeneous in its composition than the public sector, which would make their acting in concert against government expansion somewhat unlikely – especially when compared to bureaucrats' unique ability, as a group, to overcome the collective action problems we have already discussed.

The second competing story would argue that – even if we find that bureaucrats differ from private sector workers when the size of the public sector is large – the size of the public sector is a proxy for the *salience* of public sector expansion as a political issue. That is, a larger public sector prompts bureaucrats to vote differently than private citizens *not* because it elicits psychological group identities among bureaucrats, *but rather* because larger public sectors tend to make electoral politics and party rhetoric inherently more expansion-centered. As before, our objections to this alternative story are both empirical and theoretical. Empirically, our measure of public sector size correlates exceedingly poorly with overall, system-wide salience of public sector expansion as a campaign topic.[11] Theoretically, we would argue that it is not the *static* size of the public sector that should serve as a proxy

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[11] We define "salience" as the average amount of rhetoric spent discussing expansion by all political parties in the system. The two variables are correlated at $r = -0.03$.

for the salience of expansion rhetoric, but rather the *dynamic, over-time change* in size that should really matter. After all, the static size of the public sector – whether large or small – may simply indicate that the issue is well-settled rather than politically salient. While this dynamic component, then, seems essential for the "size as salience" mechanism, it is not required for our "size as group identity" argument we are advancing herein.

Data and Measurements

We rely on three common sources of data in cross-national research on the determinants of vote choice. These three sources provide data at three critical theoretical hierarchies: the level of the individual voter, the level of the party for which she votes, and the broader election-level context in which she casts her ballot.[12] Our individual voter-level data comes from more than 31,000 survey responses across all four modules of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES, 2014), which pools survey instruments administered around the time of national elections across several of the world's developed democracies beginning in the mid-1990s. We drop from the analysis any country that did not possess a Polity IV score of 7 or higher. All told, our 31,000 respondents come from 51 elections across 25 countries. Because we are interested in the extent of public-sector expansion rhetoric adopted by the parties that these voters choose on election day, we utilized data on the content coding of

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[12] Here, we focus on national elections for both empirical and theoretical reasons. Despite the fact that bureaucrats – especially those in decentralized countries – might typically be interested the outcomes of subnational elections *as well as* national elections, reliable data about the content of parties' platforms and individual voter surveys related to subnational elections simply do not exist across many countries. Theoretically, the field of electoral studies tends to view these subnational elections as being "second order" in importance (Heath et al., 1999; Rallings and Thrasher, 2005). We acknowledge, however, that examining this question at the subnational level would be a rather fruitful area for future work.

parties' manifestos (or election platforms) provided by the Comparative Manifesto Project (Volkens et al., 2013). We include all parties for which a voter cast a ballot in the CSES surveys, which amounts to 473 separate manifestos or party-election observations. At the final level of data hierarchy – the election level – we utilize databases from the World Bank, IMF, and OECD online repositories to construct our measure of public sector size. We now address each of our specific variable operationalizations in turn.[13]

Our dependent variable is the amount of *public expansion rhetoric espoused by the party for which an individual voter cast a ballot.* The concept is operationalized as explained previously: the percentage of the statements in a party's platform devoted to discussing governmental and administrative efficiency (or anti-expansion) subtracted from the sum of the percentage of the statements in the platform devoted to discussing social / welfare expansion and education expansion. In this way, an *expansion rhetoric* score of, say, +12 indicates that, on balance, a party campaigned on a platform that spent 12% of its time advocating for public sector expansion *after accounting for* any amount of time it also spent advocating for contraction in the public sector. In most cases, parties only discuss one or the other; not infrequently, however, parties will make statements of both varieties, which is why our measure takes into account the relative balance between the two. Descriptive statistics for this and all of our variables appear in Table 1 below.

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[13] Our case selection is limited by the overlap of these three sources of data, but still allows for a broad sampling of the world's democracies. The countries and elections included in the analysis are: Albania (2005), Australia (1996, 2004, 2007), Bulgaria (2001), Canada (1997, 2004, 2008), the Czech Republic (2002, 2006), Denmark (1998, 2001), Finland (2003, 2007), Germany (1998, 2005), Hungary (1998, 2002), Ireland (2002, 2007), Italy (2006), Mexico (1997, 2003), the Netherlands (1998), Norway (1997, 2001, 2005), New Zealand (1996, 2002, 2008), Poland (1997, 2005), Portugal (2002, 2005, 2009), Slovenia (1996, 2004), South Korea (2008), Spain (1996, 2000), Sweden (1998, 2002), Switzerland (1999, 2003, 2007), Ukraine (1998), the United Kingdom (1997, 2005), and the United States (1996, 2004, 2008).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for All Variables Included in the Analysis.

	Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Individual	Public Employee	0.34	0.48	0	1
(n = 31,334)	Income Quintile	3.25	1.33	1	5
	Left-Right Ideology	5.23	2.41	0	10
	Union Membership	0.31	0.46	0	1
	Gender (Male)	0.53	0.50	0	1
	Education Level	5.43	1.72	1	8
	Age	1.38	0.82	0	3
Party-Election	Expansionist Rhetoric	10.10	10.76	-19.50	40.54
(n = 473)	Relative Expansionist Rhetoric	0.35	6.20	-19.86	19.80
	Pro Expansion Statements	14.53	8.77	0	40.94
	Pro Contraction Statements	4.44	4.35	0	23.82
Country-Election	Public Sector Size	21.84	8.03	7.65	37.31
(n = 51)	Mean Expansionist Rhetoric	6.96	6.94	-9.69	26.84
	Mean Pro Expansion Statements	6.01	2.70	0	14.97
	Mean Pro Contraction Statements	4.99	3.51	0.50	18.45

In addition to our main operationalization of the dependent variable, we also test alternative specifications. The first is *relative expansionist rhetoric* which subtracts the average level of rhetoric across all parties in a given country-election from each individual party's level of rhetoric. This provides a measure of the extent to which a voter might prefer a party that is discussing expanding the public sector relatively less or relatively more than other parties in the system. As a further robustness check, we separate out *pro-expansion statements* from *pro-contraction statements* (i.e. the two additive components of the overall metric) to ensure that each component of our metric is operating in the direction we would theoretically expect. We ultimately find that our coefficient estimates point in the expected directions across all four specifications of our outcome variable.

Our main independent variables of interest are *public sector employment status* at the individual level and *public sector size* at the election level. For employment status, respondents are simply asked in the CSES surveys to explicitly indicate whether or not they work in the

public (coded 1) or private (coded 0) sectors.[14] Across the sample, roughly 33% of the individuals self-classify as public-sector workers, while the other 66% self-classify as employees of the private-sector.[15] We operationalize *public sector size* as the percentage of workers in the country who are employed in the public sector. Values on this variable vary substantially, ranging from roughly 5% to roughly 40% of the population. To gain some leverage on the conditional nature of our theory, we also employ an interaction between employment status and public sector size, with the expectation of returning a positively-signed and statistically significant coefficient on this term.

We control for a number of additional potentially important variables at the individual level, all of which are operationalized based on self-reported voter attributes in the CSES surveys. The first is a respondent's *household income quintile*, which ranges from 1 (lowest quintile) to 5 (highest). We control for a respondent's *left-right ideological placement*, which

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[14] We realize that this is something of a crude partition. After all, not all public sector employees work in similar relation to the state's apparatus and some private-sector workers (such as defense contractors) may have well-developed preferences over the government's spending patterns. Our response to this potential objection is threefold. First, asking survey respondents to draw conceptual distinctions between how thoroughly integrated with the state their particular public-sector post might be relative to some other post is asking quite a lot. Second, while the CSES does ask a question about specific occupations within the public sector in some – but not all – of its modules, the data coverage is too sparse and the range of possible answers is so great that we are unable to use this variable for analytical leverage. Finally, pertaining to the point about private-sector employees, such as defense contractors, we believe that our operationalization of the outcome variable filters out some of this noise. A defense contractor might care about statements parties make relative to defense spending (or militarism more generally), but not necessarily (or systematically) for the specific expansionist statements we include here.

[15] Unemployed survey respondents are excluded from the analysis.

Table 2: Assessing Covariate Imbalance Across Employment Status.

Variable	Public Employee Mean Value	Private Employee Mean Value	|Difference|
Income Quintile	3.35	3.20	0.14
			(0.02)
Left-Right Ideology	4.93	5.39	0.46
			(0.03)
Union Membership	0.48	0.22	0.26
			(0.01)
Gender (Male)	0.43	0.58	0.15
			(0.01)
Education Level	5.87	5.20	0.67
			(0.02)
Age	1.48	1.33	0.15
			(0.01)
	$n = 10{,}800$	$n = 20{,}534$	

Notes: Standard errors of two-sample t-tests appear below each difference statistic (using Welch's approximation, accounting for potential unequal variances across the two groups).

ranges from 0 (most liberal) to 5 (ideologically moderate) to 10 (most conservative). We control for *union membership* and *gender*, both of which are dichotomous indicator variables, as well as *education level* (an 8-point scale ranging from grade school only to completion of a post-graduate degree) and *age* (which we operationalize as a three-point generational cohort variable, rather than a continuous measure of age in years).

Finally, where we model outcome variables that have not been standardized over the average across parties, we control for, in turn, the *mean level of expansionist rhetoric*, the *mean level of pro-expansion statements*, and the *mean level of pro-contraction statements* across all parties in the country-election, respectively. This accounts for the fact that systemic differences across countries will result in some party systems where all individual parties are simply more prone to emphasize (or de-emphasize) expansionist rhetoric in their platforms. By controlling for these average levels, we ensure that whatever variation we are able to explain with our primary variables of interest is variation that exists *above and beyond* whatever systematic baseline rhetoric levels are characteristic of the party system.

We are working with a data set that is inherently imbalanced in the sense that we have

survey responses from far more private-sector employees than public-sector employees. For the purposes of implementing a large-n regression design, this could be particularly problematic if the two groups of employees were systematically and substantially different from one another on dimensions other than their vote choice for parties. That is, thinking about employment status as a "treatment" that divides the population of survey respondents in two, we would want to rule out the potential that our other explanatory variables systematically covary with whether or not an individual received the "treatment" of public employment (Imai, 2005; Sekhon, 2009). Prior work in this area would seem to indicate exactly this: that bureaucrats are, say, systematically higher income earners or are systematically better educated than their private-sector brethren (Corey and Garand, 2002; Garand, Parkhurst and Seoud, 1991). Table 2 speaks to these concerns directly by conducting a series of difference-of-means tests (unpaired, accounting for unequal variance) between the two groups across each of the individual-level covariates in our model. The absolute value of the between-group difference together with the standard error of this difference appears in the far right column of Table 2.

Although each public-private difference is statistically discernible from 0, we would argue that the substantive import of these differences is fairly minimal. For example, in the case of income quintile, a difference of 0.14 is less than 1/5 of one unit on this variable (which ranges from 1 to 5). To take another example, the value of 0.46 for ideology is less than 1/2 of one unit on a scale that ranges from 0 to 10 and much the same holds for education, where a difference of slightly more than 1/2 of one unit is relatively small on an 8-point scale. Despite the fact that there is statistically discernible imbalance across our two groups of voters, then, we would still maintain that these differences are sufficiently small so as not to systematically bias the regression estimations to which we now turn.[16]

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[16] Preliminary results of a series of matching analyses conducted within each of our 51 country-elections (not reported here) do not tell a different story than that portrayed in the regression results that follow: namely, that conceiving of employment status as a "treatment"

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Analysis

The structure of the data is such that *voter-level* vote choice outcomes are nested within *country-election-level contexts*. Because of the multilevel structure of the data and because the outcome variable – *the level of expansionist rhetoric in the platform of the party for which a voter votes* – is more-or-less normally distributed, we employ a hierarchical linear model (Gelman and Hill, 2007) with random intercepts at the level of the country-election. These intercepts allow us to account for various unobserved and idiosyncratic dynamics in each electoral context.[17] The model itself is defined as follows:

$$Expansion_{vce} \sim \mathcal{N}\left(\gamma_{ce} + \mathbf{X}_{vce}\beta, \sigma^2_{vce}\right)$$

$$\gamma_{ce} \sim \mathcal{N}\left(\mathbf{X}_{ce}\xi, \sigma^2_{ce}\right)$$

where $Expansion_{vce}$ is the level of expansionist rhetoric in a party's platform for which a voter v casts a ballot in a given election e in a given country c; $\mathbf{X}_{vce}$ is a matrix of voter-country-election variables, such as employment status and household income quintile; γ_{ce} is a random intercept at the country-election level; $\mathbf{X}_{ce}$ is a matrix of country-election-specific

in a matching analysis points to differences between bureaucrats and private-sector employees in some countries, but not all. Furthermore, the magnitudes of the differences generally track with our expectations about public sector size serving as a mediator insofar as larger differences between treated and untreated populations emerge where sector size is relatively large. Due to the difficulty in justifying the selection of a single best matching algorithm (of which there are many) and the fact that covariate imbalance does not seem to be a substantial problem in our data set, we opt for the more straightforward hierarchal OLS regression design discussed below.

[17] Each country-election hierarchy is, of course, further nested within a country hierarchy, but as we only have 1-3 observable elections within each country, we do not have the leverage we need to include an additional country-level hierarchy in the modeling process.

variables, such as, for example, the size of the public sector in that year; and β and ξ are vectors of estimated coefficients. The modeling framework also returns measures of variance across individual voters as well as across the country-election-level random intercepts.

Drawing on this basic framework, we estimate five separate models. The first is a "naive" model that estimates the effect of employment status by itself – without the mediating effect of public sector size – and is intended to examine the standard theoretical story developed by scholars of the public-private cleavage. As is indicated by the results of this model, our argument is not that the standard story is wrong. Instead, as we show in the second model, including the contextual information of public sector size *adds new explanatory power* to the standard story. The introduction of nuance here results in a model that is a better fit to the data. The third, fourth, and fifth models are robustness tests of the second model, each with a different operationalization of the outcome of interest.

The results of these estimations appear in Table 3. We will focus our discussion largely on the first two models. In our first – or "naive" – model, we see that being a public-sector employee has a positive and statistically significant effect on the amount of expansionist rhetoric a voter prefers. That is, relative to a private-sector employee, a bureaucrat will tend to vote for parties that espouse higher levels of expansionist rhetoric. This is a finding that falls very much in line with the standard theoretical story emerging from the American literature (Corey and Garand, 2002) and holds even in the presence of controlling for a number of individual-level factors *as well as* the general level of expansionist rhetoric across all parties in the system. Put differently, regardless of whether the party system on the whole is comparatively pro- or anti-expansionist, bureaucrats still prefer parties espousing more expansion in both contexts.

Table 3: Multi-Level Model of Individual Vote Choice.

| DV: Varies by Model	(1) Expansion (Absolute)	(2) Expansion (Absolute)	(3) Expansion (Relative)	(4) Pro Expand	(5) Pro Contract
Public Employee	0.27***	−0.48**	−0.49**	−0.51***	−0.03
	(0.07)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.18)	(0.09)
Public Sector Size		−0.07*	−0.07	−0.06*	0.01
		(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Employee × Sector Size		0.04***	0.04***	0.03***	−0.01
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Income Quintile	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Left-Right Ideology	−0.65***	−0.65***	−0.65***	−0.47***	0.18***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Union Membership	0.43***	0.43***	0.44***	0.40***	−0.03
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.03)
Gender (Male)	−0.29***	−0.29***	−0.29***	−0.21***	0.08***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.03)
Education Level	−0.09***	−0.09***	−0.09***	−0.08***	0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Age	0.01***	0.01***	0.01***	0.01***	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Mean Expansion	1.21***	1.21***			
	(0.05)	(0.05)			
Mean Pro Expand				2.23***	
				(0.12)	
Mean Pro Contract					1.20***
					(0.05)
Constant	1.63***	3.09***	4.95***	2.74**	−1.51***
	(0.54)	(1.06)	(1.13)	(1.15)	(0.50)
σ_n	5.51	5.51	5.51	4.60	2.31
σ_{ce}	2.18	2.15	2.54	2.01	1.05
N	31,334	31,334	31,334	31,334	31,334
N_{ce}	51	51	51	51	51
Log Likelihood Ratio Test	2,603	2,618	2,486	2,051	1,183

Notes: Standard errors appear in parentheses below coefficient estimates. Statistically significant coefficient estimates indicated by (*) at the 10% level, (**) at the 5% level, and (***) at the 1% level. The models include random intercepts at the country-election level as well as a measure of model fit (log likelihood ratio test statistic) that compares each model to a baseline model with a constant terms and random country-election intercepts.

Moving to the second model, however, we see that adding greater nuance to the standard story results in a much different relationship: the sign on employment status switches direction and we see evidence for the moderating (and positive) effect of public sector size. That is, a bureaucrat's preferences for expansionist rhetoric do not differ from a private-sector employee's where the size of the public sector is small, but do differ increasingly as the size of the public sector becomes larger. This second model controls for the same battery of covariates as the first model. It is also a markedly better fit to the data, as evidenced by a higher log likelihood ratio test statistic (evaluated against a baseline null model which includes only a constant term and random intercepts at the country-election level).[18] Figure 1 below graphically depicts the marginal effect of public employee status on preferences for expansionist rhetoric at different levels of sector size.[19]

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[18] Model 3 substitutes in our measure of *relative* expansion rhetoric and, accordingly, removes the average expansion control variable. In both substantive and statistical terms, virtually nothing changes with this new operationalization. Models 4 and 5 separate out the constituent additive components of the overall expansion rhetoric variable: only the statements a party makes on expansion (Model 4) and only the statements a party makes on contraction (Model 5). Our theoretical expectation here is that Model 4's coefficients would remain similarly signed relative to the first three models, whereas the coefficients in Model 5 – especially the interaction term – would flip. In general, the intuition holds, although the significance of the results in Model 5 weaken. Ultimately, this disaggregation of *expansionist rhetoric* into each of its components indicates that the measure is correctly aggregating each piece of the overall more complicated latent concept.

[19] We opt for the inclusion of 90% confidence bounds in Figure 1 in order to clearly present the trends in the data. As recent studies of the presentation of statistical results have argued, the choice of significance level is oftentimes less meaningful than the substance of the findings themselves (see, for example, Gelman and Stern, 2006; Gill, 1999). However, our table of regression output includes all the standard information required to assess this relationship

Figure 1: Marginal Effect of Public Sector Employee Status on Preferences for Public Sector Expansion Conditional on Size of Public Sector Employment.
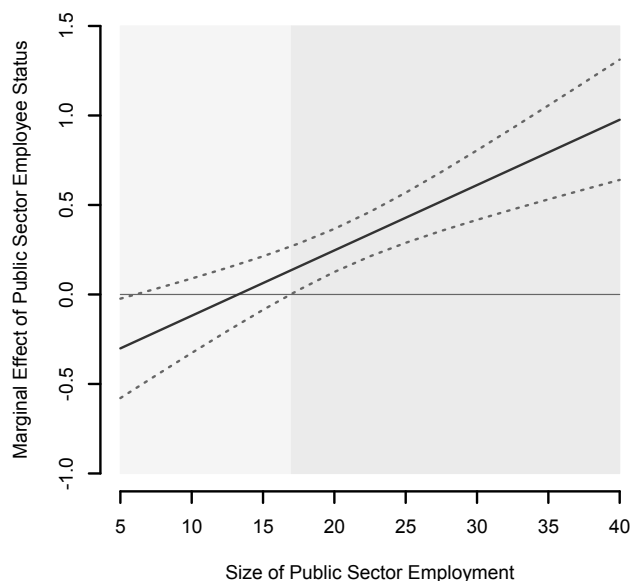
Notes: Size of public sector values on x-axis range from minimum to maximum in the data set. 90% confidence bands are depicted outside of estimates of actual marginal effect. The region of heavier shading indicates where the effect is statistically distinguishable from zero.

The x-axis is populated by values that range from roughly the minimum to the maximum of observed public sector sizes in our data set. The predicted marginal effect line is depicted in heavier black, while dashed lines indicate the level of uncertainty surrounding this prediction. The x-y coordinate plane has been shaded a heavier gray over the portion of the x-axis where the marginal effect is statistically distinguishable from zero. In this case, bureaucrats' preferences over expansionist rhetoric begin to differ markedly from their private-sector brethren when roughly 18% of total employment in a country is in the public sector. As more than half of the country-election observations in our data set assume public-sector size values in excess of this value, it is clearly a relationship that operates in a nontrivial number of electoral environments around the world.

The model's coefficient estimates lead to some generic predictions across all cases. For example, switching a voter's employment status from private- to public-sector in a country

at standard 95% and 99% levels of confidence.

with where the rate of public sector employment is 5% of the population results in that individual choosing to vote for a party that espouses 0.3% *fewer* manifesto statements in favor of expanding the public sector.[20] Contrast this with a situation where the rate of public sector employment is 40% of the population and we see that switching a voter's status from private- to public-sector results in that individual voting for a party that espouses 1.1% *more* manifesto statements in favor of expansion.

Moving away from generic predictions, specific country-election examples are illustrative. For example, Ireland in 2002, Sweden in 2002, and Australia in 2007 all had below-average public sector sizes. On average, public-sector employees in these countries voted for parties with 0.5, 0.8, and 0.9 *fewer* statements made in favor of expansion than their private-sector counterparts, respectively. For countries such as Hungary in 1998, the United Kingdom in 1997, and New Zealand in 2008 – all cases of public sector size near the average level in our data set – there is no distinguishable difference between public- and private-sector employees. Finally, in a diverse handful of cases where public sector size is markedly above our average level, we see the relationship reversed. In the Czech Republic in 2006, South Korea in 2008, and Portugal in 2005, bureaucrats on average voted for parties with 2.0, 1.8, and 1.2 *more* statements made in favor of expansion than private-sector employees, respectively.

At first glance, these results do not appear to be substantively impressive. However, if one considers how parties utilize their manifestos in the course of campaigning, an increase of 1% or 2% of a party's manifesto statements in a given issue area actually amounts to a considerable increase. Recall that the CMP codes 56 separate issue components within each manifesto. Not all parties will mention all issues in each campaign, of course, but across the nearly 4,000 manifestos coded by the CMP, parties mentioned on average 27 of these issue components in each election. This amounts to a lot of ground to cover with voters. Not surprisingly, in most cases, each issue receives fairly limited coverage as an overall percentage

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[20] From the model's coefficient estimates: $[(-0.48 \times 1) + (-0.07 \times 5) + (0.04 \times 1 \times 5)] - [(-0.48 \times 0) + (-0.07 \times 5) + (0.04 \times 0 \times 5)]$.

of the statements comprising a party's manifesto. For the three issues we draw on to tap into our latent *expansion rhetoric* variable, the average share of statements across these 4,000 manifestos dedicated to discussing welfare expansion was 7.0%; to education expansion, 3.9%; and to governmental and administrative efficiency, 3.2%. In this context, increasing any one of these issue emphases by a percentage point or two is fairly substantial.

Additionally, we are fighting against a potential selection bias that works against our being able to return support for the theory we have presented above. Specifically, we can only measure the amount of expansionist rhetoric a voter prefers in the abstract *via the rhetoric adopted by the party she voted for*. A bureaucrat might have, for instance, actually preferred to vote for a party espousing even more expansionist rhetoric, but in the absence of such a party espousing that viewpoint in the political system, we would have no way of testing this. In lieu of a CSES question asking voters directly about their preferences over the size of the public-sector, however, this is the best we can hope for empirically.

Still, the results of our model indicate that these increases can only be expected in those instances where the size of the public sector is comparatively quite large. This leads us to take a somewhat tepid view of the substantive import of our findings: the relationship is there, it appears to be robust across various specifications, but countries in which public and private sector employees differ radically from one another in how much government expansion rhetoric they prefer in party platforms are probably few and far between. In our conclusion, we discuss how these findings qualify our previous understanding of the public-private cleavage in important ways. We also note the ways in which our findings might be productively leveraged as motivation for future work.

Before concluding, we note that many of the control variables are themselves statistically significant and operate in the directions expected based on prior work. More leftist voters prefer more expansionist rhetoric (even if more left-leaning parties do not systematically adopt this rhetoric, as we demonstrated earlier) and so do older and female voters. Whether or not a voter is a member of a union is also a salient predictor, with union members preferring

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more expansionist rhetoric. Interestingly, income quintile exhibits no statistically discernible tendencies across any of the models, although we would argue that income levels probably interact in complicated ways with welfare state size across countries that would – without further work – make recovering a relationship here fairly complicated. Finally, more educated voters seem to prefer rhetoric geared toward shrinking the public sector and prioritizing government and administrative efficiency. This might perhaps be due to a general association between education level and self-sufficiency, with lower-educated individuals requiring more aid and services from the state than higher-educated individuals.

Conclusion

We began this manuscript by questioning a commonly-held tenant of theories of the public-private sector cleavage: that, due to the unique nature of their employment status, bureaucrats systematically harbor preferences toward government that differ from private-sector employees and, furthermore, these preferences are given explicit expression by bureaucrats' vote decisions. We set out to problematize both the *systematic difference* and the *vote expression* assumptions that undergird this logic. While previous work in the American context has demonstrated that bureaucrats are, indeed, politically different than their private-sector brethren and also vote with higher probability for the Democrats, these findings map poorly into the comparative context, where previous work has noted a great deal of cross-national variation in these relationships. Our contribution is to move away from notions of left-right dichotomies, focus more specifically on parties' rhetoric on topics such as welfare expansion, and provide a contextual theory of bureau voting that is steeped in intuitions derived from the literatures on collective action and social identity selection. Working with the largest multilevel data set ever assembled to test this conjecture, we ultimately find a small – but consistently discernible – positive mediating impact of group size on a bureaucrat's decision to vote in favor of a party espousing government expansion. We now turn to two addi-

tional questions. How do our findings add specifically to the literature on the public-private cleavage and how should we leverage these findings as a catalyst for future research efforts?

Regarding the division between public- and private-sector employees, these results are not entirely unexpected. Even when the collective action dynamics are right, simply being a bureaucrat may not elicit a sufficiently internalized sense of membership in the group (Huddy, 2013; Radcliff, 2001; Tajfel, 1981). That is, in the competition between subjective identity selections, self-identifying as a bureaucrat may be relatively uncommon. Other wedge issues (Hillygus and Shields, 2009), partisanship (Mason, 2014; Lupu, 2014), ethnicity (Penn, 2009) and even religion (Brooks, Nieuwbeerta and Manza, 2006) all reflect significant cleavages that demarcate voters into competing groups. If these criteria, including employment type, were rank ordered, it would be surprising if public- or private-sector status registered more than fleeting political salience for the average worker. As identity politics becomes more important for campaigns and elections both in the United States and elsewhere, the public-private cleavage may experience a general de-prioritization in the eyes of voters and in the electoral strategies of parties.

Continuing with considerations of elite-level party strategies, our ability to return any empirical support for bureau voting is highly contingent upon the existence of political elites who are willing to let their parties differentiate themselves on public-private sector issues. A developing literature in the field of electoral politics discusses the endogenous construction of electoral representation based on political elites' selective catering to potential – but not all – salient divisions within a society (Moser and Scheiner, 2012; Stoll, 2013). Where the electoral math is not favorable for a political party – or where conditions make it impossible for them to stake out a winning position on the public-private divide – then political entrepreneurs could be expected to simply ignore this social cleavage altogether (Riker, 1982; Schofield, 2006).[21] Deriving an avenue for future work from these considerations is straightforward:

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[21] It could be argued that thinking along these lines leads to a potential endogeneity concern with our research design; namely, that the results we uncover arise because the

new cross-national studies of bureau voting should try to account for the range of options bureaucrats face on election day in an effort to determine whether these voters are even allowed the option to differentiate themselves from their private-sector counterparts.

Finally, and relatedly, bureaucrats might more strongly self-identify as such when reacting to specific threats from parties that forcefully advocate trimming the ranks of the government. That is, because group memberships are rarely politically consequential without an emotional, integrated attachment to a group (Tajfel, 1981), it may take more than numbers to convince bureaucrats that they need to support government expansion – indeed, it might take the presence of an explicit threat to their livelihood. That Sears and Funk (1991) observed differences between public- and private-sector workers in their examination of the California tax-revolt suggests that an extremely salient, realistic (material) threat may be necessary to actually activate employment type as a determinative voting criteria. Developing a "threat" model of bureau voting and perhaps integrating it with the "collective action" model of bureau voting we present here constitutes a very promising way forward in this research agenda. Future work could empirically compare those country-elections where there is great variance in expansionist rhetoric across all parties to those country-elections were all parties are of the same mind on expansion (whether for, against, or silent).

Ultimately, rather than serving as a challenge to the nearly four decades of work in this area that began with Niskanen's landmark study, we interpret our findings as reopening the door on a research agenda that seems to have recently lain dormant. This and future work on bureau voting stand to contribute vital insight into how voters and parties prioritize, manipulate, and combine society's various social divisions in the world's electoral democracies.

size of the public sector positively correlates with parties beginning to discuss government expansion issues. Empirically, this is not the case, as these two variables correlate with one another at $r = -0.03$. We are simply arguing here that electoral competition between parties is complicated and myriad issues – public sector size being only one – determine whether parties ever offer bureaucrats the opportunity to vote "for" or "against" the public sector.

In particular, we see this work as contributing both indirectly and directly to developing research agendas that map social diversity into party competition (Moser and Scheiner, 2012; Potter, 2014; Stoll, 2008), the elite-level construction of issue salience (Tavits and Letki, 2009; Rovny, 2012), and the new line of studies on identity politics in the comparative context (Finseraas, 2012; Shayo, 2009; Weldon, 2006).

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