

**The Relative Importance of Industrial Relations Ideas in Politics:  
A Quantitative Analysis of Political Party Manifestos across 54 Countries**

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Abstract

Ideas are important but hard to quantify, making large-scale, quantitative analyses difficult. Political parties are important ideational contributors, and their election-year manifestos provide explicit compilations of their ideas on relevant issues. Using Comparative Manifesto Project data, this paper examines the fraction of manifesto content devoted to pro-worker and anti-union statements to measure the importance of industrial relations ideas. Multivariate analyses across 54 countries, 75 years, and 1,132 parties uniquely uncover predictors of industrial relations ideas, including party characteristics, their responses to other parties, and the wider economic and political conditions at play. Further, pro-worker ideas matter to voters during elections.

Keywords: industrial relations ideas; political parties; Comparative Manifesto Project; quantitative analysis

We are grateful to Russell Lansbury for his thoughtful insights.

## Introduction

To interrogate how ideas matter for industrial relations is to explore the importance of meanings and discourse for determining action by shaping judgement (Fox 1966; Budd and Bhave 2008), expectations (Ibsen 2015), motivation (Jonsson and Lounsbury 2016), and legitimacy (Ainsworth, Cutcher, and Thomas 2014). As such, not only do traditional, structural sources of power rooted in economic, social, and political resources affect industrial relations outcomes, but so, too, can power rooted in ideas (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016; Preminger 2020). In the policymaking arena, industrial relations research examines how labor unions, employers' associations, think tanks, political elites, and others shape policy outcomes through “the construction of ideas, the battle of ideas, and the interaction of ideas and institutions” (McLaughlin and Wright 2018: 34; Hauptmeier and Heery 2014; Morgan and Hauptmeier 2021).

However, political parties as distinct actors from the governing state are often overlooked. Even when lacking a governing role, parties can influence whether employment relations are an important policy issue, shape public attitudes toward unions, and create narratives that affect the state's policy choices. Moreover, political party manifestos offer a clear window into the positions that political actors across the full ideational spectrum take on a given issue, presenting sets of beliefs and promises of action regarding the issue if elected (Budge et al. 2001). Unlike other ideational actors, political parties are required to present their ideas to voters every election, and this presentation of ideas becomes the party's manifesto for all to see—and by focusing on the content of manifestos that pertains to work and workers, for industrial relations ideational researchers to analyze.

In this paper, we theorize that ideas enter into political party manifestos via three channels. Empirically, we analyze the importance of labor ideas in manifestos using two key

measures: the percent of a manifesto devoted to pro-worker and anti-union ideas within each party's election-based manifesto from 1945-2019, constituting 4,529 manifesto observations written by 1,132 political parties from 700 elections and 54 countries across five continents. These data are derived primarily from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), which has undertaken content analyses of all major political parties' election manifestos within a given country and election cycle as far back as 1945 (Budge et al. 2001). These data have been widely used in political science research (e.g., Tavits and Potter 2015; Böhmelt et al. 2016), but we are unaware of their use in industrial relations. We are able to contribute uniquely to the industrial relations literature since most studies that attempt to examine how societies view institutional supports for workers across time use end-product legislative indicators that often reflect compromises about competing ideas, or indirect outcome measures like union density or bargaining coverage that depend on non-ideational factors. Manifestos, in contrast, can more directly reveal the extent of ideational support for these policies, and provide the opportunity to analyze the determinants and implications of varying degrees of ideational support.

Indeed, ideational research often relies on small-n or qualitative studies, partly as a result of a paucity of data that can be used to measure the presence of ideas. Our work extends the scholarship on industrial relations ideas in the political sphere by revealing the ability to undertake large-n quantitative analyses of a uniquely quantifiable aspect of industrial relations ideas in the political arena: the presence and effects of ideas held within a political party's election campaign manifesto. Briefly, our empirical analysis reveals unique findings. First, manifesto ideas about worker issues have varied across time and between countries, and sources of this variation include differences in party characteristics (particularly party type and ideology), a party's response to the positions of its competitors in the prior election, and also changes to

within-country economic and political characteristics (namely union density, inflation, and aspects of political systems). Second, pro-worker manifesto ideas matter to voters. Specifically, greater percentages of pro-worker ideas within a party's manifesto are associated with higher vote and seat shares during elections, and pro-worker mentions are among the most important among all manifesto topics. These findings can help ideational researchers understand the origins of work-related ideas, assess when they are enduring rather than episodic, and uncover possible areas for new qualitative research.

### **Political Party Manifestos as Ideational Documents**

The social sciences concept of “idea” is broad and difficult to precisely define (Schmidt 2008). But a common denominator is that an idea provides a basis for meaning or understanding (Schmidt 2008; Béland 2010; Ibsen 2015). Furthermore, it is common to distinguish between cognitive and normative ideas, in which the former “define what is desirable and good” while the latter embody “ways of thinking about how the world works” (Ibsen 2015: 6; Schmidt 2008; Hauptmeier and Heery 2014). In the political, public policy-making sphere, cognitive ideas capture how specific “policies offer solutions to the problems at hand” and how policy programs or paradigms “define the problems to be solved and identify the methods by which to solve them” while normative ideas indicate how policies “meet the aspirations and ideals of the general public” (Schmidt 2008: 307).

Public policy proposals are widely accepted as ideas (Hauptmeier and Heery 2014; McLaughlin and Wright 2018), and this description of cognitive and normative ideas illustrates how political party manifestos are ideational documents. That is, political party manifestos are not simply a listing of policy proposals; rather, they almost always present a portfolio of policy proposals packaged together to fulfill explicit values and ideals. Table 1 presents selected

manifesto statements in the categories analyzed in this paper, and they appear as short statements to illustrate a key feature of the data collection (explained below). But note carefully that these are highly contextualized statements in the manifestos. The statement that the ANC “has safeguarded and entrenched the hard-won rights of workers” is explicitly presented as part of the ANC’s pursuit of freedom and democracy; eliminating abusive work practices is championed as part of its pursuit of an inclusive economy that “reduces income inequality as we undo the legacy of discrimination at work on the grounds of race, gender and disability.” The anti-union mentions from the New Zealand National Party manifesto are all part of that party’s pursuit of “a flexible and fair labour market [that] is critical for building a stronger and more competitive economy and creating jobs,” which will also “increase wages and encourage innovation.” So manifestos are articulations of policy goals rooted in underlying values (that is, normative ideas) and of policy proposals that identify how to achieve these goals (that is, cognitive ideas).

In other words, a manifesto provides the means for a political party to give *meaning* to its platform, and allows politicians, policy makers, and voters to more deeply *understand* a party’s platform. When this causes voters, for example, to *interpret* their world in a certain way that leads to an action, such as voting for a particular party’s candidates, then the manifesto provides an ideational explanation for this action (Parsons 2007). As such, a key function of a manifesto is to give a political party power through ideas—that is, “to persuade other actors to accept and adopt their views of what to think and do” (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016: 320-21). The literature on ideas also sees ideas as being used to enhance one’s power through increased legitimacy and/or mobilization (Béland 2010; McLaughlin and Wright 2018; Preminger 2020). Manifestos are clearly used in this way. The literature also notes that ideas can be used as a counter-discourse to challenge competing ideas (Ainsworth, Cutcher, and Thomas 2014; Ibsen 2015);

again, manifestos can also serve in this capacity—for example, the 2011 New Zealand National Party manifesto includes nearly 50 callout boxes with the title, “Labour would take New Zealand backwards.” Political party manifestos thus fit squarely within the definitions and uses of ideas as used in the ideational literature.

We follow the approach in ideational scholarship, rooted in discursive institutionalism, that does not distinguish between interests and ideas. In this approach, “interests are ideas” (Schmidt 2008: 322) as both inseparably relate to “how people define what they think is good for them” (Parsons 2007: 10). Rather than artificially distinguishing between interests and ideas, it is more fruitful to separate ideational elements from structural-institutional elements (Parsons 2007). Our analyses follow this approach by empirically modeling ideational content (manifesto mentions) as resulting from structural-institutional elements (e.g., union density) and ideational ones (e.g., prior manifesto content).

### **Three Ideational Channels in Party Manifestos**

A key issue in ideational research is the origins of ideational elements in ways that are not completely determined by structures and institutions (Parsons 2007). That political parties in the same country and election take different positions on issues strongly suggests that there is structural and institutional ambiguity that allows for an ideational construction of manifestos. Drawing from industrial relations and political science literature, we theorize three channels through which ideas originate in manifestos. We label these channels as reflecting *entrenched values*, *new thinking*, and *reactive mirroring*. Our expectation is that any industrial relations idea placed into a party’s manifesto will originate from one of these three broad categories.

Party manifesto ideas on work-related issues may be rooted in a party’s *entrenched values* based on longstanding historical traditions, ideologies, or beliefs about work and workers.

This is consistent with the importance of historical legacies and structures that cause the promotion of certain ideas to be helped or hindered within institutions (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016). Applying this concept to political party manifestos, we would expect that certain longstanding party characteristics, like the party's type or "family," provide a source of variation in manifesto ideas about worker issues. Social democratic parties, for example, might be expected to more frequently issue support for pro-worker policies in their manifestos as a result of their embedded positions on capital and workers (Sassoon 1996). Similar manifesto expectations would occur where parties are, on average, ideologically farther left, while manifestos will be more relatively anti-union among conservative and ideologically right parties due to their embedded core beliefs.

A second channel through which industrial relations ideas end up in party manifestos is that *new thinking* may take hold within a party. This channel allows for significant shifts in party thinking that reflect changes to, or considerably different implementations of, the ideological positions held by party elites, operating as a deviation from the party's common ideological position (Druckman and Jacobs 2015). New thinking may also emerge or catch on under conditions of political or economic crisis (Kindleberger and Aliber 2000). Through their manifestos, party elites then express these new ideas to their constituents in a subsequent election. A classic example of the application of new thinking to political manifestos can be found in the UK, where Margaret Thatcher introduced new ideas into the 1979 Conservative Party manifesto that reflected an ideological shift toward neoliberalism and an embrace of free markets built around the ideas of Hayek and Friedman (McLaughlin and Wright 2018). These ideas were rooted in an internal Conservative document called *Stepping Stones*, which predated

the 1979 election by four years. Thatcher capitalized on the “Winter of Discontent” crisis before the 1979 election to introduce the new thinking that had percolated for many years (Dorey 2014).

The third channel through which party manifesto ideas about industrial relations can be expected to arise comes from the *reactive mirroring* of ideas to which the party believes voters will be most receptive, usually in an attempt to gain political power. This channel sees parties as rational actors who, in seeking power, are required to either be accountable to the interests of the median voter in a society or interest group (Downs 1957), or to operate as a catch-all party to attract mobile voters who fluctuate in their attitudes toward a given issue (Mair 2013). If voter interests shift regarding how work should be governed, so too might the ideas placed within a party’s manifestos, reflecting an attempt to demonstrate commitment to the new interests of their constituents. Through this channel, the ideas that a party includes in its manifesto can be considered transactional in that they are derived from a cost/benefit calculus of electoral success rather than from entrenched values or new thinking. In spite of this transactional nature, this channel is still ideational because the manifesto presents *ideas* in the form of norms, values, and policy solutions, and is trying to reflect *ideas* held by voters.

Three closing points are in order. First, while each of the channels represent a different source of ideas, they each convey meaningful ideational content. Manifesto statements rooted in entrenched values, even if slow to change over time, portray ideas that reflect enduring ideals within the party worthy of continued re-statement. Statements generated by new thinking demonstrate the latest ideas of the party’s leaders. And manifesto content created via reactive mirroring reveals how a party seeks to reproduce ideas perceived as desirable by voters. So even if some content in a manifesto appears leftover from earlier years or is seen as strategic positioning to give the people what they want, these nonetheless capture useful types of ideas.



Second, although we believe it is important to distinguish among these channels to better conceptualize the ideational components of manifestos, we acknowledge that we cannot directly test the three channels in our analyses. Our data capture the presence of the idea itself, rather than the intent behind it. And attempting to divine intent from a political manifesto idea can be especially challenging since parties frequently claim that their manifesto ideas purely reflect the will of the people (reactive mirroring), when in reality they are often rooted in a combination of longstanding traditions (embedded values) and shifts among party elites (new thinking). Empirically, we attempt to compartmentalize these channels to some degree by considering both the party's mean ideology and its deviation from the mean in any given election, for instance, but we acknowledge that our approach is indirect. We will also attempt to account for the reactive mirroring channel by analyzing a subset of extremist parties, which would not be expected to gravitate toward malleable voter interests to win elections.

Third, although manifestos are finite documents that cannot capture every idea a party has on all given issues, their well-documented key functions push them to be comprehensive. One key function is to provide a compendium document reflecting the party's overall positions on core values and policy issues, which allows candidates who may have knowledge of only a small number of issues to quickly understand the party's views on its full array of topics (Edur, Jenny, and Muller 2017). Another is to establish an authoritative "contract" with voters that rises above any individual politician's words or actions and forces within-party alignment on issues (Laver and Garry 2000; Ray 2007). Manifestos are ineffective in fulfilling these functions if they have major gaps. Consequently, a manifesto is intended to reflect the party's aggregate thinking on issues that are particularly relevant to the collective interests of the party in a given election cycle. Analyzing the frequency of work-related content within manifestos, therefore, reveals how

industrial relations ideas wax and wane as important or unimportant to collective party goals, identities, and their contractual promises to voters.

### **Manifesto Data**

We use data derived from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), which is steered by political scientists and created from content analyses of all major political parties' election manifestos within a given country and election cycle dating back to as early as 1945 (Budge et al. 2001; Volkens et al. 2020; manifesto-project.wzb.eu). These data have been widely used in political science research and both the benefits and limitations of the data have been documented at length (Gemenis 2013).<sup>1</sup> However, we are unaware of any usage in industrial relations, and only a small fraction of political science publications that use the data feature any connection to unions or workers (Rueda 2006; Hamann, Johnston, and Kelly 2013).

The dataset captures manifestos for political parties across more than 50 countries that include the OECD and several Eastern European and Asian democracies. Coverage for Western democratic countries generally starts with the first postwar national election, and coverage for other countries generally begins shortly after democratization (e.g., Spain in 1977, South Korea

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<sup>1</sup> The CMP data have been critiqued around four areas of concern (Gemenis 2013). First, the assumption that manifesto statements emphasize contrasting policy differences between parties may be more accurate under majoritarian political systems than multiparty systems. Second, CMP sometimes includes as “manifestos” documents that may not rise to the level of an official party manifesto (such as election year party leader speeches or regional party manifestos). Third, the data may suffer from occasional misclassification issues since they are not always subject to inter-rater reliability tests. Fourth, CMP’s scaling of ideology may be problematic since the scale comes from adding and subtracting statements found within the manifesto itself. We attempt to account for these concerns wherever possible in our paper. To address the first critique, we account for political systems in much of our analyses. We address the second concern by controlling for manifesto length (and its square); also, our results are robust to only using manifesto programs identified as part of the party’s “regular program.” To overcome the third critique, we run robustness tests removing any manifestos with CMP coder reliability scores below 0.5. Regarding the fourth critique, we perform robustness tests using ideology measures derived from experts’ ratings of parties’ ideological positions.

in 1992, South Africa in 1994, and former Soviet states in the early 1990s). The goal of the CMP is to generally include in the dataset all parties that have captured at least one legislative seat in each country's election (for Central and Eastern Europe, the threshold is two seats). A total of 4,529 unique party-election manifestos are documented for 1,132 parties across 700 elections, though our sample sizes will range from slightly to significantly smaller due to missing values and data availability for measures from other sources.

Country experts code manifestos in their native language by parsing each manifesto into "quasi-sentences" containing unique ideas, and then each quasi-sentence is placed into one of 56 categories. A percent-based measure of each category's mentions is then created based on the total number of quasi-sentences in the manifesto. Virtually the entire manifesto is parsed this way (except the preamble and headlines), and quasi-sentences never span more than a single grammatical sentence, though a single sentence may be subdivided into several unique quasi-sentences. Some topics have separate categories for statements considered positive and statements considered negative while others are only positive. For example, category number 701 is "Labour Groups: Positive" while 702 is "Labour Groups: Negative," but for "Democracy" there is only one category and it captures favorable mentions.

The key variables in the CMP data are those that indicate what fraction of a manifesto's statements pertain to each of the 56 topical categories. We focus on the two that are most directly connected to industrial relations and Table 1 provides the codebook definitions and examples of each variable. The first is mentions (equivalently, quasi-sentences) that are identified as pro-worker in nature and placed into the "Labour Groups: Positive" category. This category includes specific pro-union statements and legislative goals, and also broader or more generic pro-worker ideas, like a call for more jobs, fair wages, or good working conditions. As such, these pro-

worker mentions should not be treated as exclusively pro-union, but more akin to a party's ideas about how to generally improve working conditions that frequently include pro-union sentiments among other ideas. In contrast, the second variable is almost exclusively anti-union in nature and indicates the fraction of statements coded as "Labour Groups: Negative." This category tends to focus on parties' ideas that unions hold too much power or that unions are abusing their power.

Table 2 shows the specific countries included in the data we analyze and the range of election years for each. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics. Across all years and countries, parties dedicated about 2.8 percent of their manifestos to pro-worker ideas and 0.15 percent to anti-union ideas. While these might seem like low rates of industrial relations content, ultimately what matters is the relative importance of these categories compared to others, and the implications of variation in these categories across time, place, and parties.

The average manifesto comprised about 653 quasi-sentences. We will use this (and its square) as a control variable in the multivariate analyses as a proxy for various party characteristics in a given election cycle, including the complexity of its policy platform, its entrenchment in the political arena, or the policy cleavages it seeks to address, as well as the structural form the manifesto program takes. On average, the parties in our sample were ideologically centrist, and most belonged to either socialist, social democratic, liberal, Christian democratic, or conservative party families. We supplement the CMP data with measures from other sources; these additional variables shown in Table 2 will be described later in the paper.

A requirement of being able to undertake large-n analyses of work-related manifesto content is that the measures used are comparable across contexts, which is achieved by focusing on the percent of a manifesto's content that is pro-worker or anti-union statements. But such analyses are only useful if these measures capture ideas in a meaningful rather than superficial

way. To establish this, we show that patterns in the relative importance of labor statements relate to electoral contests known to involve controversies over specific industrial relations policies in Australia (Appendix A) and the United Kingdom (Online Appendix B).

### **Trends in Work-Related Mentions**

As demonstrated by the Australian and UK cases, manifestos provide a unique opportunity to gauge the relative importance of ideas around work and labor, and to see how this differs across countries and varies over time. Figure 1 shows where mentions of work-related ideas (i.e., combined pro-worker and anti-union mentions) rank relative to other categories of mentions within manifestos using the full data back to 1945.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, Figure 1 shows the 14 most and three least important categories ordered from highest to lowest overall percent of total mentions. The bar length to the left of the zero value indicates the average percent for negative mentions, the length to the right indicates the average percent for positive mentions, and recall that most categories have only a positive option.

Work-related ideas as reflected by the relative frequency of any mentions of work and unions, positive or negative, ranks 11th out of the 42 groups, with an average of 2.88 percent of any given manifesto being devoted to a position on labor issues (2.76 percent positive, and 0.12 percent negative). In comparison, the category with the greatest representation is welfare (7.93 percent of manifestos), followed by technology and infrastructure (4.53 percent) and equality (4.44 percent). Work-related mentions sit just below party positions in favor of economic growth

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<sup>2</sup> To capture the overall attention paid to a topic, in creating Figure 1 we combined pairs of categories that have separate positive and negative categories, including the “Labour Groups” topic, and then ordered the resulting categories from highest importance to the lowest. Throughout our analyses, the underlying key measure is each category’s percent of each manifesto’s total statements, so the most important category is the one that, on average, captures the highest fraction of statements in a manifesto.

(3.02 percent), and they are slightly more commonly found in manifestos than are favorable mentions of demographic groups like the elderly or minorities (2.88 percent), freedom and human rights (2.70 percent) or positions in support of a national way of life, i.e. patriotism, nationalism, and pride of citizenship (2.69 percent). The average across all of the topics is 2.23 percent (2.11 percent positive and 0.12 percent negative). In the aggregate, then, work-related ideas have received above-average attention in the postwar period, but they are not as frequently discussed as welfare, equality, education, agriculture, and government efficiency.

How does the attention paid to work-related ideas vary across countries and time? Online Appendix C discusses average manifesto mentions by country. Interestingly, the top five pro-worker countries are from different continents. With respect to changes over time, Figure 2 shows the trends in relative mentions for the two work-related categories for 1945-2019. As the underlying data are by party and election, and the number of elections per year varies, Figure 2 shows a three-year moving average for each measure, plus the overall average for all 56 possible manifesto topics. For pro-worker manifesto mentions, there are three discrete trends. From 1945 through the early-1980s, political parties had relatively evenly distributed percentages of pro-worker positions written into their manifestos at higher-than-average rates compared to all topics, albeit with some mild variation. Then the 1980s witnessed a decline in pro-worker positions, bottoming out in the 1990s where pro-worker mentions were no more frequent than average. From the late-1990s onward, however, we see a resurgence in pro-worker manifesto mentions, with the percentages rising sharply. Though this trend slowed in the late-2000s (perhaps due to the global financial crisis), it has continued to climb in the past decade, to the point that pro-worker mentions are more common in manifestos now than they were even during what might be considered the heyday of the labor movement following World War II.

In contrast, Figure 2 clearly shows that anti-labor manifesto mentions are consistently less prevalent, on average, than pro-worker mentions. Anti-union party platforms fluctuated in the postwar period, before rising in the early- to mid-1970s, and again sharply in the early- to mid-1980s, followed by a steep decline. Finally, we see a slight temporary uptick in anti-union mentions in the late-2000s, again perhaps as a result of the global financial crisis.

### **Hypothesizing Predictors of Pro-Worker and Anti-Union Manifesto Mentions**

Though abbreviated, the Australian and UK cases (Appendix A and online Appendix B) illustrate the types of measures that are the focus of our large-n analyses and how these measures relate to meaningful ideas about industrial relations, both pro and con, and the competition of these ideas across the parties over time. Parties' ideological distinctions and trends, and their overall family membership, appear to have played a large role in the variations in pro-worker and anti-union party platforms. Moreover, many of the pro-worker and anti-union manifesto ideas appear to vary with wider political and economic circumstances. In this section we formalize these hypotheses, and then follow this section with multivariate analyses of the extent to which the frequency of work-related ideas varied according to economic, political, and party characteristics, and then how voters responded to parties' positions on labor issues.

#### *Party Family and Ideology*

Different types of political parties might find it more or less useful to deploy work-related manifesto mentions as ideational strategies. Specifically, given the traditional associations between socialist or social democratic parties and labor movements (Anthonsen, Lindvall, and Schmidt-Hansen 2011), we hypothesize that, on balance, left-leaning parties will make pro-worker mentions more frequently, and right-leaning parties are more likely to include anti-union mentions in their manifestos. But recall that pro-worker mentions can take various forms, so they

can also be found in the manifestos of right-leaning parties, which tempers our first hypothesis. Also potentially tempering this hypothesis is the consideration that institutional ties between social democratic parties in particular and trade unions have arguably weakened in some contexts (Allern and Bale 2012; Benedetto, Hix and Mastrorocco 2020). Empirically, party family membership is based on CMP's assignment of each party into a general family type when it is first included in the data: ecological; socialist or other left; social democratic; liberal; Christian democratic (or Jewish democratic in Israel); conservative; nationalist; agrarian; ethnic and regional; and special issue. As noted earlier, since party family is a static measure over time, we believe that its effects most likely map onto the entrenched values ideational channel.

Even within a party family, there can be ideological differences, and we further predict that a party's ideology will be related to its use of pro-worker and anti-union mentions. More specifically, we hypothesize that the further left-leaning is a party's ideology, then more pro-worker mentions and fewer anti-union mentions are expected. Empirically, the CMP data set includes a measure of each party's left-right ideology, based on the party's percent-based scores for 25 of the topical categories in that party's manifesto for that election.<sup>3</sup> We take advantage of the longitudinal panel nature of the CMP data to use this item to create two discrete ideology measures: 1) a party's average ideology across all its manifestos (a between-party effect), and 2) a party's deviation from its mean ideology in any given election manifesto (a within-party

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<sup>3</sup> The 13 right-leaning and 12 left-leaning items that comprise the measure were theoretically derived and confirmed by factor analysis by the CMP team (Laver and Budge 1992), and they exclude the pro-worker and anti-union categories. An advantage of using the CMP measure of ideology is that it allows for a more dynamic way of capturing changes in party ideology over a longer timeframe than are available using other common political science measures, such as ParlGov and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). This measure of ideology has been shown to correlate strongly with similar measures found in datasets like the European Social Survey and the World Values Survey (Döring and Regal 2019).



effect). Including both measures in a regression allows the estimation of a hybrid effects model that accounts for both fixed and random party ideology effects in the same model (Allison 2009; Schnuck 2013). Of particular ideational interest is that this decomposition can help illuminate the importance of different ideational sources of manifesto content. Specifically, the static, average ideology measure likely captures the entrenched values source of ideational content in manifestos because these are inherently stable over time. The dynamic, deviation from mean ideological measure indicates instances where a party moves farther to the right or left than would be traditional in its manifesto. This is more likely to capture moments where either new thinking is occurring within the party, or where the party is reacting to shifts in voter preferences. We predict that parties that are farther to the right in their mean ideology scores, and those that deviate to the right relative to their mean scores in any given election, will have less pro-worker and more anti-union manifesto content.

### *Extremist Parties*

We also consider whether extremist parties have unique patterns of work-related mentions. This is important to consider for at least two reasons. One, extremist parties have become increasingly important political actors, both on the left (as in Greece and Spain) and on the right (as in Poland and Hungary). So uncovering the extent to which work-related ideas differ between extremist and other parties can help predict the types of policy ideas related to workers one can expect to emerge if these parties gain further prominence. Two, the channels through which work-related ideas enter into political manifestos are likely different for extremist parties than for mainstream ones. By their nature, extremist parties do not aim to reflect the will of the “median voter” in a society or to serve as a catch-all party designed to instrumentally capture changing attitudes. Their positions are therefore not likely to be a product of reactive mirroring

to transactionally win votes, but rather a combination of entrenched values and new thinking. In other words, these parties are likely more willing to “be true” to their ideas, since they are primarily concerned with espousing core beliefs, even if unpopular. Specifically looking at extremist parties, then, provides a way to assess the importance of ideational elements beyond reactive mirroring. Given that far-left parties have frequently made work issues a central focus in their rejection of contemporary capitalism, while far-right parties focus on nativism and authoritarianism above all else, we predict that far-left parties will have significantly more pro-worker and fewer anti-union mentions than mainstream parties, and that far-right parties will be less likely to have any kind of work-related mentions.

To identify extremist parties, we link the CMP data to data gathered by The PopuList ([popu-list.org](http://popu-list.org)), an organization which includes academic experts and tracks the existence of populist, far-right, and far-left parties across 31 European countries back to 1989. Far-left parties reject capitalism and advocate for major redistribution, and examples include SYRIZA in Greece, Sinn Féin in Ireland, and Podemos in Spain, totaling 47 parties in all and 343 manifestos (6.8 percent of the CMP data). Far-right parties are nativist and call for strictly-ordered societies, and examples include AfD in Germany, the National Front in France, PVV in the Netherlands, and PiS in Poland, totaling 53 parties and 256 manifestos (5.3 percent of the CMP data).

#### *Parties' Responses to the Level of Work-Related Ideas in the Previous Election*

We can also ask whether parties use work-related mentions as an ideational strategy based on whether work-related issues were highlighted in the previous election. To analyze this, for each party-election we calculate the average pro-worker mentions (weighted by vote-share) in the previous election for all parties excluding that party. A positive association between this measure and current pro-worker mentions for this party would suggest that a party responds to

labor mentions by other parties by making it a more significant part of its own manifesto in the next election. This could indicate that parties find it useful to join the competition of ideas within the pro-worker ideational space when other parties have previously made this part of their own ideational strategy. That is, work-related ideas are something that parties want to pursue as power through ideas if other parties are doing so. We also analyze this for anti-union mentions. We do not have any a priori expectations whether the relationship will be positive, negative, or insignificant for pro-worker mentions, but we hypothesize a negative or insignificant relationship for anti-union mentions because the evidence from Australia and the UK suggests that spikes in anti-union mentions are episodic rather than sustained. Moreover, these cases suggest that anti-union statements can arise as a result of new thinking or reactive mirroring.

#### *Labor Movement and Economic Conditions*

The economic and institutional environment at the time of an election might influence whether political parties (de-)emphasize work-related ideas. We predict that higher union density will correlate with more pro-worker manifesto statements but also with more anti-union statements as well. Greater degrees of union membership may make labor groups more prominent within manifestos passively if unions become a common feature of a party's ideational discourse as a function of their being important stakeholders or being influential in a society. But the connection between higher union density and labor group manifesto mentions may also be actively promoted by unions if their ideas spill into a party's manifestos through, for instance, political pressure from union leaders that result in new ideas taking hold within a party. Empirically, we use an annual union membership density for the election year from the OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database (Visser 2021; [www.oecd.org/employment/ictwss-database.htm](http://www.oecd.org/employment/ictwss-database.htm)),

which is a widely-used data source for comparative industrial relations research. These data date back to 1960 at the earliest.

Labor issues also might be seen as more important when unemployment or inflation are high as workers might be struggling. New work-related ideas may emerge within manifestos in response to the salience of worker concerns around unemployment or inflation, for instance, or work issues may be more central to voter preferences (and therefore more likely to engender reactive mirroring) during periods of high unemployment or inflation. To the CMP data, then, we merge on a country's unemployment and inflation rate for the election year. These are from the Comparative Political Data Set (CPDS) which span 1960-2018 (Armingeon et al. 2020), and before 1960 we are unable to find other reliable sources for these measures for a wide set of countries (column 2 of Table 3 provides summary statistics for our CPDS measures).

#### *Political System Characteristics*

The characteristics of a political system at the time of an election might also influence what ideas are deployed by political parties. When an electoral system has high disproportionality (an inverse measure of how proportionally votes translate into legislative seats) or a single-party majority (as opposed to some form of coalitional or minority government), then political parties do not need to curry favor with outside interests groups like labor unions (Budd and Lamare forthcoming; Rathgeb 2018). So we expect less of a need to pursue power through work-related ideas, and weaker opportunities for unions to affect new thinking within a party, translating to fewer work-related manifesto mentions in those cases.

Similarly, an incumbent party that was either part of the cabinet or held prime ministerial status during the cabinet cycle immediately preceding the election at hand might have advantages that cause it to seek power through work-related ideas differently from other parties.

For example, an incumbent party might feel less of a need to emphasize support for the labor movement. Lastly, some elections occur within a context of government instability. It may be that less stable governments produce less clearly-articulated positions on issues like work-related ideas, as a result of either risk-aversion toward the electorate or ambiguity over the ownership of the manifesto's ideas. We allow for this possibility by including in our analyses a measure indicating the number of changes in government that occurred in the election year. As with inflation and unemployment, the political systems measures are almost all derived from CPDS data and thus cover the period 1960-2018. Only the incumbency measure dates back to 1945, and comes from merging ParlGov election data ([www.parlgov.org](http://www.parlgov.org)) with CMP data.<sup>4</sup>

### **Testing Predictors of Pro-Worker and Anti-Union Manifesto Mentions**

Turning to the multivariate analyses, we ask whether industrial relations ideas, in the form of the relative importance of work-related mentions in party manifestos, can be predicted by party, political, and economic characteristics. We analyze this through OLS regression models with two dependent variables: the percent of pro-worker and anti-union mentions in a manifesto. For each dependent variable, a first regression model uses only the CMP-based data on party characteristics (mean and deviation ideology, party family, incumbency, and manifesto length) and covers 4,529 party-level observations from 54 countries between 1945 and 2019 (recall from Table 2 that not all countries span this entire time frame, while one country (Montenegro) has a 2020 election). For each dependent variable, a second regression model adds a lagged dependent variable indicating that party's pro-worker or anti-union mentions in the

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<sup>4</sup> We created incumbency status by combining CMP data with ParlGov data, which is a linked database of cabinet-level data for most parties and countries in the CMP dataset. For parties without incumbency information in the combined CMP-ParlGov data, we manually coded it by searching through the electoral histories of each country and party.

previous election and a second lagged variable that is the average pro-worker or anti-union mentions of all other party manifestos in that previous election, weighted by vote percent. Incorporating lags reduces the sample to 3,181 observations in 53 countries from 1947-2019. The third specification for each dependent variable then adds CPDS and ICTWSS data on economic characteristics (union density, inflation, and unemployment) as well as political system characteristics (electoral disproportionality, government type, and government instability). Due to data availability for these additional measures, the sample for the third specification is reduced to 2,095 party-level observations from 36 countries between, at most, 1960 and 2018. Our final model specification substitutes PopuList indicators for far-right and far-left parties for party family membership. All models include controls for country and year fixed effects, and robust standard errors are clustered by party. Table 4 presents the regression results.

#### *Party Family and Ideology*

Starting with party family, relative to conservative parties (the omitted reference category in the regression models), socialist parties have the largest average pro-worker mentions, followed by social democratic parties. Unsurprisingly, most parties have significantly fewer anti-union statements relative to conservative parties—including not only socialist and social democratic parties, but also green, Christian democratic, nationalist, and ethnic-regional parties. These patterns are consistent with high-level ideological differences across party families, but the two ideology variables allow a more direct examination while also allowing for a party's ideology to not be completely defined by its overall party family.

Looking first at a party's enduring ideology as reflected in its mean ideology across all elections, parties that are more right-leaning are predicted to have fewer pro-worker mentions and more anti-union mentions than left-leaning parties, even controlling for the party family. In

predicting pro-worker mentions, this result is robust across all specifications, even controlling for previous mentions (columns 2) and numerous additional controls (column 3); for anti-union mentions, the relationship is sometimes weakly significant depending on the specification. Additionally, if a party deviates from its mean to become more right-leaning, there is some evidence that this corresponds with a downward shift in pro-worker mentions—that is, this effect is significant in the 1945-2019 analyses but non-significant in the reduced 1960-2018 sample that controls for economic and political systems characteristics. We find no consistent evidence that deviation ideology predicts anti-union mentions. The statistical importance of mean ideology suggests that entrenched values are an important foundation for political parties' ideational strategies pertaining to work, while the mixed results for deviation ideology suggests that the support for the new thinking or reactive mirroring channels is not as strong.

In columns 4 and 8 of Table 4, we replace the party family dummy variables with far-right and far-left dummy variables. Note that we still control for overall ideology, which encompasses a broader range of dimensions than reflected in the extremist definition, so these dummy variables indicate whether extremist parties differ in the rate of labor ideation beyond what is predicted by the baseline relationship between overall ideology and mentions. The regression results indicate that far-left parties are considerably more likely to have higher percentages of pro-worker statements in their manifestos. The far-right dummy variable is insignificant. So while far-right parties are predicted to have fewer pro-worker manifesto mentions due to their right-of-center ideology, once their ideology is accounted for, there is not evidence of additional avoidance or inclusion of work-related ideas. This suggests that while the far-right often portrays itself as representing workers' interests, such claims are not reflected in manifesto statements specifically targeting work. Yet the far-left directly emphasizes pro-worker

issues at the core of their manifestos. Recall that extremist party manifestos are unlikely to result from reactive mirroring, so these results provide supportive evidence that among far-left parties, pro-worker ideation reflects entrenched values and/or new thinking.

In contrast, anti-union ideas are no more or less likely among extremist parties compared to others. The takeaway from this result is that although the far-right is less likely to dedicate space to pro-worker issues, neither is it directly anti-union in its messaging; rather, it tends to simply ignore worker issues in favor of other platform ideas. This is consistent with research that finds that far-right parties try to attract native workers in ways other than discussing workers' rights (Mosimann, Rennwald, and Zimmermann 2019). Finally, these results imply an expected future increase in pro-worker manifesto content only if far-left parties gain in prominence; increased far-right extremism is not predicted to increase political discourse on labor issues.

#### *Parties' Responses to the Level of Work-Related Ideas in the Previous Election*

We also find that a party's work-related mentions in a given election are affected by both its own prior election mentions as well as those of other parties (columns 2-4 in Table 4). Greater pro-worker mentions in the previous election by that party strongly predicts greater pro-worker mentions in the current election, but with a coefficient significantly less than one. This suggests that parties do more than simply repeat their previous level of pro-worker mentions, and instead might be making strategic choices about how much to emphasize pro-worker mentions. The influence of a party's own anti-union mentions is much smaller, and is statistically significant only in column 6, suggesting a more episodic deployment of anti-union ideas. Moreover, the regression results suggest that parties respond to the use of labor ideas by competitor parties. Specifically, the more that all of the other parties included pro-worker mentions in their prior election's manifestos, the more a party is predicted to include them in the current election, and a



negative relationship is found for anti-union mentions. This is consistent with an approach in which a party wants to engage voters with pro-worker ideas if there is a recent tendency for other parties to do so, whereas anti-union mentions are avoided when they were previously higher.

#### *Labor Movement and Economic Conditions*

As union density grows within a country, it correlates with increased relative manifesto space dedicated to pro-worker ideas (column 3 in Table 4), suggesting interplay between the degree of union power in a society and a political party's engagement with pro-worker ideas in its manifesto, which may work through any of the three ideational channels. Furthermore, as long as union density exceeds 17 percent, a manifesto is expected to devote more attention to pro-worker ideas than the average of 2.23 percent across all topics. Inflation and the unemployment rate also positively relate to pro-worker ideas, although the latter relationship is not strong statistically. This is consistent with new thinking or reactive mirroring on pro-worker ideas emerging within political parties when working families are under greater stress.

Unlike our pro-worker findings, the results in Table 4 do not show a strong effect of economic conditions on anti-union party positions. Yet these results are affected by outliers. In particular, at various times, countries like Slovenia, Iceland, and Romania experienced massive inflation (for instance, in 1990 and 1992 just after the fall of Communism, Slovenian inflation was recorded as 552 percent and 210 percent, respectively). When accounting for residual outliers (of which 73 observations are considered "severe" in the full anti-union regression models after examining the outer bounds of the interquartile ranges of the residuals), both inflation and unemployment positively predict anti-union sentiments. Putting these findings together with the results for pro-worker mentions above suggests that when wider economic concerns are more likely to be on voters' minds, a competition of political ideas (both pro-

worker and anti-union) around work-related issues may emerge between parties, akin to what we see in the Australian case study in Appendix A.

### *Political System Characteristics*

Finally, all three political systems measures significantly predict pro-worker manifesto ideas. Unexpectedly, when elections have higher disproportionality, parties tend to appeal more to pro-worker issues, not less, which may reflect the less clear connection between this measure and its anticipated effects on voter preferences (Powell and Vanberg 2000). In contrast, as expected, when a single party has full governmental control, a party is predicted to dedicate significantly less of its manifesto to pro-worker issues than it would in coalitional or other non-single-party majority contexts. Note that as this is a system rather than party-specific measure, the single-party majority estimate indicates the importance of how power is distributed across the parties, and the more unequal the power distribution, the lower is the frequency of pro-worker mentions. Other research shows that when political systems provide parties with hegemonic control, they tend to be less inclined to include unions in policy choices (Rathgeb 2018) and to more generally be associated with less union influence (Budd and Lamare forthcoming). The findings here provide a unique ideational complement to this research indicating that the some of these same conditions are also associated with less pro-worker emphasis, on average, across all party manifestos in that election.

More tumultuous political environments reduced the likelihood that a party would discuss worker issues positively, lending support to the notion that risk aversion or uncertainty over manifesto attribution may disincentivize parties from introducing pro-worker ideas into their manifestos. At an individual party level, the manifesto of the incumbent prime minister's party, on average, contains fewer anti-union statements. Taken together, these results point toward an

important structural influence in which the representativeness or hegemony and stability of country's political system as well as incumbency shape the ideational choices parties make. If these ideational choices affect subsequent work-related outcomes—such as the passage or pro-worker or anti-union legislation—then these unique results highlight an overlooked area worthy of further research.

### **Do Work Ideas Matter for Voters?**

Having established that variations in political party characteristics, prior manifesto content, and economic and political system characteristics predict rates of manifesto mentions in support of or opposition to workers, we next analyze whether these mentions correlate with vote and seat share shifts during elections. Political parties' ideas about work-related issues ought to be considered in conjunction with their consequences, and in the political arena the most direct consequence of a party's ideational document is the extent to which it correlates with the votes and legislative seats obtained by that party in the election. In other words, are work-related mentions rewarded by voters? Conceptually, one possibility is that greater pro-worker or anti-union mentions cause voters to support that party. Alternatively, manifesto content may be endogenous if it is purposefully chosen to reflect the preferences of key voters. In either case, we ask whether parties that more frequently emphasize pro-worker or anti-union ideas, on balance, fare better when the election occurs, and are work-related ideas more consequential than other manifesto ideas in elections? To answer these questions, we examine the extent to which these mentions predict two dependent variables: the percent of votes and seats awarded for the election for which the manifesto was produced. Vote percentage is the most direct measure of whether voters reward or punish certain political ideas in a given election cycle, while seat percentage

measures the degree of governing power actually granted to a party following the tabulation of votes and their conversion into seats based on a country's electoral rules.

We start with similar specifications to those in columns 3 and 7 of Table 4, but exclude lagged values and instead include the party's pro-worker and anti-union mentions as key explanatory variables. The results for vote share as the dependent variable are reported in column 1 of Table 5; the results for seat share are in column 3. Note that the control variables include the party family, economic, and political system characteristics from Table 4, which limits the sample to starting in 1960, as well as country and year effects. We see strong evidence that as manifestos include greater percentages of pro-worker ideas, parties receive higher vote percentages and also higher seat percentages. For each additional percent of the manifesto that is spent discussing pro-worker issues, predicted party vote percentage increases by about 0.18 percentage points. To put this in context if this is a causal relationship, the effects of door-to-door political canvassing, which in some cases cost millions of dollars each election cycle, can be expected to raise turnout by roughly 1 percentage point (Green, McGrath, and Aronow 2013), which could be achieved, on average, by devoting an additional 5.5 percent of a party's manifesto to pro-worker issues. We also examined whether the vote percentage outcomes for any of our work-related mentions were affected by including an interaction with union density. However, we found no evidence to suggest that union density significantly affected the relationships. The pattern of results with seat share as the dependent variable is similar (technically, the pro-worker estimate in column 3 is not statistically significant at a 5 percent level, but it's very close with a p-value of 0.054).

In columns 2 and 4 we replace the ideology measures with the full set of all other non-worker manifesto categories (54 items). Including the full array of manifesto mentions allows us

to assess the relative importance of work-related ideas compared to the other possible ideational topics. The significance of the increase in vote percentage attributed to pro-worker manifesto percentages would be perhaps less meaningful if it were the case that all other mentions were also highly correlated with increased vote share. And, if the vast majority of manifesto items were positively correlated with vote or seat share, this might support the notion that manifestos are simply reflecting the will of the median voter rather than being driven by parties' ideas which then influence voting patterns. However, this is not the case. The middle section of Table 5 reports the other categories of manifesto mentions that are statistically significant, and we rank them from highest to lowest coefficient size. In column 2, only six other items (of the 54 other manifesto statement categories) were accorded positive vote percentages in a statistically significant way. Furthermore, we see that pro-worker mentions sits below two categories of mentions that were highly correlated with vote percentages—negative mentions of multiculturalism and mentions of peace—and at nearly the same level as business-oriented incentives (e.g., tax breaks and subsidies). The rate at which manifesto mentions of pro-worker ideas translates into seat percentages also compares favorably to all but a select few categories (column 4 of Table 5), especially negative mentions of multiculturalism and mentions of peace. So positive ideas about work appear to have quantifiable relationships with election outcomes in a way that only a couple of manifesto subjects have. No relationship between anti-union mentions and elections outcomes is apparent.

### **Conclusion**

As ideational actors, political parties use their manifestos to convey important information to candidates and voters about numerous issues that matter to the public during elections. Political manifestos are therefore useful documents for capturing ideational thinking

on issues relevant to industrial relations that are unadulterated by necessary legislative or other political compromises required to govern. This gives us a unique lens through which to examine how ideas in support of or opposition to workers have changed over time, what predicts these ideas, and whether they are rewarded by voters.

An important benefit of examining political party manifestos as a source of industrial relations ideas is that we are able to uniquely explore these relationships using large-n, quantitative methods. Using data from the Comparative Manifesto Project and other sources spanning as many as 54 countries, 75 years, and 1,132 parties, we find strong evidence that manifesto ideas about workers matter, and that they have changed over time and across countries. We see clear evidence that these ideas are affected by differences in party characteristics as well as political and economic circumstances. We also see that pro-worker ideas are rewarded during elections. This is important since it suggests that not only are political parties ideational actors, but also that voters will be receptive to some of their ideas, which then might influence a country's industrial relations policies in the future.

Political parties are under-researched industrial relations actors and this study of their ideas highlights areas for additional research beyond ideas alone. We found that far-right parties are significantly less likely to incorporate pro-worker ideas into their manifestos than are other parties. This result may present a leading indicator of future policy directions in countries where such parties grow in influence. More generally, we found broader results that party family and ideology are related to the importance of pro-worker and anti-union mentions in a manifesto. At one level this is not surprising, but notably, even after accounting for these, we find that features of political systems, which are more structural than ideological, also matter. To the extent that ideas then shape behavior and outcomes, this suggests that the experiences of workers and

unions will be impacted differentially by structural variations like government (in)stability and single-party governments. Our findings in this regard can be placed within new literature examining the interplay between industrial relations and political systems (Rathgeb 2018; Budd and Lamare forthcoming); in this paper, our results suggest that political systems are important not just in shaping attitudes toward unions and industrial relations, but also in affecting political parties' ideational positions on work and workers. Quantitatively studying ideas reveals the need to add an ideational component to future research on political systems and industrial relations.

Methodologically, we hope this demonstration of the ability to conduct large-n analyses inspires ideational researchers to identify other unique sources of ideational content to analyze. In no way is this a substitute for small-n and qualitative analyses, but large-n analyses can make unique, complementary contributions by incorporating data from many contexts that help tackle issues of generalizability, disentangle the implications of holding various things constant by exploiting greater variability in what's observed, and uncover new relationships worth unpacking through more focused follow-up research. For example, our results suggest that structural features of a country's political system influence the work-related ideational emphasis of the political parties in that country at that time. This pattern may have been difficult to uncover qualitatively, but could now be seen as a fertile area for small-n investigation. We also find evidence of an enduring use of pro-worker ideas in contrast to more episodic deployments of anti-union ideas. Not only does this suggest that qualitative analyses of this contrast could be useful, but it should also serve as an indicator that there is certain consistency in ideas over time such that ideational research needs to incorporate theories of long-term stability with theories of shorter-term change. Quantifying industrial relations ideas can also facilitate comparisons with

other domains' ideas to reveal when industrial relations ideas are relatively (un)important, as in the case of manifesto mentions of work-related ideas compared to other topics.

Admittedly, some care is needed in interpreting manifestos as party leaders face strategic considerations in crafting these ideational documents. But this is also true of ideational statements produced by unions, employers, and employers' associations. Conceptually, the three-dimensional framework sketched here for thinking about the ideational content of manifestos can also be applied to other actors in industrial relations. For example, what ideas that unions embrace reflect longstanding values, what ideas are rooted in mirroring rank and file preferences, and which ideas seek to pull the rank and file in new directions? By explicitly identifying new thinking, we might more clearly anticipate future directions that industrial relations actors are heading. Furthermore, unpacking these channels could produce new understandings of how unions and employers' associations push new ideas by analyzing how they navigate the tensions among these different channels.



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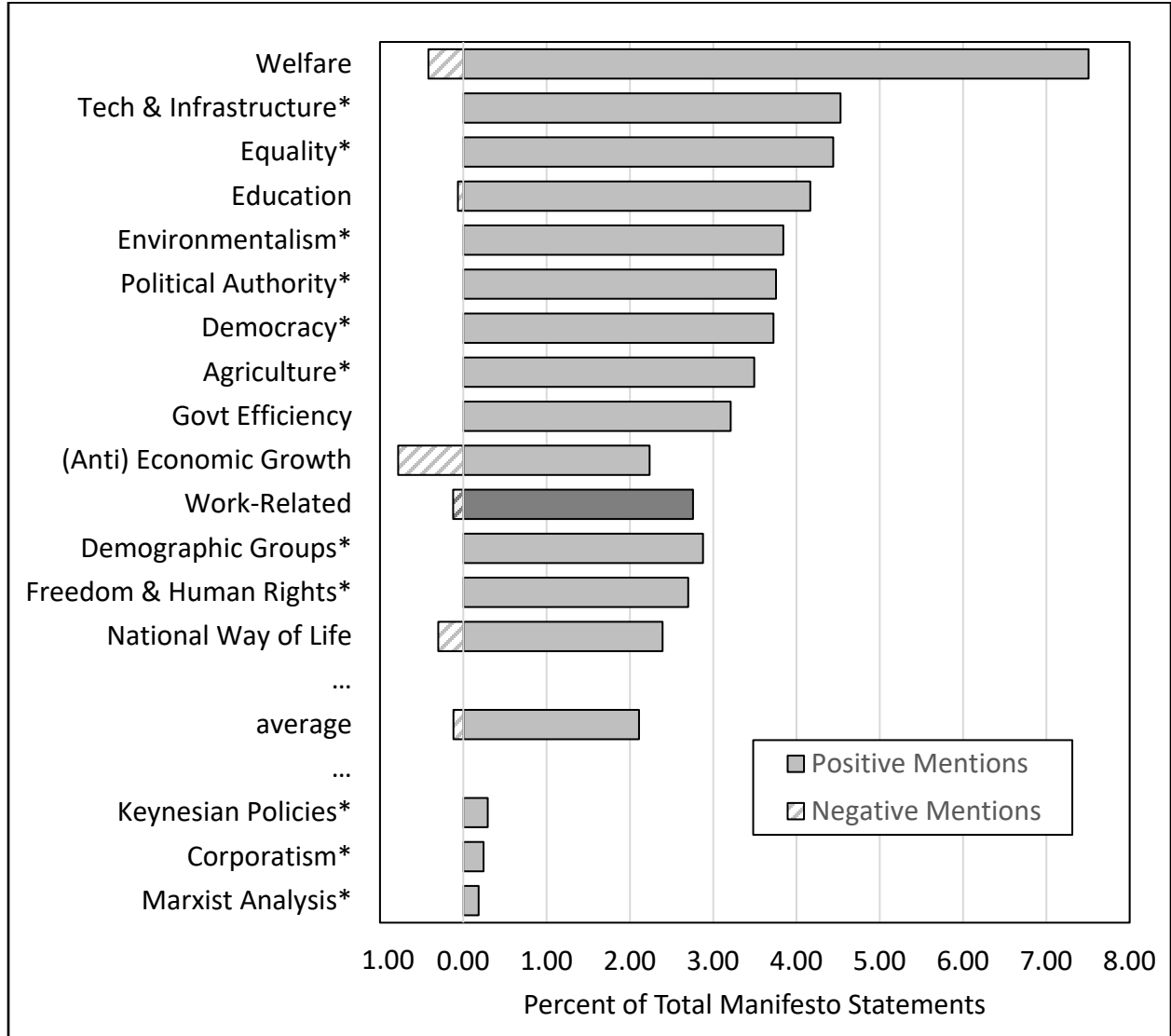
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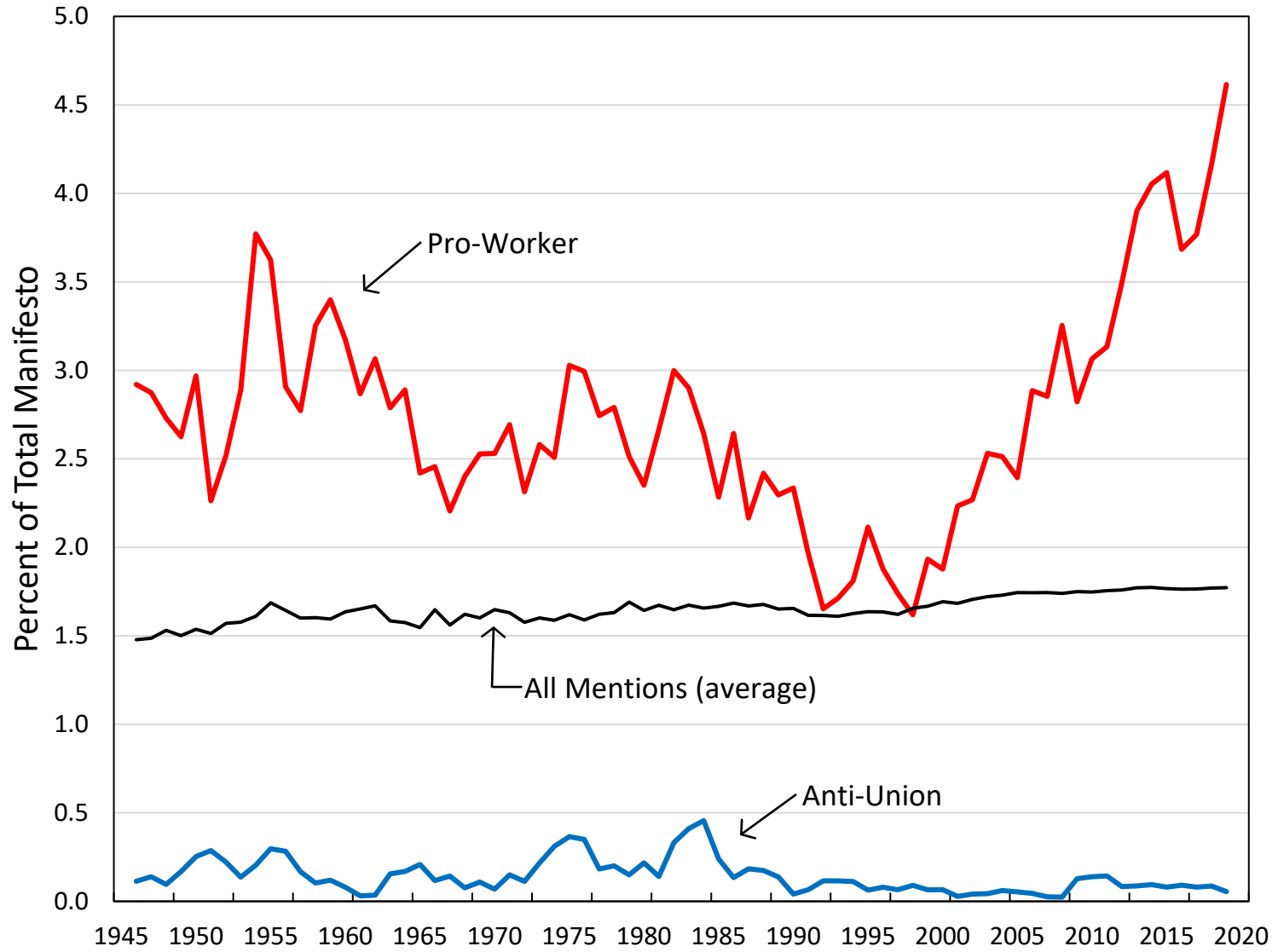
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**Figure 1: The Most- and Least-Frequently Mentioned Manifesto Topics, 1945-2019**



Note: \* indicates that only positive statements are possible in this category.

**Figure 2: Average Pro-Worker and Anti-Union Mentions over Time, 1945-2019**



**Table 1: Definition and Examples of Work-Related Manifesto Ideas**

Manifesto Category	Comparative Manifesto Project Codebook Definition	English-Speaking Examples
Pro-Worker Mentions	<p><u>“Labour Groups-Positive” (category 701)</u>            Favorable references to all labour groups, the working class, and unemployed workers in general. Support for trade unions and calls for the good treatment of all employees, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More jobs;</li> <li>• Good working conditions;</li> <li>• Fair wages;</li> <li>• Pension provision, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>ANC Manifesto (2014)      South Africa      5 of 39 total pro-worker mentions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The ANC has safeguarded and entrenched the hard-won rights of workers, including trade union workplace organising, collective bargaining, equal pay for equal work, health and safety, affirmative action, skills development, minimum wages for workers in vulnerable sectors, the right to strike, and the right to peaceful protest.”</li> <li>• “The second phase of our democratic transition calls for bold and decisive steps to place the economy on a qualitatively different path that eliminates [...] unemployment [and] creates sustainable livelihoods.”</li> <li>• “More than 250,000 jobs will be sustained through the construction, operation and maintenance of infrastructure and manufacture of local components.”</li> <li>• “[We will] enforce measures to eliminate abusive work practises in atypical work and labour broking.”</li> <li>• “In the past 5 years, the ANC has begun to put in place measures to address labour broking and the casualisation of labour to protect vulnerable workers.”</li> </ul>
Anti-Union Mentions	<p><u>“Labour Groups-Negative” (category 702)</u>            Negative references to labour groups and trade unions. May focus specifically on the danger of unions “abusing power”</p>	<p><b>National Party Manifesto (2011)      New Zealand      4 of 74 total anti-union mentions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “In times like these, the last thing we need is an economy controlled by a small cadre of union leaders.”</li> <li>• “Labour would kill of New Zealand’s film industry on the whim of the unions.”</li> <li>• “National will remove the requirement that non-union members are employed under a collective agreement for their first 30-days.”</li> <li>• “National will apply partial pay reductions for partial strikes or situations of low-level industrial action.”</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Countries and Years in the Analysis Samples**

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Albania (1991-2001)	Armenia (1995-2012)	<b>Australia (1946-2016)</b>
<b>Austria (1949-2019)</b>	Azerbaijan (1995-2000)	Belarus (1995)
<b>Belgium (1946-2019)</b>	Bosnia-Herzegovina (1990-2018)	<b>Bulgaria (1990-2017)*</b>
<b>Canada (1945-2015)</b>	<b>Croatia (1990-2016)*</b>	<b>Cyprus (1996-2016)</b>
<b>Czech Republic (1990-2017)*</b>	<b>Denmark (1945-2019)</b>	<b>Estonia (1992-2015)*</b>
<b>Finland (1945-2019)</b>	<b>France (1946-2017)</b>	Georgia (1990-2016)
<b>Germany (1949-2017)</b>	<b>Greece (1974-2015)</b>	<b>Hungary (1990-2018)*</b>
<b>Iceland (1946-2017)*</b>	<b>Ireland (1948-2016)</b>	Israel (1949-2019)
<b>Italy (1946-2018)</b>	<b>Japan (1960-2014)</b>	<b>Latvia (1993-2018)*</b>
<b>Lithuania (1992-2016)*</b>	<b>Luxembourg (1945-2013)*</b>	<b>Malta (1996-1998)</b>
Mexico (1946-2018)	Moldova (1994-2014)	Montenegro (1990-2020)
<b>Netherlands (1946-2017)</b>	<b>New Zealand (1946-2017)</b>	North Macedonia (1990-2016)
<b>Norway (1945-2017)</b>	<b>Poland (1991-2015)</b>	<b>Portugal (1975-2019)</b>
<b>Romania (1990-2016)*</b>	Russia (1993-2011)	Serbia (1990-2016)
<b>Slovakia (1990-2016)*</b>	<b>Slovenia (1990-2018)*</b>	South Africa (1994-2014)
South Korea (1992-2016)	<b>Spain (1977-2019)</b>	Sri Lanka (1947-1977)
<b>Sweden (1948-2018)</b>	<b>Switzerland (1947-2019)</b>	Turkey (1950-2018)
Ukraine (1994-2014)	<b>United Kingdom (1945-2019)</b>	
<b>United States (1948-2016)</b>		

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Bold indicates a country represented in the party-only models and models with economic and political system variables; others are only in the party-only models. Dates are for the party-only models.

\* indicates starting year in the economic and political system models that is more than five years after 1960 or the start date indicated.



**Table 3: Summary Statistics for Baseline (1945-2019) and Reduced (1960-2018) Samples**

	Mean (Std. Dev.) (1)	Mean (Std. Dev.) (2)
Countries	54 Countries	36 Countries
Maximum Year Span	1945-2019	1960-2018
Elections	700	386
Parties	1,132	368
<b>Dependent Variables</b>		
Pro-Worker Mentions (percent of manifesto statements)	2.856 (3.402)	2.720 (3.300)
Anti-Union Mentions (percent of manifesto statements)	0.150 (0.767)	0.153 (0.804)
Vote Percentage in Election	---	14.791 (13.478)
Seats Resulting from Election (percent)	---	15.364 (15.708)
<b>Independent Variables:</b>		
<b>Party Characteristics and Responses to Previous Elections (CMP Data)</b>		
1 if Ecologist Party Family	0.041 (0.199)	0.054 (0.226)
1 if Socialist / Other Left Party Family	0.111 (0.314)	0.098 (0.297)
1 if Social Democratic Party Family	0.218 (0.413)	0.209 (0.406)
1 if Liberal Party Family	0.138 (0.345)	0.142 (0.349)
1 if Christian Democratic Party Family	0.122 (0.327)	0.125 (0.331)
1 if Conservative Party Family	0.152 (0.359)	0.146 (0.353)
1 if Nationalist Party Family	0.075 (0.264)	0.081 (0.272)
1 if Agrarian Party Family	0.041 (0.199)	0.045 (0.208)
1 if Ethnic-Regional Party Family	0.073 (0.260)	0.069 (0.253)
1 if Special Issue Party Family	0.028 (0.166)	0.032 (0.176)

Mean Ideology (party average over time; greater = more right-leaning)	-0.036 (16.915)	-1.223 (16.774)
Deviation Ideology (election-specific ideology – party average; greater = more right-leaning)	-0.223 (13.685)	-0.596 (12.942)
Far-Right Party (from PopuList)	0.053 (0.225)	0.068 (0.252)
Far-Left Party (from PopuList)	0.068 (0.252)	0.076 (0.265)
Pro-Worker Mentions (this party previous election)	2.746 (3.410)	2.610 (3.261)
Pro-Worker Mentions (excluding own party, weighted by vote percent, in previous election)	2.783 (2.423)	2.695 (2.407)
Anti-Union Mentions (this party previous election)	0.137 (0.734)	0.150 (0.807)
Anti-Union Mentions (excluding own party, weighted by vote percent, in previous election)	0.124 (0.441)	0.140 (0.494)
1 if Party is Part of Incumbent Cabinet	0.397 (0.489)	0.396 (0.489)
1 if Party Includes Incumbent Prime Minister	0.202 (0.401)	0.192 (0.394)
Manifesto Length (number of statements)	653.394 (924.082)	718.383 (940.133)

**Independent Variables:**

**Labor Market, Economic, and Political Characteristics (ICTWSS / CPDS Data)**

Union Density (percent)	---	40.345 (21.516)
Inflation (percent)	---	4.492 (5.564)
Unemployment (percent)	---	6.408 (4.505)
Disproportionality	---	5.215 (4.490)
Single-Party Majority Government Type	---	0.165 (0.371)
Government Instability (greater = more disruptions during election year)	---	1.106 (0.473)
Sample Size	4,529	2,095

**Table 4: Predictors of Pro-Worker and Anti-Union Party Manifesto Mentions**

	Pro-Worker Mentions				Anti-Union Mentions			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<b>Party Characteristics and Responses to Previous Elections</b>								
Ecologist Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	0.212 (0.315)	0.092 (0.248)	0.103 (0.288)		-0.249* (0.069)	-0.207* (0.070)	-0.247* (0.108)	
Socialist / Other Left Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	3.221* (0.333)	2.201* (0.344)	2.100* (0.433)		-0.200* (0.058)	-0.196* (0.064)	-0.202+ (0.113)	
Social Democratic Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	1.533* (0.261)	1.191* (0.238)	0.976* (0.257)		-0.251* (0.065)	-0.235* (0.063)	-0.252* (0.099)	
Liberal Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	0.012 (0.183)	-0.072 (0.167)	-0.048 (0.180)		-0.061 (0.062)	-0.046 (0.067)	-0.064 (0.094)	
Christian Democratic Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	0.204 (0.187)	0.173 (0.164)	0.094 (0.184)		-0.175* (0.064)	-0.167* (0.071)	-0.210* (0.083)	
Nationalist Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	-0.085 (0.204)	-0.139 (0.201)	-0.121 (0.224)		-0.135* (0.063)	-0.138* (0.068)	-0.173+ (0.096)	
Agrarian Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	-0.795+ (0.450)	-0.793+ (0.441)	-0.460 (0.373)		-0.129 (0.095)	-0.101 (0.099)	-0.074 (0.162)	
Ethnic-Regional Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	-0.055 (0.233)	-0.078 (0.229)	-0.061 (0.258)		-0.229* (0.061)	-0.233* (0.069)	-0.272* (0.111)	
Special Issue Party Family (ref.: Conservative)	0.301 (0.363)	0.254 (0.344)	0.366 (0.399)		-0.153* (0.062)	-0.125+ (0.067)	-0.155 (0.109)	
Mean Ideology (party average over time; greater = more right-leaning)	-0.019* (0.005)	-0.015* (0.005)	-0.015* (0.006)	-0.033* (0.005)	0.002* (0.001)	0.002+ (0.001)	0.003+ (0.002)	0.007* (0.002)
Deviation Ideology (election-specific ideology – party average; greater = more right-leaning)	-0.010* (0.005)	-0.009* (0.005)	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.004 (0.006)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)

Far-Right Party (from PopuList)				-0.192 (0.206)				-0.073 (0.051)
Far-Left Party (from PopuList)				1.027* (0.303)				0.072 (0.065)
Pro-Worker Mentions (this party previous election)	0.333* (0.035)	0.362* (0.039)	0.404* (0.038)					
Pro-Worker Mentions (excluding own party, weighted by vote percent, in previous election)	0.157* (0.038)	0.127* (0.047)	0.101* (0.048)					
Anti-Union Mentions (this party previous election)						0.115* (0.054)	0.039 (0.046)	0.047 (0.048)
Anti-Union Mentions (excluding own party, weighted by vote percent, in previous election)						-0.126* (0.036)	-0.135* (0.040)	-0.145* (0.045)
Incumbent (Cabinet)	0.228 (0.168)	0.110 (0.131)	0.015 (0.158)	-0.118 (0.161)	0.009 (0.033)	-0.004 (0.036)	-0.023 (0.048)	0.001 (0.048)
Incumbent (Prime Minister)	-0.211 (0.192)	-0.126 (0.153)	0.025 (0.192)	0.168 (0.178)	-0.075* (0.037)	-0.073* (0.037)	-0.093+ (0.048)	-0.095+ (0.053)

#### Labor Market, Economic, and Political Characteristics

Union Density (percent)		0.022+ (0.011)	0.020+ (0.011)				0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)
Inflation (percent)		0.038* (0.016)	0.041* (0.016)				0.005 (0.005)	0.004 (0.005)
Unemployment (percent)		0.059 (0.038)	0.064+ (0.037)				0.023 (0.015)	0.023 (0.015)
Disproportionality		0.071* (0.023)	0.067* (0.023)				0.005 (0.007)	0.006 (0.007)

Single-Party Majority Government Type			-0.727*	-0.741*			0.284	0.284
			(0.315)	(0.311)			(0.194)	(0.195)
Government Instability (greater = more disruptions during election year)			-0.335*	-0.340*			0.031	0.034
			(0.144)	(0.146)			(0.028)	(0.028)
Time-Varying Party and Country Variables	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Country FE	Included: 54 Countries	Included: 53 Countries	Included: 36 Countries	Included: 36 Countries	Included: 54 Countries	Included: 53 Countries	Included: 36 Countries	Included: 36 Countries
Year FE	Included: 1945-2019	Included: 1947-2019	Included: 1960-2018	Included: 1960-2018	Included: 1945-2019	Included: 1947-2019	Included: 1960-2018	Included: 1960-2018
Sample Size	4,529	3,181	2,095	2,095	4,529	3,181	2,095	2,095

<sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ . Robust standard errors clustered by party in parentheses.

**Table 5: Do Work Ideas Matter for Voters?**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<b>Work-Related Mentions</b>				
Pro-Worker Mentions	0.178* (0.086)	0.200* (0.088)	0.181+ (0.094)	0.194* (0.092)
Anti-Union Mentions	-0.013 (0.373)	-0.019 (0.344)	0.023 (0.423)	0.031 (0.411)
<b>Ideology</b>				
Mean Ideology (party average over time)	-0.024 (0.033)		-0.016 (0.038)	
Deviation Ideology (election-specific ideology)	0.027+ (0.015)		0.035+ (0.018)	
<b>Other Statistically Significant Manifesto Mentions (Most Rewarded to Most Punished Politically)</b>				
Multiculturalism: Negative		0.390* (0.147)		0.409* (0.152)
Peace		0.379+ (0.215)		0.400+ (0.239)
Incentives: Positive		0.251* (0.084)		0.292* (0.098)
Technology and Infrastructure: Positive		0.190* (0.065)		0.231* (0.077)
Governmental and Administrative Efficiency		0.152* (0.061)		0.163* (0.072)
Non-economic Demographic Groups		0.110* (0.055)		0.130* (0.060)
Agriculture and Farmers: Positive		-0.136* (0.057)		-0.096 (0.067)
Democracy		-0.182* (0.075)		-0.237* (0.092)
Marxist Analysis		-0.209* (0.077)		-0.185* (0.083)
Internationalism: Positive		-0.210+ (0.114)		-0.234+ (0.126)
Constitutionalism: Negative		-0.217 (0.141)		-0.314+ (0.181)
Underprivileged Minority Groups		-0.241+ (0.144)		-0.230 (0.163)
Traditional Morality: Positive		-0.295* (0.144)		-0.309* (0.163)

		(0.072)		(0.083)
Protectionism: Positive		-0.344*		-0.482*
		(0.163)		(0.232)
Military: Negative		-0.365 <sup>+</sup>		-0.469*
		(0.193)		(0.232)
Traditional Morality: Negative		-0.611*		-0.612*
		(0.213)		(0.227)

**Controls**

All Other Non-Significant Manifesto Categories	Included	Included	Included	Included
Party, Economic, and Political Environment Characteristics	Included	Included	Included	Included
Time-Varying Party and Country Variables	Included	Included	Included	Included
Country Fixed Effects	Included: 36 Countries	Included: 36 Countries	Included: 36 Countries	Included: 36 Countries
Year Fixed Effects	Included: 1960-2018	Included: 1960-2018	Included: 1960-2018	Included: 1960-2018
Sample size	2,542	2,542	2,545	2,545

<sup>+</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ . Robust standard errors in parentheses.

## **Appendix A: The Industrial Relations Content of Manifestos in Action—The Australian Case**

Australia provides a case study that illustrates that patterns in the relative importance of labor statements relate to electoral contests known to involve controversies over specific industrial relations policies. Online Appendix B provides a similar demonstration using the United Kingdom.

Appendix Figure A shows the percent of each Australian Labor Party (ALP) manifesto that reflects pro-worker statements and the percent of each Liberal Party manifesto that reflects anti-union statements. For starters, note that there is significant variability in mentions across parties and time. So there is variation to be analyzed. And the Australian case compellingly shows that this variation is not random or superficial—rather, there are visible illustrations of the relevance and meaningfulness of our measures of relative pro-worker and anti-union manifesto statements.

First, note the jump in the prominence of anti-union mentions in the incumbent Liberal Party's manifesto for the 1983 election. This was tied directly to arguments that the recession hitting Australia at the time was primarily the fault of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), and this ideational strategy reflected that this recession had weakened the Liberal Party's political standing, and arguably would lead to their substantial electoral defeat that year (Bramble and Kuhn 1999). To illustrate the content behind the higher rates of anti-union mentions, first consider that the ACTU head who had led the national wage negotiations for the unions, Bob Hawke, had been elected ALP leader just prior to the 1983 election. Highlighting the connections between ACTU, ALP, and inflationary policies, the outset of the Liberal Party manifesto maintained "And in the last year or two Australia has suffered a totally unjustified wages explosion brought about by ACTU policies laid down when the present leader of the Labor Party was its president." Later in its manifesto, the Liberals maintained that while in



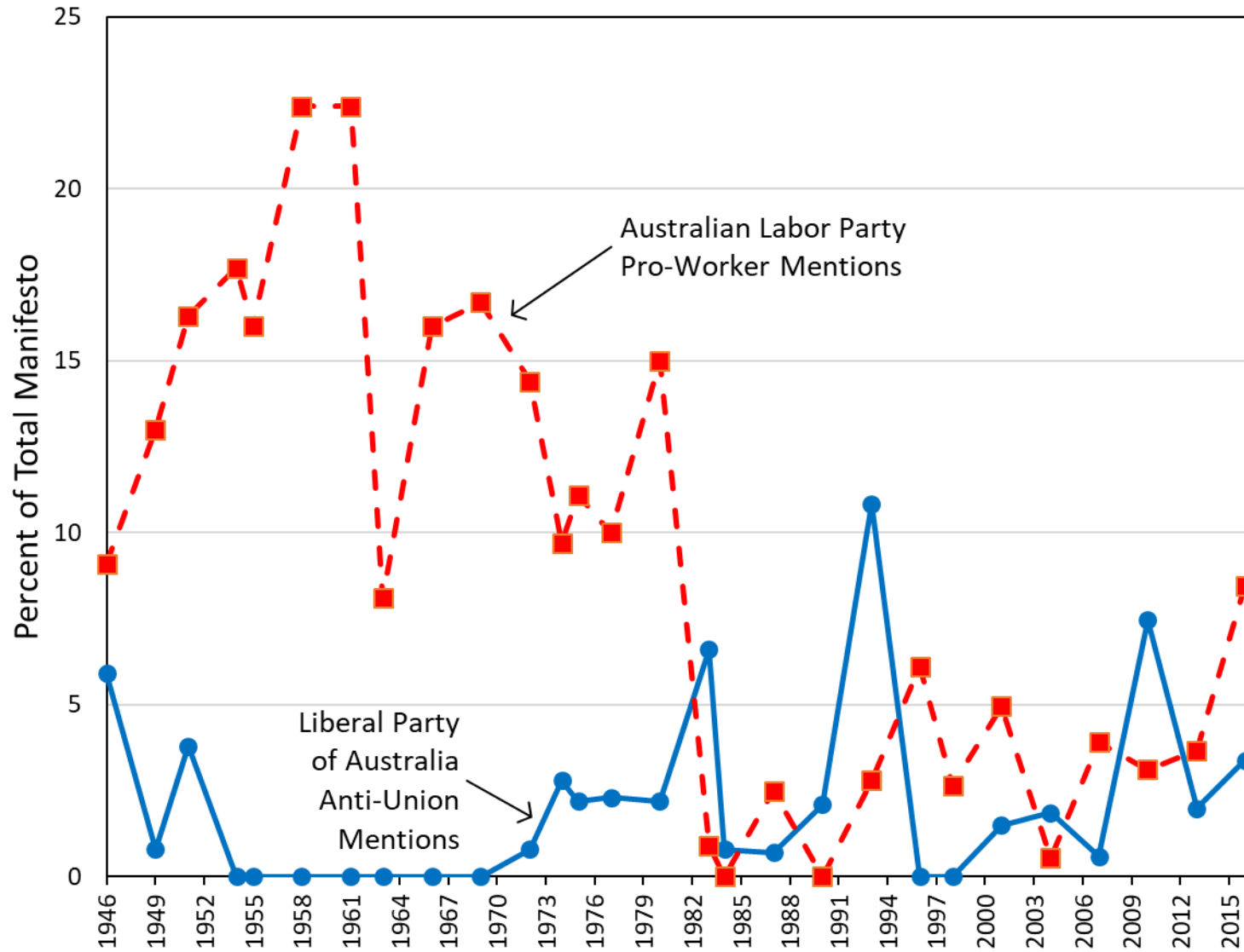
power, their party “has shown its willingness to consult and work with the unions, not for them, as Labor does.” In addressing these alleged associations, the Liberals promised to introduce a referendum that would “enable the [Conciliation and Arbitration Commission], and the Government where necessary, to prevent the community being denied essential services by the abuse of union power.”

Appendix Figure A also shows that the 1983 ALP manifesto contained very little pro-worker content. Against a backdrop of aggressive collective bargaining and industrial disputes being seen as a cause of the recession, the ALP manifesto instead emphasized cooperation and consultation in support of macroeconomic recovery; following its subsequent election victory, this was enacted in the form of the Prices and Incomes Accord (“the Accord”) between the ACTU and the ALP government (Wright and Lansbury 2014).

The next spike in the relative frequency of anti-union mentions in the Liberal Party manifesto was in 1993. This manifesto was based upon the party’s 1991 *Fightback!* economic policy portfolio, announced to combat high unemployment and inflation (Bean 1994). The ideas developed in *Fightback!* and copied into the 1993 manifesto represented the Liberal Party’s embracing ideas predicated on classic neoliberal thinking, such as deep adherence to deregulation and free-market values (Cass 1992). The aggressiveness of this switch is captured by the increase in anti-union statements in its manifesto. As illustrations of the specificity of the anti-union mentions, two key provisions of the party’s 1993 manifesto were to abolish industrial awards and to decentralize wage determination. And, although the party lost the 1993 election, its effects persist in Australia as many of the policies embedded within the platform were later adopted by the Howard government from 1996-2007 (Boucher and Sharp 2008). In other words, the statements in the manifesto are not superficial but are tied directly to contemporary industrial relations debates.

Second, the Australian case seems to illustrate the prevalence of an ongoing contest of work-related ideas in the political arena from the 1980s onward. Following Liberal's neoliberal *Fightback!* platform in 1993, ALP ran on a relatively higher pro-worker platform in 1996, though their manifesto emphasized employment stability and jobs growth over a clear promotion of unions, collective bargaining, or industrial relations reform. A similar upswing in pro-worker rhetoric by ALP occurred in 2007 when Kevin Rudd defeated the Howard coalition. But this time, the party's manifesto was specifically built around a rejection of industrial relations reforms like WorkChoices and the growth of individually-negotiated Australian Workplace Arrangements (AWAs). To this point, in its manifesto ALP overtly promised "If elected, we will abolish WorkChoices. If elected, we will abolish AWAs." In response, in its 2010 *Our Action Contract* manifesto, the Liberals promised to "Restore Work-for-the-Dole" and to "reverse Labor's softening of mutual obligation requirements," but also ensured voters that it would "not bring back Work Choices" and would "not bring back AWAs." On the whole, this contest of ideas that emerged around how labor policies should operate in the early 1980s was pronounced within each party's manifestos, related to the specific issues of the times, and frequently appeared to be situated within both wider economic contexts (inflation, unemployment, and the like) as well as the wider political circumstances (party volatility, incumbency status, and the like).

**Appendix Figure A: Pro-Worker and Anti-Union Manifesto Mentions in Australian Elections, 1946-2016**



## **Online Appendix B: The Industrial Relations Content of Manifestos in Action—The UK Case**

Similar to Appendix Figure A, Appendix Figure B shows the percent of each UK Labour Party manifesto that reflects pro-worker statements and the percent of each Conservative Party manifesto that reflects anti-union statements for 1945-2019. Note the trend in anti-union manifesto sentiment that emerged initially in the 1974 Conservative election manifesto, and peaked in 1979 with the ascendancy of Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's manifesto was by far the most anti-union on record in the UK, and in fact is the second most anti-union by a major party in our data.

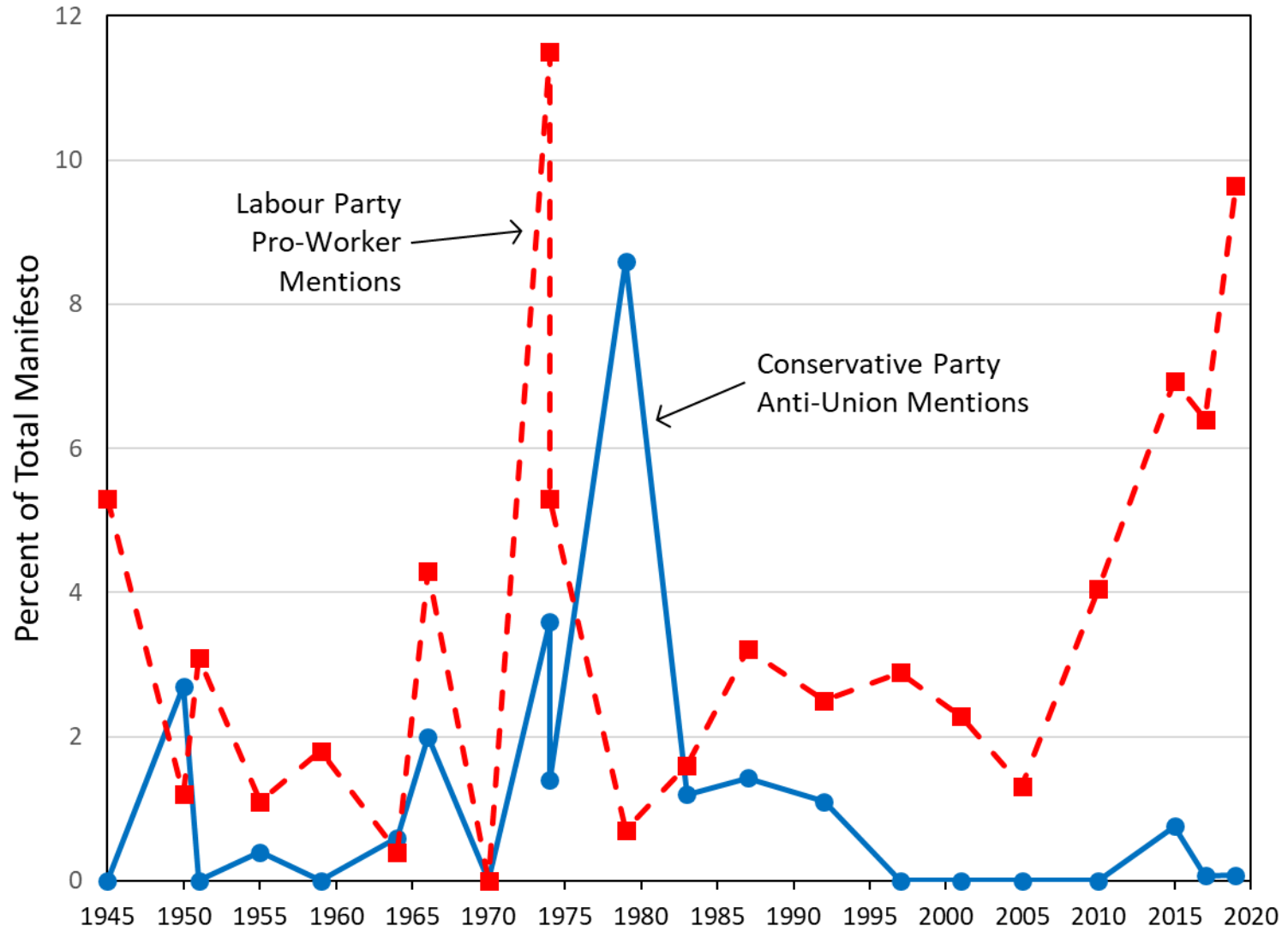
The dominant economic event that precipitated the 1979 election was the “Winter of Discontent” wherein widespread strikes under the watch of the incumbent Labour government gripped the public's attention (Hay 2009). While Thatcher expressed deep concerns regarding the severity of the strikes, the Labour Prime Minister was portrayed in the media as disregarding the situation (Thomas 2007). Labour's popularity in the polls plummeted, and in its 1979 manifesto, Thatcher's party used these events as the centerpiece of its platform. Several references within the manifesto point to the “Winter of Discontent,” and Thatcher overtly laid the blame at the feet of the unions arguing that “by heaping privilege without responsibility on the trade unions, Labour have given a minority of extremists the power to abuse individual liberties and thwart Britain's chances of success.” Moreover, the manifesto was steeped in carefully crafted proposals to solve problems of union power, and included entire sections dedicated to limiting picketing; regulating and restricting the closed shop; requiring secret ballots for union elections and other union participation events; reforming strikes so that unions had greater financial obligations to their members; and weakening centralized pay arrangements.

As anti-union as Thatcher's manifesto had been in 1979, it almost directly mirrored the degree of pro-worker sentiment found in the Labour Party manifestos of 1974. Similar to

Thatcher's 1979 manifesto, the 1974 Labour manifestos were written in the midst of an economic crisis (in this case a series of strikes by the National Union of Mineworkers), albeit with a Conservative government in power and against the backdrop of the controversial Industrial Relations Act 1971, which Labour had promised to repeal if elected, among a series of other pro-worker industrial relations reforms (Seldon and Hickson 2004). Following Thatcher's electoral successes in the 1970s and 1980s, Labour began to broaden its manifesto positions, focusing more generally on issues like unemployment and job creation than on union-specific issues. This culminated in its 1997 manifesto, where Tony Blair's "New Labour" platform explicitly promised that "In industrial relations, we make it clear that there will be no return to flying pickets, secondary action, strikes with no ballots or the trade union law of the 1970s," instead proposing "basic minimum rights for the individual at the workplace, where our aim is partnership not conflict between employers and employees." Accordingly, industrial relations was seen as less of a priority than education reform, and the party's industrial relations policies were laid out within the section written to ensure business profitability, explicitly guaranteeing that, if elected, it would "leave intact the main changes of the 1980s in industrial relations."

After the 2005 election cycle, specific policies geared toward trade union revitalization emerged as part of Labour's manifesto platforms, and Appendix Figure B shows an increase in the relative importance of pro-worker mentions after 2005. Again, the ideas in the manifestos related to observable campaign trends and pertain to specific industrial relations issues. For instance, in its 2017 manifesto, Labour assured that it would review "the rules on union recognition so that more workers have the security of a union." As part of its 20-point "Rights at Work" plan, Labour promised to "repeal the Trade Union Act and roll out sectoral collective bargaining – because the most effective way to maintain good rights at work is collectively through a union."

Appendix Figure B: Pro-Worker and Anti-Union Manifesto Mentions in U.K. Elections, 1945-2019



## Online Appendix C: Manifesto Labor Mentions Across Countries

Appendix Figure C describes the extent to which pro-worker and anti-union mentions differ across all countries in our dataset. The bar length to the left of the zero value indicates the average percent for negative (anti-union) mentions, the length to the right indicates the average percent for positive (pro-worker) mentions, and the countries are ordered based on the total fraction of all work-related mentions. Several points of note come out of the descriptive country comparisons. First, relative to many other countries, labor issues seem to be deeply embedded within the Australian political system, with ideas both favorable and unfavorable to labor proliferating among Australian parties at a higher rate than elsewhere. On average, 5.45 percent of manifesto statements for Australian political parties are pro-worker statements, and 1.11 percent are anti-union.

Second, we do not see clear evidence that a particular group of countries belonging to one type of economic or political system (say, Scandinavian countries or those belonging to specific varieties of capitalism categories such as coordinated market economies) dominate on pro-worker mentions. Each of our top five pro-worker countries comes from a different continent (Oceania, followed by Africa, Europe, North America, and finally Asia). Perhaps unsurprisingly, at the lowest end of the spectrum of pro-worker mentions we find several new democracies and former Soviet countries.

Third, anti-union manifesto mentions are also distributed across diverse countries. After Australia, the next highest rates are for the United Kingdom, Israel, Finland, and Mexico. Some countries exhibit a complete lack of anti-union statements. Out of 41,546 statements from 23 elections and 94 manifestos in Canada, there is only a single anti-union mention.

**Appendix Figure C: Average Pro-Worker and Anti-Union Mentions by Country, 1945-2019**

