

**Values Matter:  
A Study of Individual Valuation of Democratic Governance in the Public and  
Private Sectors**

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been a growing debate in the field of public administration over whether public employees are essentially self interested. Public choice theory contends that all people are self-interested utility maximizers, and as a result that public employees would seek to use their position for personal gain. This differs from the traditional rational theory of public administration, which contends that public employees essentially absorb the goals and values of the state to serve the public purpose. This paper uses data from the World Values Survey to compare private and public sector employees in six wealthy democracies in terms of their commitment to democratic values. Findings suggest that public sector employees exhibit a significantly greater commitment to democratic governance than do those in the private sector.

## INTRODUCTION

A much studied, and important question for public administration, is what differences in attitudes about the world might exist between public and private sector employees. This question is integral in how we attempt to reduce corruption, the level of trust we place in public administrators to respect democratic outcomes and at the same time play a necessary role in policymaking, and the extent to which we are willing to privatize public institutions or rely on public private partnerships to get our public business done. While much research has focused on what motivates people to enter into public service, and what differences exist between public and private institutions in terms of basic political views, or desire to help others, not much has been done on support for democratic institutions and governing structures. If we are to depend on a public

bureaucracy to get the people's work done then it is critical that we understand how public employees view the world.

## THEORY

Over the past 30 years, the rise of public choice (also referred to as rational choice) scholarship in the field of Political Science has created a rift between the more traditional Political Science grounded scholars, mostly following the rational school of public administration advanced by Herbert Simon and others, and the more economically oriented public choice scholars. The trend toward public choice dominance in Political Science Departments was noticed by Jonathan Cohn writing for the *New Republic* in 1999 (Cohn 1999), and is perhaps best illustrated by Eleanor Ostrom's new status as the first Political Scientist to win a Nobel Prize in Economics.

Rational theory and rational choice theory do have their commonalities; they both assume that public employees tend to make cost-benefit calculations in terms of their administrative behavior for example. Simon argued that this leads to the public employee either becoming an "Administrative Man" or leaving the organization, while public choice theorists would argue that public employees will engage in utility enhancing behavior as part of their job to enhance their own position either within or outside of the organization. The goals of the organization are not really relevant; it is about the way the organization might serve as a means to achieving personal satisfaction within institutional or legal constraints. Individuals think not about organizational good, but about personal good, and seek to maximize utility to the extent that they are left free to do so. Vincent Ostrom summarizes by saying, "each individual will presume to maximize one's own net

welfare if one takes advantage of the common property or common good at minimum cost to oneself” (Ostrom 1989, 50).

Another strand of public choice thought as it relates to administrative behavior is the concept of budget maximization, which is been most forcefully articulated by William Niskanen. Niskanen presents the self-interest of administrators as analogous to larger budgets for their organization. Budgets are determined as the result of a negotiation between organizations and their sponsor. The bureau attempts to maximize its budget above the minimum cost at which it can supply the service. Niskanen’s central claim as to the motivations of bureaucrats is that government services are “an incidental effect of the incentives and constraints of voters, politicians, and bureaucrats” (Niskanen 2008, 190). In other words, bureaucrats want to deliver the service with as little effort as possible, their incentive is to remain employed and keep the sponsor happy. Bureaucrats, with their pay not tied to the size of the budget the way pay often is tied to profit in the private sector, are concerned primarily about job security. As such, rather than perhaps make some enemies and find extra work for oneself, it is preferred to simply secure larger budgets to keep the sponsor happy. The sponsor may be happier spending less money, but ultimately wants the service to be provided. The bureaucrat does not really care at any fundamental level about the service itself.

Simon’s “Administrative Man” on the other hand, internalizes the goals of the organization as their own, and derives utility from realizing those goals. In this way, the goals of the state become the goals of the public employee under the rational theory. It is not that they cease to be utility maximizers, rather they make rational utility maximizing

decisions to join or remain in the organization, deriving their utility from being an efficient and useful player in the organization (Simon 1957).

Rational theory also holds that organizational values carry down through the organization in private organizations as well, but private organizations have a fundamentally different purpose for being than public ones do, and as such develop different kinds of ethical structures (van der Wal and Huberts 2008). If we think of the democratic state as having a set of goals, built around serving the “will of the people,” then we can say that there is a “democratic ethos” to public organizations in democratic countries, that must be adopted as individual values by those working in the public sector if it is to efficiently carry out its functions.

Simon’s approach was essentially responsive to concerns raised earlier by Woodrow Wilson, who was concerned that an expert dominated bureaucracy would undermine democratic governance. To Wilson, a bureaucracy was essential to carrying out public business, and must be given some leeway to do that, but must be focused on technical efficiency as a means of making sure they didn’t overstep their bounds into areas more appropriately decided through democratic processes (Wilson 1887). Simon created a strong answer to the Wilsonian problem by saying efficiency would come from satisficing employees, and administrators would not overstep their boundaries because they had been conditioned to advance the goals of the organization.

This debate frames a series of questions about the choices that will be made by individual administrators, specifically commitment to democratic institutions and arrangements. If the “Administrative Man” does indeed exist, then his commitment to democratic values should be greater in democratic states than that of the private sector

employee. This might not be the case in authoritarian states where the opposite could be expected as a result of a different set of values dominating the organization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Public choice theory would suggest that self interest and monetary rewards would be the defining reason that individuals join and remain in public organizations as well as dictating their behavior in an organization (Chang and Turnbull 2002). When one considers that public employees perceive their pay to be less than they would be paid in the private sector (Lewis and Frank 2002), this doesn't really seem to hold much water. Similarly, Crewson (1995) found that public employees were generally of a higher quality than private employees as measured by aptitude tests (Crewson 1995).

There are two ways to consider the relationship of democratic values and public employment. The first is by thinking about who chooses to become a public employee, and the second is what values are adopted as a result of already being a public employee. Both are consistent with Simon's approach to the "Administrative Man" (Simon 1957). As such we can think of both values that lead to public service, and experience within a public organization as contributing to the belief structures of public employees.

One extensive body of literature focuses on the individual characteristics that lead individuals in to public service. Known as "public service motivation," this set of studies posit that "The greater an individual's public service motivation, the more likely the individual will seek membership in public organizations" (Perry and Wise 1990, 370). We can think of this group of studies as being fundamentally concerned with what leads people to go into public service.

Drawing on this line of thinking, Lewis and Frank (2002) examined attitudes and demographic characteristics that lead someone to choose public service. They found that in the United States, people who value helping others and being useful to society are more likely to work in government. Minorities, women, people with high levels of education, veterans, and older people were all more likely to be public employees than private employees. The study also included individual preference for government employment, and found that job security, public service motivation, being a member of the US Democratic Party, minority status, and being older all correlated with having a positive view of working for government. The study used data from the 1989 and 1998 General Social Survey, which did not directly ask about sector of employment. The authors attempted to approximate it by using respondent's industrial classification code, which has some serious flaws in estimating one's likelihood of working for government, but serves as an acceptable approximation under the circumstances. Under their broadest definition, those classified as working in public administration, education, bus service, U.S. Postal Service, water supply, irrigation, and sanitary services as being public employees (Lewis and Frank 2002). It is important to note, however that there are definitely people classified as public employees in their study who are not public employees, most apparently people employed by private schools, and private bus services.

Houston and Cartwright (2007) similarly used GSS data from 1998, and found support for the idea that public employees feel a kind of interconnectedness and compassion for others that leads them to public sector employment (Houston and Cartwright 2007). The other element in this discussion however, is not just the attitudes



and belief structures that lead people into public service, but also the degree to which public employees are socialized into a particular set of beliefs and behavioral norms by the organization.

Bowman (1990) found very high levels of ethical commitment among public employees, but also demonstrated that public employees held highly skeptical opinions of the organizational environment in which they found themselves. That study however, failed to include any comparisons to private sector employees (Bowman 1990).

Moynahan and Pandey (2007) found that organizational environment was indeed a significant contributor to public employees having a high public service motivation. In particular, high degrees of red tape and serving in the same organization for long periods of time were shown to reduce public service motivation (Moynihan and Pandey 2007).

These studies would imply that a high degree of frustration with bureaucratic structures exists, and that such frustration might contribute to a less publicly oriented and less democratically concerned bureaucracy. However, Steel and Warner (1990) found that public employees, contrary to the popular narrative of that time, actually scored higher on measures of job satisfaction than private employees (Steel and Warner 1990).

Cooper and Lui (1990) explored the democratic commitment of bureaucrats in Hong Kong in the 1980s and found that while Hong Kong administrators expressed high degrees of support for democratic governance, and felt democratic governance was crucial to the success of Hong Kong moving out of British rule into Chinese rule, there was little inclination to operationalize those values into any kind of tangible action to make Hong Kong more democratic (Cooper and Lui 1990). The case of Hong Kong is however, unique and different from democratic states. Where British officials might have

given lip service to the importance of democracy, their willingness to let Hong Kong truly self govern under a democratic regime was minimal at best. Secondly, that study contained no comparison set to the private sector. While it does demonstrate that perhaps public employees are more willing to express their support for democratic values than to indicate any willingness to actually advance democratic governance, but that study was too limited and bound to the specifics of Hong Kong to draw many conclusions about the mindset of administrators or public servants in general in democratic countries.

The literature tends to support the view that public employees do in fact differ from private employees. They are motivated by a different set of concerns, far less by pecuniary benefits, and much more by beliefs that they are serving society and helping others. This fits nicely into the Simonian Rational framework, that the goals of the organization either attract people with similar goals or socialize them towards organizational goals. Past studies have focused on elements like importance of a high salary and desire to help others or achieve something positive for society (Bowman 1990; Lewis and Frank 2002; Perry and Wise 1990). Yet, in democratic states we can also think of organizational goals as being the continued support for the existing, democratic regime. This leads into the question of whether public employees value democratic governance any more than do private employees.

## HYPOTHESES

The literature indicates a general trend towards higher levels of civic mindedness and a desire to accomplish something positive for society amongst public employees than private ones. Rational theory would support this, contending that the proper decision-making process to either join or remain in a public organization involves support for its

mission, and furthermore contending that values trickle down through an organization and socialize its members towards a common goal.

Public service motivation tells us that public sector workers have different values than private sector workers. These values correspond to the role of the public sector in providing essential services without making a profit. More at the core of this ideological disposition is how strongly the system of government itself is valued. The hypotheses below reflect core elements of democratic governance.

H<sub>1</sub>=Public employees will value democratic decision-making processes more than private employees.

H<sub>2</sub>=Public employees will be more supportive of individual civil rights and liberties than private employees.

H<sub>3</sub>=Public employees will have less authoritarian attitudes than private employees.

H<sub>0</sub>=Public employees will show no significant differences in support for democratic institutional arrangements when compared to private employees.

## METHODS

The 2005 to 2007 series of the World Values Survey was used to draw comparisons between public sector employees and private sector employees (World Values Survey Association, 2009). The World Values Survey is a project spearheaded by the University of Michigan's Ronald Inglehart that seeks to create a comparative survey of the values (both public and private) of people all over the world. This has been the survey instrument used by Inglehart for his research into post-materialism (Inglehart and

Welzell 2005). This wave of the World Values Survey asked respondents about their “institution of occupation,” public, private, private non-profit, or self-employed. Self employed individuals comprised a very small portion of the entire dataset and had zero respondents within the country set used here.

This study will use data from six postindustrial countries: the United States, Canada, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. Sampling methodologies varied somewhat from country to country, with face to face interviews being the dominant method of collecting data. In the United States data was collected via a mailed survey with a number of steps taken to increase response rates. These six countries are a pretty reasonable cross section of major western powers where differences in political systems and core values are relatively minimal. This allows for a focus on the core theoretical ideas of rational and public choice theories rather than to worry about extensive differences in political systems and social values. In general we can say that all six countries have democratic governmental structures, market economies, and a strong civil society. All six share a generally common political culture as well, as Inglehart and Welzell (2005) place all of them in a similar space in their “cultural map of the world,” as holding both secular-rational and self expressive values sets, the key determinants of a “post materialist society” (Inglehart and Welzell 2005).

A series of questions were also included in this wave of the World Values Survey about support for democratic institutions, they are included as Figure 1 in the appendix. This does not deal with the operational question highlighted by Cooper and Lui (1990), their concern is an intriguing but more difficult question to get at, and lies beyond the scope of this paper, which will focus solely on stated support. Those questions will serve

as dependent variables, the first four of these dependent variables were asked in all six countries, and the last six were not asked in Italy.

These dependent variables indicate three essential elements of democraticness, including support for individual rights, authoritarian tendencies, and support for electoral processes. Several of these questions ask how important specific attributes of political systems are for democracy. The “right answer” to some of these questions could be debated forever without any conclusive answer, but for this study they will be conceived of entirely for their place as indicating “higher” or “lower” levels of valuing democratic processes. It is unimportant whether referendums for example are a good idea, or if they potentially undermine representative governance by putting too much power directly in the hands of the people, what is important is that support for them indicates an individual being “more democratic.”

Similarly, this category of questions does not necessarily indicate support for democratic processes, instead they ask about beliefs about how essential they are as a “characteristic of democracy.” Given very high indications of support for the importance of democracy in these countries, and the apparent fact that most people think democracy is good, these questions can be treated as proxy questions for support of the importance of each element (women’s rights, civil rights, referendums, etc).

In addition to these dependent variables, a series of control variables are included in a linear regression model. The literature suggests that these variables would include political orientation, gender, education level, and income. Measuring the first three is simple as they were each explicitly asked about in the World Values Survey, income on the other hand, is tricky. Income was indicated by self placement in percentiles relative

to the rest of the respondents country, this suffered from some significant country to country variation, but because of the relative commonality of standards of living in the countries included, and use of this variable by other studies that have relied on the World Values Survey make me feel relatively comfortable using it (Napier and Jost 2008).

Sector of employment was converted from the nominal categories represented in the survey for the three categories of being employed in the public sector, private sector, and private non-profit sector, to dummy variables for public and private sector workers respectively. This allows for the inclusion of effects for the private-non-profit sector as well as the public sector. No dummy variable is included for private sector employees to avoid co-linearity problems.

Frequencies were run on all variables to see the general distribution of data in the general populations, next a simple difference of means test was conducted on the three institutions of occupation for the commitment to democracy questions as well as control variables. And finally, a linear regression model including all independent variables is estimated to see if differences observed in the difference of means test remain significant when controlling for other variables.

## RESULTS

Support for democratic governance was very high throughout the case study countries (see figure 2). In every country, the vast majority favored democracy. Fifty-four percent of the overall sample thought that having a democratic political system (question 1c) was, “very good,” while only 8.8% thought it was “fairly bad,” or “very bad.”

Having experts make decisions (question 1b) is perhaps the most intriguing question included, because it has the potential to demonstrate a sense among public employees that perhaps they are the experts and politicians should just stay out. This question is a little bit confusing just because it is worded kind of oddly, saying, “experts not government.” This creates some ambiguity about how experts in government might conceive of this question. Overall, forty-eight percent of the sample thought that having experts make decisions without democratic accountability would be a good thing for their country.

France and the United States both showed strong support for strong, authoritarian leaders (question 1a). Overall, only 24.1% of the sample thought that having a strong leader who does not have to worry about parliament was a good thing, but in France, 34% did, and in the United States, 32.3% did. All countries showed a strong, shared belief that people choosing their leaders in free elections was an essential element of democracy (question 2a). Only 39% of the French sample thought that people choosing their leaders in free elections were, “absolutely essential.”

## **Figure 2**

### **National Variations in Support for Democracy**

Another set of questions were scaled one to ten and are not so easily summarized by frequencies. These questions included all of the “essential elements of democracy” questions, and none of them were included in the Italian survey. France is generally the

least democratic on these measures, while Germany is the most in every single question. France placed the least importance on democracy (question 3) with a mean response of 8.1, while the average across the five countries was 8.68. Germans and Canadians thought equal rights for women (question 2d) was essential to democracy more than respondents in other countries with means of 9.13 and 9.14 respectively. France again pulls up the rear with an average response of 8.62, the total was 8.96. The British sample was the most likely to think the army taking over when the government is incompetent with an average response of 4.12. The mean response for people choosing their leaders in free elections as an essential component of democracy (question 2a) was 8.68, oddly, this question, which strikes at the heart of democratic governance, scored lower than women’s rights. Finally, the mean response for people being able to change the laws in referendums (question 2e) was the second lowest at 7.69 for the whole sample behind the army taking over when the government is incompetent (question 2b). All this is simply to give some background into where the general thrust of the sample was; far more important to this study is how all of that broke down by sector of employment.

**Table 1**

**Support for Democracy by Country**

Country	Importance of democracy
Democracy: Women have the same rights as men.	8.67
Democracy: Civil rights protect people’s liberty against oppression.	9.14
Democracy: The army takes over when government is incompetent.	8.01
Democracy: People choose their leaders in free elections.	3.93
Democracy: People can change the laws in referendums.	8.67
Canada	7.36
Mean	



Std.Deviatin

N  
2114  
2122  
1968  
2010  
2114  
2016

1.924  
1.679  
2.113  
2.852  
1.924  
2.446  
France  
Mean  
8.10  
8.62  
7.81  
3.43  
8.10  
7.51

N  
990  
994  
986  
988  
990  
988

Std. Deviation  
2.222  
1.966  
2.152  
2.610  
2.222  
2.306  
Germany  
Mean  
9.20  
9.13  
8.90  
2.17  
9.20  
8.56

N  
2029  
2032  
2025  
1977  
2029  
2014

Std. Deviation  
1.693  
1.812  
1.808  
2.201  
1.693  
2.102  
Great Britain  
Mean  
8.43  
9.05  
7.46  
4.12  
8.43

	7.00
	N
	1003
	1020
	961
	983
	1003
	982
Std. Deviation	2.122
	1.708
	2.350
	2.864
	2.122
	2.401
United States	
Mean	8.48
	8.58
	8.03
	3.71
	8.48
	7.48
	N
	1196
	1199
	1196
	1194
	1196
	1197
Std. Deviation	2.356
	2.210
	2.386
	2.751
	2.356
	2.396
Total	
Mean	8.68
	8.96
	8.17
	3.36
	8.68
	7.69
	N
	7332
	7367
	7136
	7152
	7332
	7197
Std. Deviation	2.044
	1.869
	2.177
	2.745
	2.044
	2.387
	F
	60.700
	30.736
	97.772

150.306  
60.700  
107.131  
Sig  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000

Three of the four categories for sector of employment were represented in the sample, public, private, and private nonprofit. In general public and private nonprofit sector employees score higher in their support for democracy on every question than do private non-profit employees, though public sector employees did not always outscore private sector employees. Significance was determined using an ANOVA with an F-test because there were three categories to analyze. All the means differences are significant at the 98% confidence level or greater.

**Table 2**

**Support for Democracy by Institution of Occupation**

Institution of occupation  
Importance of democracy  
Democracy: Women have the same rights as men.  
Democracy: Civil rights protect people’s liberty against oppression.  
Democracy: The army takes over when government is incompetent.  
Democracy: People choose their leaders in free elections.  
Political system: Having a democratic political system  
Political system: Having experts make decisions  
Political system: Having a strong leader  
Democracy: People can change the laws in referendums.  
Public institution  
Mean  
9.05  
9.13  
8.38  
3.1  
8.85  
1.48  
2.68  
3.34  
7.82  
N  
1452  
1277  
1247  
1246  
1273  
1433

1388  
1410  
1259

Std. Deviation

1.557  
1.809  
2.046  
2.608  
1.871  
0.656  
0.915  
0.859  
2.278

Private business

Mean

8.72  
8.95  
8.13  
3.37  
8.64  
1.57  
2.58  
3.13  
7.7

N

3944  
3505  
3420  
3420  
3496  
3808  
3727  
3774  
3433

Std. Deviation

1.786  
1.838  
2.168  
2.721  
2.043  
0.73  
0.928  
0.946  
2.374

Private non-profit organization

Mean

8.89  
8.98  
8.53  
2.59  
9.04  
1.55  
2.43  
3.28  
8.1

N

540  
529  
527  
520  
525  
533  
516  
511  
524

Std. Deviation

1.655  
1.905  
2.124  
2.459  
1.773  
0.643  
0.937  
0.898  
2.289  
Total  
Mean  
8.82  
9  
8.23  
3.22  
8.73  
1.55  
2.59  
3.2  
7.77

N

5936  
5311  
5194  
5186  
5294  
5774  
5631  
5695  
5216

Std. Deviation

1.727  
1.839  
2.139  
2.679  
1.982  
0.706  
0.928  
0.926  
2.345

F

20.553  
4.276  
11.658  
21.086  
12.346  
9.697  
15.315  
30.181  
7.051

Sig

0.000  
0.014  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000  
0.000  
0.001

Public employees were the most democratic on the importance of having a democratic political system, having experts make decisions, having a strong leader, importance of democracy, and women's rights. Private not for profit employees were the most democratic on referendums as an essential component of democracy, civil rights as an essential component of democracy, the army taking over when the government is incompetent as an essential component of democracy, and people choosing their leaders in free elections as an essential component of democracy.

There is some question as to whether these trends hold true country to country. An ANOVA test for sector of employment controlling for country was also conducted, and while it shows statistically significant differences in the variances from country to country, none of those differences change the general pattern described above of public and private non-profit employees valuing democratic governance more than private sector employees. In some cases, private employees are more supportive of democracy than one of the other sectors in specific countries, but in few cases are they the most supportive. Germany is an exception to this rule in a few cases, indicating that something different might be happening in Germany, but in every case, Germans are across the board more democratic than other countries. This may simply indicate that the effect on sector of employment is getting eaten up by very strong support for democracy across the board in Germany.

### **Table 3**

#### **National Differences in Support for Democracy by Institution of Occupation \***

Country  
Institution of occupation

Q3  
Q2D  
Q2C.

	Q2B	
	Q2A	
	Q1C	
	Q1B	
	Q1A	
	Q2E	
Canada		
Public institution		9.24
		9.31
		8.35
		3.70
		8.92
		1.48
		2.82
		3.35
		7.47
Private business		8.85
		9.17
		7.97
		4.05
		8.66
		1.63
		2.76
		3.22
		7.38
Private nonprofit		9.07
		8.86
		8.93
		2.08
		9.44
		1.50
		3.04
		3.67
		7.26
Total		8.96
		9.20
		8.10
		3.91
		8.75
		1.59
		2.78
		3.26
		7.40
France		
Public institution		8.68
		8.76
		8.10
		2.91
		8.36
		1.58
		2.65
		3.10
		7.76

Private business	8.42
	8.57
	7.71
	3.58
	7.97
	1.67
	2.51
	2.84
	7.46
Private nonprofit	8.12
	8.12
	7.33
	3.59
	8.21
	1.58
	2.48
	2.91
	7.21
Total	8.47
	8.60
	7.79
	3.42
	8.07
	1.64
	2.54
	2.91
	7.52
Germany	
Public institution	9.19
	9.15
	9.01
	2.14
	9.24
	1.47
	2.47
	3.43
	8.52
Private business	9.01
	9.14
	8.96
	2.05
	9.27
	1.47
	2.43
	3.30
	8.71
Private nonprofit	9.04
	9.14
	8.74
	2.25
	9.14
	1.51



	2.32
	3.33
	8.38
Total	9.05
	9.14
	8.92
	2.11
	9.24
	1.48
	2.41
	3.34
	8.60
Italy Public institution	9.08
	1.32
	2.71
	3.61
Private business	8.71
	1.43
	2.58
	3.26
Private nonprofit	9.23
	1.31
	2.38
	3.08
Total	8.83
	1.40
	2.62
	3.36
Great Britain Public institution	9.01
	9.37

	7.69
	3.74
	8.75
	1.45
	2.83
	3.35
	7.20
Private business	
	8.53
	9.06
	7.45
	4.19
	8.42
	1.56
	2.58
	3.06
	6.95
Private nonprofit	
	8.75
	9.16
	7.28
	3.57
	8.79
	1.65
	2.67
	3.23
	7.80
Total	
	8.67
	9.15
	7.51
	4.05
	8.53
	1.53
	2.65
	3.15
	7.05
United States	
Public institution	
	8.90
	8.77
	8.37
	3.52
	8.54
	1.63
	2.71
	3.13
	7.87
Private business	
	8.56
	8.57
	8.10
	3.60
	8.49
	1.71
	2.64
	3.00
	7.45

Private nonprofit	8.40
	8.54
	8.24
	3.74
	8.86
	1.79
	2.66
	3.09
	7.53
Total	8.61
	8.60
	8.17
	3.60
	8.54
	1.70
	2.65
	3.04
	7.54
Total Public institution	9.05
	9.13
	8.38
	3.10
	8.85
	1.48
	2.68
	3.34
	7.82
Private business	8.72
	8.95
	8.13
	3.37
	8.64
	1.57
	2.58
	3.13
	7.70
Private nonprofit	8.89
	8.98
	8.53
	2.59
	9.04
	1.55
	2.43
	3.28
	8.10
Total	8.82
	9.00
	8.23
	3.22
	8.73

		1.55
		2.59
		3.20
		7.77
	ANOVA	
F		18.858
		26.135
		85.005
		125.854
		59.667
		19.317
		23.597
		35.129
		90.300
Sig		0.000
		0.000
		0.000
		0.000
		0.000
		0.000
		0.000
		0.000
		0.000

We know, however, that public employees differ from private sector employees in more ways than just their level of support for democracy, so it becomes necessary to control for those other factors. A regression model is estimated including political orientation, sex, education level, and income. The institution of occupation variable was recoded into two dummy variables for public employment and private non-profit employment. Additionally gender was re-coded as a dummy variable for female.

Only three dependent variables had statistically significant correlations at the 95% confidence level for public employment when controlling for other variables. They were importance of democracy, desirability of having a democratic political system, and having a strong leader who does not have to deal with parliament. This result provides nominal support for hypotheses one and three, but not two as none of the civil rights and liberties questions were statistically significant. Private non-profit employment was significant for six dependent variables, including two of the three for which public

employment was significant. The one in which it was not was importance of having a democratic political system. Of the control variables, gender was a significant determinant of four of the nine, education was a significant determinant of eight, political ideology was significant for eight, and income was significant for six.

**Table 4**

Regression Models-Support for Democracy

	Importance of democracy	
	Democracy: Women have the same rights as men	
	Democracy: Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression	
	Democracy: Army takes over when government is incompetent	
	Democracy: People choose leaders in free and fair elections	
	Democracy: People can change laws in referendums	
	Political system: having experts make decisions	
	Political system: having democratic political system	
	Political system: having a strong leader	
Constant		8.265
***		8.511
***		8.278
***		2.659
***		8.286
***		8.333
***		2.321
***		1.637
***		3.005
		(0.095)
		(0.110)
		(0.127)
		(0.158)
		(0.117)
		(0.141)
		(0.054)
		(0.041)
		(0.052)
Gender		-0.141
***		0.017
		-0.119

***	0.260
***	-0.177
***	-0.136
	-0.011
***	0.113
	0.009
	(0.049)
	(0.056)
	(0.065)
	(0.081)
	(0.060)
	(0.072)
	(0.028)
	(0.021)
	(0.027)
Highest educational level attained	
***	0.104
***	0.117
***	0.135
***	-0.096
***	0.141
***	0.012
	0.037
***	-0.036
***	0.065
***	
	(0.012)
	(0.014)
	(0.017)
	(0.021)
	(0.015)
	(0.018)
	(0.007)
	(0.005)
	(0.007)
Self positioning on political scale	
***	-0.035
***	-0.060

***	-0.113
***	0.154
***	-0.044
***	-0.081
***	0.000
***	0.025
***	-0.061
	(0.013)
	(0.015)
	(0.017)
	(0.021)
	(0.016)
	(0.019)
	(0.007)
	(0.005)
	(0.007)
Scale of incomes	
***	0.058
***	0.040
	-0.016
	0.026
	0.020
*	-0.034
***	0.021
***	-0.018
***	0.031
	(0.011)
	(0.013)
	(0.015)
	(0.019)
	(0.014)
	(0.017)
	(0.006)
	(0.005)
	(0.006)
public employment	
***	0.201

	0.066
	0.115
	-0.183
	0.040
	0.082
	0.038
*	-0.056
	0.096
***	
	(0.059)
	(0.069)
	(0.079)
	(0.099)
	(0.073)
	(0.088)
	(0.034)
	(0.025)
	(0.033)
private non-profit employment	
	0.233
	***
	0.090
	0.341
	***
	-0.643
	***
	0.350
	***
	0.340
	***
	-0.185
	-0.021
	0.153
	***
	(0.083)
	(0.093)
	(0.107)
	(0.133)
	(0.099)
	(0.119)
	(0.047)
	(0.035)
	(0.046)

F Test



	35.825
	24.286
	24.708
	20.101
	25.563
	6.273
	15.960
	28.532
	50.633
Prob. > F	0.000
	0.000
	0.000
	0.000
	0.000
	0.000
	0.000
	0.000
	0.000
R <sup>2</sup>	0.045
	0.033
	0.034
	0.028
	0.035
	0.009
	0.021
	0.037
	0.064
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	0.044
	0.032
	0.033
	0.027
	0.034
	0.007
	0.020
	0.035
	0.063

\*p<0.05  
\*\*p<0.02  
\*\*\*p<0.01

Public employment and private non-profit employment were both significant predictors of support for democratic institutions in two of the dependent variables, desirability of having a strong leader who does not have to worry about parliament and elections, and importance of democracy. An examination of the marginal effects of the institution of occupation on the dependent variables indicates that in both cases, private non-profit employees develop a stronger valuation of democratic governance than either private employees or public employees.

Public employment contributes to approximately one-tenth of one point on the four point scale measurement against support for having a strong leader who does not have to worry about parliament or elections; private-non profit employment is slightly higher with a .15 change from private employees. Importance of democracy showed similar results, where public employment increased the importance one placed on democracy by 0.2 out of 10, while private non-profit employment increased the importance of democracy by about 0.23. In both cases, private non-profit employment had a slightly stronger marginal effect than public employment did. That said, on one other question, public employment was a significant predictor of support for democracy, and that was the extent to which individuals thought having a democratic political system was a good way of governing the country.

On four questions, private non-profit employment had a significant effect, but public employment did not. All four were among the “essential to democracy” set of questions. Those questions were, civil rights protect the people liberty against oppression, the army takes over when the government is incompetent, people choose their

leaders in free elections, and the people can change the laws in referendums. All four of these questions ask not the importance of these to the governing of the country, but rather how essential each is to democracy.

Both of the questions in which respondents are asked directly whether they would prefer democratic governance or some other type of system did show significant relationships with public employment. Public employees do indeed think of democracy in more positive terms than private sector employees, but they are unlikely to define democracy in more terms more favorable to greater citizen involvement in decision-making processes, or in a way that expands individual rights and liberties.

## DISCUSSION

The first and third hypotheses found support, while the second hypothesis found none. Public employees had a greater valuing of democratic decision making processes than did private employees and were a little more likely to reject authoritarian governance structures. The second hypothesis, that public employees would show a greater valuing of civil rights and liberties appeared consistent with findings from the private non-profit sector, but not from the public sector.

In two of three cases in which public employment was a significant predictor of support for democratic institutions, private non-profit employment was as well. In both cases, private non-profit employment had a greater impact than did public employment.

The real takeaway from these results is that at no point was a coefficient on public employment negative, nor was private non-profit employment. Private employees in almost every case put the lowest value on the democracy. In some cases there is no difference between sectors, and in some cases public employees and private non-profit

employees are statistically similar to private employees, but never do either public or private non-profit employees value democracy less than their private sector counterparts.

What we can extrapolate from that is that organizations do in fact matter. Whether this is caused by the type of person who enters the various sectors or whether it is caused by organizational values is beyond the scope of this study. People in the public and private non-profit sectors do clearly seem to hold a different set of values than private employees. Whether organizations attract a certain type of person who holds similar values, or values trickle down through bureaucracies, the people who occupy them seem to hold a set of values consistent with the values of that organization. It is less important that the private non-profit sector seems to do slightly better than the public sector in terms of valuing democracy than that they both consistently outpace private sector workers.

These results are entirely consistent with the existing public service motivation literature, that individuals who have a high public service motivation will enter public sector work. This would seem to indicate that public service motivation is also common for those taking jobs in the private non-profit sector, and sometimes more so. Those who care about democratic decision-making processes do not seem to occupy private businesses at least to the extent that private non-profit employees and public employees do.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The results indicate that organizational values are in fact held by their employees pretty broadly. Public employees value democracy more than private employees, though in many cases, not as much as private non-profit employees. This might demonstrate a

greater emphasis on democratic values coming from the private non-profits than the public sector. The difference in values indicates that the world is viewed in fundamentally different ways by public sector employees than private sector employees. Public employees care in a central way about democratic governance above that seen by private employees. People enter these sectors for fundamentally different reasons, and they experience fundamentally different cultures in the organization.

Wilson's fear was that a technocracy would result from a government of experts. That democratic decisions would cease to be respected by those carrying out public functions. Simon's answer was that bureaucrats, because of a desire to fit in to the organization and carry out its goals, would just be concerned with technical efficiency and would not step in. What this study indicates is that the mechanism of satisficing goes beyond Simonian efficiency to a fundamental concern for the values that uphold the democratic state. Because public employees care about the organization, and the organization is part of the apparatus of the democratic state, public employees develop a strong sense that democracy is important more so than private employees do.

Private non-profit employees also develop this sense, in some cases more strongly than public employees do. The private non-profit sector is also dominated by organizations that seek to advance public purposes. Many of them have explicit focuses on advancing democratic decision-making processes, transparency, human rights, or reducing corruption. When the organization itself is in some fundamental way committed to public purposes rather than private purposes we see a stronger sense amongst its employees that democratic governance is valuable.

The result is a bureaucracy that in a fundamental way wants to remain consistent with the will of voters. It is unlikely to have a bureaucracy undermining the elected branches of government because public employees actually do care that publicly made decisions are carried out in the governing of the country. Where processes exist to create public input on bureaucratic decisions, public employees will feel an inclination to use them and make sure that their decisions are consistent with public sentiment. These results indicate that public employees can be given some leeway to do the public business, as Woodrow Wilson observed, “the cook must be trusted with a large discretion as to the management of the fires and the ovens” (Wilson 1887, 214).

It is absolutely essential that we create transparent governing structures that provide a means of public comment and input on bureaucratic decisions. If we create these structures, and send signals from elected officials and agency heads that it is important to use them, while maintaining a strong respect for the rule of law and the importance of fair electoral processes, then public employees will tend to use them. The state of affairs in Western European and North American democracies is that public employees tend to have a high degree of respect for democratic governance. As do private non-profit employees, the two groups are very similar in their outlook. When this is the case, public functions can be placed with a strong bureaucracy charged with carrying them out, and electoral outcomes and public input will tend to be respected. If this were not the case we would see that creating institutional structures to ensure transparency and public input would not be taken advantage of, and electoral outcomes not respected in any meaningful way by the people carrying out the everyday business of policy implementation.

## CONCLUSION

This study used a sample from six post-industrial democracies in Western Europe and North America from the World Values Survey to compare differences in how private sector employees value democratic institutions compared to the public sector, and the private non-profit sector. Public and private non-profit employees put a greater degree of importance on living in a democratically governed country and were more inclined to reject authoritarianism than were individuals employed in the private sector. Private non-profit employees additionally put more importance on civil rights and liberties than either of the other two groups. Additionally, in two of the three questions in which public sector employees displayed more democratic tendencies than private employees, the private non-profit sector was more democratic than either.

These results show that public employees see the world differently than private employees. This is consistent with the existing public service motivation literature, as well as with Herbert Simon's organizational theory in which the organizations goals are internalized by its employees and adopted as his own values. It is not clear the extent to which people who hold values consistent with particular organizations choose to join them as opposed to organizations transferring their own values down through a bureaucracy. Future research should focus on this question of whether the values preceded joining the organization or whether they were adopted after joining. It could indeed be the case that both are true.

This study found some significant differences in sector of employment from country to country within the sample. This leads to a couple of different questions. One is the extent to which this holds true in undemocratic states. If public employees in

democratic states hold more democratic values, it should also hold true that in authoritarian states, the public employees should hold more authoritarian values.

Another is whether the differences in countries can be accounted for by differences in how different sectors are organized in different countries or the extent to which people in different countries might somehow think of sector of employment differently. Finally, this questions whether there might be an element of post-materialism in this. Does this pattern hold true in less developed economies where survivalist instincts are more dominant? In many poorer countries someone seeking to make a lot of money might well be inclined to choose the public sector over the private sector. While public sector work often has some advantages, in the countries studied, it is not the correct way to go about becoming very rich, in some countries it is.

A few survey questions asking how important democratic governance is cannot really get to the depth of public employees views on how the business of administering the affairs of a democratic state ought to be carried out. Yet it provides evidence as to the degree to which democracy is viewed as something to be strived for, and that tells us something important about the process of policy implementation and the degree to which public employees are concerned about staying within the bounds of public decisions and opinions.



## APPENDIX

### FIGURE 1

1) I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or a very bad way of governing this country?

- a) Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections
- b) Having experts, not government make decisions according to what they think is best for the country
- c) Having a democratic political system

2) Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy. Use this scale where 1 means "not at all an essential characteristic of democracy" and 10 means it definitely is "an essential characteristic of democracy."

- a) People choose their leaders in free elections
- b) The army takes over when government is incompetent
- c) Civil rights protect people's liberty against oppression
- d) Women have the same rights as men
- e) People can change the laws in referendums

3) How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically? On this scale where 1 means it is "not at all important," and 10 means "absolutely important" what position would you choose?

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