

Duty and Choice

*The Evolution of the Study of
Voting and Voters*

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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS
Toronto Buffalo London

Contents

© University of Toronto Press 2019
Toronto Buffalo London
utorontopress.com
Printed in Canada

ISBN 978-1-4426-4924-8 (cloth) ISBN 978-1-4426-2664-5 (paper)

♻️ Printed on acid-free, 100% post-consumer recycled paper
with vegetable-based inks.

Publication cataloguing information is available from Library and Archives
Canada.

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This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Federation
for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Awards to Scholarly
Publications Program, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and
Humanities Research Council of Canada.

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial assistance to its
publishing program of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts
Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario.

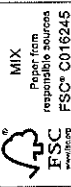


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The size of the public sector in democratic political systems has long drawn the attention of both scholars and political observers. While a wide range of theoretical arguments have been considered in explaining variation in the size of government, most explanations can be grouped into two broad categories (Lowery and Berry 1983). On one hand the *responsive government* explanations, which suggest that the size of the public sector is best explained by the preferences for government goods and services in the mass public. Here government size is seen as a reflection of the level of government activity (and the associated costs of that level of activity) that is preferred by some aggregation of mass preferences, often as represented in the preferences of the median voter. On the other hand, the *excessive government* explanations suggest that the growth in the size of the public sector is a function of action by government officials to expand the size of government beyond what the mass public would prefer. Scholarly advocates of excessive government explanations paint a less benevolent view of the public sector, suggesting that government officials use a combination of political power, deception, or obfuscation to secure greater support for government programs than would normally be supported by voters.

Public-sector employees play a major role in some of the excessive government theories.¹ For instance, Niskanen (1971) proposes what has been termed the *bureau information monopoly* theory, in which he contends that government bureaucrats are motivated by self-interest to seek larger budgets for their government agencies. According to Niskanen, public-sector employees use their near-monopoly over politically relevant information to press political decision-makers for large budgets. In Niskanen's formulation, most of the influence exerted by

bureaucrats takes place in institutional settings, such as congressional committee hearings and other legislative-bureaucratic interactions.

Alternatively, other scholars have suggested that there is an electoral mechanism for translating the relative preferences of government employees into their preferred size of the public sector. The *bureau voting* theory suggests that government bureaucrats are more liberal and pro-spending than other citizens, that they are more likely to turn out to vote, and that they show a greater propensity to cast votes for left-leaning parties and candidates who, presumably, are more supportive of an expanded public sector (Sears and Citrin 1982; Blais and Dion 1990; Blais, Blake, and Dion 1997; Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud 1991a; Corey and Garand 2002). The implication is that government employees constitute a larger share of the electorate than of the general population, and this gives them disproportionate influence over electoral outcomes and, ultimately, over elected officials (Blair 2003). Scholars have uncovered discernible evidence to support this theoretical argument, in both the United States (Lewis 1990; Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud 1991a; Corey and Garand 2002) and Western industrial democracies (Blais, Blake, and Dion 1991; Blake 1991; Jensen, Sum, and Flynn 2009).

In this chapter we build on previous research to provide an updated evaluation of the bureau voting theory. The lion's share of previous research on the bureau voting theory was conducted during the 1990s, and it is arguably time to revisit the empirical support for this theory using more recent survey data. Specifically, we ask whether government bureaucrats are more likely to cast votes for left-leaning political parties and candidates – i.e., those who typically favour an expanded public sector and greater government spending. Our approach here is explicitly comparative. In order to explore these research questions, we use survey data from a variety of sources in the United States, Canada, and other Western industrial democracies. These data sets include the American National Election Study (2004, 2008), the Canadian Election Study (2008), and the World Values Survey (2005). The results of our analyses provide a comparative, cross-national test of hypotheses about political attitudes and behaviour among public-sector employees that are derived from the bureau voting theory.

What Do We (Think We) Know?

The scholarly literature has generally provided fairly strong support for the bureau voting theory, though there is no consensus about the

degree to which government employees differ from other citizens in their political attitudes and behaviour. Much of the early work on bureaucratic attitudes focused on senior executives, both in the United States (Aberbach and Rockman 1976; Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981; Dolan 2002) and in Western democracies (Putnam 1973). This is the very group of bureaucrats that draws the attention of Niskanen, since these bureaucrats are in positions of authority in government departments and agencies. In early research, scholars did not directly explore a full range of attitude differences between senior executives and the non-bureaucracy mass public; rather, that work tends to focus on work responsibilities, perceptions of political and bureaucratic processes, and demographic attributes. Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman (1981) indeed find a left-leaning tendency in the political attitudes of senior executives in the United States, though in a more recent work Dolan (2002) finds that American senior executives are significantly less likely than the general public to support greater spending in a variety of policy areas.

Public-sector employees are a much more diverse group than senior executives, since government employment covers a wide range of occupations, salary levels, and work responsibilities. Studies that are based on large-scale surveys of the mass public and that differentiate public-sector employees and other individuals are more likely to find support for the bureau voting model. In the United States, Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud (1991a, 1991b) find considerable support for the idea that public-sector employees differ from their civilian counterparts in their political attitudes and behaviours. Using data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) from 1982, 1984, and 1986, they find that government employees are generally more likely to hold more liberal attitudes, hold more favourable views towards Democrats and liberal political figures, and support spending in some selected policy areas. Moreover, Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud (1991a) find that public-sector employees are substantially more likely to turn out to vote; the differences in turnout rates for government employees and other citizens range from 9% to 22% across years and races for different offices. This finding of higher turnout rates for public-sector employees is reinforced by Corey and Garand (2002), who find that public-sector employees are significantly more likely to turn out during the 1996 American national elections. Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud (1991a) also find that bureaucrats are significantly more likely to vote for Democratic candidates, presumably as a reflection of greater willingness to

support more liberal candidates. Finally, Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud (1991b) use data from the 1982 ANES to consider differences in attitudes and behaviour among federal government employees, state and local government employees, and the mass public; they find support for the bureau voting theory among both federal and state-local government employees, though the behaviour and attitudes of state and local bureaucrats are more in line with expectations from the bureau voting model than those of federal government employees.

In cross-national research, scholars have also found support for the bureau voting theory. Perhaps the most important comparative work on the attitudes and behaviour of government bureaucrats is by Blais and Dion (1991), who collected a series of essays assessing empirical support for the budget-maximizing behaviour by public-sector bureaucrats. Blake (1991) finds support for the view that public-sector employees in Canada, Norway, Sweden, and the United States are more likely to stake out a position to the left of other citizens, though controls for union membership tend to depress the effect of government employment by a discernible amount. It is interesting to note that Blake finds the strongest effects of government employment on ideology among those in professional and managerial/technical occupations, while individuals in other occupational categories hold relatively indistinct political views based on whether or not they work for the public sector. Regarding voting behaviour, Blais, Blake, and Dion (1991) find that government employees are significantly more likely to support left-leaning political parties and candidates in Australia, Great Britain, Japan, and the Netherlands, while little support is found to support this assertion for Germany and Switzerland. For other countries (i.e., Canada, Denmark, France, and the United States), the results are somewhat ambiguous. More recently, Jensen, Sum, and Flynn (2009) explore the degree to which public-sector employment affects ideology, turnout, and vote choice in eighteen Western democracies. Their findings suggest strong evidence of government employment effects in the aggregate, though when they specify country-specific effects of government employment they find that relatively few countries simultaneously exhibit strong support for the ideology, turnout, and vote choice components of the bureau voting theory. Interestingly, Jensen, Sum, and Flynn find little evidence that unionized government employees differ from their non-unionized counterparts in the attitudes and behaviours.

Overall, it appears that there is moderately strong evidence that government employees differ in predictable ways from other citizens.

Although there is (1) variation in support for the three components of the bureau voting theory across countries and (2) sometimes inconsistent levels of support among the three major components of the bureau voting theory within countries, the evidence in favour of the theory is sufficiently strong to support the extension of this research program to cover a more recent time frame.

Bureaucrats and the Public Sector

Why should bureaucrats be budget maximizers, if indeed they are? More specifically, why should government employees be more likely than other citizens to hold left-leaning views, support greater government spending, exhibit higher turnout rates, and vote for left-leaning candidates?

Niskanen's Bureau Information Monopoly Theory

We begin with Niskanen's (1971) view that government bureaucrats are rational self-interested actors, and their support of expanded agency budgets is derived from their self-interest. For Niskanen, public-sector bureaucrats seek to maximize agency budgets in order to achieve any number of goals, including higher salaries, flexibility in policymaking, and ease of bureaucratic management, among other things. Simply, Niskanen suggests that higher budgets bring bureaucrats greater personal reward and greater ease and flexibility in conducting their jobs. Not only are bureaucrats more likely to increase their personal salaries and benefits when funds are readily available, their jobs are also made easier by having department or agency budgets that permit them to hire adequate personnel, purchase equipment and supplies, and administer department programs. Government bureaucrats are also often strong adherents of the policy goals of their home agencies; bureaucrats who advocate for their agency policy mission – Downs (1967) refers to these bureaucrats as zealots and, to some extent, advocates – will support increased budgets for their agencies as a means of carrying out these policy goals in the strongest possible way. Finally, in more recent work Niskanen (1991) focuses attention on government bureaucrats' efforts to secure adequate discretionary budgets, though even here public-sector employees likely express a preference for expanded agency budgets in order to create discretionary funds within the overall agency budget.

How do government bureaucrats achieve their goal of budget maximization, if indeed they do? Niskanen points to the role of informational

monopolies in helping government employees to make a case for larger budgets. Public-sector bureaucrats are intimately familiar with the workings of their agencies and departments, as well as the clients with whom they are dealing, the resources necessary to fulfil agency goals, and what is necessary to satisfy personal self-interest goals. This information is far less readily available to political decision makers, most of whom must be policy generalists who cannot invest the time, energy, and resources necessary to compete with government bureaucrats over the operation of their departments and agencies. The result is that bureaucrats have a strong information advantage over elected officials when they are providing advice through legislative committee hearings and other forms of legislative-executive contact.

Bureau Voting Theory

An alternative mechanism through which government employees can affect government spending is found in the electoral arena. If government employees are more likely to (1) support more liberal, pro-spending policies, (2) cast votes for candidates who promote liberal, pro-spending policies, and (3) turn out on election day, they can shift the position of the median voter to the left and hence influence government policy related to spending in a liberal direction.² Hence budget maximization – or at least budget expansion – can take place through other processes and without the information monopolies in political institutions envisioned by Niskanen.

Of course, government employees are a diverse group, and by no means can one assume that all government bureaucrats behave in the manner suggested by the bureau voting theory. Clearly, public-sector employees do not comprise a single-minded monolith. Rather, there will be variation in the attitudes and behaviours of public-sector employees, just as there is variation in the attitudes and behaviours of other citizens. However, the bureau voting theory does not require a monolithic group of government bureaucrats marching in lockstep to the polls. As the attitudes and behaviours of the average government employee deviates from those of other citizens, bureaucrats become an electoral force to be reckoned with and increase their influence over elected officials by shifting them to the left (Blair 2003).

What explains the possible differences in attitudes and behaviours for public-sector employees and other citizens? Following Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud, we suggest that there are two possible processes

at work. First, attitudinal and behavioural differences can be explained by *selection*, whereby individuals who are predisposed towards an active government and liberal policies are more likely to seek a career that takes them into government employment. If someone perceives that an active government is necessary to protect the environment, alleviate poverty, teach public-school children, and direct the economy (among many other things), it is more likely that this person would seek a career in government service as a means of furthering those policy goals. Hence the selection model would predict that individuals who seek careers in government will be different in their political attitudes and behaviours from those who seek other careers. This means that differences between government employees and others would be observed early in their career cycles.

Second, attitudinal and behaviour differences can be explained by organizational *socialization*, whereby individuals enter into government service with political predispositions that are similar to those of other individuals but that over time they are socialized by their employing government agencies into pro-government, pro-spending dispositions. Socialization can occur as a result of explicit indoctrination, whereby the messages coming from agency leadership or from the general organizational culture constantly make clear the need for the agency to secure additional funds to achieve its goals. Alternatively, socialization can occur through an explicit recognition of self-interest as public-sector employees learn that their personal well-being and that of their agencies require expanding budgets over time.

It is important to note that attitudes and behaviours that are consistent with the bureau voting theory can occur as a result of both selection and socialization. Individuals may well select themselves into government service on the basis of their political propensities to support an active government and higher levels of spending, but these propensities may be developed and/or reinforced as individuals work with other, like-minded government employees who come to work for the public sector as a result of their own selection processes.

Data and Methods

In previous research, scholars have often tested the bureau voting theory using survey data collected from large samples drawn from the mass public. In this study, we also use large sample survey data to test one important aspect of the bureau voting theory, that is, whether or

not bureaucrats are more likely to vote for left political parties and candidates. However, unlike previous research we revisit and reassess empirical support for the bureau voting theory using data from several sources in the United States, Canada, and other Western democracies. Our general approach is to combine bivariate and multivariate analyses to draw broad conclusions about the bureau voting theory. We begin by estimating the difference-in-means for government employees and other citizens on attitudinal and behavioural variables for which the bureau voting theory would predict differences. We begin by estimating the difference-in-means for government employees and other citizens on the likelihood that they cast votes for left-leaning political parties and candidates. We then estimate multivariate models that include government employment and various control variables as independent variables; here we explore whether differences in vote choices for government employees and other citizens are observed, even as we control for the effects of other variables expected to be related to our various dependent variables.

Data

In order to test the bureau voting model empirically, it is necessary to have data on voting behaviour as well as on respondents' employment sector (public-sector versus other) and appropriate control variables. Fortunately, appropriate data are available from several sources: (1) for the United States, the American National Election Study (ANES) surveys for 2004 and 2008; (2) for Canada, the 2008 Canadian Election Study (CES); (3) for Western industrial democracies, the 2005 World Values Survey (WVS). For the World Values Survey, we use data from the United States, Italy, Canada, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, and Germany.³

Analytical Strategy

As noted, the bureau voting theory suggests that government employees are more likely than other citizens to vote for liberal candidates. At a basic level, empirical support for the bureau voting theory requires only that we find that the bivariate relationship between government employment and liberal attitudes, turnout, and voting for liberal candidates is positive and significant. Hence we present here the bivariate test of the core hypothesis developed from the bureau voting theory,

and we do so comparatively by using data from the above-mentioned scholarly surveys.

Demonstrating that government employees behave as expected in comparison to other citizens is not the same thing as explaining such difference. In order to explain the differences, we also estimate multivariate models of vote choice that include government employment as the key independent variable, but that are accompanied by other variables that capture individuals' long-standing attributes. With the multivariate models, our goal is to answer a key question: is there something intrinsic about government employment *per se* that socializes individuals from all political stripes and transforms them (or at least some of them) into individuals who are more likely to vote for more liberal candidates, all in comparison to non-bureaucrats who have not had those same government employment experiences? Alternatively, is there selection at work, whereby individuals who tend to vote for liberal candidates are more likely to seek government employment in the first place?

The observation of a simple bivariate relationship between public-sector employment, on one hand, and liberal vote choice, on the other, tells us little about *why* government employees differ from other citizens. Answering the "why" question requires a more detailed and intentional research design than what we propose here. However, we suggest that it is possible to provide a rough, indirect test of these competing explanations of differences between public-sector employees and other individuals. Following Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud (1991a), we contend that we can use a multivariate model to estimate indirectly the degree to which differences between government employees and others are due to government employment *per se* (i.e., that individuals shift their political positions or behaviours as the result of public-sector employment) or to long-term dispositions of individuals that predispose them to government employment in the first place.

Our logic is as follows. We include in our models a set of independent variables that represent individuals' attributes of long standing. This includes political attitudes (e.g., partisan identification, ideological orientation) that are developed through socialization and that tend to remain fairly stable over time, as well as fixed or relatively stable personal attributes (e.g., gender, race, education, social class) that are generally found to be associated with political attitudes and behaviour. If the effect of government employment remains intact after we control for the effects of these long-standing attributes, we suggest that

government employment per se is likely affecting individuals' values on the dependent variable. In other words, if controlling for the effects of variables that should affect political attitudes and behaviour at the time that individuals choose their career path (i.e., the selection stage) does not diminish the coefficient for government employment, it would appear that government employment has an independent effect on their attitudes and behaviour. On the other hand, if the effect of government employment disappears once the effects of these long-standing attributes are taken into account, it would appear that it is these attributes that explain the observed bivariate government employment effect.

Of course, in testing the selection and socialization explanations of public-sector employment effects, there is no substitute for a longitudinal study that tracks political attitudes and behaviour for government employees and other citizens from their pre-employment period into their employment period. Yet short of having such longitudinal data, we can do the best that we can with existing data to suggest an indirect test of these explanations.

Variables and Measurement

A detailed summary of how our dependent and independent variables are measured can be found in appendices 1–3. Here we briefly describe the variables used in our analysis.

Independent Variable: Government Employment

In each survey we are able to distinguish public-sector employees from other citizens, and we do so here by creating a variable coded 1 for respondents who are government employees, and 0 for respondents who do not designate themselves as government employees. This is the traditional measurement approach in previous studies on differences in the political attitudes and behaviour of government employees and other citizens. Given the arguments that we make regarding the bureau voting model, we expect that government employees will be more likely to support candidates affiliated with liberal political parties.

We do note, however, two shortcomings with this measure. First, this variable fails to capture fully the self-interest component of government employment, primarily because the surveys on which we rely do not include data on the occupational status of respondents' spouses or

other family members. Individuals married to a government employee may be affected, albeit less directly, by the same self-interest concerns that affect their government employee spouses. Second, this variable lacks specificity of respondents' department or agency job assignments or, in federal systems, the level of government (federal, state, or local) for which the respondent works. A public-sector employee who is a public school teacher may have a configuration of interests that are different from other public-sector employees working for, say, the state Department of Transportation, the federal Department of the Treasury, or a local welfare agency. Unfortunately, standard survey data sets do not include specific questions to measure either (1) whether the employees work for the federal, state, or local level, or (2) which agency or department employs the respondent.

Dependent Variable: Vote Choice

One of the core hypotheses for the bureau voting theory is that public-sector employees should be more likely than other citizens to vote for candidates and political parties that are on the liberal side of the ideological spectrum – i.e., parties and candidates who are likely to be more amenable to an expanded and active public sector. Hence government employment should be positively related to voting for liberal candidates or parties and negatively related to voting for conservative candidates or parties.

In a comparative project on vote choice, one must account for the variety of party and candidate choices with which voters are confronted. In the United States, this is relatively straightforward. For the 2004 and 2008 elections, we code the vote choice variable as 1 for respondents who reported that they voted for the Republican candidates, and 0 for respondents who reported that they voted for the Democratic candidates. We explore the effect of government employment on voting for president, the U.S. House, and the U.S. Senate. We hypothesize that the coefficient for public-sector employment in a logit model of vote choice will be negative, indicating that government employees are less likely to support Republican candidates.

For other countries the task of estimating a model of vote choice that compares government employees and other individuals is made more complicated by the multiple viable choices available to voters. For the CES and WVS data sets, we create a nominal variable that codes vote intentions or party voting preferences for all parties on the ballot. We

then estimate a multinomial logit model to test the hypothesis that public-sector bureaucrats will be less likely to vote for conservative parties and/or candidates. We identify the most conservative major party in each country using mean self-placements on the liberal-conservative scale for those voting for each party; the most conservative party becomes the baseline (comparison) group in a multinomial logit model. Hence the coefficients for public-sector employment should be positive, particularly for comparisons involving more liberal parties. The positive coefficient would indicate that there is a greater propensity for government employees (than for other individuals) to cast their votes for more liberal parties and/or candidates in comparison to the most conservative party.

Independent (Control) Variables

As noted, we include in our basic multivariate models a variety of control variables, most of which represent long-standing political attitudes and other attributes. The variables included in our models differ across data sets (primarily as the result of data availability) and for different dependent variables (primarily as the result of theoretical considerations). Not all models are identical, but we suggest that our multivariate models permit us to estimate the effect of government employment on vote choice, our dependent variable.

In all of our vote choice models we include four common independent variables: (1) ideological self-identification, or left-right placement; (2) education; (3) income; and (4) gender. Here again, these variables are expected to be related to vote choice in a variety of electoral contexts. We also include in selected models other variables available in specific data sets, including economic evaluations, race and ethnicity, social class, church attendance and religiosity, and union membership.

Empirical Results

We now turn to our empirical tests of the vote choice component of the bureau voting theory. The bureau voting theory suggests that government employees will be more likely to lend their electoral support to liberal parties and candidates. Liberal parties and candidates are likely to adopt policy positions that favour an expanded public sector and more active government and that will, hence, be more generous to public-sector employees (Blais, Blake, and Dion 1997). Therefore, we

would expect government employees to demonstrate a greater propensity to vote for (or express an intention to vote for) liberal parties and candidates.

We begin with data from the 2004 and 2008 ANES surveys. In table 8.1 we report the proportion of government employees and other citizens who voted for the Republican candidate for president, U.S. House, and U.S. Senate in the 2004 and 2008 elections. Because the dependent variable is measured in the Republican direction, we posit that the coefficients reported in this table will be negative, indicating that government employees are less likely to support Republican candidates. As one can readily see, there is strong support for this hypothesis. In 2004, only 34.4% of government employees supported George Bush for president, compared to 55.4% of other citizens; this 21% difference is highly significant ($t = -5.05$). We also find that public-sector employees are more likely than other citizens to vote for Republican House candidates ($b = -0.155$, $t = -3.48$) and Republican Senate candidates ($b = -0.114$, $t = -2.10$). For 2008, the differences in voting behaviour for government employees and other citizens are not quite as stark, though there is a

Table 8.1 Difference in Means for Government Employees and Other Respondents on Vote Choice in the United States (2004, 2008), Various Data Sets

Variable	Means		Difference		Multivariate logit results	
	Government employees	Others	Difference	T-ratio	b	t-ratio
American National Election Study (2004)						
Republican presidential vote	0.344	0.554	-0.210	-5.05***	-0.248	-0.70
Republican House vote	0.348	0.504	-0.155	-3.48***	0.470	1.34
Republican Senate vote	0.368	0.482	-0.114	-2.10*	0.396	1.02
American National Election Study (2008)						
Republican presidential vote	0.461	0.397	-0.064	-1.83*	0.050	0.18
Republican House vote	0.368	0.484	-0.116	-3.09***	-0.323	-1.20
Republican Senate vote	0.437	0.499	-0.062	-1.23	-0.087	0.23

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

government employment effect for both presidential voting ($b = -0.064$, $t = -1.83$) and House voting ($b = -0.116$, $t = -3.09$). We note, however, that any government employment effects disappear in a full multivariate logit model, suggesting that there is not anything intrinsic about government employment per se that creates the greater propensity of government employees to vote for Democratic candidates. Rather, the occupational voting gap appears to be due to the effects of other variables such as partisanship, ideology, and demographic and socioeconomic attributes.

For Canada, we have data from the 2008 CES, and we again find some support for the vote choice component of the bureau voting theory. Government employees are significantly less likely than other Canadians to report that they voted for the Conservative Party in 2008, and they are more likely to have voted for the New Democratic Party (NDP), Bloc Québécois, and the Green Party. The χ^2 value for voting differences is highly significant ($\chi^2 = 20.08$, $p < 0.001$). We also report results from a multinomial logit model that includes government employment and other control variables as independent variables (see table 8.2). Here we find that the differences between government employees and other citizens disappear in the face of statistical controls, as is the case for the United States.

We can also test this component of the bureau voting theory using comparative cross-national survey data. The WVS includes a vote intention question:

If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote? Just call out the number on this card. If you are uncertain, which party appeals to you most?

On the basis of responses to this question in each of eight countries for which this question was asked in the WVS, we code a nominal vote intention variable. We compare the distribution of party vote preferences for government employees and other citizens in each country, and we also estimate a multinomial logit model that includes government employment and other control variables. We use the most conservative major party, as determined by mean ideological positions for individuals who state a preference for each respective party, as the baseline category in our multinomial logit model.

Table 8.2 Party Vote Preferences for Government Employees and Other Respondents in Canada, Canadian Election Study (2008)

Country / party	%		Pearson's χ^2	Government employment Multinomial logit coefficients	
	Government employees	Others		b	t-ratio
Canadian Election Study (2008)					
Liberal Party	31.40	31.80	20.08***	-0.248	-0.73
Conservative Party	30.30	38.90		-	-
New Democratic Party (NDP)	17.20	14.20		-0.767	-1.82
Bloc Québécois	15.30	11.30		-0.039	-0.09
Green Party	5.80	3.70		0.585	-0.98
Total	100	100			
Group N	(522)	(1800)			

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

The results from these analyses are presented in table 8.3. As one can see, there is considerable evidence that government employees differ from other citizens in their party vote intention preferences. For six of the eight countries, there is a significant difference in vote preferences for public-sector employees and other citizens. In Australia government employees are much less likely to support the Liberal Party and more likely to support the Australian Labor Party and the Greens; taken as a whole, these differences are statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 32.40$, $p < 0.001$). In Canada respondents who are employed in the public sector are considerably less likely to support the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties but are more likely to express a voting preference for the NDP and Bloc Québécois; here again, these differences are statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 19.59$, $p < 0.001$). In Finland most of the differences for particular political parties are small, but collectively these differences achieve conventional levels of statistical

Table 8.3 Party Vote Intention Preferences for Government Employees and Other Respondents in Various Countries, 2005 World Values Survey

Country / party	%		Pearson's χ^2	Government employment Multinomial logit coefficients	
	Government employees	Others		b	t-ratio
Australia (N = 1330)					
Australian Labor Party	35.7	29.9	32.40***	0.645	3.41***
Liberal Party	36.8	51.6	—	—	—
National Party	3.1	3.1	—	0.793	1.74*
Greens	13.0	6.6	—	0.896	3.23***
Australian Democrats	4.3	3.1	—	0.815	2.14*
Independents	0.9	0.7	—	0.259	0.34
One Nation	3.1	1.5	—	1.383	2.66**
Family First	3.1	3.6	—	0.506	1.17
Total	100	100	—	—	—
Group N	(353)	(977)	—	—	—
Canada (N = 1703)					
Liberal	24.1	33.7	19.59***	-0.099	-0.41
Progressive Conservative	33.8	37.2	—	—	—
New Democratic Party (NDP)	24.9	18.9	—	0.035	0.13
Bloc Québécois	17.1	10.2	—	0.688	2.32**
Total	100	100	—	—	—
Group N	(245)	(1458)	—	—	—
Finland (N = 778)					
Social Democratic Party	27.0	29.8	10.95***	-0.076	-0.18
Centre Party	25.8	25.5	—	0.254	0.64
National Coalition Party	16.2	18.8	—	—	—

(Continued)

significance. Specifically, by a margin of 17.4% to 9.8%, public-sector employees are more likely than other citizens to lend electoral support to the Green League. In Norway there are several discernible differences in the party vote intentions of public-sector employees and others ($\chi^2 = 50.74$, $p < 0.001$). The former are more likely to support the Socialist Left Party (16.2% to 6.3%) and the Labour Party (38.4% to 32.8%) and are less likely to support the Progressive Party (14.5% to 21.8%) and the Conservative Party (12.5% and 21.4%). Similarly, in Sweden government employees differ significantly in their distribution party vote intentions ($\chi^2 = 37.03$, $p < 0.001$). Swedish government employees are more likely to support the Social Demokraterna (37.4% to 31.0%) and Vänsterpartiet (10.3% to 3.5%) but are much less likely to support the Moderata Samlingspartiet (19.9% to 36.6%). Finally, there are significant differences in the distribution of party vote intentions between government employees and other citizens in Switzerland ($\chi^2 = 27.58$, $p < 0.001$). Swiss public-sector bureaucrats are more likely to state a vote preference for the Grüne Partei (22.2% to 12.7%) and the Sozial Demokratische Partei (27.3% to 23.0%) but are less likely to prefer the Schweizerische Volkspartei (9.5% to 19.9%) and the Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei (17.7% to 22.1%).

The only two countries for which there is not a difference between government employees and other citizens are Germany and the United States. In these two cases there are minor differences in party vote intentions, but they are not of sufficient magnitude to achieve standard significance levels.

In the final two columns of table 8.3 we report the multinomial logit coefficients for the government employment variable in each country. Once we control for the effects of other variables related to party vote intentions, we find that differences between government employees and other citizens disappear in some cases and not in others. Indeed, for five of the eight countries in our analysis, there is at least one significant multinomial logit coefficient for the government employment variable. For instance, in Australia there are strong, significant government employment effects, even after one controls for other variables related to vote choice; in comparison to the Liberal Party, the (excluded) baseline category, government employees are more likely to vote for more liberal parties the Australian Labor Party ($b = 0.645$, $t = 3.41$), the National Party ($b = 0.793$, $t = 1.74$), the Greens ($b = 0.896$, $t = 3.23$), the Australian Democrats ($b = 0.815$, $t = 2.14$), and One Nation

Table 8.3 (Continued)

Country / party	%			Government employment Multinomial logit coefficients		t-ratio
	Government employees	Others	Pearson's χ^2	b		
Left Alliance	6.3	7.4		0.491		0.81
Swedish Peoples' Part of Finland	0.6	1.5		-0.748		-0.63
Green League	17.4	9.8		0.395		0.85
True Finns	1.2	3.3		-0.240		-0.27
Christian Democrats	5.4	3.9		0.868		1.33
Total	100	100				
Group N	(167)	(611)				
Germany (N = 1387)						
Christlich- Demokratische Union	35.4	36.6	10.24			-
Sozial Demokratische Partei	35.4	31.8		0.239		1.18
Freie Demokratische Partei	5.4	6.3		-0.372		-0.99
Die Gruenen	6.9	9.7		-0.254		-0.76
Partei des Demokratischen Sozialis	16.3	12.5		-0.121		-0.41
Republikaner, NDP	0.7	3.1		-0.747		-0.75
Total	100	100				
Group N	(277)	(1110)				
Norway (N = 894)						
Labour Party	38.4	32.8	50.74***	0.203		0.71
Progressive Party	14.5	21.8		0.137		0.46
Conservative Party	12.5	21.4		-		-
Christian Democratic Party	5.4	2.8		0.618		1.26
Communist Party	2.3	0.6		1.004		1.01

(Continued)

Country / party	%			Government employment Multinomial logit coefficients		t-ratio
	Government employees	Others	Pearson's χ^2	b		
Center Party	7.1	7.6		0.106		0.29
Socialist Left Party	16.2	6.3		1.142		2.90**
Liberals	3.7	6.8		-0.392		-0.92
Total	100	100				
Group N	(352)	(542)				
Sweden (N = 766)						
Centerpartiet	5.0%	4.1%	37.03***	0.754		1.74*
Folkpartiet	11.9%	13.8%		0.389		1.28
Kristdemokraterna	4.6%	3.5%		0.571		1.15
Miljopartiet	10.9%	7.5%		0.684		1.65*
Moderata	19.9%	36.6%		-		-
Samlingspartiet						
Sozial Demokraterna	37.4%	31.0%		0.468		1.37
Vansterpartiet	10.3%	3.5%		1.390		2.73**
Total	100%	100%				
Group N	(302)	(464)				
Switzerland (N = 818)						
Freisinnig- Demokratische Partei	17.7	22.1	27.58***	0.344		1.00
Sozial Demokratische Partei	27.2	23.0		0.320		0.82
Christlich- Demokratische Volkspartei	12.7	13.6		0.349		0.91
Schweizerische Volkspartei	9.5	19.9		-		-
Grüne Partei	22.2	12.7		0.679		1.74*
Liberale Partei	2.3	2.4		0.595		0.94
Evangelische Volkspartei	3.2	1.8		1.375		2.03*

Table 8.3 (Continued)

Country / party	%		Pearson's χ^2	b	t-ratio
	Government employees	Others			
Partei der Arbeit	2.7	1.2		0.266	0.30
Christlichsoziale Partei	1.8	1.3		0.909	1.21
Lega Dei Ticinesi	0.9	2.0		-0.517	-0.47
Total	100	100			
Group N	(221)	(597)			
United States (N = 1100)					
Republican Party	36.4	35.3	0.123	-	-
Democratic Party	45.8	45.6		-0.053	-0.19
Independent	17.8	19.0		0.026	0.08
Total	100	100			
Group N	(118)	(982)			

Note: For the multinomial logit results, the omitted (comparison) group is the most conservative of the major political parties in each given political system.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

($b = 1.383$, $t = 2.66$). For Canada, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland, government employees are more likely than other individuals to support at least one party over the most conservative major party. On the other hand, for Finland, Germany, and the United States, none of the coefficients for the government employee variable achieve statistical significance.

The bottom line is that government employees tend to support more liberal political parties and candidates. The empirical evidence to support this claim is not uniform – in some political systems or specific elections this expected pattern is not observed. However, there are enough differences in the voting behaviour of public-sector employees and other citizens to suggest support for this component of

the bureau voting theory. Simply, in most cases government employees are more predisposed to support liberal parties and candidates than are other citizens.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to reassess the degree of empirical support for the bureau voting theory. As noted, this theory attributes growth in the size of government to the pursuit of increased spending by self-interested government bureaucrats who further their personal and policy goals through the electoral arena. The bureau voting theory contends that government employees are more liberal in their attitudes, more likely to vote in elections, and more likely to cast their votes for liberal candidates who will support an expanded public sector. The candidates who benefit from having the support of this relatively liberal, high-participation group become strong supporters of growth in the size of the public sector, and subsequently government activity and budgets increase over time. This theory can be contrasted with Niskanen's bureau information monopoly theory, a close cousin that portrays government growth as a function of the willingness of self-interested bureaucrats to use their monopoly of information in institutional settings to persuade elected officials to support larger budgets.

With a few notable exceptions, much of the research finding support for this theory was conducted during the 1990s (Garand, Parkhurst, and Seoud, 1991; Blais and Dion 1991). In our view it is important to re-evaluate empirical support for this theory in light of the availability of more recent data appropriate for testing the basic contours of the theory. We use data from the American National Election Study (2004 and 2008), the Canadian Election Study (2008), and the World Values Survey (2005) to provide a comparative test of this theory across up to sixteen countries.

On the basis of our review of the empirical evidence, we can say that the bureau voting theory stands up very well to additional empirical scrutiny. We find fairly strong evidence that government employees are more likely to cast votes for parties and candidates that are on the liberal side of the ideological spectrum. In most countries there is a discernible government employment effect on vote choice, with government employees showing a greater propensity than other citizens

to oppose conservative parties and candidates and support their more liberal counterparts. These effects often remain in multivariate models that include a variety of control variables.

What Do We Not Know?

The research findings reported in this chapter go a long way towards confirming previous empirical support for the bureau voting theory. Yet there is a great deal that we still do not know about this theory and the processes that underlie it. What are the remaining unanswered questions in this research stream?

First, while we find general support for the three components of the bureau voting theory, the level of empirical support for this theory is not uniform across countries and time. What explains this spatial and temporal variation in the applicability of the bureau voting theory? To be fair, we do include country fixed effects in our pooled models, but this is no substitute for careful theoretical thinking about the sources of variation in government employment effects. Is there something about differences in the meaning of government bureaucratic service across different countries? Does variation in how government employees are selected have an effect? Are there other institutional or cultural factors that influence the relationship between public-sector employment and political attitudes and behaviour?

Second, we would be the first to admit that previous research on the bureau voting theory has been based on the rather crude survey instrument that simply differentiates government employees from other citizens in binary fashion. This is clearly an oversimplification of the world. Public-sector employees are not monolithic; rather, they differ in many important ways – e.g., the agencies or departments for which they work, the level of government (i.e., federal, state, local), their occupational prestige, educational and other qualifications. To place all types of government employees into one category prevents scholars from developing more detailed, nuanced interpretations and tests of the bureau voting theory. There may be general expectations drawn from the bureau voting theory that applies to all or most government bureaucrats, but there may also be other expectations that are specific to more detailed categories of bureaucrats. For instance, public school teachers may have stronger views towards spending on public education than, say, someone working for the federal Environmental Protection Agency, who may actually be more concerned about spending

on the environment. In addition, bureaucratic self-interest may not be limited to individuals who work for the public sector. It is possible that individuals who have retired from government service (and who have hence had some of the same socialization experiences as current government employees) or who have a spouse or other close family member working for the public sector will behave in a way similar to that of current public-sector employees. It is important for scholars to develop more detailed survey instruments that measure various aspects of government employees' work experiences and other attributes related to their self-interest.

Third, considerably more work is needed on the competing processes that can create differences between government employees and other citizens. We have already mentioned self-selection and socialization, which represent two possible processes that generate the government employment effect. Do public-sector employees differ from other citizens because the agencies and departments for which they work socialize or indoctrinate them into a perception of self-interest that results in a specific set of attitudes and behaviours? Or are different kinds of individuals (i.e., liberals, advocates of active government, those with a strong sense of political participation or policy activism) drawn to government employment? Or is there a combination of these two processes at work? We have tried to provide an indirect test of these two alternate processes by estimating multivariate models that include a wide range of control variables, including variables that represent long-standing attitudes and socio-economic/demographic attributes. Yet such tests are only indirect and are a poor substitute for conducting a longitudinal analysis of individuals prior to the start of their career work lives. For instance, are high school seniors who eventually become government employees somehow different from high school seniors who pursue other career paths in the private or non-profit sectors? Or are future government employees a random draw from the population of high school seniors and develop their left-leaning attitudes and behaviour when they are socialized by their employing agencies? We contend that creating a definitive picture of the processes that generate differences between government employees and other individuals requires the development of a longitudinal research design that tracks individuals from their pre-employment to employment periods.

Finally, little is known about the working mechanisms underlying how bureau voting theory is translated into political outcomes. If government employees are more likely to hold liberal attitudes, cast

votes in elections, and vote for liberal candidates, how does this matter? How, exactly, do bureaucrats use the electoral process to influence public spending and government policymaking and, subsequently, increase the size of the public sector? For instance, we are intrigued by the possibility that government employees represent a relatively coherent interest that can affect the behaviour of elected officials through their ideological or policy positions, their greater propensity to vote, and their greater likelihood of voting for liberal candidates who are more likely to support an active government. A case in point is the work of Blair (2003), who explores the degree to which the roll-call behaviour of U.S. House members is affected by the presence of government employees in their districts. Blair finds that House members are significantly less likely to exhibit spending constraint as the percentage of government employees in their congressional districts increases. We suggest that this finding is consistent with the bureau voting theory, insofar as it appears that House members shift their behaviour in a pro-spending direction as government employees represent a larger share of their district electorates. This is the kind of extension of the bureau voting theory that is important for scholars to consider in future research.

Appendix 1: Description of Variables Used in 2004 and 2008 American National Election Studies

Variable	Description
Government employment	1 = government employee; 0 = otherwise
Republican presidential vote	1 = R voted for Republican presidential candidate; 0 = R voted for Democratic presidential candidate
Republican House vote	1 = R voted for Republican House candidate; 0 = R voted for Democratic House candidate
Republican Senate vote	1 = R voted for Republican Senate candidate; 0 = R voted for Democratic Senate candidate
Partisan identification	7-point partisan identification scale (6 = strong Republican)
Liberal-conservative ideology	7-point liberal-conservative scale (6 = extremely conservative)
Retrospective economic evaluation	Evaluation of national economic performance in past year (4 = much better)
Retrospective unemployment evaluation	Evaluation of national unemployment in past year (4 = much better)

Variable	Description
Working	1 = R is working; 0 = otherwise
Education	Educational attainment (2004: 7 = graduate degree; 2008: years of education completed, ranging from 0 to 17)
Household income	Household income (2004: 23 = high income; 2008: 25 = high income)
Gender	1 = R is a woman; 0 = R is a man
Black	1 = R is black; 0 = otherwise
Hispanic	1 = R is Hispanic; 0 = otherwise
Asian	1 = R is Asian; 0 = otherwise

Appendix 2: Description of Variables Used in 2005 World Values Survey

Variable	Description
Government employment	1 = government employee; 0 = otherwise
Party preference: USA	1 = Republican; 2 = Democrat; 3 = Independent
Party preference: Australia	1 = Australian Labor Party; 2 = Liberal Party; 3 = National Party; 4 = Greens; 5 = Australian Democrats; 6 = Independent; 7 = One Nation; 8 = Family First
Party preference: Canada	1 = Liberal Party; 2 = Progressive Conservative Party; 3 = New Democratic Party; 4 = Bloc Québécois
Party preference: Finland	1 = Social Democratic Party; 2 = Centre Party; 3 = National Coalition Party; 4 = Left Alliance; 5 = Swedish People's Party of Finland; 6 = Green League; 7 = True Finns; 8 = Christian Democrats
Party preference: Germany	1 = Christlich-Demokratische Union; 2 = Sozial Demokratische Partei; 3 = Freie Demokratische Partei; 4 = Die Grünen; 5 = Partei des Demokratischen Sozialis; 6 = Republikaner, NDP
Party preference: Norway	1 = Labour Party; 2 = Progressive Party; 3 = Conservative Party; 4 = Christian Democratic Party; 5 = Communist Party; 6 = Center; Party; 7 = Socialist Left Party; 8 = Liberals
Party preference: Sweden	1 = Centerpartiet; 2 = Folkpartiet; 3 = Kristdemokraterna; 4 = Miljöpartiet; 5 = Moderata Samlingspartiet; 6 = Social Demokraterna; 7 = Vänsterpartiet

(Continued)

Appendix 2: (Continued)

Variable	Description
Party preference: Switzerland	1 = Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei; 2 = Sozial Demokratische Partei; 3 = Christlich-Demokratische Volkspartei; 4 = Schweizerische Volkspartei; 5 = Grüne Partei Liberale Partei; 6 = Evangelische Volkspartei; 7 = Partei der Arbeit; 8 = Christlichsoziale Partei; 9 = Lega Del Ticinesi
Liberal-Conservative ideology	10-point ideology scale (10 = strong conservative; ...; 0 = strong liberal)
Union membership	1 = union member; 0 = otherwise
Age	Respondent's age
Age ²	Respondent's age squared
Education	Education level in 9 categories
Religiosity	1 = R is religious; 0 = R is not a religious person or is an atheist
Church attendance	Church attendance (0–6 scale); 6 = more than once a week; ...; 0 = never
Upper class	1 = upper class; 0 = otherwise
Upper middle class	1 = upper middle class; 0 = otherwise
Lower middle class	1 = lower middle class; 0 = otherwise
Working class	1 = working class; 0 = otherwise

Appendix 3: Description of Variables used in the 2008 Canadian Election Study

Variable	Description
Government employment	1 = government employee; 0 = otherwise
Vote choice	For which party did you vote in the 2008 federal election? (0 = Other parties-base category; 1 = Liberal Party; 2 = Progressive Conservative Party; 3 = New Democratic Party; 4 = Bloc Québécois; 5 = Green Party)
Liberal-conservative ideology	Ideological self-identification (0 = extreme left; ...; 10 = extreme right)
Gender	Gender of respondent (0 = female; 1 = male)
Age	Age of respondent
Age ²	Age squared

Variable	Description
Satisfaction with democracy	Satisfaction with the way democracy works in Canada (0 = not at all; ...; 3 = very satisfied)
Interest in federal elections	How interested are you in the federal election? (0 = not at all; ...; 10 = a great deal)
Interest in politics	How interested are you in politics in general? (0 = not at all; ...; 10 = a great deal)
Sociotropic economic evaluations	Has the economy got better last year? (–1 = worse; 0 = the same; 1 = better)
Pocketbook economic evaluations	Are you better off financially than a year ago? (–1 = worse; 0 = the same; 1 = better)
Union membership	Do you belong to the union? (0 = no; 1 = yes)
Married	Marital status (1 = married or partnered; 0 = single, separated, divorced, or widowed)
Employment status	1 = work with pay, i.e., full time or part-time; 0 = without pay, i.e., retired, student, unemployed, etc.)
Ideology extremism	0–5 scale: 0 = neutral or moderate; ...; 5 = extreme left or right.
Education	Years of education
Family income	Family income (in thousands)

NOTES

- 1 Hereafter we use public-sector employees, government employees, and (government) bureaucrats interchangeably.
- 2 Importantly, this theory suggests a central role for both turnout and vote choice, but not always at the same time. This arguably calls for the kind of integrated study of both advocated for in the introduction of this volume.
- 3 Future studies might also employ the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, as highlighted in chapter 9.

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