

Parties, Preference Aggregation, and Policy: An Institutional Perspective on Redistribution*

William B. Heller
Department of Political Science
Binghamton University
wheller@binghamton.edu

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between electoral rules and the chain of delegation from voters to political decision makers. I argue that whether whether electoral rules push voters to focus primarily on individual candidates or to cast their votes for parties rather than individuals not only structures voter-candidate relations, but also relationships between successful candidates and party leaders and, crucially, party positions with respect to redistributive policy. Candidate-centered rules motivate candidates to target the benefits of policy to their own constituents; party leaders who want their parties to do well in elections and who want to retain the good will of their rank and file will endeavor to direct the party's efforts toward helping elect individual candidates. Party-centered electoral rules provide no such incentive, but rather make it more attractive to design policy to benefit larger constituencies more broadly. Consequently, parties on the right and left (but particularly on the right) should have more redistribution-heavy platforms in party-centered systems than in candidate-centered ones. I test the implications of my argument using party-position data from the Comparative Manifesto Project.

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1 Introduction

The range and scope of resources that democratic governments provide varies widely across countries. At one extreme, the prototypical liberal government restricts itself to ensuring nonprejudicial property rights and even-handed rule of law. At the other extreme, governments actively intervene in markets, whether subtly channeling resources and effort or overtly coordinating some activities over others within and across sectors. There is a fairly well-established link between electoral rules and government spending and social-welfare provision (see, e.g., Crepaz 1996; 1998), but the debate over causality remains unresolved. Most explanations boil down either to the preferences of the median voter (albeit focusing on distinct and possibly conflicting mechanisms; see, e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson 2009; Meltzer 1981; Iversen and Soskice 2006; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Budge and McDonald 2007; Bradley et al. 2003; Korpi 2006), or collective-action problems stemming from coalition dynamics (e.g., Roubini et al. 1989; Persson and Tabellini 1999; Persson, Roland and Tabellini 2007; Persson and Tabellini 2004; 2003).

I take a different approach. Existing examinations of welfare policy basically assume that party positions are fixed by the range of societal preferences and as such—with obvious allowances for aggregation effects depending on the number of parties—unaffected by political institutions. Instead, I begin with the assertion that parties are vehicles for individual ambition (cf. Aldrich 1995). Because political institutions tend to reward collective action, and because collective action requires organization that elevates some to elite status (Cox 2006),¹ individuals whose goals are best realized in the political sphere attach themselves to political parties. Collective action requires resources, however, and in democratic politics those resources come primarily from electoral support. Whether and to what extent what elites want differs from what their constituents or party rank and file want is an interesting question (see Heller and Shvetsova 2012), but beside the point. Rather, and consistent with the literature’s focus on electoral incentives, I examine how the *candidate-centeredness* of elections structures party elites’ incentives to imbue party platforms with broad-based versus targeted policies.

My argument, briefly, is as follows. In order to achieve the goals that impel them to play in the political (rather than, for example, the economic) arena, party elites need influence and security.

¹Elites are specifically those individuals who are most influential in party decision making; for present purposes they can be taken to be party leaders.

For the former, they need to control enough legislative seats to be able to affect outcomes;² for the latter, they need reliable support from the rank-and-file members who occupy those seats. Electoral rules that connect specific constituents to specific candidates, as in single-member districts, give candidates reason to pay attention to those constituents and party leaders reason to give candidates the resources to do so. Electoral rules that encourage voters to focus less on individual candidates and more on parties and their labels, by contrast, should reduce candidates' demand for benefits that are allocable to specific constituent groups—for, in other words, targeted policy. The best a candidate can hope for is that her party do well, since the better the party does the better its candidates do, all else equal. Party leaders, in order both to get what they want and retain rank-and-file support, are free to pitch the party label to broader constituencies as long as doing so produces electoral success.

Simply put, how voters view individual candidates and their parties affects the relationship between the party rank and file and their leaders. In candidate-centered systems, leaders who ignore candidate demands for campaign resources (including policy positions) risk sacrificing party seats and their own leadership positions. Such leaders impose their own preferences on the party, even where they have the tools to force candidates to uphold the party label against individual candidates' self-interest, at their (and their parties') peril. In party-centered systems, by contrast, candidate demands for individual campaign resources should be nonexistent, as it makes little sense to expend resources on highlighting individual candidate qualities if voters aren't paying attention.

Where the literature on the political economy of welfare policy mostly focuses on voter preferences (as expressed by the parties that represent them, cf. Hibbs 1977), coalition building, or societal structure, I highlight the importance of intraparty politics. Conversely, studies of the relationship between electoral rules and incentives to offer specific types of policy (a literature that perhaps most pervasively examines members of the US House, along with, to a lesser extent, Canada and the UK; cf. Mayhew 1974; Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987; Kam 2009) tend either to treat parties as irrelevant (in the US case) or to treat candidates' provision of targeted goods (even if only in the form of dissent from the party line, as discussed in Kam 2009) as something that leaders tolerate but not as part of party strategy. Because party positions (and hence party

²How many seats are required for influence depends on the legislative party system, legislative rules, and, in non-majority situations, coalition bargaining (Kato and Yamamoto 2005; Laver and Benoit 2003; Laver and Shepsle 1996).

labels) are observable outcomes of party decisions, and since intraparty principal-agent relations are a key element of decision-making structure, it follows that electoral rules' effect on intraparty agency relations should yield observable and predictable variation in party policy decisions.

The paper proceeds as follows. Continuing below, I review the highlights of how political scientists have viewed welfare-policy efforts and outcomes over time. In the following section, I lay out my argument that parties' welfare-policy *offerings* (as distinct from policy outcomes) should differ across countries as a function of electoral rules. In principle, my argument should offer useful insight into the variation in policy programs put forward by similarly complected governments in different systems, though how that should play out depends on aggregation effects (see, e.g., Crepaz 1998; Iversen and Soskice 2009; 2006; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Persson, Roland and Tabellini 2007) beyond the scope of this paper. In Section 4, I lay out my empirical strategy and test my argument using estimates of the welfare focus of the right-most parties in different countries. Section 5 ends with a discussion in lieu of a conclusion.

2 Parties and their Positions

Parties make policies, at least in democracies. Explanations for policy outcomes in different countries (and the consistent result that policy outcomes proportional-representation systems leans leftward relative; for a comprehensive review, see McDonald 2006) thus understandably tend to focus on party policy positions (cf. Hibbs 1977) or influence in the policy process. Both are well-studied. For the former, scholars hone in on electoral competition as channeled by electoral rules to explain variations in positioning; the starting point—the constituents parties seek to serve—are exogenous (they are products of social structure; see in particular Lipset and Rokkan 1967), and the subject of interest is the impact of electoral rules on party behavior in pursuit of electoral gain. Electoral rules thus matter on two fronts: first, to the extent that they translate party support as expressed in votes to party strength expressed in seats; and second, in the incentives they provide to candidates to emphasize some kinds of policy over others. With respect to the latter, party-position starting points are again exogenous and the question is how the exigencies of policy making (e.g., bills must be passed by legislative majorities, a problem if no single party controls a majority of seats; or the need to negotiate veto points on the way to passing bills) affect the translation of

party positions into policy outcomes.

For present purposes, the first issue of interest is whether and how much candidates and parties (and, by implication, policy outcomes) stress policies that benefit broad, diffuse constituencies rather than targeted, narrow ones. Where electoral rules push individual candidates to establish identities distinct from their parties (Carey and Shugart 1995), the preponderance of theorizing and evidence indicates that candidates, and hence policy outcomes, tend to be narrowly focused (see, e.g., Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987; Edwards and Thames 2007; McCubbins and Rosenbluth 1995; Myerson 1993; Thames and Edwards 2006; Weingast 1979). Cox and McCubbins (2001, 47-48) point out that the personal-vote imperative means that even public goods are broken down to distributable, targetable “morsels” of pork, effectively making observable policy targeted rather than diffuse. The logic underpinning the personal-vote–targeted-policy connection derives from the effective requirement that personal-vote inducing electoral rules include small electoral districts (cf. Taylor 1992), which, as Persson and Tabellini (2004, 25) put it, induces candidates “to target smaller, but pivotal, geographical constituencies.”

The link between electoral rules and policy targetability extends beyond candidate incentives. Systems that reward candidates for building personal-vote coalitions tend to be majoritarian. Where the personal-vote incentive is weaker and the vote-to-seat translation more proportional, by contrast, majority rule requires multiparty coalitions; and multiparty coalitions force policy makers to cover a broader range of interests, yielding outcomes that are both more inclusive (e.g., Crepaz 1998) and more expensive (Persson, Roland and Tabellini 2007). These are in some sense mechanical effects of electoral rules, however. A related line of inquiry, grounded in the notion that parties fundamentally represent societal interests, follows the logic of voter choice.

Voter input into policy outcomes breaks down in two ways. On one hand where groups that naturally support left parties are mobilized the left does well, with predictable results in terms of policy outcomes (see, e.g., Bradley et al. 2003; Iversen and Stephens 2008). On the other hand, Iversen and Soskice (2006; 2009) argue elegantly that the median voter’s interests are best served by voting for the right in two-party systems. The idea in a nutshell is that government policy is farther from the median voter in single-party than in multiparty governments (Powell 2000), so a left-party government is likely to redistribute *away* from the median voter, while a right-party government is likely to minimize redistribution altogether (though in the long term outcomes *on*

average should benefit the median voter; McDonald and Budge 2005). In a multiparty system, the median voter generally is represented in government (McDonald and Budge 2005) and, confident that her interests are protected, she can vote for left-leaning parties and for redistribution from income earners above the median (the presence of Christian Democratic parties might steal the left's advantage in multiparty systems, however; Iversen and Stephens 2008).

I take no issue with the established literature. Rather, I suggest an added dimension—intraparty politics—affecting how parties view redistributive policy. For the purposes of this paper, arguments that take starting party positions as given are a bit of a red herring. Basically, they presume a broad range of essentially fixed party offerings of the sort tied up in the notion of “party families” (for useful discussion and an excellent review of party families, see Mair and Mudde 1998), from which voters can pick and choose. Not only is it not clear that such stolid predictability exists in the real world (Budge and McDonald 2007), but one of the primary implications of my argument below is that the set of choices available to voters is at least in part endogenous to electoral rules.

3 Intraparty Politics and Party Positions: a Demand-Side View

Democratic politics begins and ends with voters. Campaigns that offer unattractive choices will fizzle, and parties that depend on those campaigns will lose influence or even disappear. A campaign has to appeal to voters enough to make them prefer it to available alternatives. Voter demands are in principal virtually limitless; actual vote choices, however, are restricted to the range of options on offer by parties at election time. Those options are determined by whoever controls campaign resources and, as long as a) politics are multidimensional and b) voter preferences are not known with certainty, no offer or package of offers will be obviously optimal.

Candidate-centered electoral rules lead parties to bias their policy platforms toward identifiable voters' desires. Party-centered rules, by contrast, encourage platforms aimed at broader constituencies. Underpinning this claim are two assumptions. First and foremost, I assume that people—voters, party members, and party leaders alike—are self-interested.³ Self-interest might manifest itself in different ways, with wealthy individuals most interested in property rights and

³As a matter of clarification, whenever I refer to party members or anything inside parties, I mean only politicians in elected office and their leaders (I presume that leaders hold elected office as well, though for the purposes of my argument they need not), whom members have the ability to replace if they see fit.

rule of law, and those who are less privileged wanting government to redistribute resources from the wealthy to the poor, but one element is constant: no one wants to pay for other people's benefits. Second, party platforms combine politicians' (as individuals with their own preferences) goals with what they need to do to maximize their ability to achieve it. Hence, while it makes sense for politicians to sort themselves into parties and formulate party platforms based on their own visions of the ideal society and government's role in it, they also need to tailor policies to win votes. In keeping with sociological perspectives on policy positions, then, left parties should push for redistribution and right parties should not. But where electoral rules reward more broad-based policies, even parties on the right should advocate redistribution, at least relative to their counterparts in more candidate-centered systems. More generally, all parties should be more supportive of welfare policies in party-centered systems.

The candidate-centeredness of electoral rules affects party platforms because it structures what rank-and-file party members demand from their leaders. On one hand, party structures are basically the same across systems: party rank and file choose and can check or depose leaders (i.e., leaders are their agents), while leaders define party positions. On the other hand, electoral rules affect the amount of leverage—hence influence—that rank-and-file party members can bring to bear. Where members can identify the voters that put and keep them in office, they should be motivated to work hard to ensure that those voters benefit from policy. Party leaders, moreover, should aid and abet them in their efforts because when the party's candidates do well the party does well. Leaders also have the added incentive to listen to their rank and file because failure to do so could spark rebellion in the ranks. Figure 1a illustrates the direct chain of delegation from voters to party leaders in candidate-centered systems.

In party-centered systems, individual legislators can expect to have little influence over their leaders. As long as leaders are taking positions and making policies that benefit the party as a whole (hence, on average, the reelection prospects of its elected members), they stand to benefit as well.⁴ In such systems the formal principal-agent relationship between backbenchers and leaders is flipped, with leaders being in a much better position to direct (and discipline as necessary)

⁴Sitting legislators can of course take exception to the policy direction a leader might take, but their options are limited. They can switch (or threaten to switch) parties, which could be problematic for leaders but which also might play into leaders' hands (Heller and Mershon 2009). Alternatively, they can choose to speak out, possibly mortgaging their expected future influence; or they can hold their tongues and bide their time until they are in a position to set a better course (Hu and Heller 2011; Hu 2013).

backbenchers (Figure 1b). In essence, leaders in candidate-centered systems coordinate members and handle logistics; in party-centered systems, by contrast, they are full-fledged central agents (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991) who take and enforce party decisions.

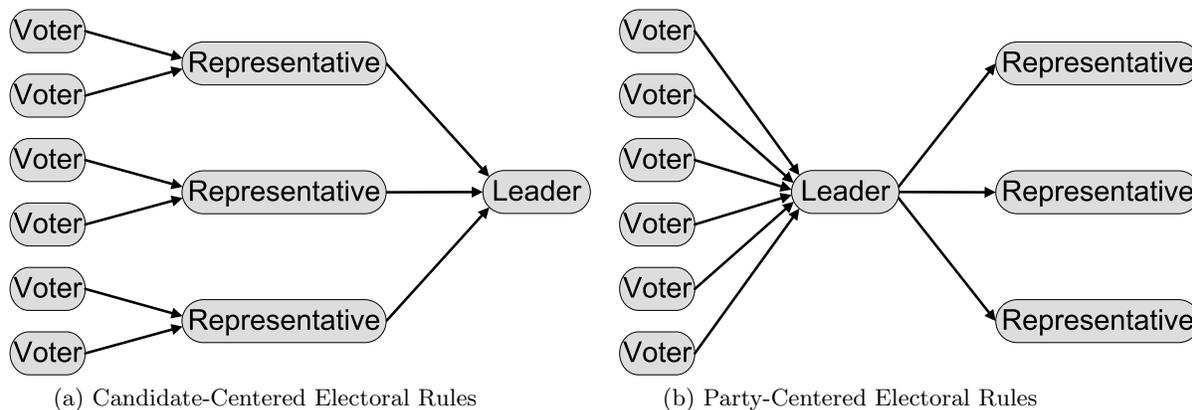


Figure 1: Electoral Rules and Intraparty Authority

Of course, identifying the locus of party decision making is not the same as predicting party decisions. The key question is whether party rank and file in candidate-centered systems want policy different from their counterparts in party-centered systems. The answer hinges on voter selfishness.

Self-interested voters want what they want. *Selfish* voters also want what they want, but they also do not want to pay for what anyone else wants. Some predictions seem reasonably self-evident: Poorer voters probably prefer redistributive policies aimed at equalizing ex-post resource allocations, for instance, because they expect to benefit and not to have to pay. Wealthier voters, on the other hand, should prefer policies that allow them to hold on to as much as possible of what they have, minimizing the difference between ex-ante and ex-post distributions.⁵ There is more at play than class distinctions, however, because of what it takes to come out ahead in elections. What voters want doesn't change; what candidates offer them does.

3.1 Candidate offerings and system candidate-centeredness

Consider a candidate in a system with candidate-centered electoral rules. The voters whose support she needs to win or retain in order to hold her seat comprise an identifiable and relatively small

⁵I assume as well (following Iversen and Soskice 2006, 169) that regressive redistribution is not an option.

group. Assuming that everything has to be paid for, her options are summarized in Figure 2. She can provide targeted (to the constituents in question only) or diffuse (to society in general) policy benefits, to be funded by targeted payees or by society as a whole.⁶ For her and her voters, the ideal outcome is the situation depicted in the upper right cell of the figure (the cells are numbered in rank order of attractiveness to the candidate and her voters), with targeted benefits and diffuse costs (this is of course the textbook example of US-style pork-barrel politics; cf. Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast 1979), which can work as long as voters don't pay attention to the accumulation of costs.

		Costs	
		Targeted	Diffuse
Benefits	Targeted	2	1
	Diffuse	4	3

Figure 2: Cost and Benefit Options for Candidate-Centered Policy

If costs become an issue such that candidates balk at asking their supporters to pay for benefits that accrue elsewhere, however, then the targeted benefits–diffuse costs option is infeasible. Transferring policy costs away from policy beneficiaries might be problematic for a member of a party, for instance, inasmuch as it would be tantamount to asking her copartisans and their constituents to pay for the benefits her constituents enjoy. The next best option is to give voters benefits that they pay for themselves—i.e., not to redistribute at all. The third alternative, broad benefits and diffuse costs, should hold little attraction for candidates who want to go on record as standing up for *their* constituents, not those of their colleagues. The option in the lower left cell, targeted costs and diffuse benefits, is worst of all, not only giving benefits to other candidates' voters but also earning the concrete ire of those who are targeted to cover the costs of policy.

Reelection-motivated politicians in candidate-centered systems can most effectively campaign by showering their own supporters with benefits. They are constrained in their efforts by other candidates with their own supporters and the overall requirement that spending be covered, at least in principle. They face, in short, a tradeoff: if they transfer resources to their constituents, they have to take the resources from other politicians' constituents; other politicians are unlikely to agree

⁶A third alternative is that targeted benefits are paid for by some targeted group distinct from the policy's beneficiaries. From the perspective of both the candidate and her voters, this is essentially the same as having society at large pay.

to such an arrangement without reciprocation. But reciprocation implies asking constituents to pay for benefits that accrue elsewhere, something politicians should prefer not to do to their supporters. That leaves the second-choice option of minimal redistribution.⁷ And because party leaders need for their own reasons to keep their rank and file happy, they set party positions consistent with what their members need.

Hypothesis 1. *The more candidate-centered the electoral system, the less parties should be willing to advocate redistributive policies.*

The logic flips in party-centered systems. Candidates have no direct relationship with voters—indeed, voters have no reason even to know candidates’ names—and they share with their copartisans the benefits of any efforts they might make to insinuate themselves with voters. Hence, no candidate has anything to gain from trying to target benefits to selected groups of voters (but see Taylor 1992). Instead, the ideal policy would be one that transfers benefits to the overall party constituency from elsewhere. Both lower cells in Figure 3 achieve this; whether the left or the right lower cell is preferred depends on whether there exists some group whose enmity can be safely weathered. Where such a group exists, the lower-left cell is ideal; where no such group exists, or where targeting some specific group would invite negative consequences, the preferred policy implies diffuse costs and benefits alike.⁸

		Costs	
		Targeted	Diffuse
Benefits	Targeted	3	4
	Diffuse	2	1

Figure 3: Cost and Benefit Options for Party-Centered Policy

Even if it were politically feasible to advocate policy with diffuse benefits and targeted costs, individual candidates would gain nothing from advocating for them. For that reason, and because such policy might have negative consequences, Figure 3 shows the lower-right cell as the most preferred policy option. The top row in the figure is generically unattractive because neither

⁷Some redistribution is inevitable. The basic public goods (e.g., defense, roads, and of course lighthouses) that even the staunchest old-world liberal would agree government should provide require labor, paid for with tax receipts.

⁸A policy that advocates targeting costs for broad benefit is democratically problematic. The paymasters for such policy must either be thoroughly steeped in the notion of *noblesse oblige*—in which case the policy would be unnecessary, since they would transfer their resources voluntarily—or unable to influence policy, hence disenfranchised (Przeworski 1991).

individual candidates nor their parties benefit from targeting specific voters. Consequently, no party with ambition to influence should build its platform on targeted-benefit policy alternatives. The figure upper-right cell (diffuse costs and targeted benefits) is the least-preferred option on the grounds that even though costs to any *given* voter might be minimal no voter should find policy that advocates benefits for somebody else to be particularly convincing.

How does making targeted policy unattractive affect party positions? At the end of the day, any party that aspires to legislative influence has to take positions with an eye to two audiences: most importantly, voters are more likely to reward a party that offers them something than one that does not; also, once in the legislature, potential legislative bargaining partners presumably would prefer not to deal with a party that stakes its existence on a small, targeted, unrepresentative subset of voters. Consequently, party-centered electoral rules should push all party positions in the direction of broader policy.

Hypothesis 2. *The more party-centered are electoral rules, the more parties should build redistributive policies into their platforms.*

These hypotheses add up to a straightforward empirical prediction. Parties in party-centered electoral systems should advocate redistributive policies more than their counterparts in candidate-centered systems. To reiterate, this is a prediction about *party positions*, not policy outcomes. The implication is that party-position antagonism to diffuse policy—I focus on welfare policy—is moderated in party-centered systems, where incentives select against parties taking extreme anti-welfare positions. I present the test of this argument and the data employed for it in the next section.

4 Party Platforms and Electoral Rules: Testing for a Link

In order to test the empirical prediction implied by my hypotheses, I need first to identify parties' positions with respect to welfare policy. The trick then is to test the claim that the candidate-centeredness of electoral rules systematically affects said positions. In the process, I need to show both that the effect of candidate-centeredness is distinct from constituency effects more generally (e.g., the demand for welfare-like policies in response to economic conditions, or the kind of coalitional policy-making concerns detailed in Iversen and Soskice 2006).

For my dependent variable, to measure “broad” or redistributive party policy positions, I use the *Welfare* variable from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP version 2015a, last accessed July 2015; see Budge et al. 2001; Klingemann et al. 2006). The CMP data have the advantage of varying over time (Budge and McDonald 2007), and while my independent variable of interest essentially is a constant to pick a single year for a cross-section analysis would risk attributing the effects of other variables (such as unusual economic conditions) to electoral rules, or vice versa. Higher values of this variable indicate more welfare-friendly positions.

What determines party positions with respect to welfare policy? Clearly, the usual-suspect variables employed for looking at welfare policy are unsuitable: Societal inequality might enrage pro-welfare parties, for example, but it is not obvious that umbrage should translate into platforms that are even more welfare-friendly; and it strikes me that anti-welfare parties for their part should be unfazed by a less-than-even playing field. Other common variables, such as old-age population, should affect outcomes but not necessarily party positions. In the first place, demographic variables hardly are surprises, so parties that are going to cater to demographic trends should not do all of a sudden. And in the second place, while pro-welfare parties might be expected to push for benefits for the elderly, other parties might be more inclined to advocate for families to take care of their own (or, in the case of the well-off, to allow them either to keep their riches or to hand them down to the next generation). I thus restrict my sample only to the most anti-welfare parties (as discussed in more detail below).

The key variable of interest is a measure of the candidate-centeredness of electoral rules. Candidate-centeredness is akin to Carey and Shugart’s (1995) measure of personal-vote incentives, built from a ranking defined by three variables measuring: the influence party leaders have over candidate access to the ballot; the degree to which ballots cast for a single candidate affect the candidate’s copartisans (e.g, the number of seats the party wins in a district); and whether voters cast ballots for candidates (one or several) or parties. The notion of candidate centeredness is conceptually similar, but focuses more on the leeway the average voter has to cast a ballot for individual candidates versus parties. The Carey and Shugart “Ballot” variable, for instance, should be irrelevant from this perspective. To this end, drawing on a dataset built from the rich “Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945” data base (ESCE; see Renwick and Pilet 2011), I construct a candidate-centeredness ranking (*CVote*) from 11 distinct variables (see Appendix A), sorted se-

quentially. The ranking ranges from 1 (the least candidate-centered systems, including Spain, Portugal, and Romania) to 34 (the least candidate-centered systems). Note that single-member district systems, such as the UK, are ambiguous, since it is impossible to distinguish between a vote for a candidate versus a party. Systems where voters are forced to choose from among copartisans, for instance are more unambiguously candidate-centered.

Candidate-centeredness is the key variable of interest, but it cannot stand alone. District magnitude also should matter, specifically in interaction with candidate-centeredness (see Carey and Shugart 1995; Edwards and Thames 2007): at low district magnitudes, voters who wish to can focus on candidates no matter what the electoral system; and at very high district magnitudes it should be difficult to keep track of individual candidates (and hence easier to seek out and follow partisan voting cues). I thus include a measure for district magnitude (*Magnitude*), which I interact with *CVote* to produce the interaction variable *CVoteM*. Rather than calculate average district magnitude the usual way, dividing the number seats by the number of districts, I calculate district magnitude from the point of view of the average voter (or candidate). My measure of district magnitude thus is $Magnitude = \sum_{i=1}^i \frac{\Sigma M_i}{S} * M_i$, where S is the total number of seats and ΣM_i is the total number of seats in districts of size i . The real effect of electoral rules should be found in the interactive term, where I expect the coefficient of *Cvote* to be nonexistent at low district magnitude and increasingly negative as *Magnitude* increases.

I include two more “institutional” variables, *Parliamentary* and *Fractionalization* as controls, along with some economic variables. The first of these (*dpi_system*, initially from the *Database of Political Institutions* [DPI, Beck et al. 2001], but here drawn from the *Quality of Government* [QoG] dataset from Svensson et al. 2012), takes integer values 0, 1, or 2, with 0 marking pure presidential systems and 2 marking parliamentary systems. The intermediate value applies to the so-called semi-presidential systems that have both president and prime minister and where presidents ostensibly are less powerful than their pure-presidential counterparts. *Fractionalization* (originally *dpi_tf*, also from the DPI via the QoG) measures the probability that two randomly chosen members of a legislature would be members of different parties. *Parliamentary* should take a positive coefficient in light of the well-worn observation that parliamentary systems encourage voters to focus on parties more than they otherwise might (Cox 1987; Epstein 1967; Laver 2006).

The point of including the *Fractionalization* variable, for which I have no theoretically derived

expectation, is to guard against mistaking the welfare-policy effects of the proportionality of the electoral system for candidate-centeredness effects. Proportional electoral rules are identified in the literature as one of the stronger determinants of welfare effort at the national level, but most measures that I know of are woefully inadequate dummies or cover a very small set of countries. I thus use *Fractionalization* as a proxy for electoral-rule proportionality, given the expectation that the proportionality of elections should correlate positively with the number of legislative parties, which in turn should be related to higher values for *Fractionalization*. If the relevant mechanism is indeed electoral proportionality rather than electoral candidate-centeredness, then its coefficient should be positive and significant while the coefficient for *CVote* should not be.

To guard against my results being swamped or driven by exogenous economic factors, I control for some key economic variables (all lagged). Specifically, I include *Unemployment*, female unemployment (*FemUnemployment*), *GDP*, and *GDPGrowth*. The coefficient for *Unemployment* should be positive, since any party or candidate campaigning in the face of high unemployment is likely to face pressure to address the problem—and the immediate salve is unemployment insurance. If parties address such issues in the programs, their positions should be more redistributive than expected irrespective of the electoral systems. The effect of female unemployment should work the other way. The more women who are staying at home because they cannot find work, the less support is needed for childcare, for example. Hence, controlling for overall unemployment, I expect female unemployment to be linked to less welfare-friendly policy stances. Further, I would expect parties in countries with higher GDP to be more friendly to redistributive spending, all else constant, because it is relatively easier to share a larger pie. The same holds for growth in GDP. I therefore expect the coefficients of both *GDP* and *GDPGrowth* to be positive. Finally, to control for the possibility of secular trends in the popularity of welfare policy over time (due, e.g., globalization in trade and manufacturing), I include the election year.

The general hypothesis under scrutiny here is that the least welfare-friendly parties should be more amenable to redistribution in party-centered than in candidate-centered systems, all else equal. The dependent variable for analysis thus is the position of the most anti-welfare party in each country per period. (Periods are elections; the lagged economic variables discussed above are taken from the year just preceding each election in the dataset.) The data have an unbalanced cross-section–time-series data structure (112 observations across 26 countries; see Appendix B),

which I analyze using Beck and Katz’s (1996) PCSE method.

The results can be seen in Table 1. Model 1 shows the full estimation using party welfare positions from the Manifesto Project Dataset (MPD), and Model 2 shows the same using the the Lowe et al. (2011) scaled measures designed to correct for problems in the original Manifesto Project dataset, including lumpy data, low counts in some policy categories, or the fact that, conceptually, the measures address saliency rather than position. In Model 1a, *CVote* and Magnitude take positive and significant coefficients, against expectations, while the interaction term, *CVoteM*, is negative and significant. The results are similar in Model 2a, albeit with *CVote* appearing statistically indistinguishable from 0. Models 1b and 2b show that dropping the institutional *Parliamentary* and *Fractionalization* variables has no substantive effect on the result.⁹

Table 1: Candidate-Centered Electoral Rules and Anti-Welfare Party Positions

Dependent Variable: Anti-Welfare	Model 1a		Model 1b		Model 2a		Model 2b	
	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value	β	p-value
<i>Cvote</i>	0.0950	0.0280	0.0871	0.0760	0.0023	0.8850	-0.0044	0.8370
<i>Magnitude</i>	0.0820	0.0000	0.0977	0.0000	0.0203	0.0030	0.0286	0.0000
<i>CvoteM</i>	-0.0039	0.0000	-0.0046	0.0000	-0.0010	0.0010	-0.0013	0.0000
<i>Parliamentary</i>	0.4601	0.4260			-0.3293	0.2280		
<i>Fractionalization</i>	-7.8240	0.0060			-4.8920	0.0130		
<i>Unemployment_{t-1}</i>	0.1037	0.7260	-0.0467	0.8640	-0.0926	0.5510	-0.1054	0.4720
<i>FemUnemployment_{t-1}</i>	-0.2951	0.2200	-0.1923	0.3840	0.0182	0.8780	0.0320	0.7810
<i>GDP_{t-1}</i>	0.0001	0.0870	0.0001	0.0890	0.0000	0.9260	0.0000	0.7060
<i>GDPGrowth_{t-1}</i>	0.1709	0.0330	0.1691	0.0390	0.1291	0.0000	0.1201	0.0010
<i>Year</i>	0.1054	0.2750			0.0434	0.3840		
<i>Constant</i>	-201.0407	0.2980	5.3364	0.0020	-80.8498	0.4160	1.9398	0.0190
rho	0.4914		0.5583		0.7026		0.7437	
Observations	110		112		103		105	
Groups	26		26		26		26	
Obs/Group (mean, max)	4.2308, 6		4.3077, 6		3.9615, 6		4.0385, 6	
R ²	0.2737		0.2295		0.2350		0.1549	

As discussed above, the *CVote* should not be considered alone. The effect of electoral rules on whether and to what extent voters look at candidates independent from partisan considerations should be conditioned on district magnitude. Specifically, for very small district magnitudes (at the extreme, single-member districts) other electoral rules ought not to affect how voters think of candidates. As district magnitude increases, however, the effect of the electoral rules summed up in *CVote* becomes more important. This can be seen by unpacking the interaction term, *CVoteM*.

The coefficient for *CVoteM* is negative and significant, suggesting that when as both *CVote*

⁹Dropping either of the unemployment variables, which are jointly significant in all models, also leaves the result substantively unaffected. The results are not robust to dropping both, however.

and *Magnitude* increase the most anti-welfare parties become more amenable—or at least less vehemently opposed—to redistributive policy. This on its face fits with the argument in Section 3, but looking at the marginal effect of *CVote* given *Magnitude*, shown in Figure 4 gives a better picture of what is going on. At low district magnitudes, electoral-rule candidate-centeredness is positively (but not statistically significantly) correlated with the welfare positions of the most anti-welfare parties. This is consistent with the notion that voters use party label as a voting cue where there is no observable difference between voting for a candidate or the candidate’s party (cf Popkin 1994). In parliamentary systems, which comprise most of my sample, it makes sense for voters to focus on party to the extent that electoral rules permit it (see, e.g., Cox 1987; Epstein 1967; Laver 2006). As *Magnitude* increases, however, candidate-centered rules can make voters pay attention to individual candidates, e.g., by forcing them to rank candidates in a party list. Thus, at higher district magnitudes the effects of candidate-centeredness should be more pronounced, consistent with the evidence in Figure 4a that candidate-centered rules are strongly and negatively correlated with the welfare positions of the most anti-welfare parties as district magnitudes increase. The evidence in Figure 4b reinforces this result: when electoral-rule candidate-centeredness is low, increasing district magnitude makes the most anti-welfare parties more welfare-friendly; the relationship reverses for more candidate-centered rules, however.

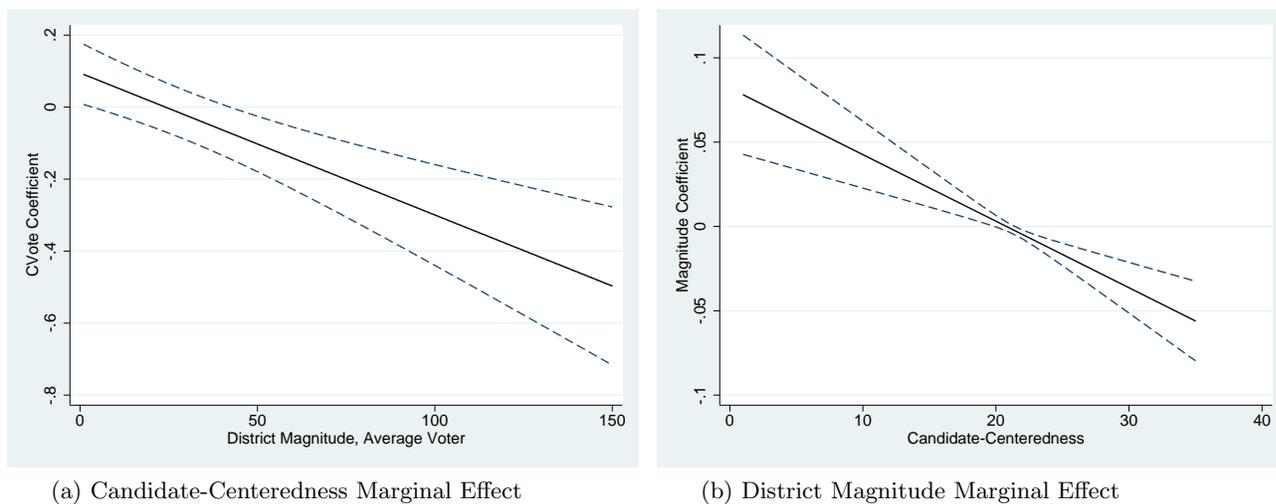


Figure 4: Marginal Effects on Anti-Welfare Positions

The evidence supports the argument that parties are less opposed to redistributive policies in party-centered than in candidate-centered electoral systems. The coefficients for the non-interacted

CVote in Model 1 seems surprising at first blush—it is positive and significant—but only indicates the effect of *CVote* when *Magnitude* is 0, which is uninteresting. The coefficient for *Magnitude*, positive and significant in both models, both is more meaningful and supports my argument: when *CVote* is 0—that is, in the most party-centered systems—increasing district magnitude makes the most anti-welfare parties more moderate. Other variables that might be expected to matter generally do, but they do not subtract from the impact of electoral-rule party centeredness. *Parliamentary* is statistically indistinguishable from 0, which might be an artifact of the sample (most cases are pure parliamentary systems). Fractionalization takes a negative coefficient, against expectations, perhaps suggesting that as the number of parties increases they focus more on specific constituent groups, in essence behaving as individual candidates in a candidate-centered systems. The economic controls, finally, take the expected coefficients but are statistically underwhelming, with only lagged GDP growth appearing to have any impact at all; the unemployment measures are jointly significant, however.

5 Discussion

I have argued—and shown for welfare policy—that electoral rules and party policy positions are related. Underpinning my argument and conclusions is the basic point that, as long as policy preferences vary across individuals, the content of collective decisions depends on the structure and process of decision making (Plott 1991). This is both old and new territory in political science. Old, because the literature on the link between electoral rules and policy outcomes is vast and fairly long-lived. New, because I look at party positions rather than policy outcomes and situate the mechanism for the relationship inside parties. My argument is innovative not simply because it is new, but because it unites and builds on two distinct analytical approaches: principal-agent analysis, starting with self-interested actors engaging with each other for their own advantage; and institutional analysis, taking seriously the notion that political institutions confer authority.

The mechanism that links electoral rules to party policy positions is the authority that those rules confer to individual candidates vis-à-vis their party leaders. When voters focus on candidates rather than just on parties, candidates gain influence, hence authority, inside their parties. This can only work where party leaders (or candidates) care about winning seats, of course; what goes

on in parties where winning seats is not instrumental to achieving leaders' and members' goals is beyond the scope of this paper, but I would expect the relationship between candidates and their purported leaders to be quite different.

There are two alternative arguments that at first glance might explain my results. The first holds that party positioning is a function of *party systems* and electoral rules, so that parties take their positions based on where the votes are (e.g., Adams and Merrill 2008; Adams, Merrill and Grofman 2005; Cox 1990; Downs 1957; Erikson and Romero 1990; Schofield and Sened 2006; and cf. Strøm 1990; Müller and Strøm 1999). The second suggests that the number of parties in a party system might affect parties' ability to take extreme policy positions without putting seats at risk. For the former, the implication is that two-party systems, which tend to go hand in hand with more candidate-centered electoral rules, should induce policy moderation. However, the empirical analysis shows that the more extreme anti-welfare parties are found where electoral rules are candidate-centered. The coefficients for *Fractionalization* in Models 1a and 2a (Table 1 as well as in the estimation (not shown) of the most pro-welfare party positions is consistent with the latter claim, but it seems to work alongside *CVote* rather than in place of it.

The underlying point of the argument is that while the rules that *govern* politics might be difficult to change, how they *affect* politics depends on how political actors adapt to them. The logic I lay out suggests, for instance that if parties failed to adapt to electoral rules, then right-wing parties consistently would do very poorly in party-centered systems. But they do adapt—they at least adjust their positions with respect to welfare policy—and so remain competitive. A corollary empirical point is that evidence of the political impact of political institutions is not always what it seems. On one hand, institutions structure equilibrium behavior, so opportunities to observe them in action and thus observe their effects should be rare. On the other hand, institutionally motivated equilibrium behavior is a consequence of adaptation, which in the context of political institutions that reward collective action implies organization; organization can be hard to see and measure directly (but see Katz and Mair 1994; VanDusky-Allen and Heller 2014), but carefully tracing of individual actors' incentives can yield useful, observable predictions that build from political institutions in action.

Appendix A

CVote is constructed as a ranking of countries by electoral rules, from most party-centered (0) to most candidate-centered. The variables used to create the country ranking are, in the order of sorting:

- vote_list** 1 if voters can vote for party lists (as well as or rather than individual candidates), 0 otherwise (reverse sort);
- vote_candidate** 1 if voters can vote for individual candidates (irrespective of whether they vote for parties), 0 otherwise;
- negvote** 1 if voters can cast negative votes on a party list (only in Latvia);
- party_order** 1 if lists are ordered by the party (e.g., lists are alphabetical), 0 otherwise (reverse sort);
- two_round** 1 if elections run two rounds, 0 otherwise (reverse sort);
- plurality** 1 if winning requires a plurality, 0 otherwise;
- majority** 1 if winning requires a majority (i.e., two-round majority), 0 otherwise (reverse sort);
- n_votes** The number of votes (e.g., preference votes in a list) a voter can cast, coded as district magnitude for the average candidate if as many votes as available seats or as many votes as names on a party list;
- crossparty** 1 if voters can cast votes for candidates of different parties; 0 otherwise;
- rankvote** 1 if voters can rank-order candidates (as opposed to simply casting preference votes), 0 otherwise;
- minrankvotes** 1 if voter must rank at least one candidate, 0 otherwise.

Appendix B

Countries included in the statistical models are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

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