

UNELECTED OVERSIGHT
THE POLITICS OF GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATIONS AND PROBLEM
MONITORING

A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
CODY A. DROLIC
Dr. Lael Keiser, Dissertation Supervisor
Dr. Jennifer Selin, Dissertation Supervisor

MAY 2020

The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined
the dissertation entitled:

UNELECTED OVERSIGHT: THE POLITICS OF GOVERNMENT
INVESTIGATIONS AND PROBLEM MONITORING

presented by Cody A. Drolc,
a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and hereby certify that, in their
opinion, it is worth of acceptance.

Dr. Lael Keiser

Dr. Jennifer Selin

Dr. Jake Haselswerdt

Dr. Irma Arteaga

Acknowledgements

Admittedly, the acknowledgements were the most difficult part of this dissertation to write. I am not great at expressing my gratitude verbally or written, and I do not feel like the words written here will fully capture the immense appreciation I have for my advisors, committee, cohort, family, and friends who graciously supported this project and my graduate school journey. So, take these words as a mere façade of my gratitude.

First, to Lael Keiser. Thank you for your support over the last five years. I would not have finished this degree and landed a job without you. You took the time to listen to my half-baked ideas, pushed me to think bigger, and kindly shared your sage wisdom and stellar network. I have enjoyed working with you and could not have asked for a better mentor. I look forward to continuing to publish together and pushing research forward in public administration and political science.

Second, to Jen Selin. To tell you that I was thrilled that you joined our department at the start of my third year would be an understatement. You have contributed so much to the department since you have been here and really pushed me as a scholar. One of my favorite lessons from you that I have attempted to internalize into my own work and will strive to combat in the future is, “nobody cares about the bureaucracy.” I knew this statement was true but wanted to ignore it. Thank you for pushing me to make people care and pushing my research into new, theoretically grounded frontiers.

To Jake Haselswerdt and Irma Arteaga, thank you both for providing excellent mentorship over the last several years. Taking classes with both of you was a pleasure, and I appreciate your willingness to share your respective expertise at a moment’s notice.

This dissertation and completion of the PhD also was not possible without Andy Emerson, Jonathan (Vanya) Kriekhaus, Audra Jenkins, Marvin Overby, Bryce Reeder, Pev Squire, or Laron Williams,

I also want to thank my cohort. We started with ten and ended with five. I am incredibly lucky to call each of you a friend and colleague. Hanna Brant, Nicholas Brother, Jordan Butcher, and Ed Goldring, I cannot imagine going through this program without each of you. We were and continue to be a super group. I look forward to many years in the discipline together as we educate the next group of scholars and push forward with our respective research agenda.

To my family. Thank you for your encouragement throughout my undergraduate and graduate career. I appreciate your patience through this process. Doug and Jill (lovingly, DougNJill), thank you for teaching me the value of hard work and perseverance. I know you two were skeptical of this process in the beginning, but I appreciate how the lessons you taught me from a young age carried me through the program.

I also want to thank some friends and family who either helped me during this process or listened to me ramble about bureaucracy, accountability, or politics. In alphabetical order because I like to be on brand: Pam Carriveau, Erika Drolc, Lucas Fralick, Brady Harr, George and Nadene Harr, Mike Hendricks, Megan Hohn, Courtney Huse-Wika, Caleb Munger, Kory Otterberg, Sara Parks, Elizabeth Russel-Williams, Jacob Scholl, Gabe Shuck, and Richard Walbe.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
Abstract.....	x
Chapter 1.....	1
Oversight by Bureaucrats.....	4
Inspectors General Monitoring Agendas	5
Congress and Government Accountability Office Oversight	6
Chapter 2.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Committing and Reporting Agency Problems.....	11
Identifying Problems.....	12
Understanding of Internal Oversight Processes	12
Public Service Motivation.....	14
Research Design.....	16
Dependent Variables.....	17
Main Explanatory Variables	20
Control Variables	22
Methodology.....	26
Results.....	28
Extension: Internal vs. External Oversight Trust.....	32
Conclusion	35
Chapter 3.....	37
Introduction.....	37
Offices of Inspectors General	40
Diversity in Monitoring	42
Organization Structure	42
Resources	48
Political Environment	51
Inspector General Reports.....	54

Coding Report Contents.....	57
Monitoring Agenda Diversity.....	61
Organization Structure.....	64
Resources.....	65
Political Environment.....	66
Controls.....	67
Methodology.....	68
Results.....	69
Extension: Conditional Importance of Political Environment.....	77
Conclusion.....	81
Chapter 4.....	84
Introduction.....	84
Overhauling Congress’s Oversight Capabilities.....	88
Oversight Through Legislative Support Agencies.....	91
The Role of Experts in Legislative Oversight.....	95
Watchdogs or Partisan Pawns?.....	98
A Watchdog Agenda.....	99
A Partisan Pawn Agenda.....	101
Research Design.....	104
Government Accountability Office Reports.....	104
Primary Explanatory Variables.....	110
Control Variables.....	114
Methodology.....	115
Results.....	116
Extension: Chamber and Capacity Moderating Effects.....	120
Conclusion.....	124
Chapter 5.....	127
Policy Implications.....	128
Limitations.....	130
Moving Forward.....	131
References.....	133
Appendix A.....	160
Appendix B.....	164
Appendix C.....	168

Collecting GAO Reports.....	168
GAO Congressional Request Considerations	169
Robustness Checks.....	171
Diversity of Investigations	173
NAPA Report Impact on GAO’s Agenda.....	175
Vita.....	178

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Summary Statistics and Variable Questions.....	23
Table 3.1: OLS Estimates of Diversity in OIG Monitoring Agendas.....	70
Table 3.2: OLS Estimates of the Moderating Effect of PAS IGs on the Political Environment.....	79
Table 3.3: OLS Estimates of the Moderating Effect of Vacancies on the Political Environment.....	80
Table 4.1: Estimates of the Number of Times on Agency in Investigated by GAO	119
Table A.1: Multilevel Bayesian Logit Estimates of the Probability of Identifying Wrongdoing	161
Table A.2: Multilevel Bayesian Logit Estimates of the Probability of Identifying Wrongdoing with Competing Oversight Sources	162
Table B.1: Summary Statistics.....	164
Table B.2: OLS Estimates of OIG Agenda Diversity, 2000-2016	165
Table B.3: OLS Estimates of the Moderating Effect of PAS IGs on the Political Environment, 2000-2016	166
Table B.4: OLS Estimates of the Moderating Effect of Vacancies on the Political Environment, 2000-2016	167
Table C.1: Summary Statistics.....	168
Table C.2: Estimates of the Number of Times and Agency is Investigated by GAO	172

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Agencies with the Greatest Proportion of Employees Observing Wrongdoing	19
Figure 2.2: Distribution of Main Explanatory Variables	21
Figure 2.3: Posterior Means and Densities of the Probability of Identifying Wrongdoing, Illegal Activity, and Wasteful Activity	30
Figure 2.4: Change in Probability for Identifying Wrongdoing, Illegal Activity, and Waste.....	31
Figure 2.5: Competing Effect of OIGs, GAO, and Congress on Identifying Wrongdoing	34
Figure 3.1: Prevalence of Major Issues in OIG reports, 1994-2018.....	60
Figure 3.2: OIG Monitoring Agenda Diversity, Establishment Offices	63
Figure 3.3: OIG Monitoring Agenda Diversity, Designated Federal Entities	64
Figure 3.4: Long Term Effects of OIG Staff on Monitoring Agenda Diversity.....	72
Figure 3.5: Long Term Effects of OIG Budget on Monitoring Agenda Diversity	74
Figure 3.6: Long Term Effects of President-Congress Policy Divergence	75
Figure 3.7: Long Term Effects of Congressional Hearing Diversity.....	76
Figure 4.1: Total GAO Reports by Primary Requesting Chamber, 1974-2018.....	107
Figure 4.2: Top 20 Investigated Agencies	110
Figure 4.3: Bivariate Densities of the Number of Reports	113
Figure 4.4: First Differences of Expected Counts	119
Figure 4.5: Expected Count with Chamber as the Moderating Variable.....	122
Figure 4.6: Expected Count with Committee Staff as the Moderating Variable	122
Figure C.1: Records Request Submitted to GAO	169
Figure C.2: GAO’s Response to Records Request	170

Figure C.3: Number of Unique Agencies and Diversity of Agencies by Chamber, 1974-2018.....	173
Figure C.4: Diversity Estimates by Chamber-Year	174
Figure C.5: GAO’s Adjusted Budget and FTE Staff, 1974-2018.....	175
Figure C.6: First Differences of Expected Counts Before and After NAPA Report	177

Abstract

How do elected officials and top decisionmakers receive information about the problems encountered in government agencies? Policymaking and agenda setting research primarily examines how elected officials directly gather information through mechanisms like oversight hearings or from outside interests. In this dissertation, I build on existing research by examining how agenda setting and problem identification take place in an oversight context with a specific focus on unelected means including bureaucrats themselves, Offices of Inspectors General, and the Government Accountability Office. In doing so, I extend and clarify existing theories of oversight, agenda setting, and problem identification to highlight three important but underappreciated and understudied sources of expert information.

First, I consider oversight within public organizations performed by civil servants. Using survey data, I find that bureaucrats with greater knowledge of internal oversight processes and public service motivation are more likely to identify problems in their agency. Second, I consider the monitoring agendas of federal Offices of Inspectors General using an original dataset of reports. My findings suggest that OIGs monitor a greater variety of issues with larger budgets and when signals in the political environment become more diverse. Third, I use a new dataset of all Government Accountability Office reports from 1974-2018 to examine how Congress steers their auditing agenda, noting that it reflects a desire for information on technical agencies but still reflects members' political concerns in relation to individual agencies and the president. Taken together, these findings advance our understanding of oversight and accountability by

demonstrating how unelected administrators and specialized organizations monitor and identify problems that undermine the effectiveness of government programs.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2014, the Veterans Health Administration was embroiled in a scandal over lengthy wait times and phony waiting lists. According to an official audit released by the Department of Veterans Affairs inspector general, multiple VA hospitals kept unofficial waiting lists out of the view of the public and agency managers. By multiple accounts patients had to wait an average of 115 days to see a doctor (significantly higher than the VA's 14-day goal), and subsequent reports indicated that the wait times directly contributed to the deaths of as many as 40 veterans (Oppel 2014; VA Office of Inspector General 2014a, 2014b). The Government Accountability Office also acknowledged scheduling and wait time problems in 2013 and 2014 reports requested by Congressional Republicans (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2013b, 2014), but it was not until a nurse reported problems to the VA inspector general and an audit was released that the issues were made widely known to the public and elected officials. According to the inspector's general audit and related GAO reports, oversight of VA hospitals was almost nonexistent, and these problems were the outcome of VA policies that created incentives to falsify waitlists, reduce patient backlogs, and decrease veterans' wait times.

Following these reports, Congress and President Obama enacted several measures to reform VA hospitals including eliminating the 14-day waiting goal, initiating monthly inspections of VA facilities, bi-weekly case updates, and providing more funding for veterans' health care (Lopez 2014). The effectiveness of these changes and whether the

VA has righted course are still debatable (Boyer 2016), but these changes were not possible without tracking the problem in the first place. In this case, individual bureaucrats, Offices of Inspectors General, and the Government Accountability Office all played a central oversight role that allowed decisionmakers to enact reforms.

This example raises two important questions about the American bureaucracy, agenda setting, and government-wide oversight initiatives. First, why do some problems in government agencies go unnoticed? Second, how do specialized oversight offices like the GAO and OIGs decide who and what to investigate? This dissertation seeks to answer these questions by examining the agendas of three unelected sources of oversight and their role in enhancing accountability and identifying deficiencies in government agencies: (1) civil servants; (2) Offices of Inspectors General; and (3) Congress's use of the Government Accountability Office.

Officials at all levels of government rely on expert bureaucrats and auditing organizations to provide performance information and identify problem areas in public agencies (Adler and Wilkerson 2013; Baumgartner and Jones 2015; Gormley 1996; Haveman 1976; Hird 2005; Jones 1976; Light 1993, 2014; Weiss 1989a). Important work has considered how elected officials oversee and monitor public organizations (Aberbach 1990; Acs 2018; Balla 1998; Balla and Deering 2013; Feinstein 2018; Hall and Miler 2008; Hammond and Knott 1996; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984; McGrath 2013; Parker and Dull 2013), and significant work in public policy and administration has examined how problems are defined and perceived in addition to how those problems receive attention from the public and decisionmakers through agenda setting (Baumgartner and

Jones 1993, 2015; Dery 2000; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Kingdon 1984; Weiss 1989b).

These two overarching strands of literature on oversight and agenda setting/problem identification largely ignore the oversight mechanisms that exist within government agencies and their agendas. These systems allow non-elected public managers and employees to monitor the implementation and formation of public policies and communicate information to elected officials and agency leaders (Gormley 1996; Joyce 2011; Light 1993; Rubin 2005). This gap in the literature leaves questions about the identification and monitoring of government activities that influences the information decisionmakers have available to enact change.

Understanding who and what is monitored in government agencies has implications for the effectiveness of administrators and specialized offices to improve performance and enhance accountability. Moreover, understanding their problem identification and monitoring agendas builds on our understanding of the policymaking process, which relies on expert sources of information. My dissertation fills these gaps in the literature with a specific focus on how unelected sources of oversight can identify and monitor problems, influencing the available information to decisionmakers. First, I examine oversight within public organizations performed by civil servants. Second, I consider how government-wide oversight initiatives like the establishment of Offices of Inspectors General support monitoring of executive agencies. Third, I extend this investigation to elected officials who created non-partisan, internal organizations like the Government Accountability Office to oversee the bureaucracy to understand how Congress influences their auditing and investigation agenda.

Oversight by Bureaucrats

Individual bureaucrats can help public managers and elected officials identify agency problems. This chapter examines how training about oversight process and public service motivation shapes the likelihood that civil servants will identify problems in their agencies. Existing research tends to focus on the role of Congressional monitoring on problem identification but neglects the role of bureaucrats who are important sources of information for legislators and other actors (Carpenter and Krause 2014; Gailmard and Patty 2013; Mills and Selin 2017; Waterman and Meier 1998). They are the most proximate actors to government activities and often the first to know when a problem arises or performance declines. Bureaucrats receive direct training about oversight process in their agency or accumulate knowledge by working in their unit and over time. Familiarity of these processes is important because it enhances bureaucrats' knowledge of what constitutes a problem, what to do when one is identified, and how their agency is likely to respond to the report. By enhancing knowledge about internal oversight process, bureaucrats are better positioned to identify problems. Additionally, public service motivation, an orientation towards serving in a public context and willingness to work for the betterment of others, increases vigilance among bureaucrats towards identifying problems.

Using survey data from the Merit Systems Protection Board on public employees' perceptions of agency problems, I demonstrate that an understanding internal oversight processes and public service motivation are associated with identifying agency problems. These findings highlight the importance of both administrators and knowledge about internal monitoring initiatives in identifying deficiencies that undermine the effectiveness

of public programs. Given bureaucrats' proximity to potential problems and role in providing information to decisionmakers, understanding how training about internal oversight processes and public service motivation shape problem identification is crucial to our understanding of accountability, transparency, and how agency leaders identify problems they can subsequently address.

Inspectors General Monitoring Agendas

Offices of Inspectors General are specialized auditing and investigatory offices with most federal agencies and cover nearly every corner of the executive branch. These offices are tasked with monitoring public organizations with the goal of identifying waste, fraud, and abuse. Over the last 40 years oversight initiatives like the Inspectors General Act of 1978 ensured the executive branch had internal monitors that would keep agency heads and Congress informed about agency performance and identify areas of improvement. To date, scholars have yet to explore how organizations specifically designed to monitor government agencies like OIGs allocate attention to agency problems. Given limited resources, capacity, and mixed incentives, the amount of attention (if any) given to any number of defined or undefined issues will always be limited (Baumgartner and Jones 2015; Jones 2001; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Jones, Sulkin, and Larsen 2003; March and Simon 1958; Workman 2015). With these limitations in mind, I develop a theory based around organization structure, resources, and the political environment to explain the size of auditing organizations' monitoring agenda.

For this empirical chapter, I collected nearly 40,000 published reports from 49 of the 74 federal Offices of Inspectors General and identified 127 issue areas examined across time and offices. I first provide a descriptive account of what issues they examine,

noting that performance management, budgetary, and auditing issues form more than 60% of all dedicated space in the reports every year. Second, I create a measure of agenda diversity and demonstrate that the breadth of the agenda is influenced primarily by OIG resources and the changing political environment. Structure of the offices, or how they are organized, does not seem to influence diversity in the agenda. Executive-branch oversight offices monitoring a more diverse set of issues are more likely to uncover performance problems and communicate a greater range of information to decisionmakers. These officials can then use this information to design and implement solutions as well as hold responsible actors accountable. Overall, the effectiveness of OIGs in assisting agency leaders and Congress in identifying problems is dependent upon resources they have available and the OIG's response to the political environment.

Congress and Government Accountability Office Oversight

Congress also has its own experts within the legislative branch to support oversight efforts. In this chapter, I examine how Congress uses the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to monitor the executive branch. This component of the oversight and policymaking process remains unexplored. Understanding how members of Congress acquire information on the executive branch through the GAO is important because where they allocate their attention influences the problems they will detect, shaping future oversight and policymaking decisions. Congress designed GAO to build neutral expertise on administrative and policy matters happening in the executive branch. Despite the purported neutrality of GAO, the office is still an arm of Congress, a highly political institution.

I created another original dataset of all Government Accountability Office reports from 1974—2018 to understand the degree to which Congress uses legislative-branch experts as a political tool to direct oversight or to build expertise on complex tasks in the executive branch. With these data, I identify the primary requesting chamber (i.e., House of Representatives or Senate) and agencies GAO reviewed. My results indicate that GAO’s auditing agenda reflects the shifting partisan composition of Congress. When a chamber is ideologically opposed to an agency in the executive branch, the number of investigations increases, reflecting a desire to investigate agencies that are likely to undermine Congressional policy goals. Similarly, investigations also increase during divided government. However, the partisan biases in GAO’s agenda are outweighed by Congress need for information on the technical nature of government agencies. My findings indicate that even neutral, expert information sources are subject to political manipulation, but that Congress’s need for information on technical agencies outweighs the partisan effects. These findings also challenge the traditional understanding of congressional-bureaucratic interactions that assume information is privately held (Alchian and Demsetz 1972; Epstein and O’Halloran 1999; Gailmard and Patty 2013; McCubbins 1985). Rather, Congress extracts information from the bureaucracy through its own experts to support oversight or policymaking endeavors.

Taken together, the three empirical chapters make several contributions to public administration and political science research. The findings advance our understanding of democratic accountability and performance by demonstrating how bureaucrats and government-wide oversight initiatives contribute to the monitoring and identification of issues in public organizations. In doing so, I highlight the role of bureaucrats themselves,

inspectors general, and the Government Accountability Office, three underappreciated but central sources of information for elected and unelected decisionmakers.

Additionally, I introduce two new sources of data and provide a descriptive overview of the nature and number of reports from OIGs and the GAO that was previously aggregated without reference to agencies investigated or the nature of the investigation. This dissertation also challenges extant literature on oversight that put Congress as the central actor. Rather, unelected sources like bureaucrats, OIGs, and the GAO are critical monitoring tools that perform substantially more oversight than elected officials and influence what information is potentially communicated to decisionmakers.

These chapters also point toward a potentially fruitful future research agenda. The data introduced here represent the most comprehensive collective of individual GAO and inspectors general reports to date. They can be used to answer questions about agency responsiveness to audits and evaluations. Are all recommendations implemented and which ones do agency prioritize? Do agencies reject findings in these reports, especially coming from “outsiders” like the GAO? When recommendations are implemented, do they increase agency performance, decrease waste, or enhance accountability? While this dissertation answers what issues and agencies are investigated and the breadth of problem monitoring, these subsequent questions will be important to address if we are to truly understand the impact of unelected sources of oversight.

Chapter 2

On the Front Lines Problem Identification by Public Employees

Introduction

At the most basic level, government employees possess the best information concerning actions, good and bad, taken within their agency. Securing accountability is no easy task as evident by the ongoing changes to Department of Veterans Affairs policy since 2014, but identifying and subsequently addressing problems marks a step in the right direction (Boyer 2016). Given the proximity of bureaucrats and their demonstrated importance in identifying problems, this chapter examines what factors enhance their vigilance.

Extant literature on agency problems places a special emphasis on the determinants of reporting the problem (whistleblowing) (e.g. Brewer and Selden 1998; Caillier 2017; Cho and Song 2015; Lavena 2016) but fails to take a step back and examine a crucial stage of the whistleblowing process: identifying the problem (Henik 2008). Current studies treat problem identification (a prerequisite for blowing the whistle) as random, but not all bureaucrats and the agencies they work in are equally equipped to

find problems (Ashforth and Anand 2003; Gino and Bazerman 2009; Miceli et al. 2012; Tenbrunsel and Messick 2004). Consequently, continuing to treat finding problems as a function of being in the right place at the right time grossly simplifies individual and organizational characteristics impacting public employees.

A firm understanding of factors that enhance or depress the likelihood of identifying problems is a necessary prerequisite to fixing issues and securing the accountability citizens and democratic principles demand. In this chapter, I take the first steps towards providing a theory centered around knowledge and understanding of internal oversight mechanisms and public service motivation that enhance the likelihood bureaucrats will identify problems. I test these propositions using federal employee survey data from the Merit Systems Protection Board that is matched with agency-level covariates. My findings suggest public employees' responses to questions about knowledge of internal oversight processes and inspectors general as well as self-reported public service motivation are associated with responses about identifying agency problems. These findings highlight the importance of both individual administrator and government-wide monitoring initiatives in identifying deficiencies that undermine the effectiveness of public policies and services.

My results challenge the notion that identifying problems is random. Moreover, they support greater employee training about internal oversight processes including the role of inspectors general and support greater communication of IGs with agency personnel. My results also provide additional evidence for hiring and retaining individuals with high levels of public service motivation to improve internal monitoring through front-line bureaucrats.

Committing and Reporting Agency Problems

Extant literature on problems in agencies focuses on the reporting process, or whistleblowing. Scholars agree on a relatively linear course for disclosing problems: (1) triggering event, (2) the trigger is perceived as an issue and the witness decides to take action, (3) action is taken, (4) agency responds to the whistleblowing, (5) the whistleblower assesses the agency's response (Henik 2008). The triggering event, or an agency problem, and reporting have been studied the most. A triggering event can come in multiple forms including wrongdoing committed by individual bureaucrats, which has been examined in public administration and psychology literature (e.g., Belle and Cantarelli 2017; Menzel 2015; Moore and Gino 2015). From the perspective of individual bureaucrats, the research suggests that "ordinary people" can commit amoral acts despite considering themselves good actors due to blindness to one's own transgressions and organizational norms (Adams 2011; Adams and Balfour 2010; Adams, Balfour, and Reed 2006). Adverse actors are generally influenced by their peers and provide a self-justification for their actions, meaning committing wrongdoing is not a random process; it is purpose-driven (O'Leary 2014; Tenbrunsel and Messick 2004). Additionally, a triggering event can be due to performance problems or waste caused by poor design or implementation.

Reporting problems receives considerably more scholarly attention. From this vein of work, researchers conclude that reporting problems is a dynamic process explained by personnel characteristics (Brewer and Selden 1998; Miceli, Near, and Dworkin 2008; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005; Shawver 2011; Caillier 2017),

type of problem (Miceli et al. 2012; Near et al. 2004; Clinard 1983), and organizational culture and structures including fear of retaliation (Cho and Song 2015; Greenberger, Miceli, and Cohen 1987; Miceli and Near 1985; Kaplan, Pope, and Samuels 2010; Lavena 2016). Current studies tend to emphasize the private sector despite whistleblowers concentrating in the public sector (Miceli, Near, and Dworkin 2008).

The focus on these two stages of the whistleblowing process, triggering events and actual disclosure, ignore an important question, who identifies the problem? While whistleblowing research treats identification of a problem as a result of being in the right place at the right time (Miceli and Near 1985; Near and Miceli 1996; Near et al. 2004), this view suggests that observing a problem is only situation specific and random. However, I argue that bureaucrats systematically differ in their likelihood to identify an event as a problem.

Identifying Problems

Public administration and political science theory provide little guidance on what factors influence the likelihood that bureaucrats will identify an event as a problem. Due to this limitation, I rely on studies from both disciplines in addition to organizational psychology and business ethics, with a specific focus on bureaucrats' knowledge and understanding of internal oversight processes and public service motivation in enhancing vigilance.

Understanding of Internal Oversight Processes

Although literature on executive branch oversight tends to focus on Congress or actors external to agencies (Aberbach 1990; Lowande 2018; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984; McGrath 2013), bureaucrats play a central monitoring role. They are the most proximate

actors to government activities and therefore often among the first to know when a problem arises. Overseeing agency activities is not in most employees' formal job description, but identifying problems helps bureaucrats, agency managers, and elected officials ensure programs are being developed and implemented effectively. To this end, bureaucrats have at least some incentive to be vigilant of problems in their agency, but identifying those problems requires knowledge of what they look like and how to respond to them.

One way bureaucrats may become more vigilant of agency problems is through their knowledge about internal oversight processes. That is, understanding how internal procedures operate and having sufficient trust that the process will take a report seriously should they decide to report it after identifying a problem. Primary among the internal oversight mechanisms are Offices of Inspectors General (OIGs). OIGs cover almost every corner of the federal government, and many exist at the state and local level (Kempf 2020; Light 1993; Newcomer and Grob 2004). These offices, which are examined in more detail in the next chapter, have a duty to root out waste, fraud, and abuse in government agencies and have been generally successful in achieving this goal (Light 1993). While OIGs run their own independent investigations, bureaucrats also receive information from them about how to make a disclosure and protections once they do (Hesch 2011). Additionally, agencies are required to educate employees about the purpose of OIGs. Even though the training is supposed to be uniform in each agency, not all bureaucrats believe they received the same information because implementation of education about IGs and from IGs is not uniform (Peffer et al. 2015).

OIGs act as an important information conduit for bureaucrats. Employees receive information from OIGs that informs them about the full process of identifying, reporting, and the agency response to a problem outlined by Henik (2008). This education enhances the likelihood that bureaucrats will identify problems through two mechanisms. First, bureaucrats will have an enhanced understanding of what problems look like. Public organizations are complex, and many employees may not know what waste, bribery, or any illegal activity looks like unless it is blatant. Through a joint education process by OIGs and agencies, bureaucrats receive information about what problems to look out for.

Second, bureaucrats vary in the confidence that the internal processes will handle allegations with care. If bureaucrats do not believe that they can go to a reliable source, like an inspector general, they are less likely to report problems (Lavena 2016; Shawver 2011; Taylor 2018; Ugaddan and Park 2019). In the same vein, we should expect them to be less likely to identify them in the first place. Although finding problems is not the priority of most bureaucrats, it becomes less of a priority if they do not know what to do with the information or if they do not think their report will be taken seriously.

Taken together, I expect greater knowledge of internal oversight mechanisms in addition to trust in reporting process to increase the likelihood of bureaucrats identifying problems.

Public Service Motivation

Employees' knowledge of internal oversight processes is one way to enhance their vigilance of agency problems. Another way is through public service motivation. People work in government for a variety of reasons that drive their daily work performance and

activities. One common motivating factor that public administration research has examined since the early 1990s is public service motivation (PSM). Public service motivation is generally defined as an individual's predisposition to public service and attitudes beyond organizational interest or self-interest (Bozeman and Su 2015; Perry 1996; Perry and Wise 1990; Vandenabeele 2007). Employees engaged in public service display unique traits compared to their counterparts employed in the private sector and are generally more attracted to careers in public service (Brewer and Selden 1998; Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey 2012). Under this conception, PSM is not just a desire to work in the public sector (for which the evidence is mixed), but it is indicative of a type of personality.

While some scholars argue that PSM is difficult to isolate (Gabris and Simo 1995), it is established as a meaningful predictor of organizational behavior such as decreased turnover (Bright 2008; Naff and Crum 1999; Steijn 2008), whistleblowing (Brewer and Selden 1998; Caillier 2017; Cho and Song 2015; Lavena 2016), and organizational commitment (Leisink and Steijn 2009). PSM is also associated with trust in government, better management, accountability, and employee productivity (Brewer, Selden, and Facer 2000; Moynihan and Pandey 2007). Moreover, PSM is often positively associated with job performance (Petrovsky and Ritz 2014). Brewer and Selden (1998) were the first to empirically test the effects of PSM on whistleblowing by federal employees—a topic closely related to the purpose of this study. Using data from the 1992 Merit Principles Survey, they show PSM is linked to prosocial behaviors like whistleblowing. Moreover, Cho and Song (2015), in contrast to Glazer (1983), find that the PSM underpinnings of behaviors like whistleblowing indicates that the decision to

disclose is altruist, not out of self-interest. Wright, Hassan, and Park (2016) report similar findings, noting that PSM is associated with more ethical leadership and willingness to report problems. In context of extant literature, PSM is indicative of a highly motivated, vigilant, and altruistic personality found primarily among those employed in the public sector.

It is this personality that current literature emphasizes that translates into greater organizational commitment (Crewson 1997; Moon 2000; Wright 2007) but should also increase employee vigilance. By vigilance, I mean keeping a watchful eye on the behavior of the organization and employees for activity that does not fit the public service ethic. Agency problems including waste, fraud, abuse, poor performance, or unethical behavior work against agency goals, which employees with higher levels of PSM should therefore be more likely to identify. Taken together, I expect bureaucrats with higher levels of PSM to be more likely to identify problems.

Research Design

To test the propositions outlined above, I use the 2010 Merit Principles Survey (MPS) as it focused on a wide variety of issues including prohibited personnel practices, motivation, and perceptions of organization problems.¹ This survey is conducted periodically by the Merit Systems Protection Board to assess the integrity of the merit system in the U.S. federal bureaucracy. In 2010, the MPS was administered to 71,970

¹ The 2005 survey has a similar focus, but it does not hold as rich of a set of covariates and it does not include questions about the nature of problematic behavior civil servants personally observed. Scholars tend to use the 2005 wave of the survey when their interest is solely on whistleblowing.

permanent, full-time federal employees under the merit system with an overall response rate of 58 percent for 42,020 final responses. The sample represents 97 percent of all full-time federal employees from 61 agencies and subunits. Most respondents are coded with their sub-agency rather than department, which allows me to control for organizational-level differences between agencies. Some agencies were coded as “other,” making it impossible to match agency-level covariates with the responses. As a result, the cases in these categories were excluded—approximately 2,500 observations.

Dependent Variables

I focus on three dependent variables to capture perceptions of overall agency problems. First, MPS respondents were first asked to indicate whether they personally observed wrongdoing in their agency in the past 12 months. In this case, “wrongdoing” is defined as the “creation or toleration in the workplace of a health or safety danger, unlawful behavior, fraud, waste, or abuse.” For the second and third dependent variables, I grouped responses to a subsequent question that asked respondents to indicate the most serious problem they personally observed. The first group is illegal activity and includes problems such as accepting bribes, stealing federal funds, or using a position for personal gain. The second group is wasteful activity and includes problems such as waste due to mismanaged programs, waste caused by ineligible people receiving goods and services, and waste due to deficient goods and services. These three variables do not capture problems related to poor performance, but wrongdoing in general and wasteful and illegal activity are likely tied to performance. Overall, these questions capture problems that undermine the effectiveness of government agencies and the programs they implement.

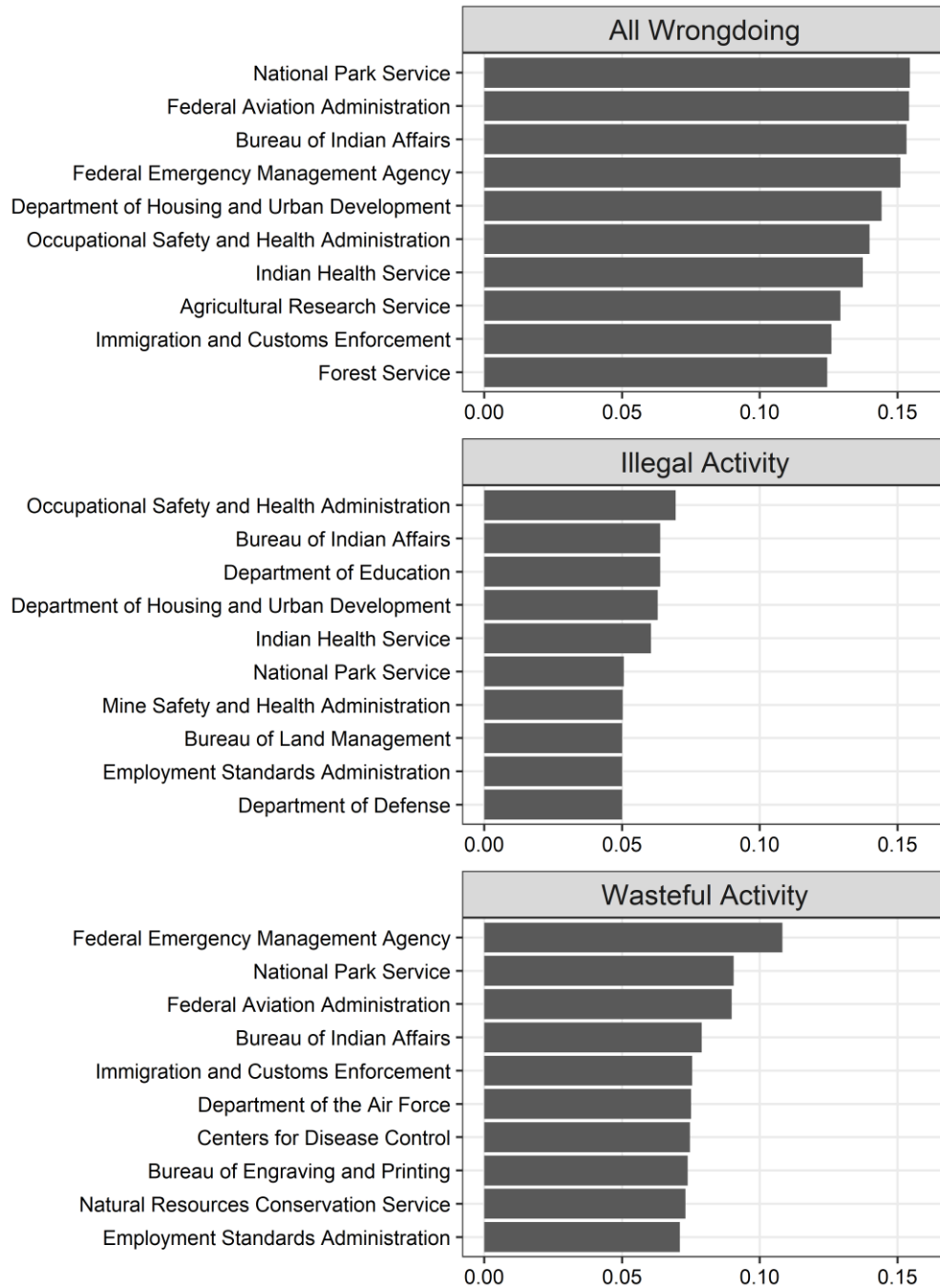
Figure 2.1 depicts the distribution of the three dependent variables by agency with the top 10 in each category selected. Overall, around 10% of respondents indicated they personally observed wrongdoing. This response varies substantially by agency with just under 6% observing wrongdoing in the Bureau of Labor Statistics to a little over 15% in the National Park Service. Responses to this question serve as the first dependent variable. For the two groups of wrongdoing, approximately 4% indicated that an illegal activity was the most serious problem they personally observed, and 6% indicated waste.

Descriptively, agencies housed within the Department of the Interior appear to have the greatest proportion of employees observing both illegal activity and waste. The National Parks Service, for example, appears on the top 10 list for illegal and wasteful activity and is the agency with the greatest overall proportion of employees observing wrongdoing. Comparing illegal and wasteful activity, it appears that waste is a more prevalent problem. Although respondents were given twice as many options for illegal activity, the average agency has a greater proportion of respondents identifying waste as the most serious problem.

It is important to note, however, that these variables are based on bureaucrats' perceptions. Consequently, waste may be perceived as more serious than illegal activity, or illegal activity could simply be less prevalent. Regardless of the case, all three dependent variables are limited because they are based on perceptions, and I have no way to verify whether an actual problem occurred. My modeling strategy discussed below attempts to deal with the across-agency variation by estimating separate baselines, but *actual* wrongdoing would be a better control or even outcome. Despite the limitations,

the MPS and variables I am focusing on here will provide insights about what employees think are the most serious problems in their agencies.

Figure 2.1: Agencies with the Greatest Proportion of Employees Observing Wrongdoing



Note: Top 10 agencies selected.

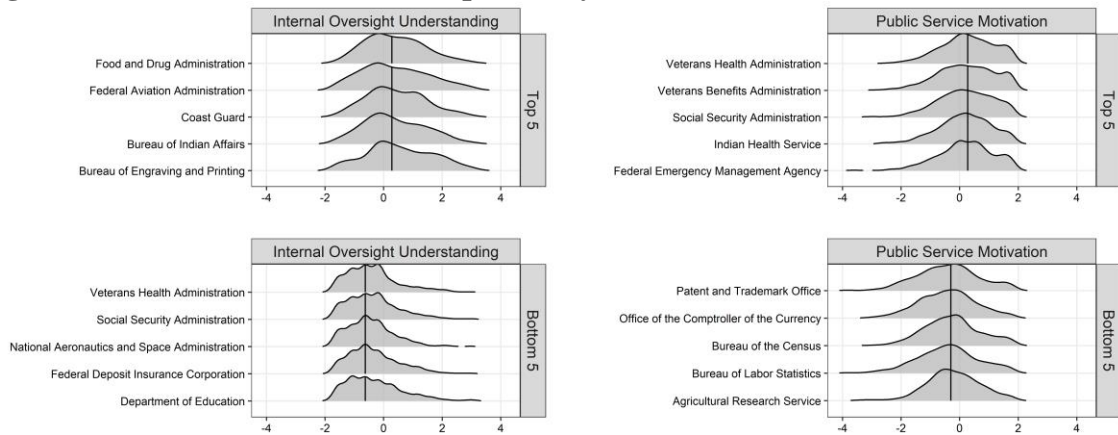
Main Explanatory Variables

To best proxy bureaucrats understanding of internal oversight mechanisms, I create a simple composite measure based on three questions in the MPS (*Internal Oversight Understanding*). Questions used to create this measure focus on agency inspectors general, who are the most direct actors of internal oversight that bureaucrats will interact with. OIGs are also the offices that will handle reports of misconduct unless the reporter decides to make the disclosure outside their agency. The full questions are shown in Table 2.1 but taken together should reflect respondent's overall understanding and trust in internal oversight mechanisms. The three questions are summed, and the final scale can range from 0 to 10. The average score on this scale is 3.38, reflecting a relatively low overall understanding of IGs and their role.

Next, I create a global public service motivation measure in accordance with questions and the procedure used by Alonso and Lewis (2001), Cho and Song (2015), and Caillier (2017). This scale is also summed using questions Perry (1996) suggests capture the broad extent of PSM in order to collapse the construct into a single dimension. Wright, Christensen, and Pandey (2013) demonstrate the consistency of outcomes using global measures like this across a variety of data sets. The six questions used to create the composite PSM measure are reported in Table 2.1. This scale ranges from 0 to 24. The average respondent scores an 18, showing a high level of PSM among the average bureaucrat. This high level of PSM among the average employee should not be surprising because individuals working in the public sector have a higher desire to serve the public and exhibit overall higher levels of PSM than similar counterparts in the private sector (Perry, Hondeghem, and Wise 2010; Steijn 2008).

Figure 2.2 shows the standardized distribution of the two main explanatory variables. The agencies with the highest and lowest averages are shown. Agencies with the highest levels of oversight understanding include the Food and Drug Administration, Coast Guard, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. The average for these agencies is only slightly greater than the overall average as Figure 2.2 shows. Notably, the Veterans Health Administration and National Aeronautics and Space Administration have the lowest levels of oversight understanding. Comparing the distributions between the top and bottom 5, the distribution is less spread for agencies in the bottom five. This may suggest that where oversight understanding is low, it is low among the majority of employees.

Figure 2.2: Distribution of Main Explanatory Variables



Note: Top 5 and bottom 5 agencies selected. Standardized distribution of variables shown.

Turning to public service motivation, the Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration both rate among the highest. Both are housed within the Department of Veterans Affairs, and VHA had among the lowest overall understanding of internal oversight. Also, among the agencies with the highest levels of

public service motivation is the Social Security Administration and Federal Emergency Management Agency. Agencies with lowest levels of PSM include the Bureau of the Census and Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unlike employees understanding of internal oversight processes, the distributions for the highest and lowest agencies are relatively similar. At both ends, the median still concentrates around zero even if the spread is greater for the agencies with the lowest average levels of PSM.

Control Variables

Along with the primary explanatory variables, I recognize that there are other factors that may confound the expected relationships. First, I control for survey respondent's perceptions of agency performance. If employees think their agency is performing well, then they may be less likely to observe wrongdoing. Moreover, there may be fewer actual opportunities to observe problems. Performance is measured using two questions that are summed together capturing perceptions of delivering quality services and whether the respondent believes her agency is successful at achieving its missions. Second, I account for perceived agency fit. Civil servants who do not necessarily fit with their agency, may be more critical and therefore more likely to observe wrongdoing. This variable is measured by summing three questions. The questions used in both of these variables are reported in Table 2.1.²

² To assess the implicit unidimensionality in summated rating scales, I perform a singular value decomposition with each composite measure to ensure that there is only one meaningful dimension among the set of questions. For each measure, one dimension captures the vast majority of the variance.

Table 2.1: Summary Statistics and Variable Questions

Variable	Survey Question(s)/Source	Mean	SD
All Wrongdoing	During the last 12 months, did you personally observe or obtain direct evidence of one or more illegal or wasteful activities involving your agency?	0.10	0.30
Illegal Activity	The respondent indicated he or she personally observed: (1) stealing federal funds, (2) stealing federal property, (3) accepting bribes or kickbacks, (4) use of an official position for personal benefit, (5) unfair advantage in the selection of a contractor, consultant, or vendor, or (6) other serious violation of law or regulation.	0.04	0.19
Wasteful Activity	The respondent indicated he or she personally observed: (1) waste caused by ineligible people receiving funds goods, or services, (2) waste caused by deficient goods or services, or (3) waste caused by a badly managed program.	0.06	0.23
Internal Oversight Understanding $\alpha = 0.62$	(1) My agency has educated me about the purpose of the Office of the Inspector General (2) To what extent do you understand the role of each of the following organizations when it comes to responding to reports of wrongdoing? (3) If you were to report wrongdoing to one of the following organizations, to what extent do you believe the organization would give careful consideration to your allegations?	3.38	2.21
Public Service Motivation $\alpha = 0.77$	(1) Meaningful public service is important to me (2) I am not afraid to go to bat for the rights of others even if it means I will be ridiculed (3) I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of the agency (4) I am often reminded by daily events about how dependent we are on one another (5) Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements (6) Important job factor: being able to serve the public	18.04	3.48
Agency Performance $\alpha = 0.67$	(1) My agency produces high-quality products and services (2) My agency is successful in accomplishing its mission	8.24	1.44
Agency fit $\alpha = 0.78$	(1) The work I do is meaningful to me (2) My job makes good use of my skills and abilities (3) I would recommend my agency as a place to work	12.11	2.40
Supervisor	Supervisor (coded in survey)	0.34	0.47
Tenure	How many years have you been a Federal civil service employee?	5.78	2.71
Minority	(1) Are you Hispanic or Latino? (2) Racial category or categories in which you belong?	0.30	0.46
Union Member	Are you a dues-paying member of a union?	0.14	0.34
Education	What is your current education level?	4.74	1.47
<i>Agency-level Covariates</i>			
Agency Employees	OPM employment data (natural log)	9.96	1.51
Politicization	Ratio of non-career SES, limited-term SES, PAS, and Schedule C appointees to career SES; OPM employment data	0.44	1.08
President-Agency Ideology Mismatch	Conservative agency (1); liberal and moderate agency (0); agency ideology coded from Clinton and Lewis (2008)	0.48	0.50
Professionals	Proportion of employees identified as professionals; OPM employment data	0.24	0.20

Note: Agency-level covariates are from sources outside the 2010 MPS and matched at the subagency level in all cases except where impossible (e.g., Defense, State, Education, Energy, and HUD). Questions used to construct each index are measured in the survey instrument using two ordinal scales: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree; and (1) not at all, (2) little extent, (3) some extent, (4) great extent.

Additionally, I include a series of demographic characteristics. First, I control for respondents' minority status, union membership status, and education level. Minority employees may perceive problematic behavior at higher rates due to discrimination issues. More education may increase the likelihood of observing wrongdoing due to greater potential knowledge of what would be considered a problem.

Tenure is also an important consideration. For employees with an organization for an extended period of time, problems take more effort to discontinue than to continue (Benson 1985). This normalization of adverse practices suggests that civil servants with greater tenure are less likely to recognize wrongdoing because activities agency problems can become normalized in the organizational culture (Ashforth and Anand 2003; Caproni and Finley 1997). Alternatively, newly hired civil servants may not have enough contextual knowledge of their agency to identify problems. Simply put, they may not know what suboptimal performance, waste, or illegal activity look like. Training for a new job takes time and, in most cases, federal employees are not fully trained within their first year. As a result, despite being in a new environment, newer employees may lack an understanding of what constitutes problematic behavior and therefore be less likely to observe wrongdoing. Tenures is measured as the number of self-reported years with the federal government. The MPS does not distinguish between how long individuals have been with their current agency or simply with the federal government. Consequently, this measure may miss employees with a great amount of experience but are new to their current agency.

Next, I include employee's supervisory status using a binary indicator. Supervisors who oversee more complex tasks encounter a greater number of situations in

which to notice a problem. Their job further entails monitoring agency and personnel activity for inconsistencies, including waste and performance problems. Miceli et al. (2012) examine original survey data from a large military base with civilians and non-civilians. While this study was focused on whistleblowing, they did present descriptive evidence that supervisors are more likely to recognize wrongdoing across a host of categories. Greater involvement with the actions of the agency and coworkers provides more opportunity to observe corruption or waste. It is the intricacies of program implementation and adequate knowledge about services, or how an agency operates, that should civil servants below executives more likely to observe problems.

Along with control variables from the survey, I include agency-level covariates that may confound the expected relationships. First, I control for employment characteristics of each agency including the logged number of employees and proportion of professionals. Larger agencies may have more opportunities for problems, increasing the baseline probability for employees to observe them. The proportion of professional employees in an agency controls for the types of programs an agency is implementing. With more professionals, the agency is likely implementing more complex policies and therefore greater opportunities for waste.

Additionally, I control for the level of politicization. Presidents use political appointees to achieve policy goals and settle patronage bills, choosing them for their ideological similarities and expected loyalty (see Lewis 2008; Moe 1985). On average, appointees have fewer years of relevant public management experience, bureau-specific expertise, and stay in their position for fewer years than career civil servants. As a result, performance on a multitude of metrics suffers due to politicization and appointee-led

implementation (Fuenzalida and Riccucci 2019; Gallo and Lewis 2012; Gilmour and Lewis 2006; Krause, Lewis, and Douglas 2006; Lewis 2007, 2008; Miller 2015; Wood and Lewis 2017). Politicization is measured as the ratio of political appointees—politically-appointed senate confirmed (PAS), non-career senior executive service (SES), limited-term SES, and schedule C—to career SES. This measure captures the relative prevalence of appointed officials among the agency leadership. As politicization increases, so should the opportunities to observe wrongdoing, especially waste due to poor implementation.

The effects of politicization may be moderated by the general ideology of an agency's workforce. Presidents use appointees for political control purposes, prioritizing policy-relevant appointments in agencies that are perceived as ideologically distant (Lewis 2008; Moe 1985). An ideological mismatch between the president and agency could compound the effects of politicization. To code agency ideology, I use the Clinton and Lewis (2008) estimates based on an expert survey. I consider an agency conservative if the ideal point is positive and the 95% credible interval does not overlap zero. Similarly, I consider an agency liberal if the ideal point is negative and the 95% credible interval does not contain zero. An agency is considered moderate if the credible interval overlaps zero. An ideological mismatch is then coded as 1 (0 in other cases) if the agency is conservative because Obama was president at the time of the MPS. This indicator is then interacted with measure of politicization.

Methodology

In my approach, survey respondents are nested within agencies and all variables of interest are dichotomous. With these two observations in mind, I use Bayesian

hierarchical logit models to estimate the effects of internal oversight understanding and public service motivation on the probability of observing agency wrongdoing. With nested data, a hierarchical model is appropriate because it allows for dependencies among observations within each agency, resulting in inefficient estimates if between-group variance is not properly modeled (Goldstein 2011).³ Varying intercepts permit me to estimate a different baseline probability of observing wrongdoing for each agency. This effectively treats the latent amount of wrongdoing or propensity to identify it as different for every agency all while estimating a common effect for each independent variable. The Bayesian version of the hierarchical model is preferred because of the flexibility with binary outcomes and multiple agency-level predictors (Gelman and Hill 2007). Moreover, the Bayesian version is considerably less biased and more conservative than its MLE counterpart no matter the number of groups (Stegmueller 2013). The estimated models take the following form:

$$Y_i \sim \text{Bernoulli}(p_i) \quad \text{where,}$$

$$\text{logit}(p_i) = \beta_j + \Pi \mathbf{X}_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

$$\beta_j = \rho_j + \gamma \mathbf{Z}_j + u_j$$

where i indexes individual survey respondents and j indexes agencies. The Bernoulli response distribution is estimated with the logit link function. \mathbf{X} is a matrix of individual-level predictors, including the main explanatory variables and controls discussed above with corresponding coefficient vector Π . \mathbf{Z} , with coefficient vector γ , is a matrix

³ Explicitly modeling the structure of the data eliminates frequentist “nuisance” fixes such as clustering standard errors.

containing the agency-level covariates previously discussed that explain the varying intercepts, β_j , for each agency.

The priors for each parameter are sufficiently uninformative but centered around zero given the nature of the estimated model and standardization of variables:

$$\gamma \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1),$$

$$\Pi \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1),$$

$$\beta \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma) \quad \text{where,}$$

$$\sigma \sim \mathcal{C}(0, 1)$$

Each parameter is given a normal prior with a mean zero and standard deviation of one.

The varying intercepts are given the same normal prior. The standard deviation takes on a Cauchy distribution with a location centered at zero and scale parameter of one. Taken together, these priors will help the chains converge without influencing the explored parameter space.

Results

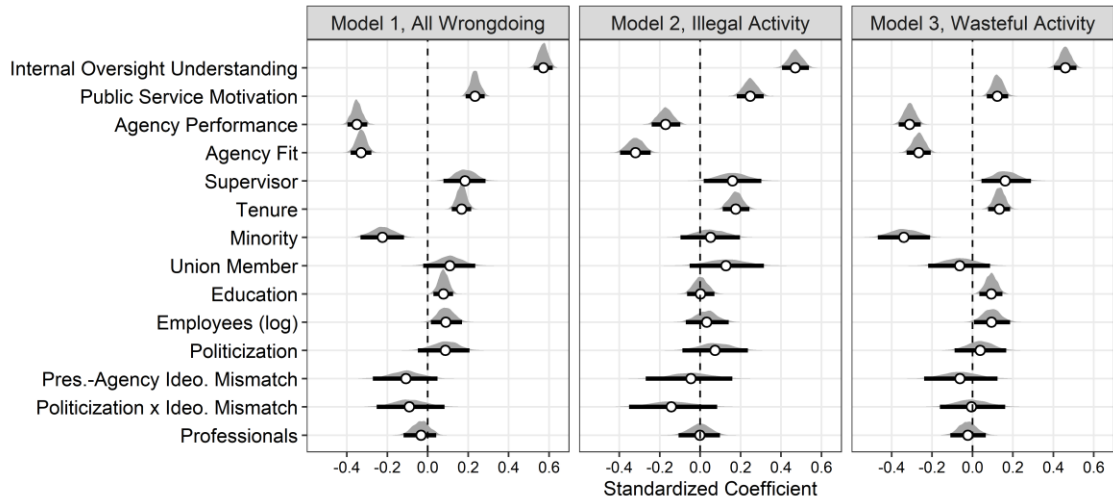
Figure 2.3 summarizes the relationship between oversight understanding, PSM, and the likelihood that bureaucrats reported identifying wrongdoing in their agency. Here I presented the standardized posterior means and credible intervals to improve readability and comparison between coefficients. The tables and credible intervals are shown in Appendix A. Variables with an estimate greater than zero are associated with an increased likelihood of identifying a problem while variables with an estimated effect less than zero are less likely to identify a problem. If the shown 95% credible interval

includes zero (shown as a dashed line), then the variable has no significant effect on identifying a problem.

Considering the variables of interest, it appears that both an enhanced understanding of oversight and public service motivation increase the likelihood of identifying wrongdoing. This effect holds across all three dependent variables, but both appear to have a larger effect when considering just waste. These initial results support my expectations.

Turning to the control variables, agency performance and agency fit are associated with a decreased probability of identifying wrongdoing. The same relationship holds for wasteful and illegal activity. Supervisors are more likely to identify a problem, which is consistent with the nature of their role. Minority employees are less likely to identify wrongdoing, an effect that seem driven by waste rather than wasteful activity. Additionally, education is positively associated with identifying wrongdoing, and this effect is again driven by waste rather than illegal activity. At the organization level, the size of the agency measured in (log) employees is positively associated with identifying wrongdoing. This relationship holds for the overall measure and waste but not illegal activity. The other organization-level controls do not appear to influence the likelihood that bureaucrats report identifying a problem.

Figure 2.3: Posterior Means and Densities of the Probability of Identifying Wrongdoing, Illegal Activity, and Wasteful Activity



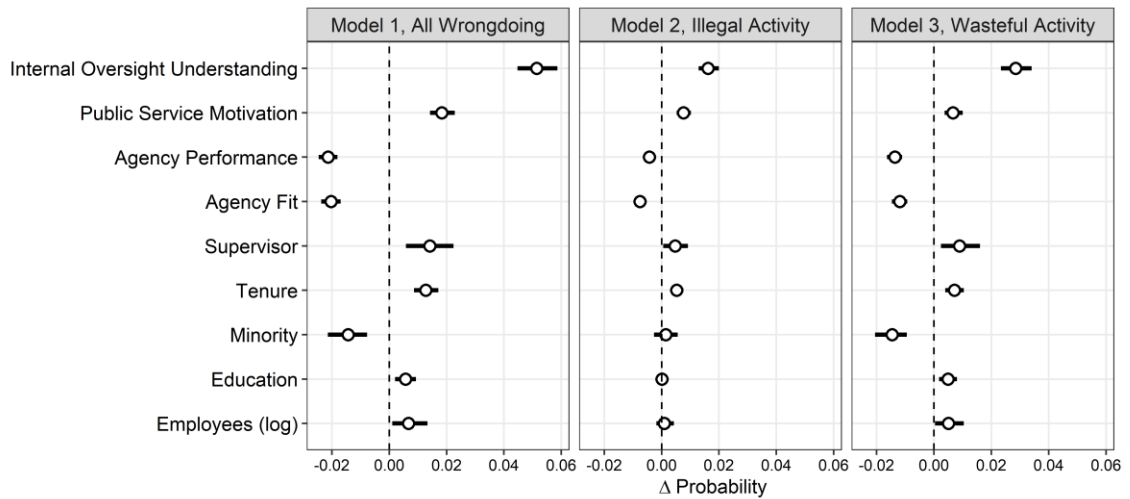
Note: Hierarchical logit estimates with random intercepts for each agency. Standard deviation of intercepts and mean of grand intercept excluded. 95% credible intervals and posterior densities shown.

To gain a better understanding of the substantive impact of each variable, I estimate first differences or the change in probability of identifying wrongdoing. The effect of statistically significant variables is shown in Figure 2.4. Binary variables are changed from 0 to 1 and continuous variables are changed from their mean to one standard deviation over the mean to ensure that each is comparable as possible. All other variables are held at their mean (continuous) or modal value (binary). Although each agency has a different baseline probability, I show the average effect for each variable.

A one standard deviation increase in *Internal Oversight Understanding*, increase the probability of identifying wrongdoing by 5 percentage points. Considering the baseline probability of 10.5%, this effect is rather substantial with an overall increase of nearly 48%. This effect is smaller for illegal activity at just under 2 percentage points compared to a baseline probability of 4.1%. For waste, the change was 3 percentage points over the baseline probability of 6.7%. In context of the other variables, the effect

understanding internal oversight mechanisms appears to be the largest, highlighting the important of education and trust in internal oversight mechanisms. PSM has a similar positive effect with a one standard deviation increase leading to a 2-percentage point increase in the probability of identifying wrongdoing or a 19% percent increase over the baseline. This effect is less than half for both illegal activity and waste at a less than 1 percentage point increase.

Figure 2.4: Change in Probability for Identifying Wrongdoing, Illegal Activity, and Waste



Note: 95% credible intervals shown. Controls held at their mean (continuous) or modal (dichotomous) values.

While the focus in the chapter was on knowledge and understanding of internal oversight mechanisms and public service motivation in enhancing bureaucrat’s awareness of agency problems, the substantive significance of a few controls is worth noting. Both perceived agency performance and fit have the expected negative effect on the probability of identifying wrongdoing. When considering wrongdoing overall, a one standard deviation increase in each measure decreases the probability of identifying wrongdoing 2 percentage points. For illegal activity, this effect is reduced to less than 1 percentage point for both. The effect is slightly less than 2 percentage points for wasteful

activity. Another significant finding is that supervisors are about 1.5 percentage points more likely to indicate they observed wrongdoing. This result highlights the role of supervisors as an internal check.

At the agency level, the size of the agency measured as the logged number of employees appears to have a significant effect. For both all wrongdoing and wasteful activity, a one standard deviation increase in employees increases the probability by a little less than 1 percentage point. This effect appears to be driven primarily by waste, a finding that should not come as a surprise. Public choice theorists point to the potential performance and coordination benefits that can come from fragmentation of bureaucracies (Boyne 1998). Larger agencies, therefore, may simply be more wasteful, increasing the probability of bureaucrats identifying these potential problems.

Extension: Internal vs. External Oversight Trust

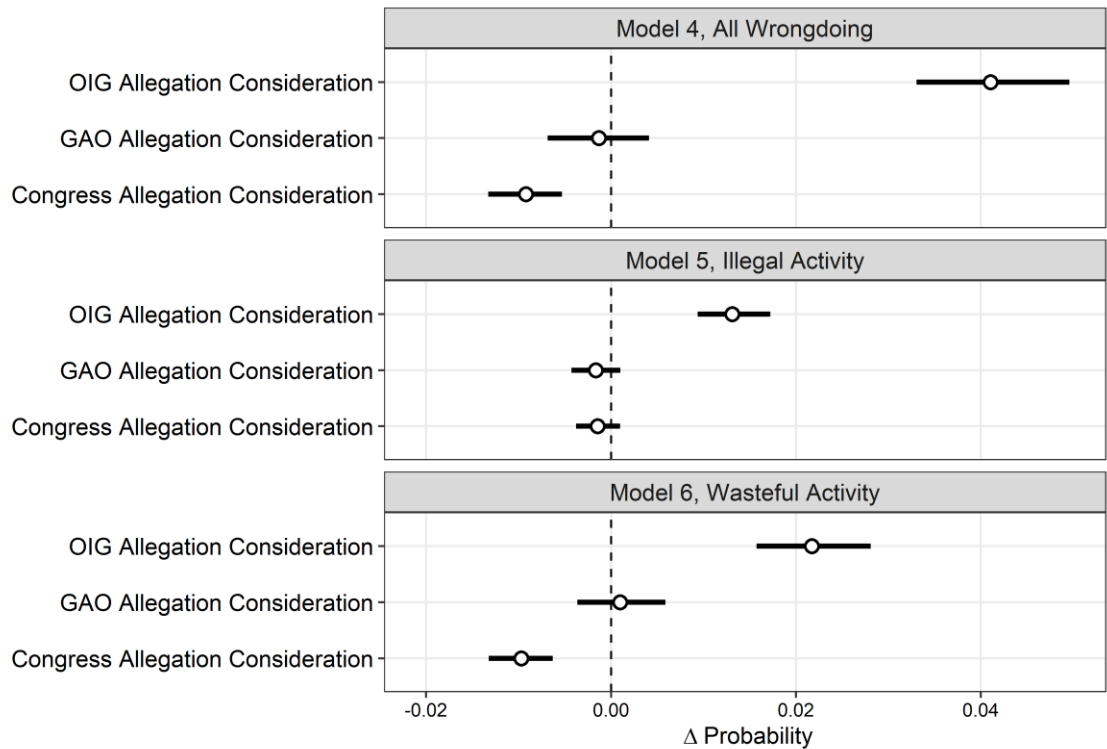
One goal of this chapter was to highlight how bureaucrats' understanding of internal oversight mechanisms can enhance their vigilance. In doing so, my theoretical and empirical treatment focused on inspectors general who are the most direct internal oversight mechanisms bureaucrats receiving training about and from. IGs are just one of many oversight mechanisms inside and outside government agencies. Here, I test the competing role of IGs, an internal mechanism, against two other central, external overseers: Government Accountability Office (GAO) and Congress. GAO works at the direction of Congress to oversee the executive branch, and Congress has a Constitutional prerogative to investigate executive agencies. As such, both have direct connections to bureaucrats like IGs in that they serve as reporting outlets. Unlike IGs, they are outside of agencies and therefore do not work as closely with agency employees. If understanding

internal mechanisms has a unique role, then trust in these mechanisms should increase the probability of identifying problems, holding trust in GAO and Congress constant.

To test the complementary or even competing role of these three institutions, I use the same empirical setup as the previous section. For comparability, I only use one question about inspectors general that also included GAO and Congress: “If you were to report wrongdoing to one of the following organizations, to what extent do you believe the organization would give careful consideration to your allegations?” Respondents could respond (1) not at all, (2) little extent, (3) some extent, or (4) great extent to this question for offices of the inspector general, GAO, and Congress.⁴ Focusing on this question is limiting because it does not capture employees overall understanding or perception stemming from each source. Rather, it focuses on how much trust bureaucrats put into each organization when it comes to responding to allegations of wrongdoing.

⁴ This question was used to construct the *Internal Oversight Understanding* index that served as a primary explanatory variable in the previous section.

Figure 2.5: Competing Effect of OIGs, GAO, and Congress on Identifying Wrongdoing



Note: 95% credible intervals shown.

Figure 2.5 shows the estimated change in probability of identifying wrongdoing, illegal activity, and waste using the same procedure for Figure 2.4. As shown, greater trust that the OIG will seriously consider allegations increases the probability of identifying wrongdoing by 4 percentage points with the effect being slightly smaller for illegal activity and waste. Perceptions of GAO appear to have no effect. This is probably because GAO is not a primary reporting outlet for bureaucrats, but bureaucrats do routinely assist in GAO investigations. The results for Congress are interesting because greater trust that the institution will seriously consider allegations decreases the probability of identifying wrongdoing. There is no effect for illegal activity, but when considering wrongdoing overall and waste, an increase in believing Congress will

seriously consider an allegation decrease the probability of identifying wrongdoing by a little less than 1 percentage point.

These findings highlight the importance of internal oversight mechanisms in enhancing the vigilance of bureaucrats. The two external bodies highlighted either had no effect of the opposite effect on the likelihood that a bureaucrat identifies wrongdoing.

Conclusion

What implications do these results hold for bureaucratic oversight? First, retaining employees with a higher probability of identifying problems may decrease additional wrongdoing. In experimental settings, high risk of detection is negatively associated with cheating (Hill and Kochendorfer 1969; Leming 1980). Applying this logic to identifying problems suggests that employees with a high propensity of finding the problems may be instrumental in reducing the overall number of prohibited acts committed in the bureaucracy. Consequently, they would need to be known within their work unit for their vigilance to decrease problems. Second, this chapter highlights internal and external oversight from a different perspective. Prior work has considered how internal mechanism like IGs improve agency performance and save money but has not how an understanding of their role influences bureaucrats. Indeed, this chapter shows how improving an understanding of internal oversight mechanisms and trust in their process increases the likelihood that bureaucrats will report identifying problems.

Moreover, this research further underscores the recommendations by Houston (2006) and in the meta-analysis by Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann (2016) that public organizations should consider applicant's degree of public service motivation in the hiring process. These individuals are more likely to identify agency problems, and prior

research indicates that they are more likely to report them (Brewer and Selden 1998; Caillier 2017; Cho and Song 2015). Identifying and reporting are important steps in addressing organization problems that can then improve service delivery and ultimately enhance democratic accountability. My findings also help answer the “so what” question of some PSM critics. Evidence presented here and elsewhere indicate that employees with the public service ethic are vigilant servants with an eye towards rooting out problematic practices.

These findings also join recent proposals to take some of the partisanship out of oversight and rely on other entities like inspectors general and the Government Accountability Office (Smith and Wehbe 2018; Pardue 2019). Some argue that delegating oversight authority to civil servants in these offices will improve its quality and therefore effectiveness. My findings would suggest that practitioners also rely on individual bureaucrats for less-partisan oversight. Indeed, bureaucrats are on the frontline and supporting them, enhancing their knowledge of internal oversight mechanisms, and fostering higher levels of public service motivation has the potential to improve internal monitoring of agency problems.

Chapter 3

Diversity in OIG Monitoring: The Role of Structure, Resources, and Political Environment

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how federal Offices of Inspectors General (OIG) monitor government agencies with a specific focus on diversity in the issues they consider.

Whereas the previous chapter examined the role of individual bureaucrats and what makes them more likely to identify problems, this chapter looks at organizational-level monitoring agendas. My focus is on the diversity of issues OIGs consider, but I also provide a descriptive account of the types of issues that form their monitoring agenda.

Elected officials reformed monitoring in of the executive branch in the 20th century as it became larger and took on additional responsibilities. One of these changes was the introduction of inspectors general in the late 1970s who are tasked with rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse. These offices cover nearly every corner of the executive branch and exist independent from the agencies they monitor. Their job is to keep Congress, the president, and agency leadership informed about the actions their agencies do and do not take. As politicians want bureaucrats to make decisions consistent with

their preferences and seek to have their programs be effectively implemented, they turn to OIGs for information to evaluate these goals.

Government programs routinely face implementation problems—delays or disruption to the desired outcome of a policy that arise due to poor design, client or bureaucratic malfeasance, ineptitude, or suboptimal allocation of resources—like backlogs in social assistance programs or issues with the rollout of Healthcare.gov cost taxpayers money and undermine the effectiveness of policies. Routine implementation is often successful, but problems are common and seemingly inevitable (Adler and Wilkerson 2013; Barrett 2004; Pressman and Wildavsky 1984). OIGs are one of several tools within the executive branch designed to detect these problems so that decisionmakers can find a remedy and hold those responsible accountable. Yet, existing literature on government oversight generally rarely considers the role of inspectors general, and currently literature on inspectors general does not examine the content of their monitoring agendas (Kempf 2020; Kempf and Cabrera 2019; Light 1993, 2014).

In this chapter, I fill a gap in existing literature on government oversight and problem monitoring in the executive branch by considering the role of Offices of Inspectors General and the breadth of their monitoring agendas. Understanding the breadth or diversity in OIGs monitoring agenda is important for several reasons. First, who and what they pay attention to has down-stream information effects on decisionmakers. Elected officials and agency heads rely on OIGs and other institutions for information. Low diversity in OIG monitoring can be problematic for decisionmakers. Some problems will never be highlighted and therefore never addressed, creating potential performance and accountability deficits. Similarly, casting a wide net on issues

in government agencies ensures that decisionmakers are fully informed and have complete understanding of what does and does not work in government agencies. Second, OIGs focused on a smaller number of issues are not fulfilling their statutory obligations. Finally, focusing on a small number of issues could contribute to goal displacement, or prioritizing some goals at the expense of others. When a small number of issues are highlighted, agencies only have an incentive to address those that are perceived as a problem, which may have adverse effects for other goals.

I argue that diversity in the problems and issues they monitor is a product of how their office is structured, available resources, and political environment in which they operate. For my purposes, the important question is not how many reports OIGs produce (i.e., how much oversight is occurring), but how structure, resources, and the political environment influence how inspectors general allocate attention to problems facing agencies and society.

To test the effects of structure, resources, and politics, I created a new dataset of nearly 40,000 OIG reports from 49 offices that I code into 127 issue areas with 21 major topics. From these reports, I first describe what issues OIGs allocate most of their attention to, noting that performance management, auditing and finances, and budget and spending make up more than 60% of all space allocated in a given year. Next, I create a measure of OIG monitoring agenda diversity and demonstrate that resources and the political environment but not structure influence the breadth of their agenda.

Offices of Inspectors General

Offices of Inspectors General rarely make the headlines unless they uncover egregious acts of malfeasance in the agencies they monitor. Recent examples include poor sanitary conditions in Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facilities (Davidson 2019), the Department of Justice's OIG review of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's investigation into President Donald Trump's alleged ties with Russia during the 2016 election (Gerstein 2019), and the Department of Defense's use of cancer-linked chemicals that leaked into water supplies near military bases (Beitsch 2020). Cases like these represent only a handful of the collective thousands of OIG reports released every year that do not garner media attention but are meaningful, nonetheless.

Currently, there are 74 Offices of Inspectors General, covering nearly all corners of the federal government. The first 12 offices were established under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (IG Act), and the idea proved to be so popular that the number of offices more than doubled in 1988 and further expanded to 74 with subsequent amendments. Establishing IGs was neither a quick process nor one without opposition. Congressional hearings in the 1960s emphasized the need for independent investigators across the government, bringing together disparate audit and investigatory units (Light 1993, 1995; Gianni 2003). But it was not until scandals in the Department of Agriculture and former Department of Health, Education, and Welfare that the IG Act was passed. Today, OIGs are a central part of the government's oversight apparatus. Congress does perform oversight at its own initiative but often looks for help from its own experts at the Government Accountability Office or outside the legislative branch to OIGs, the Administrative Conference of the United States, or United States Office of Special

Counsel. Out of these entities, OIGs have the greatest discretion, employ the most civil servants, and produce the largest number of official reports.

OIGs have the statutory goal to combat “waste, fraud, and abuse” in government agencies. This is achieved through audits, investigations, and evaluations. These investigations are typically initiated by the office and performed without influence from agency leaders, the president, or Congress. IGs have a dual reporting requirement to keep agency heads and Congress “fully informed” about issues that arise in agencies or program deficiencies. In fulfilling their mission, they primarily gather, generate, and disseminate information to those with authority to enact change. Put another way, OIGs emphasize monitoring. They look but do not act. Rather than taking action on an identified problem, the goal of OIGs is to produce authoritative, independent information (Light 1993).

Existing indicators suggest that OIGs have had a positive impact on improving efficiency and enhancing accountability. In 2017, OIGs issued nearly 4,000 reports, processed over half a million hotline complaints, and successfully prosecuted over 4,000 people.⁵ OIGs are also cited as an important cost saving mechanism for the federal government, with offices routinely emphasizing their return on investment in press releases and semiannual reports to Congress (Hudak and Wallack 2015). In short, they hold a central role in ensuring good governance and performing oversight tasks the president and Congress do not have the capacity to do on their own.

⁵ Numbers taken from CIGIE’s annual report to the president and Congress: https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/cigie-reports/FY17_Annual_Report_to_the_President_and_Congress.pdf

Not only are OIGs important sources of oversight, accountability, and reliable information, how they are embedded into government agencies makes them an ideal component of the government oversight apparatus to study. OIGs, unlike similar bodies, are quasi-independent from the agency they investigate, the president, and Congress, and IGs are given discretion in how to structure their offices, where to allocate resources, and how to respond to changing political landscapes. Additionally, their mission of combating waste, fraud, and abuse is consistent across offices with only minor variations in authority.

Diversity in Monitoring

Bureaucratic organizations and OIGs in particular do not have the capacity, resources, or incentive to investigate all issues encountered during agency policymaking and program implementation. Given these general limitations, the amount of attention (if any) given to any number of defined or undefined issues will always be limited (Baumgartner and Jones 2015; Jones 2001; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Jones, Sulkin, and Larsen 2003; March and Simon 1958). With these limitations in mind, I develop a theory based around organization structure, resources, and the political environment to explain the size of auditing organizations' monitoring agenda.

Organization Structure

Offices of Inspectors General vary in their organizational structure. The variations in structure are rooted in both statute and the inspector's general discretion. That is, Congress determines some features of the offices while IGs have some latitude in how they organize their office. Structure is an important characteristic to consider for understanding the output of bureaucratic organizations (Rourke 1984; Simon 1957;

Thompson 1967). Existing research emphasizes how the organization of the executive branch and agencies influences political control and responsiveness to political principals (Bækgaard 2011; Lowande 2019; McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1989; Moe 1989; Selin 2015), performance (Krause and Douglas 2005; Lewis 2003), and policymaking (Egeberg 1999; Potter 2019; Whitford 2002, 2006). For my purposes, I consider two structural features of OIGs theoretically linked to how they allocate their monitoring attention. The first is whether the inspector general, the leader of the office, is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate (PAS) or appointed by an agency head (DFE). This structural feature is set in statute. The second is the physical organization of the offices with an emphasis on the number of different sub-offices or work units comprising an OIG. This structural feature is left to the discretion of the inspector general.

Appointment Structure

Politics are baked into the structure of OIGs with some appointed by the president and confirmed by the senate while others are appointed by agency heads. This is as much a political as it is a structural choice, and this variation in agency structure should influence how OIGs allocate monitoring attention. Scholarship on appointments generally decries the negative effects of politicization—increasing the number and influence of politically appointed personnel (see Lewis 2008; Moe 1985; Resh 2015)—on agency performance, morale, and capacity through careerist turnover (e.g., Fuenzalida and Riccucci 2019; Gallo and Lewis 2012; Gilmour and Lewis 2006; Haglund 2015; Krause, Lewis, and Douglas 2006; Lewis 2008; Miller 2015; Wood and Lewis 2017). The appointments literature, while theoretically and empirically rich, treats all appointees the same. OIGs,

unlike a department secretary, are not chosen for political reasons and serve an oversight role that the president and Congress stand to benefit from. As Light (1993) explains, “OIGs are one of the very few places left in government where politicization remains at bay and a strong civil service ethic and career path remains in place” (234). To this end, I treat OIGs and similar appointees (e.g., the Comptroller General of the Government Accountability Office) as theoretically distinct than appointees serving in a policy-determining role.

I argue that two mechanisms drive an expected difference in monitoring breadth between presidentially appointed IGs and agency appointed IGs: (1) selection of quality IGs and (2) buffering from agency leadership. First, the appointment process grants both the president and Congress a direct hand in the selection process, leading to more qualified leaders at the top of the OIG structure (Chang 2001).⁶ Traditional studies of political appointees suggest that presidents prefer loyalty over competence (Krause and O’Connell 2016; Lewis 2008; Moe 1985). However, IGs are a qualitatively distinct type of appointee where both the president and Congress stand to benefit from higher competence. Congress uses information from OIGs to assess the performance of executive branch agencies and passively detect problems in program implementation and issues facing the public. Equally, the president relies on information from OIGs to understand performance of agencies he is responsible for managing. The president can use the information from OIGs to signal what needs to be fixed to decisionmakers

⁶ With the exception of the United States Postal Service and US Capitol Police IGs, all IGs may serve indefinitely. Appointees in other areas of the government are typically filtered out when a new president takes office (see Moe 1984; Lewis 2008), but IGs typically maintain their position.

throughout the administrative state. Through the appointments process, the president is inclined to nominate quality IGs because (1) the president benefits from their expertise and (2) Congress is less likely to confirm a nominee who may not produce diverse, quality work they need to monitor the executive branch. The end result is a more qualified IG that I expect to be able to monitor a greater diversity of issues.

Second, presidentially appointed IGs enjoy greater independence from the agency leadership they are expected to monitor. The IG Act and subsequent amendments guarantee de facto independence from agency leadership concerning what issues they investigate (5a U.S. Code § 3).⁷ Current statute prohibits agency leadership from influencing who or what they investigate or audit, but this legal barrier does not mean IGs are immune from agency influence. However, IGs in designated federal entities where they are appointed by agency heads or multi-member boards rather than the president may feel more loyalty towards the agency they investigate. Controlling for a number of factors that influence the number of audits and investigations OIGs complete, Kempf and Cabrera (2019) find that IGs appointed by agency heads produce fewer reports compared to presidentially appointed IGs. They argue that agency heads are better able to influence OIG oversight when they are in DFEs because of the IG's loyalty to the agency. Agency heads may pressure IGs to not pursue some investigations because they may be critical of

⁷ The statute states, "Each Inspector General shall report to and be under the general supervision of the head of the establishment involved or, to the extent such authority is delegated, the officer next in rank below such head, but shall not report to, or be subject to supervision by, any other officer of such establishment. Neither the head of the establishment nor the officer next in rank below such head shall prevent or prohibit the Inspector General from initiating, carrying out, or completing any audit or investigation, or from issuing any subpoena during the course of any audit or investigation."

the agency, leaving the door open for oversight from Congress, potential budget cuts, or threats to autonomy.

Taken together, I expect OIGs led by a presidentially appointed IG to monitor a more diverse set of issues compared to agency appointed IGs. These IGs are both put through a more rigorous selection process and less susceptible to influence from agency heads. As a result, they are both able and more willing to pursue a diverse set of investigations.

Office Organization and Specialization

In addition to the political structure of OIGs, how they are physically organized should influence how the offices allocate attention. Basic cognitive limitations prevent organizations from maximizing specialization, supervision, and control (Jones 2001; Jones, Sulkin, and Larsen 2003; March and Simon 1958). Therefore, the attention to any given issue will always be limited (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Despite these cognitive limitations, organizations can shape their structure in such a way to minimize the effects of a narrow span of attention. In the case of OIGs, the inspector general has discretion to organize their offices to best suit their needs as long as they fulfill their statutory obligations. An important aspect of structuring their offices is dividing units. By dividing units, IGs can compartmentalize and refocus tasks, changing how they allocation attention to issues they confront. For example, Peggy E. Gustafson, the inspector general for the Small Business Administration from 2009 through 2017, added an additional field office in Charleston, SC shortly after taking lead of the office.

Why do more units within an organization diversify attention? Baumgartner and Jones (2015) argue that when organizations (Congress in their study) sub-divide,

members of those units can build area-specific expertise. This expertise enables them to focus their attention on issues a broader group may not be able to. In sub-dividing the units, organizations create specialization through design that can enhance administrative efficiency (Simon 1946). In doing so, organizations can reduce transaction and coordination costs. Each unit has a specialized task and can therefore process information more efficiently, resulting in greater agenda diversity. Take two organizations for example both with a central leader, the same mission, and resources. Organization *A* includes all employees in one unit, while organization *B* is structured into three. Organization *A* will struggle to allocate attention beyond what leadership desires. Organization *B*, on the other hand, works around three pre-defined areas and as a result will necessarily allocate attention differently. Not only does organization *B* have specialized units, the tasks within each unit are better defined and members of the units can coordinate towards a common goal. This is more difficult in organization *A*.

Some argue, however, that specialization can be detrimental to organizations because multiple units can be inefficient and lead to unnecessary redundancy. Adams and Balfour (2014) argue that specialization can be detrimental to organizations because bureaucrats' focus becomes narrow. With narrow attention, they are unable to identify new problems. Yet in the case of OIGs, this sort of narrow attention through specialization is an asset. Dividing an organization into sub-units does not mean it is free from redundancies or overlaps. Some units will pursue similar issues because very few issue areas, especially concerning bureaucracy and public policy, are neatly defined. Landau (1969), however, contends that overlap is necessary for stability. Organizations, including OIGs, face a complex environment, and one way to handle the complexity is to

sub-divide units and create teams. These teams do not need perfect jurisdiction over an area because, as stated, issues they face are complex. Despite overlapping responsibilities among units in an organization, they are still likely to allocate attention to a greater variety of issues (Baumgartner and Jones 2015). How IGs structure their offices is not optimal, but I assume that they do so in such a way to minimize trade-offs between specialization, supervision, and prioritization (see Simon 1946).

Given the attention benefits associated with sub-dividing organizations into more units through specialization and building expertise, I expect OIGs with a greater number of units to monitor a more diverse set of issues.

Resources

In addition to structure, I also consider how resources should affect the number of issues OIGs can pay attention to. In this case, I consider financial, human, and leadership resources. Financial resources represent the funding OIGs possess to conduct investigations and build the technical and administrative capacity needed to fulfill their mission. Human resources include the staff OIGs can use to allocate to a multitude of evaluations. For leadership resources I focus on vacancies (or gaps in leadership) and inspector general experience, capturing the ability of IGs to direct their office.

Financial Resources

Financial resources are often tied to organization performance (see Boyne 2003 for an overview). Scholars argue that sufficient resources are necessary to build “administrative and technical capacity” in an organization to fulfill their mission (Fernandez and Rainey 2006; Lee and Whitford 2013, 694). For OIGs, financial resources can be used to support investigations, hire and retain quality staff, and maintain facilities and equipment to

support their work. For these reasons, I expect OIGs with more financial resources to have a more diverse monitoring agenda. With a smaller budget, OIGs are restricted in the number of issues they can investigate in a given year, while larger budgets can be allocated to more issues.

Human Resources

An important part of financial resources is human resources, or the number of full-time employees in an organization. Existing scholarship demonstrates that staff are associated with shorter regulatory reviews (Bolton, Potter, and Thrower 2016), number of regulations (Potter and Shipan 2019), and Food and Drug Administration drug approval review lengths (Carpenter et al. 2012). Staff in these cases help organizations absorb and process information and make additional decisions. An OIG with more staff does not have to decline investigations. This is not just about the volume of investigations more staff support, but the breadth of issues they can focus on. More staff allows employees to build expertise in certain areas and therefore confront a greater variety of issues. An OIG with few staff may not be able to do this and prefer to investigate a smaller, more familiar set of issues. For these reasons, I expect OIGs with more staff to monitor a more diverse set of issues.

Leadership

In addition to sufficient budgets and staff capacity, organizations need continuity in leadership to effectively pursue their goals (Behn 2009; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999). This is why scholars, elected officials, and the media decry vacancies in the federal bureaucracy. Considerable theoretical but limited empirical work suggests that vacancies are problematic for agency performance. Without confirmed leadership, OIGs—even

under the direction of an acting IG—lack political capital and authority, have an incentive to be risk averse, and less equipped to address emerging problems (O'Connell 2009; Mendelson 2015). During these times, we should expect them to keep audits and investigations focused on a narrow set of issues. Branching to additional topics may create tension with agency leadership that could impede future monitoring endeavors. A recent U.S. Government Accountability Office (2018) report indicated that OIGs working under an acting IG were concerned about strategic planning, budget discussion, and office independence. One employee stated, “An acting IG is a caretaker, someone internal who is expected to maintain the status quo. Therefore, having an acting IG in place for an extended period may have delayed the implementation of reforms or bold changes that would normally be expected from new leadership.” These concerns could be detrimental to how OIGs allocate attention, choosing to focus in on fewer issues.

Despite good theoretical reasons to expect vacancies to influence how OIGs allocate attention and therefore the breadth of their monitoring agenda, there may be no difference when the IG position is vacant. As mentioned, an acting IG will usually take the leadership position when a vacancy occurs. In essence, the acting official takes over the duties of the office without restrictions and becomes a leader by delegation (O'Connell 2020). With statutory defined goals, acting IGs have direction on what to pursue, meaning a leadership vacancy may not impede the breadth of their monitoring agenda.

The final resource I consider is leadership experience. Skilled leaders have been shown to enhance performance in public agencies (Boyne 2003; Brewer and Selden 2000; Meier et al. 2006; Rainey 2003). They are better at allocating resources, adapting

to new situations, and directing their staff. With more experience, IGs know how to confront recurring issues, leaving more time to investigate emerging issues. For these reasons, I expect more experienced IGs to investigate a more diverse set of issues.

Political Environment

Structure and resources are determined jointly by politicians and IGs to directly influence the offices. In addition to these two factors, OIGs should also be influenced by the political environment. Even quasi-independent offices like OIGs seek to maintain support from political principals and justify their continued existence. Being responsive to Congress and the president, therefore, may require adjusting how they allocate attention to a variety of issues. Traditional principal-agent models of bureaucratic responsiveness presume that elected officials design agencies in such a way that public employees will make decisions in line with their preferences. The empirical literature suggests that design and other instruments of control have varying levels of success in producing responsiveness to elected officials' preferences (e.g., Gailmard 2009; Hammond and Knott 1996; McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1989; Wood and Waterman 1991). OIGs have a distinct relationship with the president and Congress and are not always subject to traditional tools of political control. OIG budgets are relatively insulated, and Congress, the president, and agency heads have tied their hands from interference in their affairs. For example, IG Act guarantees noninterference in who or what they investigate. Yet, I expect OIGs to respond to signals in the political environment because they care about their reputation and seek to maintain political support.

President-Congress Policy Divergence

The first aspect of the political environment that OIGs should be sensitive to are the relative policy preferences of Congress and the president. OIGs seek to be relevant with elected officials, which means providing information relevant to their policy concerns. When the policy preferences of these actors diverge, OIGs will broaden their monitoring agenda for two reasons. First, OIGs seek to maintain political support and relevance with Congress *and* the president. Disagreement among political principals sends a signal to OIGs about policy priorities. When the president and Congress are distant, their preferences and policy goals are likewise different. To support both, OIGs will focus on a greater variety of issues. While one principal may not be totally satisfied, both will have at least some degree of satisfaction because they are receiving reports covering a multitude of issues. This rationale assumes that inspectors general are *equally* responsive to both principals and care, more or less, about maintaining support from both. Some agencies can find “friends” from one side, but research suggests that they balance the wishes from both principals (Whitford 2005). Because my focus is on oversight offices, I expect increased diversity in monitoring agendas to attempt to maintain support from both. Focusing more on issues of interest to Congress as opposed to the president, puts OIGs at risk of losing support from the president. The president may turn elsewhere for information or not advocate for OIGs. Thus, OIGs have an incentive to match diverging preferences by increasing diversity in the issues they monitor.

Second, insights from literature on agency goals also suggests that OIGs will diversify their monitoring agenda when the preferences of the president and Congress diverge. Multiple principals often create political control problems (Clinton, Lewis, and

Selin 2014; Hammond and Knott 1996; Whitford 2005). As Moe (1984) writes, “Each principal is effectively in competition with the others in his efforts to exert control, while the bureau, on the receiving end of all this, must contend with uncoordinated and often conflicting demands, requirements, and incentives” (768). To balance the competing demands without explicit direction, organizations may increase goal ambiguity. In a study of 115 agencies goals, Lee, Rainey, and Chun (2009) find that increasing salience to political principals and competing demands leads to greater goal ambiguity. When principals disagree, OIGs lose some direction in what issues they need to focus on, increasing diversity in their monitoring agendas.

Oversight Interests Within Congress

The second aspect of the political environment OIGs need to pay attention to is the diversity of interests within Congress. While inspectors general enjoy discretion in the issues they investigate, they still seek to make an impact in Congress (Light 1993). That is, they want their reports cited in Congressional hearings and want to share their expertise as witnesses during these hearings. To be impactful, OIGs may decide to focus on a greater variety of issues as substantive interests within Congress becomes more heterogenous. When legislators are interested in different issues, OIGs have more opportunities to get their attention if they similarly broaden their monitoring activities. The electoral incentives of Congress also invite this kind of response. When an OIG releases a report on a particularly scandalous topic or routine cost savings, members of Congress can claim credit for their findings (Fiorina 1977; Mayhew 1974). Beginning in the 1970s, members of Congress moved away from party accomplishments to emphasizing individual accomplishments (Loomis 1988). Inspectors general are a way of

helping MCs highlight personal accomplishments. Even though OIGs would want to take credit for their findings, support in Congress is politically valuable as they seek to maintain political relevance, their autonomy, and reputation for expertise.

I expect OIGs to be sensitive to their political environment in two respects. First, when the policy preferences of the president and Congress diverge, OIGs should monitor a greater variety of issues to appease both principals. Second, as the substantive interests of Congress increases, OIGs should respond by increasing diversity in the monitoring agenda.

Inspector General Reports

To understand diversity in monitoring agendas, I collected all available reports from 49 inspectors general from 1994 to 2018.⁸ Many of the OIGs in the intelligence community do not publish their reports online and are therefore excluded by default. These offices include: Architect of the Capitol, Capitol Police, Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, National Reconnaissance Office, National Security Agency, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

Unlike prior studies (e.g., Feinstein 2018; Hudak and Wallack 2015; Kempf and Cabrera 2019; Light 1993), I focus on the actual reports rather than the semiannual report to Congress, providing a much richer picture of IG oversight. My approach moves beyond aggregated report counts, problematic cost-savings measures, and what Light (2014) calls “statistical body count” approaches to measuring OIG success (164). The

⁸ Although I have a limited number of reports from an additional 16 OIGs, I do not include them in the present analysis because their publishing is inconsistent, and websites are difficult to systematically scrape.

decentralized reporting and archive system for inspectors general investigations and audits poses a significant problem for accurately and efficiently gathering reports from every office. The Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) launched “Oversight.gov” in late 2017 to centralize the reports with all 71 OIGs that make their reports public participating at the end of 2019.⁹ While the creation of this site was a significant step in creating an accessible way for the public and researchers to retrieve reports, it does not contain the entire repository of reports available on individual OIG websites. As a result, I adapted semi-automated web scrapers that extracted all public reports from 49 OIG websites to create my sample. Going to each OIG website as opposed to “Oversight.gov” ensured that I collected everything the office accomplished over the last twenty years without being concerned that some information was not transferred over to the centralized website.

In total, I collected 39,259 reports spanning a varying number of years. The disparity in years is in part due to when the office was established, how far back IGs decided to post reports, and how the web scrapers interacted with the website.¹⁰ My semi-automated collection method was validated by manually counting reports from several OIG websites and matched exactly. Yearly counts also matched the counts reported in semiannual reports to Congress and in other sources (e.g., Kempf and Cabrera 2019).

⁹ Beyond some IGs not publishing their reports, some are still not published online. Groups are currently making an effort to gather these reports through Freedom of Information Act requests.

¹⁰ In some cases, my scrapers would stop interacting with an office’s website and pull a limited number of reports in more recent years. I tried to collect as many reports by hand but ultimately had to restrict some offices to 2014.

While OIGs were designed to independently investigate instances of waste, fraud, and abuse in government agencies, members of Congress still, from time to time, ask inspectors general to investigate problems. IGs can theoretically refuse to do an investigation or issue a report, but in practice these requests tend to be honored (Light 1993). Request from members of Congress are rare but will bias any estimates of agenda diversity because they could artificially inflate the size of an offices auditing and inspection agenda. For example, Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) requested the Social Security Administration OIG to investigate Stanley Thornton in 2011 for receiving Supplemental Security Income checks while living life as an “adult baby.” Thornton was ultimately cleared of any alleged abuse (Caulfield 2011). Fortunately, reports issued at Congress’s request are relatively easy to identify and removed from the presented counts and diversity measures. 489 out of the 39,259 reports were done at the direct request of a member of Congress and excluded. This number is likely smaller than the actual number of reports created because of a Congressional request, but without insider information they would be difficult to identify.

Publicly posted reports limit the picture of OIG’s monitoring agenda. Some investigations that resulted in criminal or civil prosecution are not posted in individual reports. Semi-annual reports to Congress include aggregated numbers of these activities, but I am unable to determine the content of such investigations. Therefore, the reports used in this analysis represent a public-facing monitoring agenda.

Despite some limitations, this new dataset of OIG reports represents a substantial descriptive advancement of the work performed by the IG community. To date, researcher relied on raw counts of activities and estimates of dollars saved to understand

OIGs (e.g., Feinstein 2018; Hudak and Wallack 2015; Kempf and Cabrera 2019; Light 1993), but these data will aid in creating a broader understanding of the substantive issues they examine and the breadth of their agenda.

Coding Report Contents

To code the content of the reports, I rely on structural topic modeling (STM) with manual verification. Structural topic models belong to a family of semiautomated machine learning algorithms developed for understanding latent traits in textual data. A basic topic model based on latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) treats every document (i.e., OIG reports) as a mixture of a number of user-defined “topics” or themes/issues and all of those topics as a mixture of key words. This approach bridges documents and therefore allows their content to be directly compared and grouped in a sensible manner. These models are popular for understanding political texts because they allow often complex texts to be reduced to a number of manageable dimensions. The structural topic model extends LDA models by including important information about the documents themselves such as the author and date, improving the accuracy and usefulness of the model (Roberts, Stewart, and Tingley 2014; Roberts et al. 2014). LDA only uses the frequency of words in each document, while STM incorporates document features that allow for better discrimination between issues.

The benefit and the drawback of a latent text approach to identifying issues, is that I allow the data to *mostly* speak for itself. I do not assume a specific number of issues or how they will cluster together. Letting the number and prevalence of topics come from the data, removes limitations associated with fitting reports into a predefined number of categories. Moreover, this STM allows me to estimate the prevalence of each issue in

every OIG report. Each report will generally focus on one primary issue but will often overlap with other areas. Take a report issued by the Social Security Administration in January of 2020 as an example.¹¹ The primary focus of the audit was the processing speed and accuracy of social security remittances, but the report also touched on waste related to unnecessary mailings, overpayments, and poor implementation of the Security Electron Remittance System.

Estimation of the STM is as follows:

- 1) Remove symbols, numbers, punctuation, and stop words (e.g., and, but, a, the, etc.)
- 2) Stem all words
- 3) Remove sparse words (words appearing very rarely)
- 4) Count the frequency of each word for every document
- 5) Create document term matrix
- 6) Randomly sample 5,000 reports to identify the optimal number of topics to estimate
- 7) Estimate full STM with optimal number of topics

Using the algorithm outlined by Lee and Mimno (2014), I find that 130 appears to be the optimal number of topics or issues across the IG reports. Using this as a fixed number of topics, I estimate the STM with all the text from the 39,000 reports and include the following document-level features: type of report (audit, evaluation, inspection, other), OIG issuing the report, agency investigated in the report (“multi” and “other” included), and the year the report was issued. After estimating the model, I examined the topics and words associated with them to ensure they were coherent. From my examination, I determined that three of the 130 topics were not meaningful because they included form

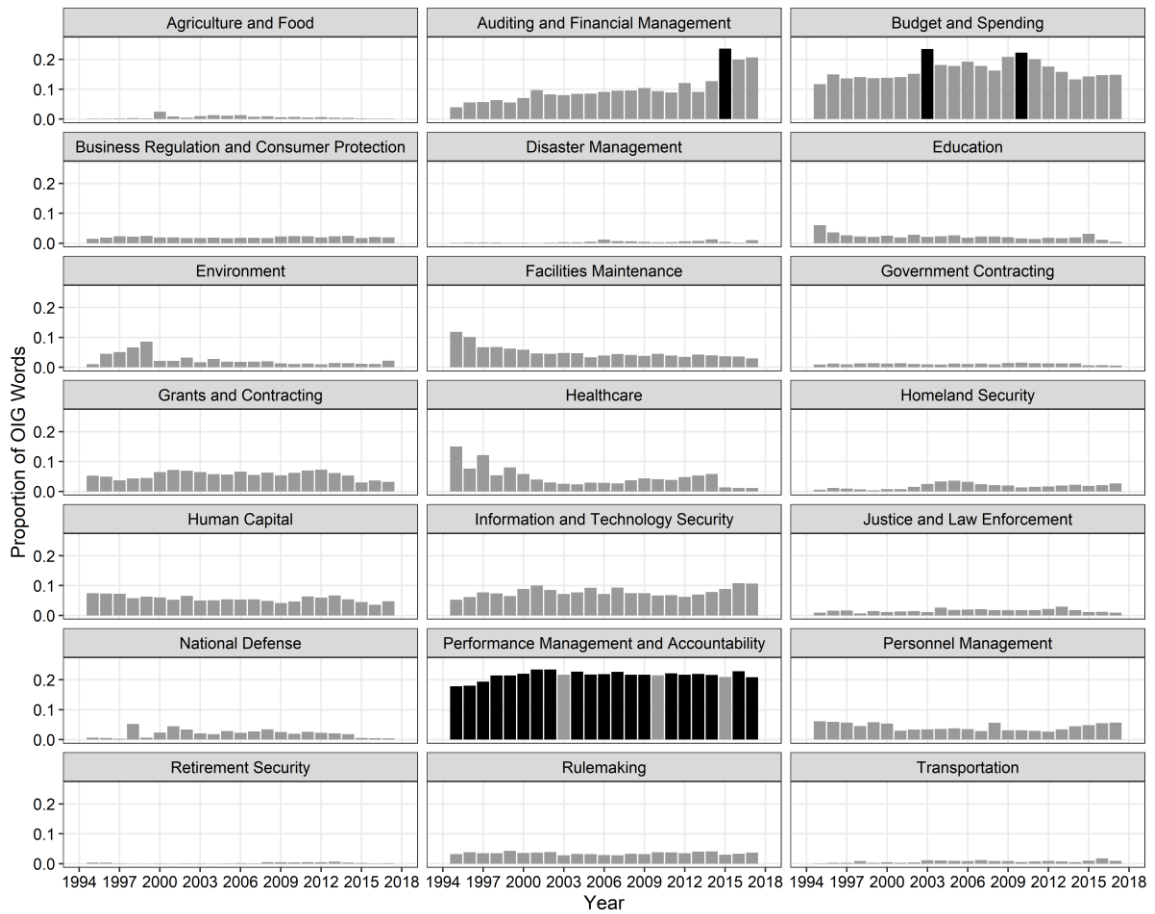
¹¹ The full report is available here: <https://oig.ssa.gov/audits-and-investigations/audit-reports/social-security-administrations-electronic-remittance-system>

language or were clusters of words leftover from cleaning the text (e.g., “www”). In total, every report represents a mixture of 127 different issues.

Next, I use the topic prevalence for each report to summarize the number of words dedicated to each issue in every report. I took the total number of words from each document and multiplied it by the topic prevalence to get the number of words dedicated to each topic in each report. The 127 issues were then grouped into 21 major issues to provide a broader overview of what topics OIGs dedicate the most information to. Figure 3.1 summarizes the proportion of words dedicated to each major topic in each year. The darker bars indicate that the issue had the greatest proportion of words dedicated to it during that year.

The first obvious pattern is the domination of monetary and performance issues with three categories forming around 60% of all words from the reports: Auditing and Financial Management, Budget and Spending, and Performance Management and Accountability. The central nature of these three categories should not be surprising. Waste, dollars saved, allocation of resources, and performance management issues are readily identifiable for OIGs. Moreover, this information is easy to communicate to Congress. The rise in importance of performance management and accountability related issues in the 1990s and stability from 2000 onwards reflects the changes to governing strategies associated with New Public Management. Indeed, “performance regimes” permeate many discussions of agency activities (Moynihan 2008).

Figure 3.1: Prevalence of Major Issues in OIG reports, 1994-2018



Note: 127 minor topics were grouped into the 21 major categories presented in this figure. The oversight area with the greatest proportion of words in a year is shown as the darkened bar.

The prevalence of the 21 major issues also appear to reflect changes in national priorities. For example, issues related to homeland security increased following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Healthcare was also prevalent in the early 1990s when the Clinton administration was discussion major reforms. It rose in popularity again after Obama’s election but dropped off quickly towards the end of his presidency in 2015. Disaster management, although representing a small proportion of OIG agendas, also follows national trends with a slight rise following Hurricane Katrina in 2003.

Monitoring Agenda Diversity

To identify diversity in the monitoring agenda, I sum the number of words dedicated to each issue by an OIG in every year so that my unit of analysis is the OIG-year. Dividing by the total number of words an OIG produces a year, leaves me with the proportion of words dedicated to the 127 topics. I construct a measure of monitoring agenda diversity for each OIG-year using the Blau index:

$$Blau = (1 - \sum_{i=1}^n p(x_i)^2)$$

For this measure, diversity is simply squared sum of proportion of words, $p(x_i)$, for each category. A number of scholars in public management research use this measure because it is easy to interpret and works well with categorical data, or the number of word in this situation (e.g., Choi and Rainey 2010; Pitts 2005; Pitts and Jarry 2009). This measure is theoretically bound between 0 and 1 and practically bound between 0.30 and 0.98. If an office focused on a single issue in one year then the score would be 0 whereas if they give equal attention to every category, the score would be 1. I find the Blau index for every IG year based on the 127 sub-issues and 21 major issues.

Agenda diversity is summarized in Figures 3.2 and 3.3. Figure 3.2 shows the breadth of agenda diversity for establishment OIGs, those with presidentially appointed inspectors. The solid line shows the measure with all 127 topics and the dashed lines shows diversity with the 21 major topics. Except for a few cases, the breadth of the

agenda is relatively stable, change by only a couple of points every year.¹² Indeed, the standard deviation of this measure is just 0.06. The average level of diversity in establishment OIG is 0.922 for all topics and 0.812 for major topics. One notable pattern is that agenda breadth does not appear to be affected by major national changes. Take the addition of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002. Over twenty different agencies were brought together to form this department, including moving some agencies from existing departments. Neither the Department of Justice nor Department of Energy appear to be affected by the change. The Department of Treasury could have been impacted, but my data do not precede the creation of DHS.

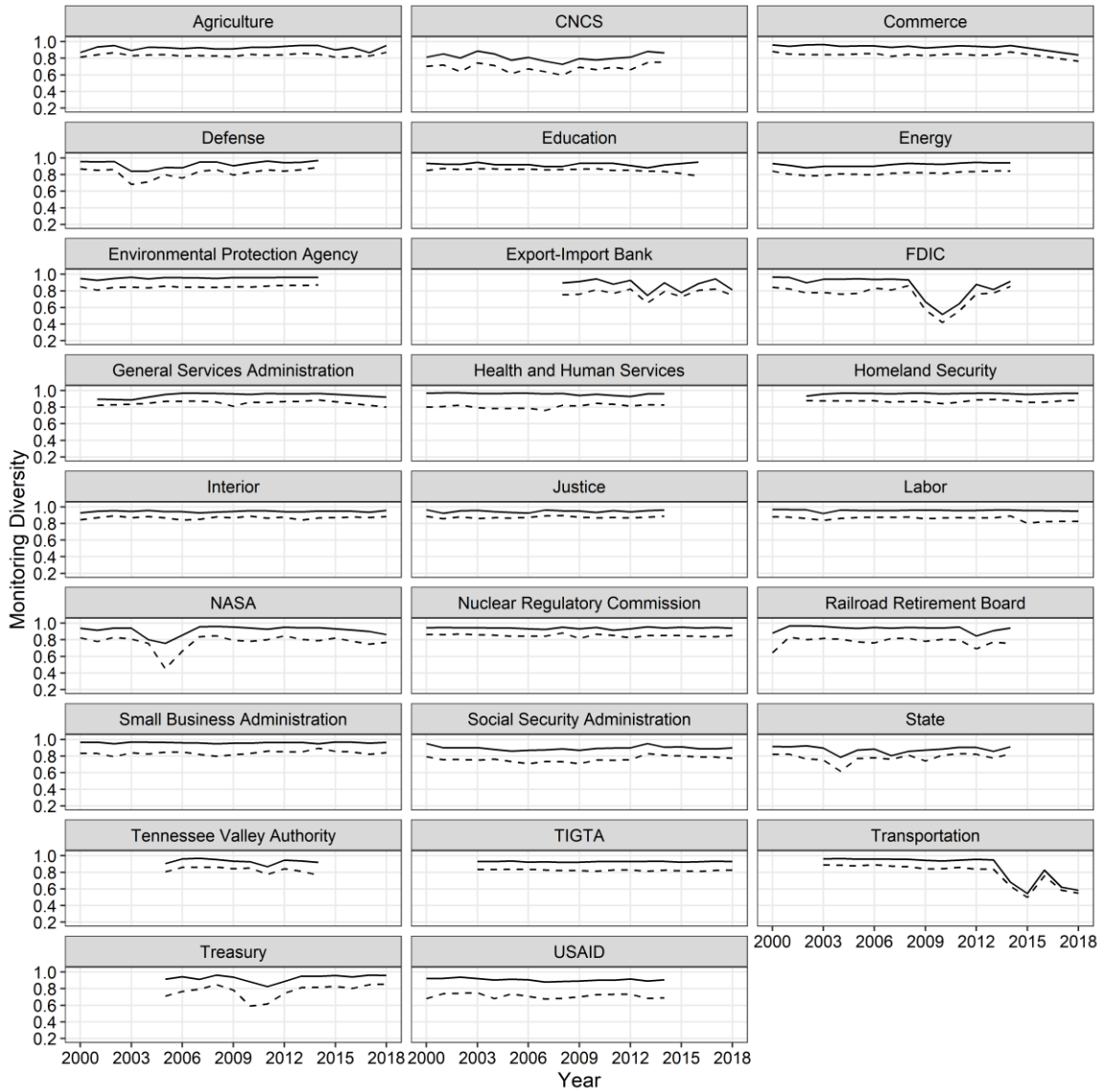
Figure 3.3 depicts agenda breadth over time for the OIGs in designated federal entities, those with IGs appointed by agency heads or a commission. Unlike diversity in the oversight agendas of establishment OIGs, DFE OIGs tend to have more varied monitoring over time. The standard deviation is slightly greater at 0.08 for this grouped compared to 0.06. Supporting one expectation, the average agenda diversity is also lower in the DFE OIGs at 0.905 for all issues and 0.785 for major issues. However, this results I purely descriptive and does not account for the size difference between the types of offices.

Overall, OIGs monitor a diverse set of issues given the high average value on the Blau index of 0.914. This suggests that OIGs connect a wide number of issues together in every year. Although an OIG like the one overseeing the Smithsonian Institution would appear to have a narrow set of responsibilities, they, like their colleagues, appear to

¹² Although the measures are stable, they are stationary according to the Levin-Lin-Chu test.

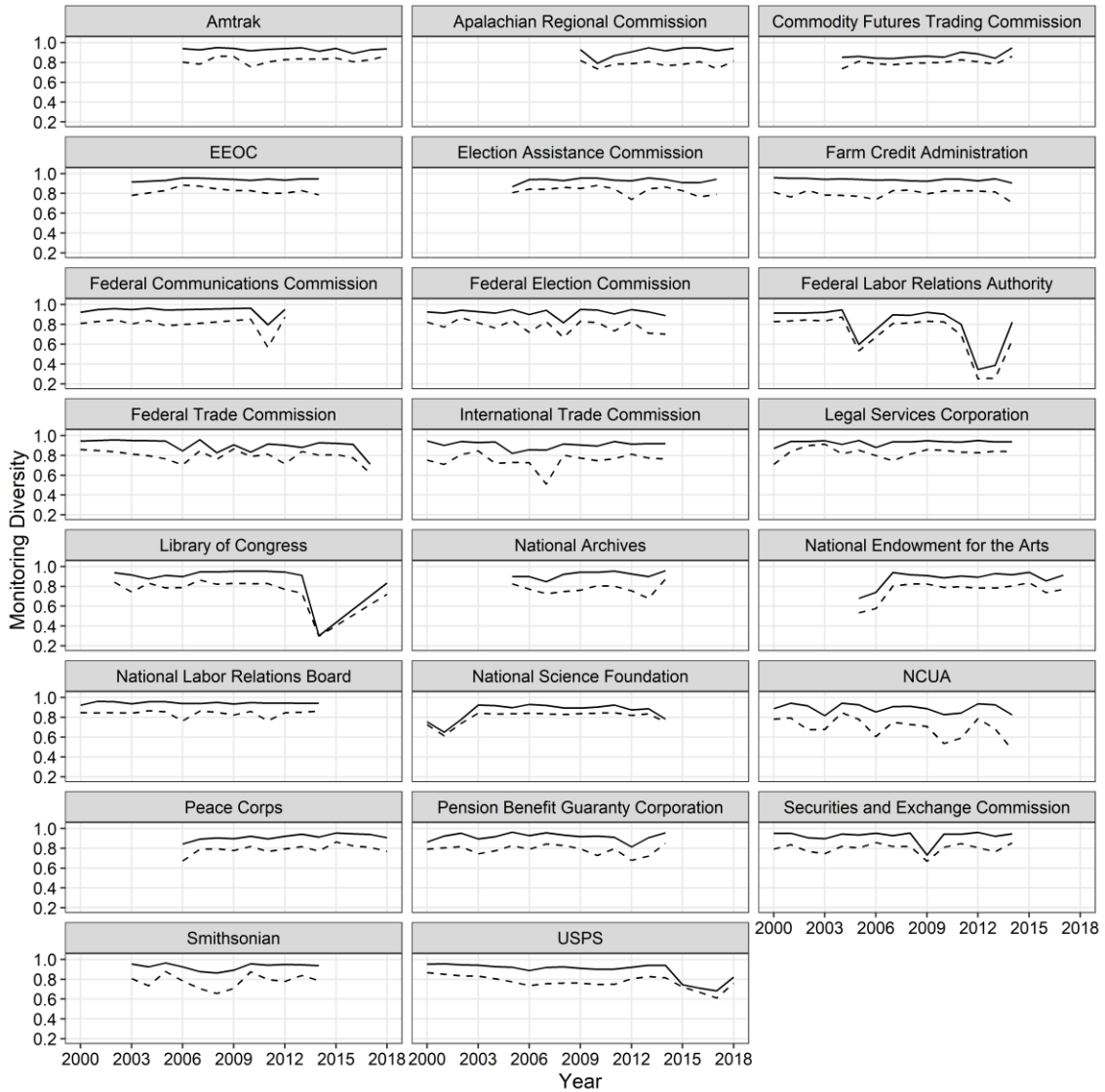
allocate their attention somewhat equally to a wide array of issues. The average level of diversity when considering major topics is slightly lower at 0.8. This is to be expected because categories have been combined.

Figure 3.2: OIG Monitoring Agenda Diversity, Establishment Offices



Note: All topic diversity shown as solid line and major topic diversity shown as dashed line.

Figure 3.3: OIG Monitoring Agenda Diversity, Designated Federal Entities



Note: All topic diversity shown as solid line and major topic diversity shown as dashed line.

Organization Structure

As I argued, I expect structure to influence diversity in OIG monitoring agendas. The structure of OIGs is determined in statute or by inspectors general. The first structural feature I consider is whether the IG is presidentially appointed (PAS). This is set in statute and includes the majority of OIGs located in cabinet departments. I create a simple indicator for OIGs with PAS IGs and those appointed by agency heads or

commissions. I do not differentiate between commission and agency head appointments because I have no theoretical reason to believe they would substantially differ.

The second half of structure, I consider is the physical organization of the office, which influences specialization. OIGs have statutory obligations to fulfill, but the IG Act and subsequent amendments give the IG discretion in how to organize their office. Some IGs may prefer a centralized office with few subdivisions or field offices to perform their work. Others may prefer further divisions to neatly demarcate duties and responsibility within the organization. I count the number of unique units and field offices within each OIG over time. These counts are based on organizational charts reported in semi-annual reports to Congress, in budget requests, or strategic planning documents. The number of unique units ranges from 1 in cases where there is just an IG or just an IG and an assistant to 85 in the case of the United States Postal Service OIG, containing many field offices. The average OIG consists of around 18 units. Field offices typically add the most to an OIG structures. For example, the Department of State has a large IG office but few field offices apart from a couple of international posts.

Resources

For OIG resources, I consider four variables outlined in the theory section: (1) budget, (2) staff, (3) vacancies, and (4) IG experience. The first two variables capture the raw materials OIGs have to allocate to numerous projects and initiate investigations. For both the budget and staff, I log the variables because they are skewed. Budget is counted in thousands of dollars, and staff includes all FTE individuals, even if they are support (such as administrative assistants) rather than audit or investigation staff.

I operationalize gaps in leadership with an indicator for whether the IG position was vacant for the majority of a given year. Some OIGs like the Export-Import Bank and Department of the Interior had particularly long vacancies, but most vacancies last for one year at most. Finally, I count OIG experience as the number of years in their capacity as an IG. Some IGs move around offices; their prior experience is counted. In some cases, IGs worked in the office before leading it, but as I am unable to consistently verify this experience, I do not count that as experience. When there are vacancies, OIG experience is coded as zero for each year even if the same acting official filled the position for more than one year.

Political Environment

As argued, there are two features of the political environment I expect to change the breadth of OIG's monitoring agenda. The first are the policy preferences of the president and Congress. When their preferences diverge, OIG's agenda should become more diverse to appease both principals. I proxy policy preferences using NOMINATE scores for the president and members of Congress (Lewis et al. 2019; Poole and Rosenthal 1997). For this measure, I use the absolute value of the difference between the president's NOMINATE score and the average of the two chamber medians, yielding a biennial measure of diverging preferences.¹³ Greater values mean the president and Congress hold different policy priorities.

¹³ Trump does not have a NOMINATE score because he has not taken enough clear stances on legislation. Some treat Trump as the most conservative actor in politics, but this ignores the fact that his positions are generally undermined except in a few key areas. In terms of immigration and international trade, Trump has defined priorities that align with conservative values, but Trump's views in other areas are not as clear. As a result, I place Trump in the middle and assign a NOMINATE score of 0. I test the sensitivity of the results in Appendix B by dropping 2017 and 2018 from the analysis. The results are

The second feature I expect to influence diversity in the monitoring agenda are the substantive interests in Congress. When the breadth of interests increases, I expect OIGs to also increase their monitoring breadth to maintain relevance with Congress. Diversity in Congressional interests is measured following Baumgartner and Jones (2015) and Comparative Agenda Project (CPA) coding of Congressional hearings. The CPA follows a similar procedure to my approach to OIG reports and codes all hearings into approximately 20 major and 200 minor topics. Using the minor topics coding, I create a yearly measure of hearing topic diversity with Shannon's H, a conceptually similar approach to measuring diversity as the Blau index. Overall, Congressional interests are more varied than OIGs with a standard deviation in this measure of 0.20 compared to just 0.08 in the Blau index for OIGs.

Controls

Besides the primary variables of interest, I control for several factors that may confound the expected relationships. First, I include an indicator for the IG's first year leading an office. This variable takes on a value of 1 when a new IG takes control of the office and does not include the first year of an acting IG's term. Second, I account for time since the OIG was established. This is a counter variable that starts at one for the year the office was established and increases by one for every subsequent year. One might expect that OIGs established in 1978 versus 2000 will routinize certain investigations and audits or better handle recurring issues, leaving more time to explore additional issues.

qualitatively similar, but less precise when considering the diversity measure based on all issues.

Next, I account for two additional features of the offices. The first being whether the office has law enforcement authority. Although, the primary duty of the OIG is to *monitor*, the 2002 Homeland Security Act signed by George W. Bush shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks granted most presidentially appointed OIGs law enforcement authority.¹⁴ The new authority allowed OIGs to execute warrants and make arrests that was reserved for other officials. The additional responsibility could influence the breadth of their monitoring agenda, even though this authority does not necessitate dedicated reports. Finally, I control for the proximity of the agency the OIG oversees to the president using an indicator for cabinet and non-cabinet agencies. This is a rather blunt indicator for proximity but serves to control for which agencies the president may keep a closer eye on for investigations. The cabinet indicator includes all departments plus the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA).

Methodology

Due to data limitations, I restrict the panel from 2000 through 2018 for most offices. The panel is unbalanced due to both data limitations and the fact that some offices did not exist during the entire time period.¹⁵ I use dynamic linear models to estimate the relationship between structure, resources, the political environment, and diversity in OIG's monitoring agenda. This specification is appropriate because I expect the agendas

¹⁴ Prior to 2002, four OIGs had law enforcement authority. Some DFE OIGs also have law enforcement authority.

¹⁵ The presented results do not include data from five OIGs: Department of Energy, Department of State, National Credit Union Administration, Railroad Retirement Board, and Tennessee Valley Authority. I was unable to gather reliable information on these offices' organization, budget, or staff.

to be inertial with attention to issues spanning multiple years. Take the fraudulent VA waiting lists offered in the introduction as an example. The Department of Veterans Affairs OIG issued multiple reports on waiting lists, veteran health, and scheduling practices following their initial audit. As such, topics remain salient for each OIG for more than one year. The inclusion of a lagged dependent variable will allow me to model these dynamics and examine both the short and long-term effects of each variable. While a fixed effects estimator is typically used in these scenarios, it has two distinct drawbacks. First, OIG fixed effects would absorb time-invariant office characteristics, of which one is an important theoretical variable. Second, the fixed effects would be correlated with the lagged dependent variable because of the length of the panel, introducing bias into the estimates (Beck and Katz 2011).

Results

Table 3.1 presents the short-run impact of the theoretical variables on OIG monitoring agenda breadth. Model 1 shows the estimates with the measure of diversity that includes all 127 issues OIGs allocate attention to, while Model 2 shows the effects when collapsing the 127 sub-categories to 21 major categories. I present both because the differences in the minor categories may unnecessarily obfuscate general patterns. That is, some OIGs may allocate most of their attention to performance issues, but within this category there are many sub-categories, somewhat inflating monitoring diversity.

Beginning with structure, both Models 1 and 2 indicate that presidentially appointed IGs do not differ from agency appointed IGs in the breadth of issues they monitor. The coefficient is in the expected direction, but the standard error is quite large. Similarly, the number of units in an office does not appear to significantly increase

agenda diversity. This finding contrasts Baumgartner and Jones (2015) who find that an increased number of Congressional committees increased hearing topic diversity. The reason for the difference may be because the role of IGs is clearly defined. Increasing and dividing units, therefore, may not change the way they approach their job despite my theoretical expectations. Additionally, offices with a smaller number of units may still be specialized but have done so through defining jobs rather than the physical organization of the office (Simon 1946).

Table 3.1: OLS Estimates of Diversity in OIG Monitoring Agendas

	Model 1 All Issues	Model 2 Major Issues
PAS IG	0.06 (0.12)	0.10 (0.14)
OIG Units	0.01 (0.04)	0.06 (0.05)
Staff (log)	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.15** (0.06)
Budget (log)	0.09* (0.05)	0.14*** (0.04)
Vacancy	0.01 (0.09)	0.01 (0.10)
IG Years of Service	0.02 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)
President-Congress Policy Divergence	0.06* (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)
Congressional Hearing Topic Diversity	0.06** (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)
IG's First Year	-0.12 (0.15)	-0.15 (0.14)
OIG Age	0.04 (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)
Law Enforcement Authority	-0.10 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.12)
Cabinet	0.05 (0.11)	0.20* (0.12)
Monitoring Diversity $_{t-1}$	0.53*** (0.08)	0.53*** (0.05)
Constant	0.03 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.09)
Observations	623	623
Adjusted R ²	0.30	0.34

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors clustered by OIG in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Now considering resources, there appears to be a consistent positive effect of OIG budgets on agenda breadth between Models 1 and 2. The effect is slightly larger and more precise in Model 2. In contrast to my expectations, staff appears to be associated with decreased agenda diversity but only when explaining the measure based on major issues. Vacancies and IG experience both appear to have no relationship with agenda diversity. The null effect of vacancies contrasts strong theoretical arguments in the literature but that had limited empirical support. Rather, it falls in line with my argument that acting officials can effectively manage OIGs because their task is well-defined.

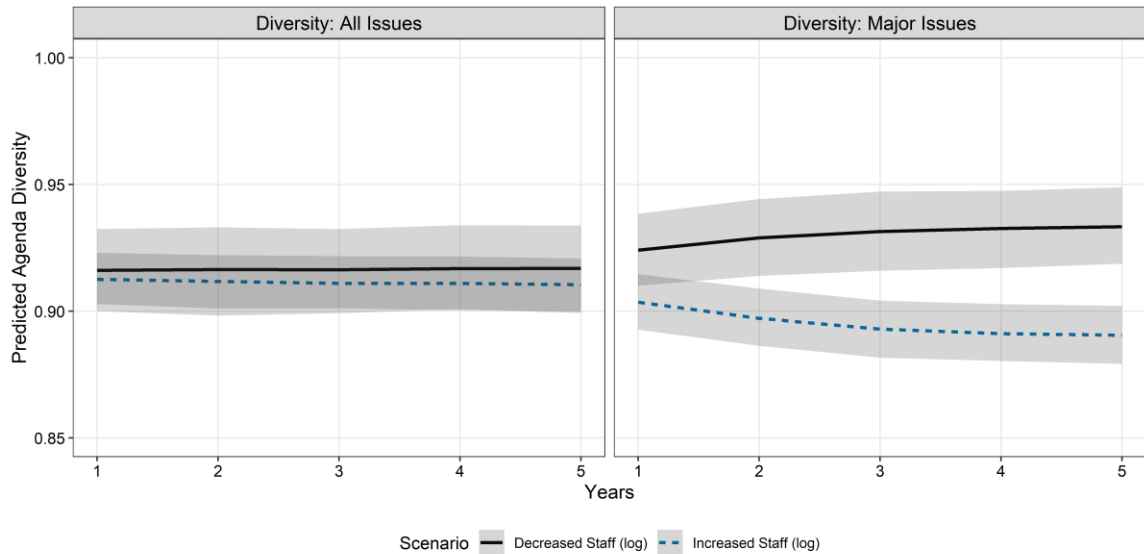
Expectations about the political environment are supported by Models 1 and 2. Increasing preference divergence between the president and Congress increases the short-run size of OIG's agendas by 0.06 standard deviations, an effect that is consistent with both versions of the dependent variable. Similarly, when Congressional hearing topics become more diverse, so do OIG monitoring agendas. This effect is substantively indistinguishable to president-Congress preference divergence but estimated with slightly greater precision.

To better understand the substantive impact of each statistically significant variable, I follow the procedure outlined by Williams and Whitten (2012) and estimate the long term effects via simulation (with 90% credible intervals). In each of the figures below, I compare the effect of staff, the budget, preference divergence between the president and Congress, and Congressional hearing topic diversity on both measures of agenda diversity from Models 1 and 2 over a five-year period. For the four scenarios, I change the variable of interest by plus and minus one standard deviation to demonstrate the effect of both an increase and decrease. All other variables are held at their mean

(continuous) or modal (binary) values. This approach to understanding long-term effects has two distinct advantages. It directly shows the uncertainty in the estimates and permits greater inferential power by demonstrating how each variable of interest impacts monitoring diversity over time.

Figure 3.4 shows the long-term effects of changing OIG staff on agenda diversity. The left panel conforms with results in Model 1 where staff had no statistically distinguishable effect on the breadth of the agenda. In the right panel, an increase in staff decreases agenda diversity. This effect is only significant beginning in the second year where the confidence intervals no longer overlap. Compared to year 1, a standard deviation decrease in log staff decreases agenda diversity by 0.02 points in year 5, a little less than one third of a standard deviation. In contrast, decreasing staff increases agenda diversity in year 5 by 0.02 points compared to year 1. Past three years, the effect of changing staff on agenda diversity appears to level off. The negative effect of greater staff is consistent with Blau (1970) who argues that more members in an organization creates communication and coordination problems. This is one possible explanation for decreased agenda breadth but is inconsistent with arguments suggesting more staff leads to greater organization capabilities to solve problems and allocate attention to more tasks (see Hill 1982; Lee and Whitford 2013).

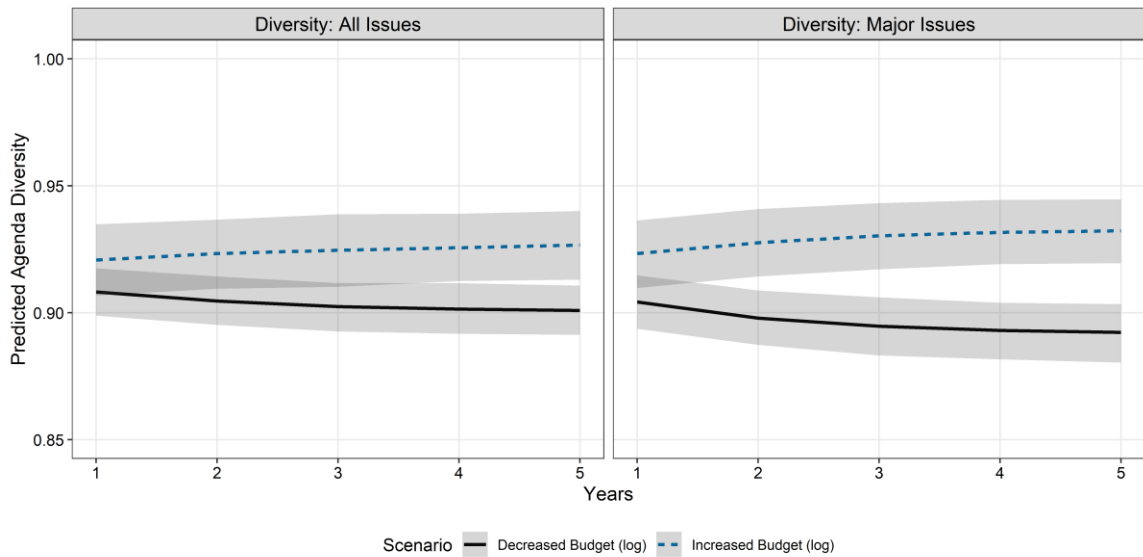
Figure 3.4: Long Term Effects of OIG Staff on Monitoring Agenda Diversity



Note: Left panel based on Model 1. Right panel based on Model 2. 90% confidence intervals shown.

Figure 3.5 depicts the long-term effects of OIG budgets on agenda diversity. For the measure based on all sub-topics, a change in budget has a statistically distinguishable effect after about 4 years. This suggests that it takes time for OIGs to allocate monetary resources to a wider variety of investigations. Using the diversity measure with just the major issues, the budget has a more immediate impact, showing a statistically distinguishable effect at year 2. Substantively, budgets have a moderate effect on the breadth of OIG agendas. Increasing the logged budget by one standard deviation increases diversity by 0.01 or 0.14 standard deviations over a five-year period. However, I will note that this change is not statistically distinguishable from the predicted diversity in year 1.

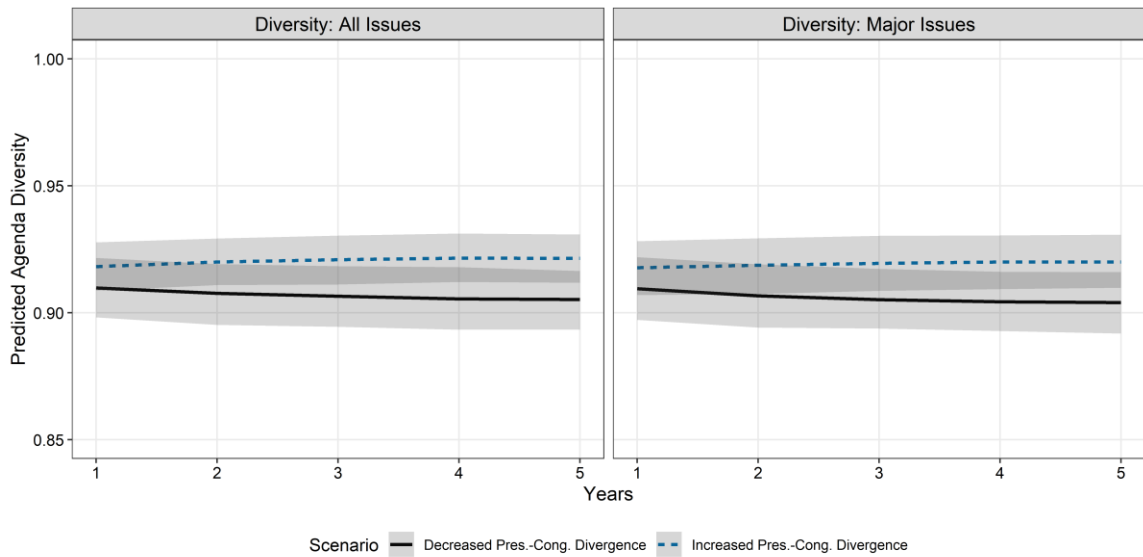
Figure 3.5: Long Term Effects of OIG Budget on Monitoring Agenda Diversity



Note: Left panel based on Model 1. Right panel based on Model 2. 90% confidence intervals shown.

Moving to the long-term effects of the political environment, Figure 3.6 shows how changes in preference divergence between the president and Congress influences the predicted agenda diversity. Looking at Figure 3.6, it appears that a change in preference divergence, whether the gap increases or decreases, does not have a long-term effect on agenda diversity. Rather, there appears to only be an immediate, short-run effect as indicated by the coefficients in Models 1 and 2.

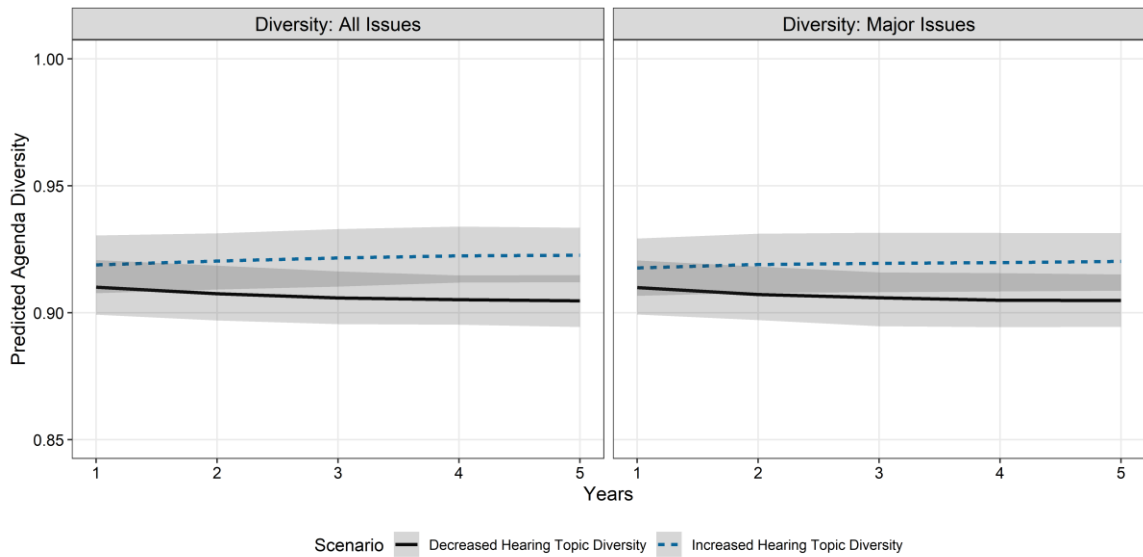
Figure 3.6: Long Term Effects of President-Congress Policy Divergence



Note: Left panel based on Model 1. Right panel based on Model 2. 90% confidence intervals shown.

Figure 3.7 highlights a similar pattern concerning changing Congressional hearing topic diversity. Over time, the predicted monitoring agenda diversity does not change given an increase or decrease the diversity of issues Congress deals with in their hearings. Again, there appears to only be a short-run effect of broadening or contracting hearing attention.

Figure 3.7: Long Term Effects of Congressional Hearing Diversity



Note: Left panel based on Model 1. Right panel based on Model 2. 90% confidence intervals shown.

What is notable about the long-term effects is that resources appear to be the only factor that has a lasting effect. OIGs are sensitive to the political environment but only in the short term. The short-run effect of the political environment, however, suggests that OIGs are immediately responsive to their environment. As the composition of Congress and the president change every few years and Congress allocates attention to different issues, it makes sense for OIGs to only respond immediately. Changing the breadth of their agenda over a longer period of time ($t + n$) potentially puts the offices at risk of not appealing to immediate changes in the environment. That is, any change past time t , would ignore the constantly changing political environment.

Extension: Conditional Importance of Political Environment

The primary results suggest that resources and the political environment influence the breadth of OIGs' monitoring agenda. Notably, neither indicator of structure that I considered had a significant effect. In this next section, I consider the potential moderating effects of IG leadership (presidentially appointed head and vacancies) on the influence of the political environment on agenda diversity. Leadership is not a tertiary concern when it comes to the effects of the political environment. IGs, even though they are relatively separate from the agencies they monitor, sit at the apex of their offices. In this role, they have the greatest interaction with political officials and are therefore the relevant component when considering how OIGs respond to the political environment (Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman 1981; Jacobsen 2006; Mouritzen and Svava 2002). First, presidentially appointed IGs may be more sensitive to changes in the political environment because they can be removed by the president. If they do not respond to changes in the preferences of the President and Congress, they risk losing relevance to both. The president is the only one who can remove PAS IGs and must notify Congress within 30 days of doing so. Notifying Congress serves as a check for removal, but Congress may be less likely to resist the president if they also believe the IG is not being responsive to them. As a result, I expect the effect of preference divergence to be greater for PAS IGs compared to DFE IGs. In terms of Congress, I expect PAS IGs to be more sensitive to Congressional hearing issue attention. PAS IGs may feel a greater loyalty to Congress and fulfilling their expectations or information needs than those in DFEs because of the appointment process. To test these two propositions, I interact the

indicator for PAS IGs with the two political environment measures and estimate models with the same covariates used for the main results.

Table 3.2 presents the estimates for the moderating effects of IG appointment structure on responsiveness to the political environment. Models 3 and 5 focus on policy preference divergence between the president and Congress, while Models 4 and 6 focus on Congressional hearing topic diversity. For both measures of OIG monitoring diversity, there is no moderating effect of appointment structure on the effect of preference divergence. The coefficient on the interaction term is in the theoretically correct direction, but there is too much uncertainty in the estimate to draw substantive conclusions. Similarly, appointment structure does not appear to influence responsiveness to diversity in Congressional hearing topics. The interaction term is not in the expected direction, but the coefficient is not statistically significant.

Finally, I examine the potential for vacancies to moderate the effects of the political environment. Unlike appointed IGs, an acting head during a vacancy does not hold a safe position. The president could nominate an IG, agency heads could appoint someone in a DFE, or the acting official could be replaced by another official. Vacancies on their own did not influence diversity in the agenda, but they could make the offices more sensitive to political actors. As such, I expect the effect of policy preference divergence between the President and Congress and Congressional hearing topic diversity to increase when there is a vacancy.

Table 3.2: OLS Estimates of the Moderating Effect of PAS IGs on the Political Environment

	Model 3 All Issues	Model 4 Major Issues	Model 5 All Issues	Model 6 Major Issues
PAS IG	0.06 (0.12)	0.06 (0.12)	0.10 (0.14)	0.10 (0.14)
President-Congress Policy Divergence	0.05 (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)	0.05* (0.03)
Congressional Hearing Topic Diversity	0.06* (0.03)	0.10* (0.06)	0.06** (0.03)	0.11** (0.05)
PAS IG \times Policy Divergence	0.01 (0.06)		0.003 (0.06)	
PAS IG \times Hearing Diversity		-0.07 (0.06)		-0.08 (0.05)
Monitoring Diversity $_{t-1}$	0.53*** (0.08)	0.53*** (0.08)	0.53*** (0.05)	0.53*** (0.05)
Constant	0.03 (0.09)	0.02 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.09)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	623	623	623	623
Adjusted R ²	0.30	0.30	0.34	0.34

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors clustered by OIG in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table 3.3 presents the moderating effects of vacancies on responsiveness to the political environment. Models 7 and 9 focus on preference divergence between the president and Congress, while Models 8 and 10 focus on Congressional hearing topic diversity. Again, I fail to find evidence that leadership vacancies influence responsiveness to the political environment. The coefficients on each interaction term are not in the expected direction except for Model 8, but the standard error on each is large,

meaning there is too much uncertainty around each estimate to draw substantive conclusions.

Table 3.3: OLS Estimates of the Moderating Effect of Vacancies on the Political Environment

	Model 7 All Issues	Model 8 Major Issues	Model 9 All Issues	Model 10 Major Issues
Vacancy	0.02 (0.09)	0.03 (0.09)	0.01 (0.10)	0.01 (0.09)
President-Congress Policy Divergence	0.06* (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)	0.06* (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)
Congressional Hearing Topic Diversity	0.06** (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)
Vacancy \times Policy Divergence	-0.05 (0.07)		-0.06 (0.06)	
Vacancy \times Hearing Diversity		0.07 (0.08)		-0.01 (0.08)
Monitoring Diversity $_{t-1}$	0.53*** (0.08)	0.53*** (0.08)	0.53*** (0.05)	0.53*** (0.05)
Constant	0.03 (0.09)	0.03 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.09)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	623	623	623	623
Adjusted R ²	0.30	0.30	0.34	0.34

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors clustered by OIG in parentheses.

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1

From this examination of OIG leadership with a focus on appointment structure and vacancies, we can tentatively conclude that who leads (acting or confirmed officials) and how they are chosen does not appear to have a direct effect on agenda diversity or moderate responses to the political environment. Like I suggested earlier, this may be because the tasks of OIGs are relatively well-defined, making leadership not matter with

respect to the breadth of issues they monitor or how they respond to the political environment.

Conclusion

Diversity in OIG monitoring is important because what issues and how many they allocate attention to affects what information is highlighted to decisionmakers who can ultimately enact change. The results here suggest supporting greater budgets for OIGs can improve the breadth of their agenda. But they also demonstrate that OIGs are sensitive to elected officials, putting their de facto independence in question. But the results also conform with a Congressional perspective on OIGs. Members of Congress often think of OIGs as their experts even though they are statutorily independent. For example, Senator Christopher Murphy (D-CT) wrote the OIGs at four agencies to investigate noncompliance with Congressional investigations, even requesting an initial response just 20 days after sending the letter.¹⁶ Such requests and my results show that the OIGs are not as independent as once thought.

Monitoring more issues can improve accountability, performance, and effectiveness in the executive branch by highlighting additional issues to decisionmakers. However, my study does not consider the tradeoff, if any, between breadth and depth. While OIGs with a larger budget may monitor a more diverse set of issues, these investigations could be shallow. My measure of diversity is based on the number of words devoted to each issue, all of which I am assuming are substantive while they may

¹⁶ Senator Murphy's letter can be found here:
<https://www.murphy.senate.gov/download/burisma/ig-letter->

not be. Future studies should consider both the breadth and depth of the investigations to see whether there is a tradeoff.

One limitation of the research design used in this chapter and examining published OIG reports in general, is that I am *mostly* unable to determine whether the investigation was opened at the initiative of the OIG or if they are simply responding to reports from bureaucrats or outside actors. This problem fits into the oversight distinction presented by McCubbins and Schwartz (1984). Some investigations are the response to “fire alarms” or individuals notifying oversight bodies like the OIG, while others are undertaken as “police patrols” or at the discretion of the oversight body. With this distinction in mind, the breadth of OIG agendas could simply be due to responses to reports within their agency. Some of these are easy to identify because the report will indicate the investigation was undertaken as a response. Additionally, the VA investigation presented in the introduction was initiated because of a nurse report to the OIG. However, this problem is not as detrimental as it might seem. OIGs still maintain discretion of who and what they investigate, routinely choosing to not investigate alleged waste, fraud, and abuse. To this end, the observed reports are a product of OIG discretion but still likely influenced by what issues are brought to their attention. In short, it would be incorrect to say that all OIG oversight is “police patrol” in nature. Rather, it is a combination of police patrols and fire alarm oversight.

Despite several limitations, the theory and empirical approach presented in this chapter can be expended beyond federal OIGs. Indeed, there are more than 170 OIGs with similar functions, duties, and structures at the state and local level in the United States (see Kempf 2020 for an overview). Future studies could consider how these OIGs,

with varying levels of independence and greater variation in organizational structure, allocate attention and whether they are more or less susceptible to their political environment.

Chapter 4

Watchdogs or Partisan Pawns? Agenda Setting and GAO Oversight

Introduction

While inspectors general are one portion of the oversight system that is situated within the executive branch, another important oversight organization is the Government Accountability Office (GAO) situated within the legislative branch. Elected officials at all levels of government rely on research and auditing institutions for nonpartisan, expert information to fulfill their statutory and constitutional duties. Congress, for example, routinely turns to the Congressional Budget Office, Congressional Research Service, and Government Accountability Office to support its policymaking and oversight duties of the executive branch. Understanding how these institutions support Congressional oversight is important because their auditing agendas ultimately influence the information made available to legislators, which can influence both problem definition and agenda setting (Adler and Wilkerson 2013; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Whiteman 1985). Moreover, who and what they investigate influences who can be held accountable if and when a problem is uncovered.

GAO has the longest history among support agencies in the legislative branch, existing since 1921. The modern GAO was created through an expansion of powers by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, which institutionalized program evaluation responsibilities and granted GAO authority to access agency information. It was further enhanced by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, which permitted members of Congress to investigate agencies through GAO unilaterally. Today, GAO is no longer just an auditor; it is a powerful watchdog for Congress that produces nearly 1,000 reports at their direction every year. Members of Congress cite GAO as an important source for policymaking information, but legislators dispute the role of GAO in Congress.

At times, members of Congress have accused GAO of partisan bias. In the early 1990s, Congressional Republicans accused the GAO of being a pawn for Democrats with Senator Kit Bond calling their oversight "...irregular and unsystematic" in early 1992. Bond, speaking for the majority of Republicans, argued that GAO's "...work has become fodder for one-sided press releases." The picture of the GAO created by Republicans was that it investigated agencies at the direction of Democrats for political purposes. However, not all members were of Bond's persuasion. Representative John Dingell in 1993 countered the Republican's narrative calling it "hooey" and defending the agency as the source where "...Congress is going to get facts it needs to legislate well."

To balance these two perspectives, the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs commissioned a report from the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) that was completed in October 1994. NAPA's audit of the auditors found "no evidence of deliberate partisan bias." In a follow-up hearing Charles Boshwer, the Comptroller General at the time, echoed NAPA's conclusion and stated that "any

recommendations we make are based on our analysis of the information we gather and never on political or ideological considerations.” Although NAPA did not find evidence of partisan bias, it was not setup to answer Congress’s questions. NAPA relied on interviews with Congressional staffers and GAO personnel and reviewed numerous GAO reports. However, NAPA missed GAO’s auditing agenda as hinted at by Senator Bond and other Congressional Republicans.

In this chapter, I follow up on and expand the competing perspectives of oversight through the GAO that NAPA examined and members of Congress decried. Specifically, I ask why does the Government Accountability Office investigate some agencies more often than others? To address this question, I weigh competing theoretical perspectives about GAO’s role and how auditing institutions more generally were designed to operate. My focus is on GAO’s oversight agenda that is largely set through Congressional requests. Under the *watchdog* approach, Congress is expected to use its experts more often to overcome information disadvantages associated with technical complexity because of the nature of policies some agencies form and implement. Legislative support agencies were designed to combat executive branch information (Baumgartner and Jones 2015; Bimber 1991; Joyce 2011; Light 2014). As such, Congress can use their own experts to understand the often-technical work of government agencies. Under this perspective, agencies implementing and making technical decisions (policy or otherwise) are more likely to be subject to oversight by the GAO.

According to the *partisan pawn* approach, Congress is more likely to use GAO to investigate ideological opponents in the executive branch. On one level, Congress does not necessarily trust agencies with opposing policy preferences to implement and form

policies consistent with their goals. On another level, Congress can use GAO investigations for political ammunition against the president during divided government. Therefore, the pawn approach expects GAO to investigate agencies more often when they are ideologically opposed to Congressional majorities and during divided government.

To test these competing perspectives, I introduce an original dataset of all U.S. Government Accountability Office reports published between 1974 and 2018. My results indicate that GAO's auditing agenda reflects the shifting partisan composition of Congress. When a chamber is ideologically opposed to an agency in the executive branch, the number of investigations increases. Similarly, investigations also increase during divided government. However, partisan biases in GAO's agenda are outweighed by Congress's need for information on the technical nature of bureaucratic agencies.

Taken together, this chapter makes several contributions to our understanding of auditing institutions and legislative and executive politics. First, it demonstrates that even nonpartisan organizations are not immune from politics. GAO's work may be fact-based and neutral but the agencies they pay attention to is, in part, driven by politics. Second, it provides insight into legislative politics and highlights an underappreciated mechanism of oversight. Beyond the direct oversight that occurs through legislative agents like GAO, their findings and expertise inform subsequent oversight endeavors and policymaking decisions. Congress, executive agencies, the media, and public regard these findings as non-partisan and expert, but my findings indicate that why they are gathered is, in part, for political reasons. Finally, this chapter provides extensive new data on GAO reports that can be used to study questions related to good governance, performance management, and separation of powers. While the focus and findings of this chapter

center around the Government Accountability Office, the competing theories, approach, and implications are applicable to other legislative support agencies at all levels of government. Indeed, additional work should consider these offices at the state and local level to leverage variation in institutional design, resources, and politics.

Overhauling Congress's Oversight Capabilities

During the 1960s and through the 1970s Congress confronted an increasingly powerful executive branch that could swiftly produce information, make decisions, and, at times, hold Congress hostage to the president's policy information and budgetary estimates. Antiquated technologies, insufficient staff, and scarce resources exacerbated the expertise gap between Congress and the executive and limited legislators' capacity to make informed policy decisions (Bimber 1991). The power imbalance threatened Congress and exacerbated disadvantages in policymaking (Moe 1985). Legislators responded by substantially increasing internal capacity through greater information gathering resources to build expertise and better inform policy decisions (e.g., passing the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970). Together, the reforms were essential if Congress was to challenge the executive and regain ground as the primary policymaking actor through both oversight and agenda setting.

In response to greater executive power, Congress held a series of hearings before the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations with the intention of finding permanent solutions to improve Congressional analytic capacity and oversight capabilities. In an interview surrounding the hearings in 1972, then Senator from Minnesota, Walter Mondale, lamented the lack of independent information:

I have been in many debates, for example on the Education Committee, that dealt with complicated formulas and distributions. And I have found that whenever I am on the side of the Administration, I am surfeited with computer print-outs and data that comes within seconds, whenever I need it to prove how right I am. But if I am opposed to the Administration, computer print-outs always come late, prove the opposite point or always are on some other topic. So I think one of the rules is that he who controls the computers controls the Congress, and I believe that there is utterly no reason why the Congress does not develop its own computer capability, its own technicians, its own pool of information. I would hope that we do so.

Mondale was not alone in his concerns over a lack of independent information. Chairman of the Joint Committee, Lee Metcalf, spoke for the majority of Congress during one hearing in saying, “All of us are acutely aware that without access to information and analysis of the best quality, readily available and in a form we can use, Congress cannot hope to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities as a coequal branch of the Federal Government” (1974). In short, Congress had a severe analytic problem that required major changes to how they produce and receive information about the executive branch and on issues confronting society.

The first, and most consequential, step to enhancing expertise and oversight capabilities was the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act (LRA) of 1970. Among the most notable internal changes was the expansion of committee staff who are important information filters and a primary resource for members of Congress (Price 1971). Beyond staff, the LRA of 1970 replaced (and expanded) the Legislative Reference Service with the Congressional Research Service and expanded the role of the Government Accountability Office all with the mission of enhancing oversight capabilities, combating executive information, and increasing overall Congressional

expertise.¹⁷

Apart from the landmark LRA of 1970, Congress made several prominent changes in the 1970s that augmented Congress's legislative agents—the legislative support agencies—into arrangements we know today. First, Congress established the now defunct Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) in 1972 to examine issues related to new or evolving technologies and their impact on policy. OTA eventually lost relevance to Congress and was dissolved in 1995, but some of its functions were transferred to the Congressional Research Service and Government Accountability Office (Bimber 1996), but debates remain today about reviving the office in light of growing concerns about policymakers understanding of quickly evolving technology (Washington Post Editorial Board 2018) . Second, legislators established the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) under the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to regain ground in the budget process lost under Johnson and Nixon. CBO's primary function is to act as a nonpartisan counterweight to the Office of Management and Budget (Joyce 2011).

As suggested, strengthened capacities allowed Congress to simultaneously provide better oversight of the administrative state and challenge the executive while receiving nonpartisan policy and evaluative information to better inform legislative decisions. However, it is important to note that the overhauled legislative support agencies serve different but related purposes related to oversight, expertise, and policy information. The Congressional Research Service, Congressional Budget Office, and former Office of Technology Assessment provide “prior analysis” for Congress, whereas

¹⁷ The Government Accountability Office was known as the General Accounting Office until 2004. For simplicity, I will refer to the office as the Government Accountability Office throughout the text.

the Government Accountability Office primarily engages in an evaluation role as part of its auditing responsibilities. Therefore, GAO is primarily a reactive institution, engaging in oversight most often at the direction of Congress.

Oversight Through Legislative Support Agencies

Significant changes made by Congress throughout the 1970s enhanced the body's capabilities to engage in oversight with the frequency of hearings increasing sharply in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s (Aberbach 1990, 2002; McGrath 2013). These changes also importantly established a system where Congress could easily and sometimes necessarily turn to legislative support agencies like the Government Accountability Office to fulfill oversight duties. Unlike other forms of oversight, directing oversight of the executive through support agencies is less visible than, for example, hearings but serves a similar purpose. Legislators seeking to control the bureaucracy can do so by authorizing legislative agents to audit agencies all while claiming credit for the findings (Fiorina 1977; Mayhew 1974). For example, in 2013 Congressional Democrats, led Senator Robert Menedez and Representative Maxine Waters, requested that GAO investigate banking regulators in the Federal Reserve and Department of Treasury's Office of the Comptroller of Currency. The scathing report detailed inconsistencies with foreclosure reviews conducted by independent consultants and traced many of the problems to the government regulators who failed to properly oversee and review the consultants (Silver-Greenberg and Protes 2013; U.S. Government Accountability Office 2013a). Although GAO did the work to create this

report, Representative Waters used personal pronouns like “I” to talk about the findings.¹⁸

While traditional studies of oversight focus on hearings, administrative procedures, or other mechanisms (Aberbach 1990; Acs 2018; Balla 1998; Balla and Deering 2013; Feinstein 2018; Lupia and McCubbins 1994; MacDonald and McGrath 2016; McCubbins, Noll, and Weingast 1987; McCubbins and Schwartz 1984; McGrath 2013), oversight through legislative support agencies is unique in several respects. Notable, it represents, in part, a delegation of responsibility to trusted agents. Congress does not have the capacity to unilaterally oversee the executive branch or make policy, meaning members must rely on support agencies. In a related context, numerous studies have examined delegation of policymaking authority to executive branch agencies (Bendor, Glazer, and Hammond 2001; Bendor and Meirowitz 2004; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Huber and McCarty 2004; Huber, Shipan, and Pfahler 2001; Gailmard and Patty 2013; Krause and Woods 2014; Palus and Yackee 2016; Taratoot and Nixon 2011).

However, studies of delegation of oversight authority to legislative support agencies are significantly less common.¹⁹ The distinction is important theoretically and especially in a standard principal-agent framework. In a principal-agent relationship for delegating policymaking authority, the principal (the legislature) grants authority to

¹⁸ The committee press release with Representative Waters' statement can be found here: <https://financialservices.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=382973>. Accessed August 3, 2019.

¹⁹ A similar form of intra-branch delegation (or subdelegation) has been explored a handful of times in the context of separation of powers and the executive branch (Bawn 1995; Lewis 2003; Nou 2017).

agents in a different branch, the executive.²⁰ This relationship is complicated by secondary but equal principals like the president who also has preferences concerning the outcome of administrative policymaking and standard issues plaguing information asymmetries (Whitford 2005). In the case of delegating oversight authority to legislative agents, the principal-agent framework is distinct. The primary agent, a legislative support agency, is situated structurally close to Congressional principals and tasked with investigating external agents in the executive branch.

The structural difference to delegation of oversight authority where the agency and principal are both in the legislative branch also means legislative agents are subject to greater control from Congress. Indeed, this was an intended design feature of the support agencies. Legislative agents, like the bureaucracy, derive their funding from Congress but are significantly less isolated. At any time, Congress could defund their offices if they are not responsive or lose relevance. Indeed, this happened with the Office of Technology Assessment in 1995. During budget negotiations in 1995 OTA was dissolved and some of its functions were transferred to GAO and CRS. A primary driver of this change was the perception among legislators that the office was not producing information that helped them balance power with the executive branch (Baumgartner and Jones 2015; Bimber 1996; Fisher 2011; Mucciaroni and Quirk 2006). OTA's contribution to policymaking was not as clear as its larger counterparts, CBO and GAO, and was an easy target for "zeroing out" that Republicans could use to send a message of fiscal responsibility even if the cut was "symbolic" by most accounts (Bimber 1996).²¹ To this end, support

²⁰ See Huber and Shipan (2006) for a comprehensive overview.

²¹ Cutting OTA saved roughly \$20 million at the time, a small portion of Congress' overall budget. Additionally, zeroing out OTA did not eliminate the agency. Indeed, it

agencies have an incentive to be highly responsive. Setting aside issues of funding, much of the work of support agencies is directed almost unilaterally by requests from Congress. This means they have significantly less discretion in how they allocate resources to oversight issues.

Despite the connectedness and demand for responsiveness, legislative support agencies occupy a peculiar position with often competing demands. For the most part, the civil servants staffing these agencies are professionals, tasked with performing non-partisan, expert work. In this respect, they are removed from political influence due to merit systems protections. These protections are similar to those in the executive branch. As professionals, they see themselves as neutral arbitrators between competing political interests and producers of objective, fact-based information. For example, GAO's core values clearly invoke a notion of neutral competence: "Accountability, integrity, and reliability: our mission core values allow us to demonstrate that our work is independent, objective, and accurate. We operate under strict professional standards of review and referencing; all facts and analyses in our work are thoroughly checked for accuracy."²²

The support agencies are also relatively removed from political control. The Comptroller General, the head of the Government Accountability Office, is appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate for a fixed 15-year term that is not renewable. Unlike other appointees, the Comptroller General cannot be unilaterally removed by the president; she may only be removed by a joint resolution from Congress or through

could be funded during any budget cycle without going through the process of creating a new agency.

²² GAO's full mission statement and description of core values found here: <https://www.gao.gov/about/what-gao-is/>, accessed September 15, 2019.

impeachment. The structural design of the GAO's leadership, therefore, insulates them from direct political influence by the president or Congress.

Although legislative support agencies were designed as non-partisan and neutral, they are vulnerable to political influence. As the OTA example describe above demonstrates, legislative agents must maintain political relevance otherwise they risk having their budgets cut or, in the severe cases, zeroed out. Legislators also criticize legislative support agencies as favoring one side of a political discussion even though they operate under nonpartisan missions. Newt Gingrich, in an opinion piece published in Fox News, called for the elimination of the Congressional Budget Office because "it has historically shown a bias toward a left-wing economic worldview through its use of static scoring" (Gingrich 2019). CBO still stands but not without criticism.

Despite criticism, legislative support agencies can greatly impact the legislative process. Take healthcare reform as an example. Congress relied heavily on CBO's analysis when Bill Clinton attempted to create a new insurance market in 1994 and during the debates surrounding Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act. For Clinton, CBO helped Congress thwart his reform attempts, but CBO's analysis eventually convinced members of Congress in passing the Affordable Care Act (Saldin 2017).

The Role of Experts in Legislative Oversight

Why would elected officials want to direct their experts to conduct an audit or investigation when they have other options such as oversight hearings or information from agency officials? In addition to the responsiveness Congress receives their support agencies, members stand to benefit from oversight done by *experts*. Among the primary benefits of using experts is credibility. Although many levy criticisms against Congress

for not using their experts effectively (Jones 1976; Kosar 2018; Mooney 1991; Patashnik and Peck 2017; Weiss 1989a; Weiss et al. 2008; Whiteman 1985), legislators routinely and strategically use their information to engage in further oversight and form policy. Moreover, legislators and their staff consistently cite legislative support agency expertise as an important source (Hird 2005; Shulock 1999; Weiss 1989a; Whiteman 1985). Politicians attach findings from legislative research organizations to policy proposals especially because the media, most members of Congress, the public, and even the executive branch view their work as highly credible (Patashnik and Peck 2017), and evidence suggest that the source of information matters just as much, *if not more than*, the content (Bourdeaux 2008; Doberstein 2017; Rich 2001; Shulock 1999; Weiss 1989a; Weiss and Bucuvalas 1980).

As Bimber (1996) writes, "...one cannot understand information in politics divorced from an understanding of the relationship between the experts who produce it and the policymakers who use it" (5). Over fears of making bad policy decisions and optics with voters, legislators and their staff carefully consider the political motivations of the source and whether they have incentives to misrepresent findings (Shulock 1999; Weiss 1989a). Legislators tend to distrust self-reported information from agencies as well as information from interest groups because of perceived conflicts of interest (Bourdeaux 2008). This makes alternative, independent sources of expert oversight important for legislators (Hird 2005).²³ Overall, credible experts can help in the policymaking process

²³ Yet legislators and witnesses often misrepresent policies and their potential consequences. For example, Mucciaroni and Quirk (2006) find a significant amount of misleading or wholly inaccurate information during floor speeches in the House and Senate. The misleading claims, however, are often balanced by informed rebuttals. Esterling (2011) bolsters these findings using transcripts from hearings on Medicare.

and may even improve oversight endeavors by cutting through accusations of partisan credit claiming. However, the neutrality of experts does not mean their work is immune from political influence, which is explored in the next section.

Beyond credibility, Congress trusts their support agencies. Because of the trust, Congress routinely looks inward for information on the executive branch. For example, a 1946 GAO audit of the former Reconstruction Finance Corporation requested by the Senate Banking Committee criticized RFC's accounting practices and temporarily stalled the extension of the corporation following the Senate's unanimous approval prior to GAO's audit. The weight members of Congress put on GAO's audit is notable. RFC received yearly audits from certified public accountants who, as a former board member stated, never "found anything of material to criticize" (The Associated Press 1946). More recently, a GAO report released to the public in 2014 found deficiencies in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's genetic testing and statistical analyses in the Amerithrax case. Although the FBI officially closed the case in 2010, elected officials questioned their "definitive" conclusion that implicated Bruce Ivins. Former Representative Rush Holt, one of the report's requestors, stated that he and others long suspected that "the F.B.I.'s definitive conclusions about the accuracy of their scientific findings in the Amerithrax case are not, in fact, definitive" (Broad 2014). In both of these cases, actors attempted to provide reassurance that executive branch operations were smooth, but Congress asked GAO to provide and separate investigation and uncovered different results. These results were then important in legislative decisions but ultimately highlight the trust Congress

Participants in hearings use "falsifiable rationales" when an issue is moderately contentious but shift to "nonfalsifiable rationales" when disagreement becomes extreme.

has in its own institutions.

Watchdogs or Partisan Pawns?

Existing literature on the role of experts and legislative research organizations leaves open questions about how their investigatory agendas are set by legislators. These agencies at every level of government are directly connected to the legislature and perform most of their duties at their direction. Elected officials may cite legislative branch experts as crucial information sources on the executive branch and issues confronting society more broadly but the variation in the what agencies and issues these bodies investigate remain unexplored.

To fill this gap, I consider how Congress's relationship with the executive branch shapes the agenda of legislative support agencies with a specific focus on the Government Accountability Office. In answer these questions, two competing theoretical perspective arise. First, the *watchdog* approach portrays Congress's use of the GAO to build expertise and understanding complex issues in the executive branch. This approach is relatively non-partisan and consistent with mission of GAO as a neutral institution. Second, the *partisan pawn* approach argues that members of Congress use GAO for political purposes. If GAO acts more like a pawn, then we would expect Congress to ask GAO to investigate agencies that members do not like and to find faults in the executive branch.

These two approaches, however, are not incompatible. Congress can direct GAO's oversight agenda in ways that both help it build expertise to understand problems in the executive branch and to monitor agencies it disagrees with from a policymaking perspective. Both of these approaches are explored in greater detail in the next two

sections.

A Watchdog Agenda

The first of the competing theories about how elected officials use their experts in the oversight process establishes GAO and similar agencies as *watchdogs*. That is, they conduct audits and investigations to help elected officials build the necessary expertise to effectively oversee the executive branch. This approach to oversight runs consistent with the establishment and reforms to support agencies over the last century.

Congress's experts within GAO, CBO, or CRS possess the technical knowledge to effectively evaluate the actions of executive agencies. Bureaucratic work is often of a specialized, technical nature, requiring advanced training and years of insider knowledge to do the job effectively. By technical complexity I mean the degree to which specialized knowledge, training, and experience is needed to form, implement and understand the policies and standard tasks within an agency's jurisdiction. Here complexity refers to both the policy area and the procedures needed to implement it. In the delegation literature, scholars often make a distinction between policy and procedural complexity because they have opposite effects on delegating authority (e.g., Bawn 1995; Ringquist, Worsham, and Eisner 2003). However, in the case of oversight, both pose similar political control problems that I explore below. Therefore, I refer to technical complexity more generally to characterize an agency's activities.

Information disadvantages and imperfect monitoring underly the classic principal-agent relationship between Congress and the administrative state. While experts will not solve this problem, they can alleviate it by applying their own expertise to make an objective evaluation of an agency's work that members of Congress cannot do on their

own. But the degree of technical complexity varies by agencies as some are tasked with forming and implementing more specialized policies. In so far as Congress uses GAO as a watchdog, it is more likely to ask GAO to investigate agencies characterized by greater technical complexity.²⁴

Technical complexity poses political control problems to elected officials. First, greater complexity reduces the ability of elected officials to oversee the outputs and actions of agencies. If specialized knowledge is required to understand performance and outcomes, then agencies can hide behind a wall of complexity Congress cannot easily see over. For example, the average member of Congress or their staff is unlikely to understand the medical terminology the Department of Veterans Affairs uses in the rating system for veteran disability claimants. Moreover, legislators are often outside the relatively closed policy subsystem that forms in complex areas (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). This makes authorizing oversight authority to GAO practically and politically appealing for members of Congress. Experts stand a better chance of evaluating experts. Indeed, findings in the executive politics literature, indicate that presidents prefer less centralization as policymaking complexity increases (Rudalevige 2002); rather, the president lets other experts deal with the problem, a pattern that we should also expect in setting GAO's oversight agenda.

Second, professionals often make up the majority of staff in technical agencies. These professionals have specialized training required to implement and form the policies

²⁴ The logic here is similar to that underlying the relationship between discretion and policy complexity. This literature stresses that elected officials provide greater discretion to bureaucrats with expert knowledge as policy complexity increases (Bawn 1995; Epstein and O'Halloran 1999; Huber and Shipan 2006; Huber, Shipan, and Pfahler 2001).

their agencies are responsible for. This specialized knowledge poses a threat to legislators' goals because their professionalized careers often bring in outside norms that may not conform with their preferences (Brehm and Gates 1997; Eisner and Meier 1990; Rourke 1984; Teodoro 2011). For example, Eisner and Meier (1990) found that the influx of economists in the Department of Justice Antitrust Division significantly influenced the types of cases pursued by the DOJ whereas Congressional and presidential factors like ideology appeared to have no effect. In cases where the number of professionals and therefore technical complexity increases, then legislators may seek to exert additional pressure through GAO investigations, allowing them to counterbalance some of the information asymmetries and potential problems with external norms and values that could undermine their policy goals.

A Partisan Pawn Agenda

Theories based around the need for neutral, nonpartisan information account for only one approach and discount the political environment in which research organizations operate. GAO, like the Congressional Budget Office or Congressional Research Service, is an arm of Congress. With this direct connection, we might expect that partisan biases to influence what agencies GAO investigates. This approach to understanding oversight through these support agencies treats them as *partisan pawns*, or agencies that fulfill *primarily* partisan wishes on behalf of elected officials.

This approach to understanding GAO's agenda considers Congress's relationship with the executive branch on two levels. The first is their relationship with each agency, and the second is Congress's relationship with the president. Each level has similar motivations, with Congress seeking to check up on agencies that may undermine their

political goals and in search of political ammunition to fuel policymaking endeavors.

Congress's Relationship with Agencies

Congress has policymaking goals that are reliant on agencies tasked with implementing the law and filling in details when Congress delegates policymaking authority.

Government agencies are often characterized just like elected officials by their political ideology, which captures their preferences related to government policies. Some agencies like the Department of Defense are viewed as conservative whereas others like the Environmental protection agency are viewed as liberal. What determines an agency's ideology is often subjective, but it is generally considered a product of agency mission or their policy commitments that are often tied to either Republicans or Democrats (see Clinton et al. 2012; Clinton and Lewis 2008). Ideologically opposed agencies—that is, a liberal Congress and conservative agency—are more likely to implement and form policies further away from politicians' preferred position (Gailmard and Patty 2013; Shepsle 1992). In these situations, Congress can check up on agencies they think are most likely to undermine their goals through the GAO. The reverse is also true: Congress has no need to expend resources investigating ideological allies in the executive branch who are likely implementing and forming policy consistent with their goals.

Apart from members' policy goals, they also search for ammunition in policy debates in order to reform or even eliminate some government agencies. The nature of government work and organizations in general is that implementation is always suboptimal, meaning outputs always have some sort of inefficiency that leads to waste or other problems. Therefore, when Congress goes looking, they are likely to find a problem (Baumgartner and Jones 2015). This is the “gotcha” approach to oversight through the

GAO. Congress has an incentive to have experts investigate ideologically opposed agencies to uncover problems they can use as ammunition in future oversight efforts and policy decisions. Additionally, they can claim credit for legislative agents' findings. The reverse, Congress investigating ideologically aligned agencies, is also true. If in-depth investigations are likely to uncover an issue, then the information experts produce grants political opponents' ammunition in policy debates and, for example, to argue for budget cuts. Therefore, these GAO investigations could undermine the long-term goals of elected officials even if they lead to improvements in agency performance.

Congress's Relationship with the President

Like Congress's relationship with agencies, we also need to consider the institution's relationship with the president. During divided government, inter-branch tension increases as the president and Congress often pursuing disparate policy goals. What's concerning for members of Congress is that the president will use the bureaucracy to pursue his or her goals during divided government in order to circumvent the higher transaction and conformity costs associated with bargaining with Congress (Kagan 2001; Moe 1985). Therefore, Congress fears that the bureaucracy may drift too far towards the president's preferences during divided government. To combat these possibilities, Congress should increase the number of times they ask GAO to investigate agencies across the board in the executive branch.

Again, Congress has more than policy concerns when it comes to ideological divisions in relation to the executive branch. During divided government, Congress can use GAO, who's investigations are likely to find problems, to score political points (Kriner and Schwartz 2008; Parker and Dull 2013). This approach is somewhat risky

because ideologically aligned agencies will be subject to more investigations, giving ammunition to political opponents. However, members of Congress can attribute blame to the president for performance or related problems. Congress can also hide behind GAO's expert reputation. Oversight during divided government can be criticized as overly partisan, but members of Congress can point to the non-partisan mission of GAO.

Research Design

Due to the growth of the administrative state and to challenge executive power, Congress built their own capacity through institutions like the Congressional Budget Office, Congressional Research Service, now-defunct Office of Technology Assessment, and Government Accountability Office. These offices operate at the direction of Congress with the GAO serving a more-direct oversight function. Because of GAO's auditing, investigatory, and evaluation authority, close relationship with Congress, and high volume of activity, I use its activities to understand whether Congress uses it more like a watchdog as originally designed or more like a partisan pawn.

Government Accountability Office Reports

As indicated, NAPA approached similar questions about potential political or ideological biases at GAO but "... found no evidence of deliberate partisan bias." There are two reasons why NAPA may not have found an evidence of partisan bias in GAO's work. First, GAO's work may be completely free from bias. Second, NAPA interviewed GAO personnel, Congressional staffers, and audited their reports that did not position them to answer the questions posed by members of Congress and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. Recall that Congressional Republicans in the early 1990s were adamant that GAO was a pawn for the Democrats, primarily investigating agencies at

their direction. While NAPA reviewed GAO's evidence and procedure, they did not examine GAO's agenda. Indeed, they were not in a position to do so.

To test the competing theories about how members of Congress use the GAO, I take a different approach than NAPA and introduce a new dataset consisting of all GAO reports published between 1974 and 2018. Congress formed GAO in 1921 to "investigate all matters related to the receipt, disbursement, and use of public money." GAO's modern form emerged in the 1970s and engages in program evaluation in addition to audits primarily at the direction of Congress.²⁵ The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 institutionalized the program evaluation responsibilities of GAO, granted GAO broad authority to access agency information, and ultimately enhanced Congressional oversight capabilities. In many respects, GAO moved beyond a certified public account role to Congress's watchdog with these changes.

The Congressional Budget Act of 1974 sewed the relevant ties between GAO and members of Congress by permitting committees to investigate programs and agencies unilaterally. One such way committees accomplished this was through GAO investigations. Moreover, the Congressional Budget Act established the Office of Program Analysis within the GAO to evaluate federal programs, agencies, and assist Congress with oversight duties through program evaluation. These features of GAO and detailed auditing, investigation, and evaluation records make it an ideal case to test the competing perspective of GAO's role in Congressional oversight and policymaking.

GAO works closely with Congress to carry out audits and evaluations. Due to limited time and resources and to reduce redundancies, GAO prioritizes work based on

²⁵ 31 U.S.C. §712 (1)

(1) Congressional mandates, (2) senior member or committee leader requests, and (3) requests from individual members.²⁶ Mandates include requirements written in statute, conference reports, and committee reports. GAO also performs work at the Comptroller General's initiative and agency heads. However, requests from agency heads have declined since the early 1980s presumably because inspectors general fill the role. Taken together, members in the legislative branch almost uniformly direct GAO's work.

Between 1974 and 2018, GAO published 42,295 reports. To ensure I am analyzing audits conducted at the request of Congress, I exclude yearly summaries of GAO activity, budget summaries, and "top management challenges" reports the office publishes at least once a year. GAO typically writes these reports at the direction of the Comptroller General and are therefore beyond the scope of this study.²⁷ Filtering the reports in this way is important because they will routinely address members of Congress even if they were done at the direction of the Comptroller General. Using the "Letter" section of reports, I classify the primary requesting chamber (i.e., House of Representatives or Senate) based on the committee or member of Congress listed first. GAO generally sends reports to committees in both chambers, but I make the simplifying assumption that the committee (or member) listed first was the primary requestor.²⁸

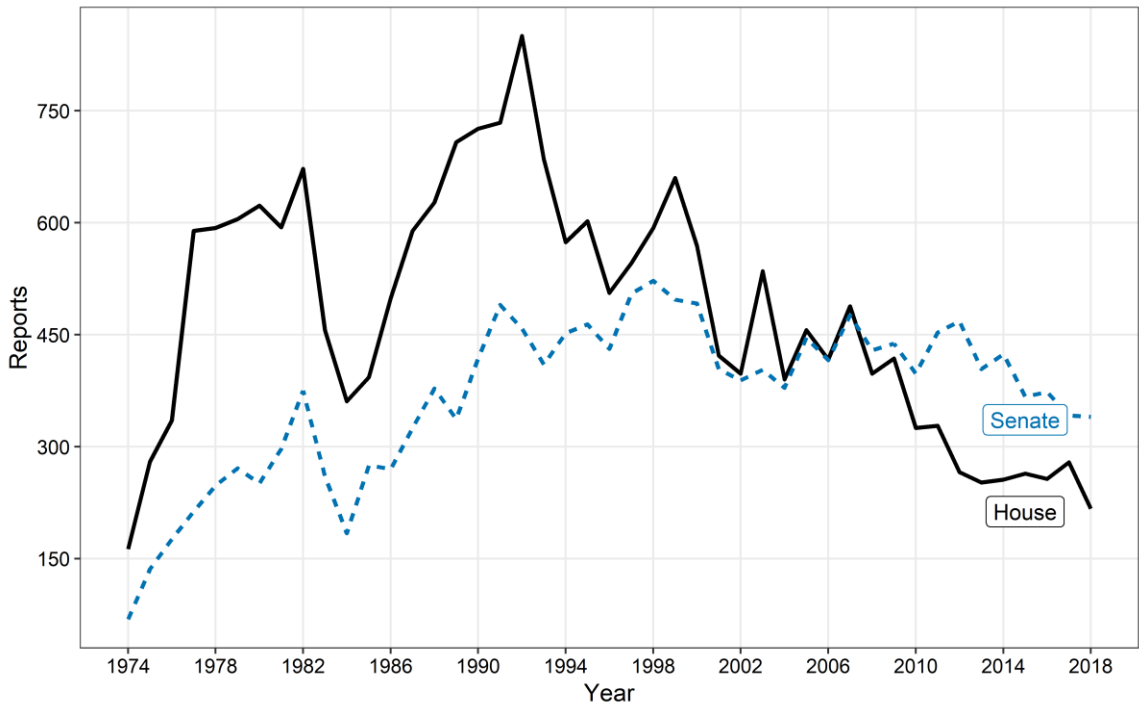
²⁶ Requests from individual members are rare. GAO denies these requests because they do not have the resources or when they are concerned with undertaking overtly political work (interview with GAO personnel). More information on how GAO works with congress can be found in their recently updated Congressional Protocols: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-767G>.

²⁷ However, some reports created under GAO's initiative may be useful in another context to understand what issues and agencies they think Congress will find important and if the agencies they investigate on their own exhibit similar patterns discussed below.

²⁸ More recent GAO reports address "Congressional Committees," "Addressees," or "Requestors" and list the relevant committees and members at the end of the report. GAO

Therefore, the request decision was made in either the House or Senate, but the report’s findings commonly go to both chambers.²⁹ Through these letters, I also eliminate reports that went directly to agency heads and department secretaries.

Figure 4.1: Total GAO Reports by Primary Requesting Chamber, 1974-2018



Note: Total number of reports in each year.

addresses some of these reports to committees but actually created under the direction of the Comptroller General. When this happens, the “Letter” section of the report cites statute related to the Comptroller General’s authority to conduct evaluations at his or her discretion. For example, a recent report on improper payment methodologies states, “We prepared this report under the authority of the Comptroller General to conduct evaluations on his own initiative and support congressional oversight of issues of national importance” (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2018, 2). The report was addressed to members of Congress but created at the initiative of the Comptroller General.

²⁹ This approach captures the vast majority of GAO reports. However, there are times when the primary requestor, the first member of Congress listed in the report, is not from the majority party in the member’s chamber. In terms of coding ideological opponents, this should introduce bias *against* finding results.

Filtering reports and coding the chamber resulted in a total of 38,051 reports published from 1974 to 2018. Figure 4.1 summarizes these totals by chamber over this time period. Up until 2008, the House of Representatives requested more reports than the Senate. This should not be surprising given the size of the House compared to the Senate and more oversight of the executive branch occurring in the House (Aberbach 1990, 2002; Balla and Deering 2013; McGrath 2013). GAO produced the greatest number of reports in the early 1990s prior to downsizing under Newt Gingrich's Contract with America and the National Partnership for Reinventing Government championed by the Clinton Administration. During this time Congress made cuts across the entire legislative branch including its own committee staff. Therefore, even with GAO's budget and staffing cuts, Congress expected GAO to fill the capacity void created by reduced committee staff. Since the mid-1990s, Congressional and GAO staff remained fairly constant (increasing slightly in recent years), and the overall volume of reports has steadily decreased.³⁰

Next, I searched each report for the primary agency or agencies GAO investigated. I drew the list agencies from Selin (2015), Selin and Lewis (2018), and Lewis (2003). I also consulted historical budget data to ensure that I included as many administrative units as possible in the classification of the GAO reports. In total, I searched for 641 unique executive-branch agencies, bureaus, and offices. Of these units, 596 were the subject of GAO oversight at least once during this time period. The initial sweep was done through exact matching, but subsequent iterations took reading the

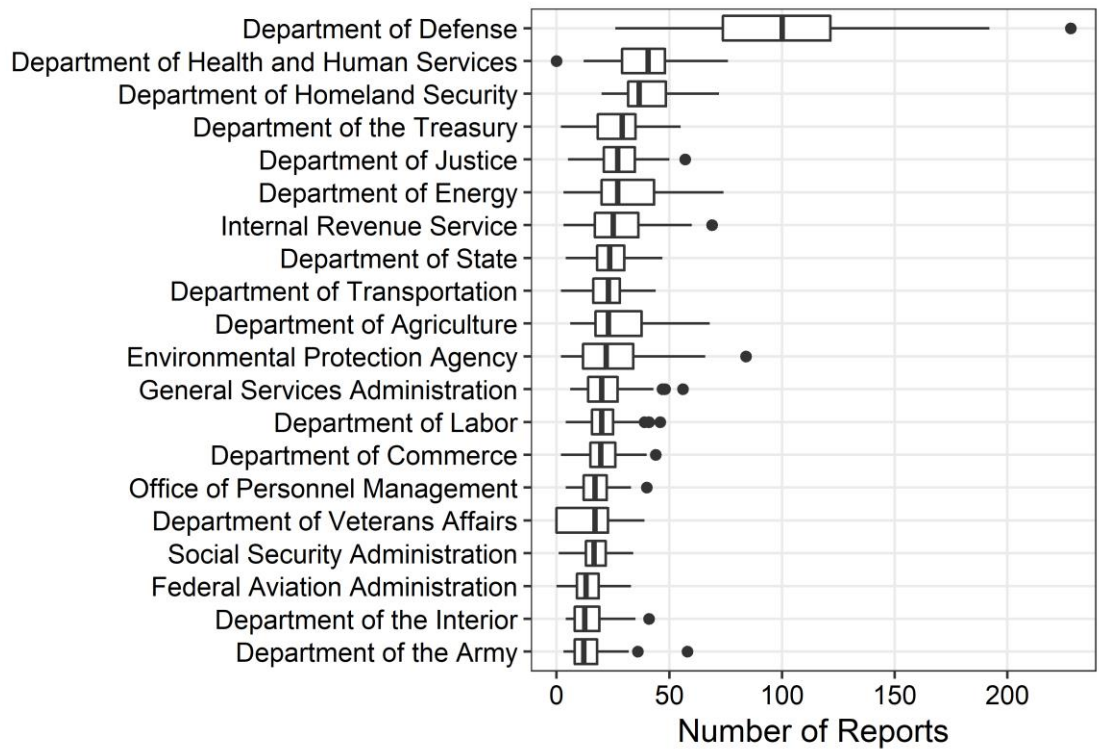
³⁰ More information on the changes to GAO's budget and staffing are in Appendix C and depicted in Figure C.5.

reports to ensure all subjects were coded properly. Some units were renamed during this time period. If they did not change functions, I grouped the units together and assigned the most recent name after I completed the search. This includes agencies that were part of reconstructions such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that was moved in the Department of Homeland Security in 2003.

Figure 4.2 reports the top 20 agencies that were the primary subject of GAO investigations. The numbers and range reported here come from yearly totals by agency. Figure 4.2 shows the interquartile range and each dot represents years that fall outside this range. As one would expect, Congress uses GAO to investigate the departments most often with independent agencies like the Internal Revenue Service that are central to government functions also making the list. This ranking of most investigated agencies also conforms well with the agencies subject to the most oversight hearings reported in Marvel and McGrath (2016) for a similar, albeit shorter, timeframe.

Next, I grouped these counts of agency investigations by chamber and year to create my dependent variable. Therefore, the unit of analysis is the chamber-agency-year. These pairs are important given how GAO prioritizes requests with respect to chamber leadership. Leadership in a chamber or a chamber's committee is drawn from the majority party. These party majorities often do not match across chambers. As a result, GAO can prioritize requests from leaders of Republicans and Democrats and therefore different ideological dispositions concurrently. On average, GAO investigates agencies 6 times each year with the median agency investigated 2 times per year.

Figure 4.2: Top 20 Investigated Agencies



Note: Range of reports created from total yearly reports by agency and chamber pair.

Primary Explanatory Variables

Theory suggest that Congress should use GAO more often for investigations when partisan majorities are ideologically opposed to an agency, during divided government, and when technical complexity is greater. My goal is to balance between these explanations using the report data introduced in this Chapter.

Watchdog Approach

Under the watchdog approach to understanding Congressional oversight through the GAO, Congresses should use the GAO more often to investigate agencies characterized by high levels of technical complexity. I measure technical complexity with characteristics of agency employees. Specifically, I follow Hollibaugh, Horton, and

Lewis (2014) by using the logged proportion of professional staff minus the logged proportion of blue-collar and clerical staff. Previous studies use this measure to capture the professionalism of agencies but serves as a strong indicator of technical complexity. Compared to agencies dominated by blue-collar and clerical staff, those with a greater proportion of professionals carry out and develop more technical policies where staff are chosen for purposes related to their expertise. Moreover, professional staff typically require training and advanced degrees beyond the average government worker. These characteristics of bureaucrats' position should mirror the overall technical responsibilities of an agency and therefore a greater need for expert oversight by members of Congress through the GAO. This measure has the benefit of avoiding potentially arbitrary decision about classifying agencies as technical or not. I draw these employment characteristics from the Office of Personnel Management's records.

Partisan Pawn Approach

Under the partisan pawn approach, Congress is expected to conduct oversight through the GAO more often to investigate ideologically opposed agencies and during divided government. To code agency ideology, I used the Clinton and Lewis (2008) estimates based on a survey of bureaucratic experts to create ideal points on a left-right continuum represent agency ideology. I consider an agency conservative if the ideal point is positive and the 95% credible interval does not overlap zero. Similarly, I consider an agency liberal if the ideal point is negative and the 95% credible interval does not contain zero. An agency is considered moderate if the credible interval overlaps zero. Ideological opponents are then coded as 1 when the chamber in the agency-chamber pair is controlled by Republicans (Democrats) and agency is liberal (conservative). Allies and moderate

agencies are coded as 0.

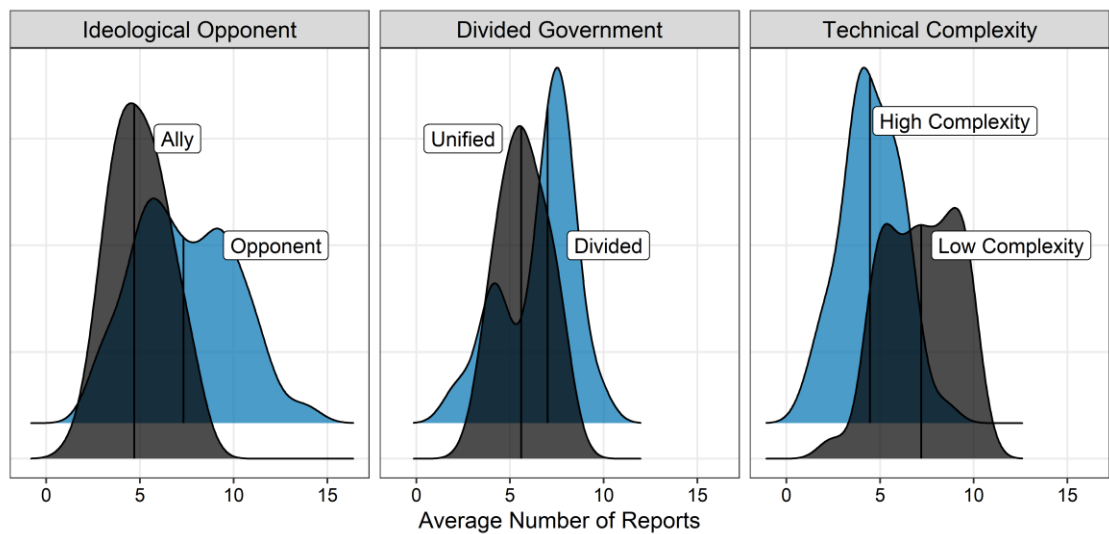
This approach to identifying ideological opponents has two limitations. First, collapsing the coding by liberal, conservative, and moderate eliminates the nuanced differences in agency ideology. For example, the Department of the Navy is more conservative than the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, but both are treated as similarly conservative. However, collapsing the ideological orientation this way removes the possibility that the effect of ideological opponents could be non-linear. Using a continuous measure of ideological divergence between a chamber and agency creates the possibility that the size of the effect changes with different magnitudes of separation; collapsing removes this possibility. Second, the Clinton and Lewis (2008) estimates are time invariant and therefore my classification scheme is as well. Despite these drawbacks, their estimates are still preferred to alternatives. Unlike other estimates, the Clinton and Lewis (2008) estimates are designed to capture the “long-term tendencies” of agency ideology (16). These estimates also cover a greater number of agencies than alternatives and do not depend on appointee preferences that are often contrary to the ideological orientation of the agency (Lewis 2008; Moe 1985). Overall, I am able to match 230 agencies with ideology estimates where a chamber and agency are ideological opponents 38.4 percent of the time.³¹

Next, I code a binary indicator for instances of divided government with 1 representing divided government and 0 representing unified government. As chief executive, presidents are tasked with carrying out the laws but also use the bureaucracy to

³¹ Agencies without a directly estimated ideal point are coded based on their department. For example, the Farm Service Agency is given the same moderate rating as the Department of Agriculture.

pursue their policy goals (Haeder and Yackee 2015; Kagan 2001; Moe 1985, 1989; Rudalevige 2009). When the president is from a different party than Congress, Congress may be more inclined to investigate executive agencies to find inconsistencies with their intentions because the risk is greater during divided government. For this measure, both chambers need to be from a different party than the president. Overall, 19 out of the 45 years in my dataset are during divided government.

Figure 4.3: Bivariate Densities of the Number of Reports



Note: Densities reported as yearly averages for agencies grouped by ideological opponents and low and high levels of technical complexity. High and low technical complexity are determined by being above or below the median, respectively.

Prior to estimating fully specified models of Congress’s use of GAO for audits and investigations, I first present descriptive densities of the average number of reports by grouping ideological opponents and allies, divided and unified government, and whether technological complexity is high or low. The purpose of this figure is to explore what relationships are evident in the raw data before specifying a statistical model with appropriate controls. The left panel of Figure 4.3 shows the average number of reports by opponents and allies. As shown, ideological opponents are investigated by GAO more

than allies. Moreover, the density is much greater for higher numbers of reports (10 or more). The middle panel groups the average number of reports by divided and unified government. During divided government, the average agency is investigated two additional times. However, there is still substantial overlap in the distributions. The right panel depicts the average number of reports by high and low technical complexity. While we would expect Congress to use the GAO more often when technical complexity is high, this relationship is not borne out in the raw data. Rather, low complexity agencies are investigated more often in the raw data. However, none of these descriptive assessments consider confounding factors such as agency size that will likely have a large impact on the number of GAO investigations.

Control Variables

Beyond these primary variables, I recognize that there are confounding characteristics and alternative explanations for the number of times GAO investigates an agency. The House and Senate have unique operating procedures in committees and the overall chamber. To account for these differences, I include a binary indicator for the House. Additionally, I account for agency size. Larger agencies implement and develop more policies and therefore there are more reasons and opportunities to investigate their activities. I measure size as the logged number of agency employees. I also draw these numbers from the Office of Personnel Management's employment records.

Capacity in the legislature and GAO could also influence the number of times GAO investigates an agency. As discussed, Congress cut its committee staff during the 1990s, dampening its ability to engage in oversight itself. To fill this void, Congress may rely on GAO more often for reports when there are fewer committee staff. Using

Brooking's Vital Statistics on Congress, I count the total number of committee staff for each chamber from 1974-2018. Additionally, GAO's internal capacity could impact the number of reports they produce. I measure GAO's capacity two ways: (1) the number of staff and (2) GAO's budget (logged). While staff and budget are correlated, greater monetary resources allow GAO to complete additional tasks. As such, I expect GAO's staff and budget to positively influence the total number of reports.

Additionally, I control for factors in the political environment that are likely to influence GAO investigations. I include an indicator for divided Congress. Unlike divided government, a majority party division between the chambers introduces coordination problems that may decrease the overall volume of reports. GAO still needs to be responsive but may have to distribute resources to more agencies, decreasing the overall number of investigations into a single agency.

Methodology

Count data like the number of times GAO investigates an agency are characterized by a Poisson distribution. In this case, I use negative binomial regression because the count variable is over-dispersed where the variance is greater than the mean. To account for unobserved agency characteristics that may confound the estimated relationships, I also include agency fixed effects. The fixed effects approach controls for important missing characteristics like agency independence. While indicators for location in the executive branch or more nuanced measures of independence (see Selin 2015) could be included, they are largely time-invariant and therefore captured by the fixed effects. This is more appropriate than chamber-agency fixed effects because there are few reasons to believe

that the chambers have a unique relationship with agencies.³² Finally, I account for the clear trending in the number of reports depicted in Figure 1 by including cubic time trends beginning with 1 in 1974.

Results

Why does Congress use GAO to investigate some agencies more often than others?

Estimates provided in Table 4.1 offer a few insights into how Congress directs GAO in this respect. Notably, Model 1 indicates that when a chamber and agency are ideological opponents, Congress delegates oversight authority to GAO more often. That is, ideologically opposed agencies are subjected to a greater number of GAO audits and evaluations compared to allies and moderate agencies. Similarly, agencies are investigated more often during divided government. The effect of divided government mirrors the oversight literature that finds Congress investigates the executive more often during divided government (Parker and Dull 2009, 2013). These two results highlight the political nature of supposedly non-partisan oversight, providing support for the partisan pawn theoretical approach to understanding oversight through the GAO. Moreover, the results reported in Model 1 also support the watchdog prediction that greater technical complexity contributes to a greater need for GAO investigations. The positive coefficient suggests that Congress relies on GAO to evaluate agencies performing complex tasks.

To better understand the relative importance of each of these variables, I estimate first differences using Model 1 that are reported in Figure 4.4. Binary variables are changed from 0 to 1 and continuous variables are varied from their mean to one standard

³² However, I still report this substantively similar results in Table C.2 in Appendix C to demonstrate that the results are not sensitive to modelling decisions.

deviation above the mean. Control variables are held at their mean or modal value. As shown, GAO investigates ideological opponents an additional 1.2 times compared to allies. This translates into a 20 percent increase over the mean number of reports and a 60 percent increase over the median. Divided government has a slightly larger effect with an additional 2 reports compared to unified government or a 33 percent over the mean and a 100 percent increase over the median. An increase in technical complexity results in an additional 2.5 reports or a 42 percent increase over the mean and a 110 percent increase over the median. Comparing these three variables, the findings suggest that technical complexity has a larger substantive impact than the partisan variables if they are considered in isolation.

Unlike the raw data presented in Figure 4.1, the House appears to investigate any given agency fewer times than the Senate. On average agencies are expected to be investigated by the House through GAO 6 fewer times. Even though the overall number of reports to a single agency may be lower, the House could be examining a greater number of agencies. This possibility needs to be investigated further but is likely given the House's slightly more expansive committee system and as a result more divided attention to executive agencies. Larger agencies, as expected, are investigated significantly more often with a one standard deviation increase in logged employment translating into almost an additional 9.2 reports. This should not be surprising given the greater number of responsibilities and therefore potential problems associated with bigger agencies. Another interesting finding reported in Table 4.1 and shown in Figure 4.4 is that committee staff and GAO staff have opposite effects that are similar in magnitude on the number of reports. A standard deviation increase in committee staff increases the

number of reports by slightly more than 6 and a standard deviation increase in GAO staff decreases the number of reports by slightly less than 6.

Divided Congress has the expected negative effect. When the chambers are controlled by two different parties, agencies are expected to be investigated two fewer times. This effect is almost equal in magnitude but in the opposite direction to divided government. This finding could suggest that Congress has a difficult time coordinating oversight endeavors between the House and Senate or that GAO has to balance diverse priorities and therefore audit or evaluate any given agency fewer times.

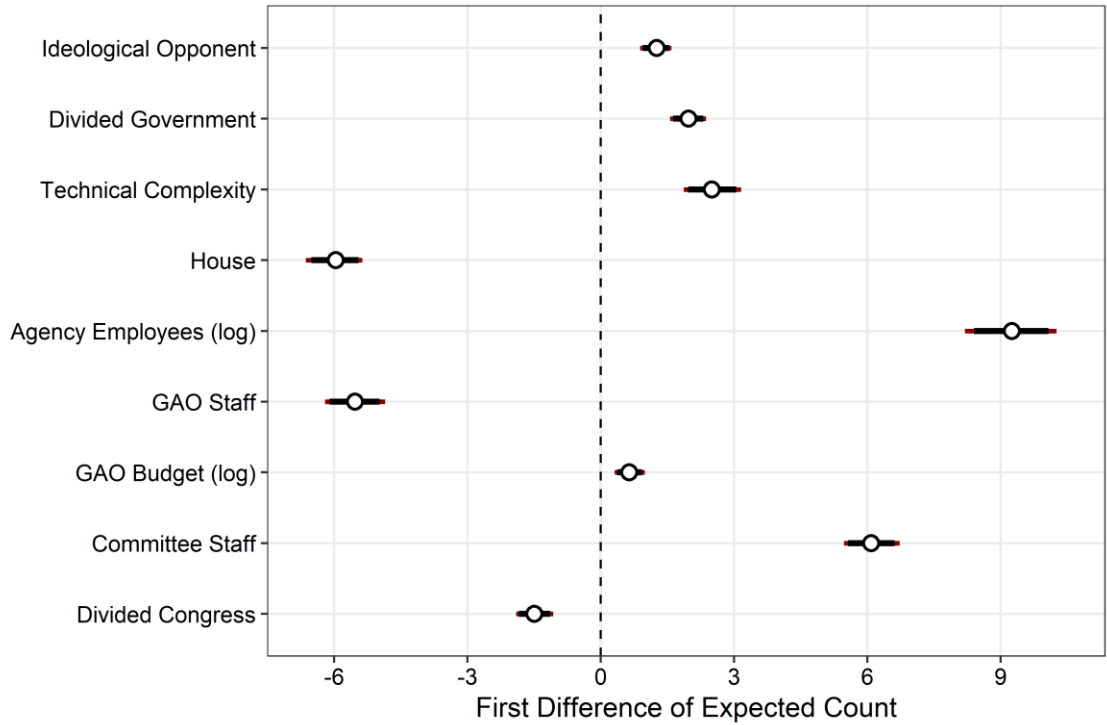
Table 4.1: Estimates of the Number of Times on Agency in Investigated by GAO

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Ideological Opponent	0.07*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	-0.06** (0.03)
Divided Government	0.56*** (0.07)	0.57*** (0.07)	0.70*** (0.07)	0.82*** (0.10)
Technical Complexity	0.10*** (0.01)	0.11*** (0.01)	0.11*** (0.01)	0.22*** (0.03)
House	-0.32*** (0.01)	-0.32*** (0.01)	-0.28*** (0.02)	-0.32*** (0.01)
Committee Staff	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)
Ideological Opponent x Divided Government		-0.02 (0.01)		
Ideological Opponent x House			0.01 (0.01)	
Divided Government x House			-0.25*** (0.04)	
Technical Complexity x House			-0.25*** (0.04)	
Ideological Opponent x Committee Staff				0.01*** (0.01)
Divided Government x Committee Staff				-0.01*** (0.01)
Technical Complexity x Committee Staff				-0.01*** (0.01)
Agency Employees (log)	0.17*** (0.01)	0.17*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.01)
GAO Staff	-0.01*** (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.01)
GAO Budget (log)	0.33*** (0.09)	0.32*** (0.09)	0.33*** (0.09)	0.27*** (0.09)
Divided Congress	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)
Constant	-4.87*** (0.86)		-5.09*** (0.86)	-5.02*** (0.86)
Agency FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cubic Polynomials	✓	✓	✓	✓
AIC	57334.72	57348.29	57286.00	57292.78
BIC	59160.18	59181.29	59126.55	59133.33
Agencies	230	230	230	230
N	13950	13950	13950	13950

Note: Negative binomial regression estimates with standard errors clustered by agency reported in each cell. The panel is unbalanced because some agencies and departments were created after 1974.

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

Figure 4.4: First Differences of Expected Counts



Note: First differences are based off Model 1 in Table 4.1. Each variable of interest is changed from 0 to 1 if binary or from the mean to the mean plus one standard deviation if continuous. Control variables were held at their mean or modal value. 90% and 95% confidence intervals shown.

Extension: Chamber and Capacity Moderating Effects

The primary findings are suggestive of both a watchdog and pawn approach to oversight through the GAO, but I examine these findings further to understand whether they are specific to chamber or dependent on legislative capacity. That is, does the House of Representatives and Senate respond similarly to technical complexity, ideological mismatches, and divided government? One of the reasons Congress built the capacity of the GAO was to confront an increasingly powerful executive and to support oversight endeavors they did not have the capacity to do on their own. At the same time Congress expended its own staff but has reduced the overall number since the early 1990s. Changes in internal capacity could moderate Congress's need to pursue oversight through the GAO. Additionally, the results from Model 1 suggest that the House and Senate do not

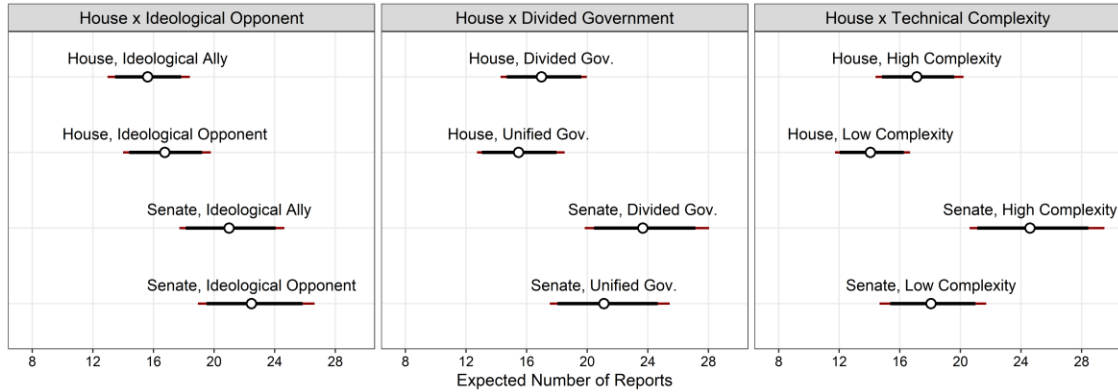
direct GAO in the same fashion with the House, on average, investigating any single agencies fewer times than the Senate. These differences could also influence how each chamber wades through technical complexity, investigate ideological opponents, and during divided government.

To investigate potential moderated effects, I interact the indicator for the House with *Ideological Opponent*, *Divided Government*, and *Technical Complexity* and report the results in Model 3. The statistically significant interaction coefficient for *Technical Complexity* and *Divided Government* indicates that the effects are different in the chambers, but the not statistically significant interaction for *Ideological Opponent* suggests that the chambers investigate opponents in a similar manner.

I estimated expected counts for each interaction to demonstrate the substantive differences and report them in Figure 4.5. The left panel shows the expected number of reports for each combination of the House and Senate and ideological opponents and allies. According to these estimates, ideologically opposed agencies are investigated by the Senate 5 more times than in the House. However, this result appears to be driven by the chamber effect rather than ideology. The middle panel shows the results for divided government and chamber. Again, there is a similar pattern. During divided government, each chamber investigates agencies more often through GAO, but the effects within chamber are not statistically distinguishable. Differences in the chambers appear to drive most of the effects, but the confidence intervals for divided government in the House and Senate have minimal overlap. The comparison between chambers highlights the institutional differences between the House and Senate when it comes to directing the GAO, but the similar findings for the partisan and ideology variables suggest that

legislators in each chamber of similar oversight motivations.

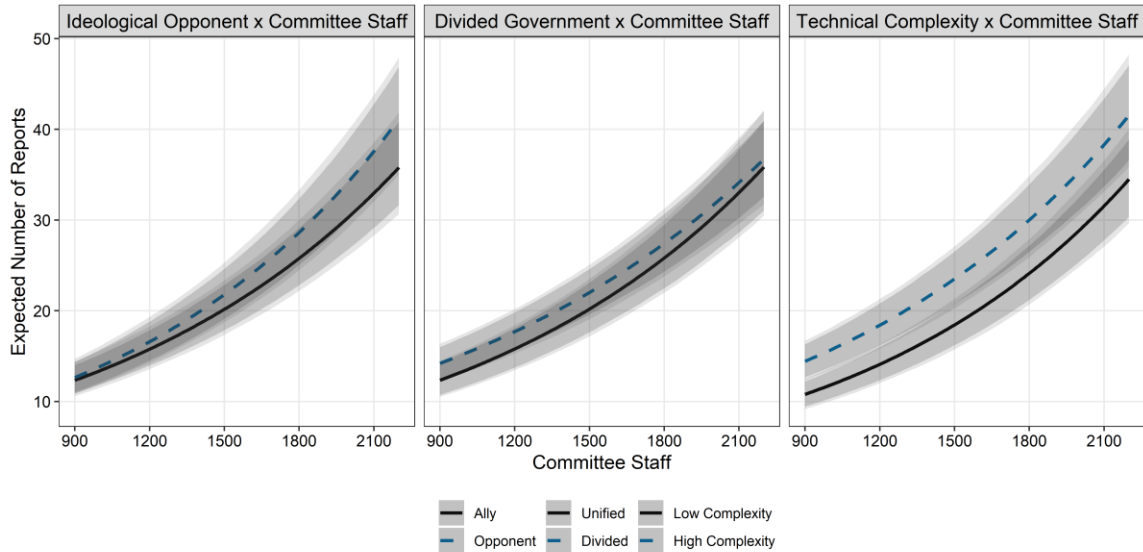
Figure 4.5: Expected Count with Chamber as the Moderating Variable



Note: Expected counts are based off Model 3 in Table 4.1 where control variables were held at their mean or modal value. Low technical complexity is one standard deviation below the mean and high technical complexity is one standard deviation above the mean. 90% and 95% confidence intervals shown.

The right panel depicts a similar combination of House and Senate and high and low technical complexity. For ease of interpretation, I consider high uncertainty as one standard deviation above the mean and low uncertainty as one standard deviation below. For both chambers, greater complexity appears to increase the number of GAO investigations. However, the effect is larger in the Senate than in the House. This finding may be due to the nature of the committee system in the Senate. There are fewer committees and subcommittees but also fewer members and overall staff. Therefore, the Senate may need to rely on GAO more often than the House to fulfill its oversight goals and duties.

Figure 4.6: Expected Count with Committee Staff as the Moderating Variable



Note: Expected counts are based off Model 3 in Table 4.1 where control variables were held at their mean or modal value. Low technical complexity is one standard deviation below the mean and high technical complexity is one standard deviation above the mean. 90% and 95% confidence bands shown.

Finally, I consider whether capacity in Congress moderates the effect of partisan influences and technical complexity. When Congress has lower capacity to engage in oversight—defined as the number of committee staff—it may need to rely on GAO more often. Therefore, at lower levels of capacity, we should expect ideological opponents to be investigated more often than allies. Similarly, divided government should have a greater effect on investigations at low levels of capacity than high. Finally, low levels of capacity should translate into more investigations into agencies with higher values of technical complexity.

Again, I interact my three main explanatory variables with committee staff to test the conditional effects. The interaction terms reported in Model 4 are statistically significant, but I estimated expected counts as shown in Figure 4.6 to understand the substantive impact. The left panel shows the expected number of reports across values of committee staff grouped by ideological allies and opponents. Across all values of staff,

the expected counts are statistically indistinguishable, but the expected number of reports does begin to diverge when capacity increases. Similarly, the effects for divided and unified government are statistically indistinguishable across all values of committee staff as shown in the middle panel.

The right panel in Figure 4.6 shows the expected number of reports across values of committee staff grouped by high and low values of technical complexity. At the lowest levels of capacity, technical complexity increases the number of GAO reports. As capacity increases, the number of reports between both high and low levels of capacity becomes statistically indistinguishable. In short, capacity does appear to condition when Congress relies on GAO for expertise but only for technical complexity, a finding that is consistent with a watchdog approach to GAO oversight.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to further our understanding elected official's relationship with auditing and research organizations. As the executive has gained more power and the size of the bureaucracy has grown, understanding oversight dynamics has gained significant importance. Indeed, this chapter highlights an additional way in which Congress oversees the executive branch that has not been previously investigated. Overall, these findings demonstrate that Congress influences GAO's auditing agenda in partisan ways, where the number of reports increasing during divided government and when agencies are ideological opponents to chamber majorities. That is, even non-partisan organizations can be and are used in political ways, affecting what types of expert information enter future oversight and policymaking discussions.

However, my findings should also be reassuring for elected officials, agency

heads, and employees of auditing organizations. While there are partisan effects on the agenda, they are not overwhelming and actually substantively smaller than other contributing factors. Indeed, Congress's need for information on agencies engaged in technical tasks and from large agencies outweigh the use of GAO for political ammunition. This is not to say that the findings of the reports will not be used for partisan purposes. Rather, GAO's agenda is influenced to a greater degree by less-partisan factors.

Importantly, this chapter also introduced a new data source on GAO reports. GAO has a reputation as Congress's watchdog but only limited data on their activities have been compiled and used until now. These data can be used in a variety of ways to understand dynamics related to good governance, performance management, and separation of powers including understanding legislators' policy priorities, agency malfeasance, performance management, and individual member behavior.

The findings here support both watchdog and pawn approaches to oversight through non-partisan research and auditing organizations. However, the findings leave open several key questions. First, are the audit reports and investigations impactful? If Congress and agencies do not use the results, then GAO reports may not be as useful as their proponents suggest. Second, are partisan requests less severe than other requests? Recall that legislators are hesitant to ask questions they do not already know the answer to; these questions could be less severe and driving the findings presented in this chapter. Fourth, additional work should consider the relationship between Congress and the other support agencies. The patterns uncovered with respect to GAO may not hold for both the Congressional Budget Office and Congressional Research Service. For example, Republican lawmakers in late 2017 pledged to ignore the Congressional Budget Office's

estimates of health care coverage loss if the numbers did not support their bill. Members argued that CBO was inaccurate about the number of new enrollees under the Affordable Care Act and therefore the numbers could not be trusted in their pursuit to pass the American Health Care Act (Elis 2018; Pascrell 2019). This sort of distrust, apart from the accusation in the 1990s, has not publicly plagued the GAO and may influence the willingness of Congress to request information or even look elsewhere, including outside the government, for information. Finally, the role of institutional structure should be considered, an area where studies at the state and local level will likely prove fruitful.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

As governments become increasingly complex and asked to deal with more issues, elected officials and top agency decisionmakers have come to depend on expert sources of information to improve the formation and delivery of public policies. In this dissertation, I examined three sources of expert information and their role in providing oversight of government agencies and the range of issues they examine. My specific focus on the agenda of these sources contributes to our broader understanding of the policymaking and oversight environment. First, civil servants, the most proximate actors to the implementation of government programs, are more likely to identify problems in their agencies when they have a greater understanding of internal oversight processes and higher levels of public service motivation. Second, I examine diversity on the monitoring agendas of federal Offices of Inspectors General. My findings indicate that budgets, preference disagreement between the president and Congress, and diversity of topics in Congressional hearings increase the breadth of OIG monitoring agendas. Finally, I weigh two competing but not exclusive theories about how Congress directs oversight through the Government Accountability. My findings support both theories suggesting that Congress steers GAO's agenda to improve its understanding of technically complex agencies but also for partisan reasons, noting that investigations increase during divided government and when the House or Senate is ideologically opposed to an agency.

Importantly, I introduced two new datasets to support the last two empirical chapters. The first dataset contains nearly 40,000 OIG reports covering 49 offices from 1994 through 2018 in most instances. These reports are coded as a mix of 127 issues and were used to highlight that IGs spend most of their time investigating issues related to performance management, auditing and finances, and budget and spending. The second dataset of over 40,000 GAO reports was coded with respect to the requesting chamber and agencies investigated from 1974-2018. This dataset represents the near universe of reports produced by the modern GAO. Beyond the theoretical advancements and findings, these two datasets and this dissertation make a substantial descriptive contribution about OIGs and GAO.

Taken together, the findings and data from this dissertation provide insights into three underappreciated sources of unelected oversight and their oversight agendas. Elected officials and decisionmakers rely on these sources of expert information to understand policy implementation and formation in the executive branch and to hold malicious actors accountable. This dissertation shows that these sources are subject to political manipulation even though they are quasi-independent and designed for non-partisan purposes. How these sources allocate attention influences the type and breadth of information decisionmakers receive, which has consequences for the quality of their decision and influences the direction of policymaking.

Policy Implications

The evidence from the three empirical chapters have several policy implications to improve oversight and monitoring. First, agencies should work on improving knowledge of internal oversight process and have OIGs be more visible with front-line employees.

Doing so could enhance the vigilance of bureaucrats, increasing the likelihood that they will identify problems. In a similar vein, agencies should foster public service motivation and seek to recruit and retain employees with higher levels of PSM. Not only are these employees more active, ethical, and better performers, my results indicate that they are more likely to identify problems. With the multitude of benefits PSM has for governance in the public sector, hiring practices that incorporate PSM could improve accountability, performance, and effectiveness.

For inspectors general, my results support increasing budgets. Congress recognizes the importance of agency “insiders” to administrative accountability. As former Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) stated prior to the 2008 IG Act amendments, “If one thinks about the inspector generals, what they are is a first line of defense on behalf of taxpayers and against Government waste and inefficiency. They are the first line of defense because they are inside Federal agencies. Let's be honest, inspectors general inside Federal agencies are facing mountains of waste and inefficiency. If they are to do their jobs the way Congress intended, they must be independent, and their work must be immediately accessible to the public.”³³ Yet, a decade later, Congress called to cut their budgets. McCaskill stated in response, “Cutting the budgets of independent watchdogs is deeply troubling and hinders the effort to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent appropriately” (Johnson 2018). According to members of Congress, cutting OIG budgets would hamper their job and my results indicate that they would monitor fewer issues. This has down-stream effects for what information agency heads and members of

³³ *Congressional Record*. June 28, 2007. S8693.
<https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/2007/06/28/senate-section/article/S8693-1>

Congress receive about agency performance and problems, leaving some issues unlikely to ever get addressed.

Finally, my results support tentative reform of GAO. Their agenda is partially explained by partisanship. If a good governance stance rejects any partisanship in an auditing institution's agenda, then reforming how Congress requests reports could minimize or eliminate these effects. To this end, granting GAO more discretion over what agencies they investigate and confidence to reject members' request could reduce the partisan effects. However, such a reform could place GAO in a similar position as the now defunct Office of Technology Assessment. To prevent a similar fate, giving GAO a multi-year budget could shield it from backlash. Yet, these reforms are unlikely to be supported by members of Congress who want GAO to be responsive to their wishes.

Limitations

Although many would contend that more oversight would improve agency decision making and enhance accountability, empowering OIGs, GAO, and bureaucrats is not a panacea solution. Oversight is time consuming for those who perform it and those who are on the receiving end. Kettl (1992) suggests that micromanagement in general and GAO and OIG monitoring by implication, "is not so much paralysis as administrative sluggishness. Checking and cross-checking slow down the administrative process.

Administrators become more circumspect in making decisions, less likely to take chances that could improve production or save money, and more likely to avoid making decisions at all if they can be avoided" (103). In short, oversight can slow down agencies and hamper innovation through promoting risk-aversion. While some might advocate for a

risk-averse bureaucracy, one that is unable to adapt is less effective and cannot deal with new challenges.

Despite the professionalism and neutral competence of all three positions discussed in this dissertation, they are all still subject to manipulation. While the GAO is a direct arm of a political institutions, OIGs and bureaucrats are not immune from pressure. Indeed, too much faith in oversight by and through the unelected will inevitably allow poor performance, ethical and legal violations, or wasteful spending to slip by (Cabral and Lazzarini 2015).

Moving Forward

Several questions are left unanswered by this dissertation, but the new data on OIG and GAO oversight agendas support multiple future research projects. The questions I investigated were centered around the agendas of these three actors with a focus on problem identification and monitoring but leave open questions about whether oversight performed by bureaucrats, OIGs, and GAO is effective. When a problem is identified, do agencies fix it? Oversight for the sake of oversight is superficial, especially if it does not actually address identified problems Answering this question would require tracking the identified issues from OIGs and GAO to follow up investigations to assess whether agencies are responsive to their findings.

Additionally, in an interview with a GAO employee where I described my data, this individual was curious about why some agencies reject recommendations. To this end, my report data (but limited to the mid-1990s and on) can be used to answer broader questions about external oversight and agency responses. This employee suggested that politicized agencies were more likely to reject reports. Answering this question is

important because recommendations that agencies reject are not likely to be implemented. Rejecting recommendations undermines the effectiveness of oversight and has implications for accountability.

Finally, these data can be used to examine endogenous agenda setting in Congress. Do GAO or OIG investigations alter the Congressional oversight and policymaking agenda? Or, alternatively, does Congress's agenda determine what these offices examine? I answered this question in part, but I did not consider the likely endogenous agenda-setting process of problem monitoring.

References

- Aberbach, Joel D. 1990. *Keeping a Watchful Eye: The Politics of Congressional Oversight*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- . 2002. "What's Happened to the Watchful Eye?" *Congress & the Presidency: A Journal of Capital Studies* 29(1): 3-23.
- Aberbach, Joel D., Robert D. Putnam, and Bert A. Rockman. 1981. *Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Acs, Alex. 2018. "Policing the Administrative State." *The Journal of Politics*.
- Adams, Guy B. 2011. "The Problem of Administrative Evil in a Culture of Technical Rationality." *Public Integrity* 13(3): 275-86.
- Adams, Guy B., and Danny Balfour. 2014. *Unmasking Administrative Evil*. New York: Routledge.
- Adams, Guy B., and Danny L. Balfour. 2010. "Market-Based Government and the Decline of Organizational Ethics." *Administration & Society* 42(6): 615-37.
- Adams, Guy B., Danny L. Balfour, and George E. Reed. 2006. "Abu Ghraib, Administrative Evil, and Moral Inversion: The Value of "Putting Cruelty First"." *Public Administration Review* 66(5): 680-93.
- Adler, E. Scott, and John D. Wilkerson. 2013. *Congress and the Politics of Problem Solving*: Cambridge University Press.
- Alchian, Armen A., and Harold Demsetz. 1972. "Production, Information Costs, and Economic Organization." *The American Economic Review* 62(5): 777-95.

- Alonso, Pablo, and Gregory B Lewis. 2001. "Public Service Motivation and Job Performance Evidence from the Federal Sector." *The American Review of Public Administration* 31(4): 363-80.
- Ashforth, Blake E., and Vikas Anand. 2003. "The Normalization of Corruption in Organizations." *Research in organizational behavior* 25: 1-52.
- Bækgaard, Martin. 2011. "The Impact of Formal Organizational Structure on Politico-Administrative Interaction: Evidence from a Natural Experiment." *Public Administration* 89(3): 1063-80.
- Balla, Steven J. 1998. "Administrative Procedures and Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review* 92(3): 663-73.
- Balla, Steven J., and Christopher J. Deering. 2013. "Police Patrols and Fire Alarms: An Empirical Examination of the Legislative Preference for Oversight." *Congress & the Presidency* 40(1): 27-40.
- Barrett, Susan M. 2004. "Implementation Studies: Time for a Revival? Personal Reflections on 20 Years of Implementation Studies." *Public Administration* 82(2): 249-62.
- Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2015. *The Politics of Information: Problem Definition and the Course of Public Policy in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Bawn, Kathleen. 1995. "Political Control Versus Expertise: Congressional Choices About Administrative Procedures." *American Political Science Review* 89(1): 62-73.

- Beck, Nathaniel, and Jonathan N. Katz. 2011. "Modeling Dynamics in Time-Series–Cross-Section Political Economy Data." *Annual Review of Political Science* 14(1): 331-52.
- Behn, Robert D. 2009. *Leadership Counts: Lessons for Public Managers from the Massachusetts Welfare, Training, and Employment Program*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Beitsch, Rebecca. 2020. "Inspector General to Review Dod's Use of Pfas." *The Hill*.
- Belle, Nicola, and Paola Cantarelli. 2017. "What Causes Unethical Behavior? A Meta-Analysis to Set an Agenda for Public Administration Research." *Public Administration Review*.
- Bendor, Jonathan, Amihai Glazer, and Thomas H. Hammond. 2001. "Theories of Delegation." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4(1): 235-69.
- Bendor, Jonathan, and Adam Meirowitz. 2004. "Spatial Models of Delegation." *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 293-310.
- Benson, Michael L. 1985. "Denying the Guilty Mind: Accounting for Involvement in a White-Collar Crime." *Criminology* 23(4): 583-607.
- Bimber, Bruce. 1991. "Information as a Factor in Congressional Politics." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 16(4): 585-605.
- . 1996. *The Politics of Expertise in Congress: The Rise and Fall of the Office of Technology Assessment*. Albany, NY: State University of New York press.
- Blau, Peter M. 1970. "A Formal Theory of Differentiation in Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 35(2): 201-18.

- Bolton, Alexander, Rachel Augustine Potter, and Sharece Thrower. 2016. "Organizational Capacity, Regulatory Review, and the Limits of Political Control." *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 32(2): 242-71.
- Bourdeaux, Carolyn. 2008. "Integrating Performance Information into Legislative Budget Processes." *Public performance & management review* 31(4): 547-69.
- Boyer, Dave. 2016. "Va Still Plagued by Problems Two Years after Scandal." *The Washington Times*.
- Boyne, George A. 1998. *Public Choice Theory and Local Government: A Comparative Analysis of the UK and USA*. London: MacMillan.
- . 2003. "Sources of Public Service Improvement: A Critical Review and Research Agenda." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART* 13(3): 367-94.
- Bozeman, Barry, and Xuhong Su. 2015. "Public Service Motivation Concepts and Theory: A Critique." *Public Administration Review* 75(5): 700-10.
- Brehm, John O., and Scott Gates. 1997. *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage: Bureaucratic Response to a Democratic Public*: University of Michigan Press.
- Brewer, Gene A., and Sally Coleman Selden. 1998. "Whistle Blower in the Federal Civil Service: New Evidence of the Public Service Ethic." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 8(3): 413-40.
- . 2000. "Why Elephants Gallop: Assessing and Predicting Organizational Performance in Federal Agencies." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 10(4): 685-712.

- Brewer, Gene A., Sally Coleman Selden, and Rex L. Facer. 2000. "Individual Conceptions of Public Service Motivation." *Public Administration Review* 60(3): 254-64.
- Bright, Leonard. 2008. "Does Public Service Motivation Really Make a Difference on the Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions of Public Employees?" *The American Review of Public Administration* 38(2): 149-66.
- Broad, William J. 2014. "Inquiry in Anthrax Mailings Had Gaps, Report Says." *The New York Times*.
- Cabral, Sandro, and Sérgio G. Lazzarini. 2015. "The "Guarding the Guardians" Problem: An Analysis of the Organizational Performance of an Internal Affairs Division." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25(3): 797-829.
- Caillier, James Gerard. 2017. "Public Service Motivation and Decisions to Report Wrongdoing in Us Federal Agencies: Is This Relationship Mediated by the Seriousness of the Wrongdoing." *The American Review of Public Administration* 47(7): 810-25.
- Caproni, Paula, and Jocelyn A. Finley. 1997. "When Organizations Do Harm: Two Cautionary Tales." In *Managing the Organizational Melting Pot: Dilemmas of Workplace Diversity*, ed. P. Prasad, A. J. Mills, M. Elmes and A. Prasad. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Carpenter, Daniel, Jacqueline Chattopadhyay, Susan Moffitt, and Clayton Nall. 2012. "The Complications of Controlling Agency Time Discretion: Fda Review Deadlines and Postmarket Drug Safety." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1): 98-114.

- Carpenter, Daniel, and George A. Krause. 2014. "Transactional Authority and Bureaucratic Politics." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25(1): 5-25.
- Caulfield, Philip. 2011. "'Adult Baby' Stanley Thornton Jr. Will Still Receive Social Security Checks Following Probe." *New York Daily News*.
- Cho, Yoon Jik, and Hyun Jin Song. 2015. "Determinants of Whistleblowing within Government Agencies." *Public Personnel Management* 44(4): 450-72.
- Choi, Sungjoo, and Hal G. Rainey. 2010. "Managing Diversity in U.S. Federal Agencies: Effects of Diversity and Diversity Management on Employee Perceptions of Organizational Performance." *Public Administration Review* 70(1): 109-21.
- Clinard, Marshall B. 1983. *Corporate Ethics and Crime: The Role of Middle Management*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Clinton, Joshua D., Anthony Bertelli, Christian R. Grose, David E. Lewis, and David C. Nixon. 2012. "Separated Powers in the United States: The Ideology of Agencies, Presidents, and Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(2): 341-54.
- Clinton, Joshua D., and David E. Lewis. 2008. "Expert Opinion, Agency Characteristics, and Agency Preferences." *Political Analysis* 16(1): 3-20.
- Clinton, Joshua D., David E. Lewis, and Jennifer L. Selin. 2014. "Influencing the Bureaucracy: The Irony of Congressional Oversight." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(2): 387-401.
- Crewson, Philip E. 1997. "Public-Service Motivation: Building Empirical Evidence of Incidence and Effect." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 7(4): 499-518.

- Davidson, Joe. 2019. "Inspection Finds Ice Jail's Conditions Endanger Detainees' Health, Safety." *The Washington Post*.
- Dery, David. 2000. "Agenda Setting and Problem Definition." *Policy Studies* 21(1): 37-47.
- Doberstein, Carey. 2017. "Whom Do Bureaucrats Believe? A Randomized Controlled Experiment Testing Perceptions of Credibility of Policy Research." *Policy Studies Journal* 45(2): 384-405.
- Egeberg, Morten. 1999. "The Impact of Bureaucratic Structure on Policy Making." *Public Administration* 77(1): 155-70.
- Eisner, Marc Allen, and Kenneth J. Meier. 1990. "Presidential Control Versus Bureaucratic Power: Explaining the Reagan Revolution in Antitrust." *American Journal of Political Science* 34(1): 269-87.
- Elis, Niv. 2018. "Gop Dismisses Report That Tax Will Add \$1.9 Trillion to Debt." *The Hill*.
- Epstein, David, and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1999. *Delegating Powers: A Transaction Cost Politics Approach to Policymaking under Separate Powers*: Cambridge University Press.
- Esterling, Kevin M. 2011. "'Deliberative Disagreement' in Us Health Policy Committee Hearings." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 36(2): 169-98.
- Feinstein, Brian D. 2018. "Congress in the Administrative State." *Washington University Law Review* 95(5): 1187-248.
- Fernandez, Sergio, and Hal G. Rainey. 2006. "Managing Successful Organizational Change in the Public Sector." *Public Administration Review* 66(2): 168-76.

- Fiorina, Morris P. 1977. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Fisher, Louis. 2011. *Defending Congress and the Constitution*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Fuenzalida, Javier, and Norma M. Riccucci. 2019. "The Effects of Politicization on Performance: The Mediating Role of Hrm Practices." *Review of Public Personnel Administration*.
- Gabris, Gerald T., and Gloria Simo. 1995. "Public Sector Motivation as an Independent Variable Affecting Career Decisions." *Public Personnel Management* 24(1): 33-51.
- Gailmard, Sean. 2009. "Multiple Principals and Oversight of Bureaucratic Policy-Making." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 21(2): 161-86.
- Gailmard, Sean, and John W. Patty. 2013. *Learning While Governing: Expertise and Accountability in the Executive Branch*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gallo, Nick, and David E. Lewis. 2012. "The Consequences of Presidential Patronage for Federal Agency Performance." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 22(2): 219-43.
- Gelman, Andrew, and Jennifer Hill. 2007. *Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerstein, Josh 2019. "Justice Watchdog Report on Trump-Russia Probe Set for Release." *Politico*.

- Gianni, Gaston L. 2003. "Testimony of Honorable Gaston L. Gianni, Jr." *Hearing Before United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Government Efficiency and Financial Management Committee on Government Reform*.
- Gilmour, John B., and David E. Lewis. 2006. "Political Appointees and the Competence of Federal Program Management." *American Politics Research* 34(1): 22-50.
- Gino, Francesca, and Max H. Bazerman. 2009. "When Misconduct Goes Unnoticed: The Acceptability of Gradual Erosion in Others' Unethical Behavior." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45(4): 708-19.
- Glazer, Nathan. 1983. *Ethnic Dilemmas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Goldstein, Harvey. 2011. *Multilevel Statistical Models*. 4th ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Gormley, William T. 1996. "Counterbureaucracies in Theory and Practice." *Administration & Society* 28(3): 275-98.
- Greenberger, David B., Marcia P. Miceli, and Debra J. Cohen. 1987. "Oppositionists and Group Norms: The Reciprocal Influence of Whistle-Blowers and Co-Workers." *Journal of Business Ethics* 6(7): 527-42.
- Haeder, Simon F., and Susan Webb Yackee. 2015. "Influence and the Administrative Process: Lobbying the U.S. President's Office of Management and Budget." *American Political Science Review* 109(3): 507-22.
- Haglund, Evan T. 2015. "Striped Pants Versus Fat Cats: Ambassadorial Performance of Career Diplomats and Political Appointees." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 45(4): 653-78.

- Hall, Richard L., and Kristina C. Miler. 2008. "What Happens after the Alarm? Interest Group Subsidies to Legislative Overseers." *The Journal of Politics* 70(4): 990-1005.
- Hammond, Thomas H., and Jack H. Knott. 1996. "Who Controls the Bureaucracy?: Presidential Power, Congressional Dominance, Legal Constraints, and Bureaucratic Autonomy in a Model of Multi-Institutional Policy-Making." *The Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 12(1): 119-66.
- Haveman, Robert H. 1976. "Policy Analysis and the Congress: An Economist's View." *Policy Analysis* 2(2): 235-50.
- Henik, Erika. 2008. "Mad as Hell or Scared Stiff? The Effects of Value Conflict and Emotions on Potential Whistle-Blowers." *Journal of Business Ethics* 80(1): 111-9.
- Hesch, Joel D. 2011. "Whistleblower Rights and Protections: Critiquing Federal Whistleblower Laws and Recommending Filling in Missing Pieces to Form a Beautiful Patchwork Quilt." *Liberty University Law Review* 6(1): 51-107.
- Hill, Gayle W. 1982. "Group Versus Individual Performance: Are Tv + 1 Heads Better Than One?" *Psychological Bulletin* 91(3): 517-39.
- Hill, John P., and Roy A. Kochendorfer. 1969. "Knowledge of Peer Success and Risk of Detection as Determinants of Cheating." *Developmental Psychology* 1(3): 231.
- Hird, John A. 2005. "Policy Analysis for What? The Effectiveness of Nonpartisan Policy Research Organizations." *Policy Studies Journal* 33(1): 83-105.
- Hollibaugh, Gary E., Gabriel Horton, and David E. Lewis. 2014. "Presidents and Patronage." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 1024-42.

- Houston, David J. 2006. "'Walking the Walk' of Public Service Motivation: Public Employees and Charitable Gifts of Time, Blood, and Money." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 16(1): 67-86.
- Huber, Gregory A., and Charles R. Shipan. 2006. "Politics, Delegation, and Bureaucracy." In *The Handbook for Political Economy*, ed. B. Weingast and D. Wittman. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huber, John D, and Nolan McCarty. 2004. "Bureaucratic Capacity, Delegation, and Political Reform." *American Political Science Review* 98(03): 481-94.
- Huber, John D., Charles R. Shipan, and Madelaine Pfahler. 2001. "Legislatures and Statutory Control of Bureaucracy." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2): 330-45.
- Hudak, John, and Grace Wallack. 2015. "Sometimes Cutting Budgets Raises Deficits: The Curious Case of Inspectors General Return on Investment." *Brookings Institution*.
- Jacobsen, Dag Ingvar. 2006. "The Relationship between Politics and Administration: The Importance of Contingency Factors, Formal Structure, Demography, and Time." *Governance* 19(2): 303-23.
- Johnson, Derek B. 2018. "McCaskill Sounds Alarms over Proposed IG Budget Cuts." *Federal Computer Week*.
- Jones, Bryan D. 2001. *Politics and the Architecture of Choice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jones, Bryan D., and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2005. *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*: University of Chicago Press.

- Jones, Bryan D., Tracy Sulkin, and Heather A. Larsen. 2003. "Policy Punctuations in American Political Institutions." *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 151-69.
- Jones, Charles O. 1976. "Why Congress Can't Do Policy Analysis (or Words to That Effect)." *Policy Analysis* 2(2): 251-64.
- Joyce, Philip G. 2011. *The Congressional Budget Office: Honest Numbers, Power, and Policymaking*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Kagan, Elana. 2001. "Presidential Administration." *Harvard Law Review* 114: 2245-385.
- Kaplan, Steven E., Kelly Richmond Pope, and Janet A. Samuels. 2010. "The Effect of Social Confrontation on Individuals' Intentions to Internally Report Fraud." *Behavioral Research in Accounting* 22(2): 51-67.
- Kempf, Robin J. 2020. *The Power of Accountability: Offices of Inspector General at the State and Local Levels*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
- Kempf, Robin J., and Jessica C. Cabrera. 2019. "The De Facto Independence of Federal Offices of Inspector General." *American Review of Public Administration* 49(1): 65-78.
- Kettl, Donald F. 1992. "Micromanagement: Congressional Control and Bureaucratic Risk." In *Agenda for Excellence: Public Service in America*, ed. P. W. Ingraham and D. F. Kettl. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Kingdon, John W. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Kosar, Kevin R. 2018. "The Atrophying of the Congressional Research Service's Role in Supporting Committee Oversight." *Wayne Law Review* 64: 149-62.

- Krause, George A., and James W. Douglas. 2005. "Institutional Design Versus Reputational Effects on Bureaucratic Performance: Evidence from U.S. Government Macroeconomic and Fiscal Projections." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 15(2): 281-306.
- Krause, George A., David E. Lewis, and James W. Douglas. 2006. "Political Appointments, Civil Service Systems, and Bureaucratic Competence: Organizational Balancing and Executive Branch Revenue Forecasts in the American States." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 770-87.
- Krause, George A., and Anne Joseph O'Connell. 2016. "Experiential Learning and Presidential Management of the U.S. Federal Bureaucracy: Logic and Evidence from Agency Leadership Appointments." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 914-31.
- Krause, George A., and Neal D. Woods. 2014. "Policy Delegation, Comparative Institutional Capacity, and Administrative Politics in the American States " In *Oxford Handbook of State and Local Government*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kriner, Douglas L., and Liam Schwartz. 2008. "Divided Government and Congressional Investigations." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 33(2): 295-321.
- Landau, Martin. 1969. "Redundancy, Rationality, and the Problem of Duplication and Overlap." *Public Administration Review* 29(4): 346-58.
- Lavena, Cecilia Florencia. 2016. "Whistle-Blowing: Individual and Organizational Determinants of the Decision to Report Wrongdoing in the Federal Government." *The American Review of Public Administration* 46(1): 113-36.

- Lee, Jung Wook, Hal G. Rainey, and Young Han Chun. 2009. "Of Politics and Purpose: Political Salience and Goal Ambiguity of Us Federal Agencies." *Public Administration* 87(3): 457-84.
- Lee, Moontae, and David Mimno. 2014. "Low-Dimensional Embeddings for Interpretable Anchor-Based Topic Inference." In *Proceedings of the 2014 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP)*.
- Lee, Soo-Young, and Andrew B. Whitford. 2013. "Assessing the Effects of Organizational Resources on Public Agency Performance: Evidence from the Us Federal Government." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 23(3): 687-712.
- Leisink, Peter, and Bram Steijn. 2009. "Public Service Motivation and Job Performance of Public Sector Employees in the Netherlands." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 75(1): 35-52.
- Leming, James S. 1980. "Cheating Behavior, Subject Variables, and Components of the Internal-External Scale under High and Low Risk Conditions." *The Journal of Educational Research* 74(2): 83-7.
- Lewis, David E. 2003. *Presidents and the Politics of Agency Design*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 2007. "Testing Pendleton's Premise: Do Political Appointees Make Worse Bureaucrats?" *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 1073-88.
- . 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Lewis, Jeffrey B., Keith T. Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin, and Luke Sonnet. 2019. "Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database."
- Light, Paul C. 1993. *Monitoring Government: Inspectors General and the Search for Accountability*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- . 1995. *Thickening Government: Federal Hierarchy and the Diffusion of Accountability*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- . 2014. *Government by Investigation: Congress, Presidents, and the Search for Answers, 1945-2012*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Loomis, Burdett A. 1988. *The New American Politician: Ambition, Entrepreneurship, and the Changing Face of Political Life*: Basic Books New York.
- Lopez, German. 2014. "Congress Passed a Plan to Fix the Va. Here's What It Does." *Vox*.
- Lowande, Kenneth. 2018. "Who Polices the Administrative State?" *American Political Science Review* 112(4): 874-90.
- . 2019. "Politicization and Responsiveness in Executive Agencies." *The Journal of Politics* 81(1): 33-48.
- Lupia, Arthur, and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1994. "Learning from Oversight: Fire Alarms and Police Patrols Reconstructed." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 10(1): 96-125.
- MacDonald, Jason A., and Robert J. McGrath. 2016. "Retrospective Congressional Oversight and the Dynamics of Legislative Influence over the Bureaucracy." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 41(4): 899-934.
- March, James G., and Herbert A. Simon. 1958. *Organizations*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

- Marvel, John D., and Robert J. McGrath. 2016. "Congress as Manager: Oversight Hearings and Agency Morale." *Journal of Public Policy* 36(03): 489-520.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*: Yale University Press.
- McCubbins, Mathew D. 1985. "The Legislative Design of Regulatory Structure." *American Journal of Political Science* 29(4): 721-48.
- McCubbins, Mathew D., Roger G. Noll, and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* 3(2): 243-77.
- . 1989. "Structure and Process, Politics and Policy: Administrative Arrangements and the Political Control of Agencies." *Virginia Law Review* 75(2): 431-82.
- McCubbins, Mathew D., and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1): 165-79.
- McGrath, Robert J. 2013. "Congressional Oversight Hearings and Policy Control." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 38(3): 349-76.
- Meier, Kenneth J., Laurence J. O'Toole, Jr, George A. Boyne, and Richard M. Walker. 2006. "Strategic Management and the Performance of Public Organizations: Testing Venerable Ideas against Recent Theories." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 17(3): 357-77.
- Mendelson, Nina A. 2015. "The Uncertain Effects of Senate Confirmation Delays in the Agencies." *Duke Law Journal* 64(8): 1571-606.
- Menzel, Donald C. 2015. "Research on Ethics and Integrity in Public Administration: Moving Forward, Looking Back." *Public Integrity* 17(4): 343-70.

- Mesmer-Magnus, Jessica R., and Chockalingam Viswesvaran. 2005. "Whistleblowing in Organizations: An Examination of Correlates of Whistleblowing Intentions, Actions, and Retaliation." *Journal of Business Ethics* 62(3): 277-97.
- Miceli, Marcia P., and Janet P. Near. 1985. "Characteristics of Organizational Climate and Perceived Wrongdoing Associated with Whistle-Blowing Decisions." *Personnel psychology* 38(3).
- Miceli, Marcia P., Janet P. Near, and Terry Dworkin. 2008. *Whistle-Blowing in Organizations*. New York: Routledge.
- Miceli, Marcia P., Janet P. Near, Michael T. Rehg, and James R. Van Scotter. 2012. "Predicting Employee Reactions to Perceived Organizational Wrongdoing: Demoralization, Justice, Proactive Personality, and Whistle-Blowing." *Human Relations* 65(8): 923-54.
- Miller, Susan M. 2015. "The Relationship between Short-Term Political Appointments and Bureaucratic Performance: The Case of Recess Appointments in the United States." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 25(3): 777-96.
- Mills, Russell W., and Jennifer L. Selin. 2017. "Don't Sweat the Details! Enhancing Congressional Committee Expertise through the Use of Detailees." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 42(4): 611-36.
- Moe, Terry M. 1984. "The New Economics of Organization." *American Journal of Political Science* 28(4): 739-77.
- . 1985. "The Politicized Presidency." In *The New Direction in American Politics*, ed. J. E. Chubb and P. E. Peterson. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

- . 1989. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure." In *Can the Government Govern?*, ed. J. E. Chubb and P. E. Peterson. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Moon, M. Jae. 2000. "Organizational Commitment Revisited in New Public Management: Motivation, Organizational Culture, Sector, and Managerial Level." *Public performance & management review* 24(2): 177-94.
- Mooney, Christopher Z. 1991. "Information Sources in State Legislative Decision Making." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 16(3): 445-55.
- Moore, Celia, and Francesca Gino. 2015. "Approach, Ability, Aftermath: A Psychological Process Framework of Unethical Behavior at Work." *Academy of Management Annals* 9(1): 235-89.
- Mouritzen, Poul Erik, and James H Svara. 2002. *Leadership at the Apex: Politicians and Administrators in Western Local Governments*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Moynihan, Donald P. 2008. *The Dynamics of Performance Management: Constructing Information and Reform*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Moynihan, Donald P., and Sanjay K. Pandey. 2007. "The Role of Organizations in Fostering Public Service Motivation." *Public Administration Review* 67(1): 40-53.
- Mucciaroni, Gary, and Paul J. Quirk. 2006. *Deliberative Choices: Debating Public Policy in Congress*: University of Chicago Press.
- Naff, Katherine, and John Crum. 1999. "Working for America: Does Public Service Motivation Make a Difference?" *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 19(4): 5-16.

- Near, Janet P., and Marcia P. Miceli. 1996. "Whistle-Blowing: Myth and Reality." *Journal of management* 22: 507-26.
- Near, Janet P., Michael T. Rehg, James R. Van Scotter, and Marcia P. Miceli. 2004. "Does Type of Wrongdoing Affect the Whistle-Blowing Process." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 14(2): 219-42.
- Newcomer, Kathryn E., and George Grob. 2004. "Federal Offices of the Inspector General: Thriving on Chaos?" *American Review of Public Administration* 34(3): 235-51.
- Nou, Jennifer. 2017. "Subdelegating Powers." *Columbia Law Review* 117(2): 473-526.
- O'Connell, Anne Joseph. 2009. "Vacant Offices: Delays in Staffing Top Agency Positions." *Southern California Law Review* 83: 913-1000.
- . 2020. "Actings." *Columbia Law Review*.
- O'Leary, Rosemary. 2014. *The Ethics of Dissent: Managing Guerrilla Government*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQPress.
- Oppel, Richard A. 2014. "V.A. Official Acknowledges Link between Delays and Patient Deaths." *The New York Times*.
- Palus, Christine Kelleher, and Susan Webb Yackee. 2016. "Clerks or Kings? Partisan Alignment and Delegation to the Us Bureaucracy." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 26(4): 693-708.
- Pardue, Andrew B. 2019. "'When the President Does It': Why Congress Should Take the Lead in Investigations of Executive Wrongdoing." *William and Mary Law Review* 61(2): 573-601.

- Parker, David C.W., and Matthew Dull. 2009. "Divided We Quarrel: The Politics of Congressional Investigations, 1947-2004." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 34(3): 319-45.
- . 2013. "Rooting out Waste, Fraud, and Abuse: The Politics of House Committee Investigations, 1947 to 2004." *Political Research Quarterly* 66(3): 630-44.
- Pascrell, Bill. 2019. "Why Is Congress So Dumb?" *The Washington Post*.
- Patashnik, Eric M., and Justin Peck. 2017. "Can Congress Do Policy Analysis? The Politics of Problem Solving on Capitol Hill." In *Governance in a Polarized Age*, ed. A. Gerber and E. Schickler. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Peffer, Shelley L., Aleksandr Bocheko, Rita E. Del Valle, Allmir Osmani, Shawn Peyton, and Edna Roman. 2015. "Whistle Where You Work? The Ineffectiveness of the Federal Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 and the Promise of the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012." *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 35(1): 70-81.
- Perry, James. 1996. "Measuring Public Service Motivation: An Assessment of Construct Reliability and Validity." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 6: 5-24.
- Perry, James L., Annie Hondeghem, and Lois Recascino Wise. 2010. "Revisiting the Motivational Bases of Public Service: Twenty Years of Research and an Agenda for the Future." *Public Administration Review* 70(5): 681-90.
- Perry, James, and Lois Wise. 1990. "The Motivational Base of Public Service." *Public Administration Review* 50(3): 367-73.

- Petrovsky, Nicolai, and Adrian Ritz. 2014. "Public Service Motivation and Performance: A Critical Perspective." *Evidence-Based Human Resource Management* 2(1): 57-79.
- Pitts, David W. 2005. "Diversity, Representation, and Performance: Evidence About Race and Ethnicity in Public Organizations." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART* 15(4): 615-31.
- Pitts, David W., and Elizabeth M. Jarry. 2009. "Getting to Know You: Ethnic Diversity, Time and Performance in Public Organizations." *Public Administration* 87(3): 503-18.
- Poole, Keith T., and Howard Rosenthal. 1997. *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll-Call Voting*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2019. *Bending the Rules: Procedural Politicking in the Bureaucracy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Potter, Rachel Augustine, and Charles R. Shipan. 2019. "Agency Rulemaking in a Separation of Powers System." *Journal of Public Policy* 39(1): 89-113.
- Pressman, Jeffrey L., and Aaron Wildavsky. 1984. *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; or, Why It's Amazing That Federal Programs Work at All, This Being a Saga of the Economic Development Administration as Told by Two Sympathetic Observers Who Seek to Build Morals on a Foundation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Price, David E. 1971. "Professionals and "Entrepreneurs": Staff Orientations and Policy Making on Three Senate Committees." *The Journal of Politics* 33(2): 316-36.

- Rainey, Hal G. 2003. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Rainey, Hal G., and Paula Steinbauer. 1999. "Galloping Elephants: Developing Elements of a Theory of Effective Government Organizations." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 9(1): 1-32.
- Resh, William G. 2015. *Rethinking the Administrative Presidency: Trust, Intellectual Capital, and Appointee-Careerist Relations in the George W. Bush Administration*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rich, Andrew. 2001. "The Politics of Expertise in Congress and the News Media." *Social Science Quarterly* 82(3): 583-601.
- Ringquist, Evan J., Jeff Worsham, and Marc Allen Eisner. 2003. "Salience, Complexity, and the Legislative Direction of Regulatory Bureaucracies." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 13(2): 141-64.
- Ritz, Adrian, Gene A. Brewer, and Oliver Neumann. 2016. "Public Service Motivation: A Systematic Literature Review and Outlook." *Public Administration Review*.
- Roberts, Margaret E, Brandon M Stewart, and Dustin Tingley. 2014. "Stm: R Package for Structural Topic Models." *Journal of Statistical Software* 10(2): 1-40.
- Roberts, Margaret E, Brandon M Stewart, Dustin Tingley, Christopher Lucas, Jetson Leder-Luis, Shana Kushner Gadarian, Bethany Albertson, and David G Rand. 2014. "Structural Topic Models for Open-Ended Survey Responses." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 1064-82.
- Rourke, Francis E. 1984. *Bureaucracy, Politics and Public Policy*. 3rd ed. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

- Rubin, Edward. 2005. "The Myth of Accountability and the Anti-Administrative Impulse." *Michigan Law Review* 103: 2073-136.
- Rudalevige, Andrew. 2002. *Managing the President's Program: Presidential Leadership and Legislative Policy Formulation*: Princeton University Press.
- . 2009. "The Administrative Presidency and Bureaucratic Control: Implementing a Research Agenda." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39(1): 10-24.
- Saldin, Robert P. 2017. *When Bad Policy Makes Good Politics: Running the Numbers on Health Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Selin, Jennifer L. 2015. "What Makes an Agency Independent?" *American Journal of Political Science* 59(4): 971-87.
- Selin, Jennifer L., and David E. Lewis. 2018. *Sourcebook of United States Executive Agencies*. Second ed. Washington, DC: Administrative Conference of the United States.
- Shawver, Tara. 2011. "Can Ethics Education Impact Whistleblowing?" *Management Accounting Quarterly* 12(4): 29-37.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. 1992. "Bureaucratic Drift, Coalitional Drift, and Time Consistency: A Comment on Macey." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 8: 111-18.
- Shulock, Nancy. 1999. "The Paradox of Policy Analysis: If It Is Not Used, Why Do We Produce So Much of It?" *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 18(2): 226-44.
- Silver-Greenberg, Jessica, and Ben Protess. 2013. "Government Watchdog Faults Regulators over Foreclosure Review." *The New York Times*.

- Simon, Herbert A. 1946. "The Proverbs of Administration." *Public Administration Review* 6(1): 53-67.
- . 1957. *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organizations*. New York: The Free Press.
- Smith, McKay, and Alan Wehbe. 2018. "A Bipartisan Vehicle for Change: Proposing a Novel Investigative Framework Designed to Improve and Empower Congressional Investigations." *Stanford Law and Policy Review* 29(2): 237-66.
- Stegmueller, Daniel. 2013. "How Many Countries for Multilevel Modeling? A Comparison of Frequentist and Bayesian Approaches." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3): 748-61.
- Steijn, Bram. 2008. "Person-Environment Fit and Public Service Motivation." *International public management journal* 11(1): 13-27.
- Taratoot, Cole D., and David C. Nixon. 2011. "With Strings Attached: Statutory Delegations of Authority to the Executive Branch." *Public Administration Review* 71(4): 637-44.
- Taylor, Jeannette. 2018. "Internal Whistle-Blowing in the Public Service: A Matter of Trust." *Public Administration Review* 78(5): 717-26.
- Tenbrunsel, Ann E., and David M. Messick. 2004. "Ethical Fading: The Role of Self-Deception in Unethical Behavior." *Social Justice Research* 17(2): 223-36.
- Teodoro, Manuel P. 2011. *Bureaucratic Ambition: Careers, Motives, and the Innovative Administrator*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- The Associated Press. 1946. "Jones Charges Gao Attempt to Harm Rfc." *The Washington Post*.

- Thompson, James D. 1967. *Organizations in Action: Social Science Bases of Administrative Theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. 2013a. "Foreclosure Review: Lessons Learned Could Enhance Continuing Reviews and Activities under Amended Consent Orders."
- . 2013b. "Va Health Care: Reliability of Reported Outpatient Medical Appointment Wait Times and Scheduling Oversight Need Improvement."
- . 2014. "Va Health Care: Ongoing and Past Work Identified Access Problems That May Delay Needed Medical Care for Veterans."
- . 2018. "Inspectors General: Information on Vacancies and Ig Community Views on Their Impact."
- Ugaddan, Reginald G., and Sung Min Park. 2019. "Do Trustful Leadership, Organizational Justice, and Motivation Influence Whistle-Blowing Intention? Evidence from Federal Employees." *Public Personnel Management* 48(1): 56-81.
- VA Office of Inspector General. 2014a. "Department of Veterans Affairs Access Audit: System-Wide Review of Access".
- . 2014b. "Veterans Health Administration: Review of Alleged Patient Deaths, Patient Wait Times, and Scheduling Practices at the Phoenix Va Health Care System."
- Vandenabeele, Wouter. 2007. "Toward a Public Administration Theory of Public Service Motivation: An Institutional Approach." *Public management review* 9(4): 545-56.
- Washington Post Editorial Board. 2018. "Legislators Struggle with Tech. That's Why We Need the Office of Technology Assessment." *The Washington Post*.

- Waterman, Richard W., and Kenneth J. Meier. 1998. "Principal-Agent Models: An Expansion?" *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 8(2): 173-202.
- Weiss, Carol H. 1989a. "Congressional Committees as Users of Analysis." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 8(3): 411-31.
- Weiss, Carol H., and Michael J. Bucuvalas. 1980. "Truth Tests and Utility Tests: Decision-Makers' Frames of Reference for Social Science Research." *American Sociological Review* 45(2): 302-13.
- Weiss, Carol H., Erin Murphy-Graham, Anthony Petrosino, and Allison G. Gandhi. 2008. "The Fairy Godmother—and Her Warts: Making the Dream of Evidence-Based Policy Come True." *American Journal of Evaluation* 29(1): 29-47.
- Weiss, Janet A. 1989b. "The Powers of Problem Definition: The Case of Government Paperwork." *Policy Sciences* 22(2): 97-121.
- Whiteman, David. 1985. "Reaffirming the Importance of Strategic Use: A Two-Dimensional Perspective on Policy Analysis in Congress." *Knowledge* 6(3): 203-24.
- Whitford, Andrew B. 2002. "Bureaucratic Discretion, Agency Structure, and Democratic Responsiveness: The Case of the United States Attorneys." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 12(1): 3-27.
- . 2005. "The Pursuit of Political Control by Multiple Principals." *The Journal of Politics* 67(1): 29-49.
- . 2006. "Unitary, Divisional, and Matrix Forms as Political Governance Systems." *Journal of Management & Governance* 10(4): 435-54.

- Williams, Laron K., and Guy D. Whitten. 2012. "But Wait, There's More! Maximizing Substantive Inferences from Tscs Models." *The Journal of Politics* 74(3): 685-93.
- Wood, Abby K., and David E. Lewis. 2017. "Agency Performance Challenges and Agency Politicization." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 27(4): 581-95.
- Wood, B. Dan, and Richard W. Waterman. 1991. "The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review* 85(03): 801-28.
- Workman, Samuel. 2015. *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy in the Us Government: How Congress and Federal Agencies Process Information and Solve Problems*: Cambridge University Press.
- Wright, Bradley E. 2007. "Public Service and Motivation: Does Mission Matter?" *Public Administration Review* 67(1): 54-64.
- Wright, Bradley E., Robert K. Christensen, and Sanjay K. Pandey. 2013. "Measuring Public Service Motivation: Exploring the Equivalence of Existing Global Measures." *International public management journal* 16(2): 197-223.
- Wright, Bradley E., Shahidul Hassan, and Jongsoo Park. 2016. "Does a Public Service Ethic Encourage Ethical Behaviour? Public Service Motivation, Ethical Leadership and the Willingness to Report Ethical Problems." *Public Administration* 94(3): 647-63.
- Wright, Bradley E., Donald P. Moynihan, and Sanjay K. Pandey. 2012. "Pulling the Levers: Transformational Leadership, Public Service Motivation, and Mission Valence." *Public Administration Review* 72(2): 206-15.

Appendix A

The sections below include the full coefficient estimates for the main results presented in the main text and additional results.

Table A.1: Multilevel Bayesian Logit Estimates of the Probability of Identifying Wrongdoing

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	All Wrongdoing	Illegal Activity	Wasteful Activity
<i>Individual-Level Covariates</i>			
Internal Oversight Understanding	0.57*	0.47*	0.46*
	[0.52; 0.62]	[0.40; 0.54]	[0.40; 0.51]
Public Service Motivation	0.23*	0.25*	0.12*
	[0.19; 0.28]	[0.18; 0.31]	[0.07; 0.18]
Agency Performance	-0.35*	-0.17*	-0.31*
	[-0.40; -0.30]	[-0.24; -0.10]	[-0.36; -0.26]
Agency Fit	-0.33*	-0.32*	-0.27*
	[-0.38; -0.28]	[-0.40; -0.25]	[-0.33; -0.21]
Supervisor	0.18*	0.16*	0.16*
	[0.08; 0.29]	[0.02; 0.30]	[0.04; 0.29]
Tenure	0.17*	0.18*	0.13*
	[0.12; 0.22]	[0.11; 0.24]	[0.08; 0.19]
Minority	-0.22*	0.05	-0.34*
	[-0.33; -0.12]	[-0.10; 0.20]	[-0.47; -0.21]
Union Member	0.11	0.13	-0.06
	[-0.02; 0.24]	[-0.05; 0.32]	[-0.22; 0.09]
Education	0.08*	0.00	0.09*
	[0.03; 0.13]	[-0.06; 0.07]	[0.03; 0.15]
<i>Agency-Level Covariates</i>			
Employees (log)	0.09*	0.03	0.09*
	[0.02; 0.17]	[-0.07; 0.14]	[0.01; 0.19]
Politicization	0.09	0.07	0.04
	[-0.05; 0.21]	[-0.09; 0.24]	[-0.09; 0.17]
Pres.-Agency Ideology Mismatch	-0.11	-0.05	-0.06
	[-0.27; 0.05]	[-0.27; 0.16]	[-0.24; 0.12]
Politicization x Ideo. Mismatch	-0.09	-0.14	-0.00
	[-0.25; 0.08]	[-0.35; 0.08]	[-0.16; 0.16]
Professionals	-0.03	-0.00	-0.02
	[-0.12; 0.04]	[-0.11; 0.10]	[-0.11; 0.07]
Intercept	-2.49*	-3.54*	-2.88*
	[-2.62; -2.37]	[-3.71; -3.37]	[-3.02; -2.74]
σ^2 Intercept	0.21*	0.25*	0.22*
	[0.14; 0.30]	[0.14; 0.37]	[0.13; 0.31]
Observations	24,852	24,948	24,948
Agencies	52	52	52

Note: Posterior means shown in each cell with 95% credible intervals in brackets. Variables standardized to mean zero and standard deviation one before estimating models.

* 95% credible does not contain zero.

Table A.2: Multilevel Bayesian Logit Estimates of the Probability of Identifying Wrongdoing with Competing Oversight Sources

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	All Wrongdoing	Illegal Activity	Wasteful Activity
<i>Individual-Level Covariates</i>			
Internal Allegation Consideration	0.48*	0.44*	0.36*
	[0.41; 0.55]	[0.33; 0.54]	[0.28; 0.45]
GAO Allegation Consideration	-0.02	-0.07	0.02
	[-0.10; 0.06]	[-0.19; 0.04]	[-0.07; 0.11]
Congress Allegation Consideration	-0.14*	-0.06	-0.21*
	[-0.21; -0.08]	[-0.17; 0.04]	[-0.29; -0.13]
Public Service Motivation	0.23*	0.27*	0.12*
	[0.18; 0.29]	[0.19; 0.34]	[0.05; 0.18]
Agency Performance	-0.33*	-0.15*	-0.30*
	[-0.39; -0.28]	[-0.23; -0.07]	[-0.37; -0.23]
Agency Fit	0.07	0.11	0.05
	[-0.04; 0.19]	[-0.06; 0.28]	[-0.09; 0.19]
Supervisor	0.13*	0.12*	0.11*
	[0.08; 0.18]	[0.05; 0.20]	[0.05; 0.17]
Tenure	-0.21*	0.09	-0.32*
	[-0.34; -0.10]	[-0.08; 0.26]	[-0.48; -0.17]
Minority	0.15*	0.22*	-0.07
	[0.01; 0.28]	[0.03; 0.42]	[-0.25; 0.11]
Union Member	0.08*	0.01	0.09*
	[0.02; 0.13]	[-0.07; 0.10]	[0.03; 0.16]
Education	-0.32*	-0.32*	-0.25*
	[-0.38; -0.26]	[-0.41; -0.23]	[-0.32; -0.18]
<i>Agency-Level Covariates</i>			
Employees (log)	0.09*	0.02	0.09
	[0.01; 0.18]	[-0.08; 0.12]	[-0.00; 0.18]
Politicization	0.12*	0.09	0.06
	[0.00; 0.24]	[-0.06; 0.24]	[-0.07; 0.19]
Pres.-Agency Ideology Mismatch	-0.08	-0.01	-0.04
	[-0.25; 0.08]	[-0.22; 0.19]	[-0.22; 0.14]
Politicization x Ideo. Mismatch	-0.00	0.01	0.00
	[-0.09; 0.08]	[-0.10; 0.11]	[-0.09; 0.10]
Professionals	-0.12	-0.15	-0.04
	[-0.28; 0.03]	[-0.36; 0.06]	[-0.22; 0.14]
Intercept	-2.51*	-3.67*	-2.87*
	[-2.64; -2.39]	[-3.85; -3.50]	[-3.02; -2.72]
σ^2 Intercept	0.20*	0.20*	0.20*
	[0.12; 0.28]	[0.02; 0.33]	[0.10; 0.32]
Observations	19,353	19,431	19,431
Agencies	52	52	52

Note: Posterior means shown in each cell with 95% credible intervals in brackets. Variables standardized to mean zero and standard deviation one before estimating models.

* 95% credible does not contain zero.

Appendix B

Table B.1: Summary Statistics

Statistic	N	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Monitoring Diversity	667	0.92	0.94	0.07	0.30	0.98
Monitoring Diversity (Major Issues)	667	0.80	0.82	0.08	0.25	0.91
PAS IG	667	0.54	1	0.50	0	1
OIG Units	667	17.83	13.0	16.85	1	85
Vacancy	667	0.15	0	0.36	0	1
IG's First Year	667	0.11	0	0.32	0	1
IG Years of Service	667	4.53	3	5.02	0	23
Law Enforcement Authority	667	0.64	1	0.48	0	1
Cabinet	667	0.27	0	0.45	0	1
Congressional Hearing Topic Diversity	667	4.61	4.66	0.20	3.96	4.80
President-Congress Policy Divergence	667	0.47	0.49	0.18	0.16	0.76
OIG Age	667	21.60	22	8.68	0	40
Staff (log)	667	4.90	5.52	1.71	0.00	7.40
Budget (log)	667	9.97	10.30	1.52	4.42	12.63

Table B.2: OLS Estimates of OIG Agenda Diversity, 2000-2016

	Model 1 All Issues	Model 2 Major Issues
PAS IG	0.03 (0.12)	0.08 (0.15)
OIG Units	0.01 (0.04)	0.06 (0.05)
Staff (log)	0.002 (0.09)	-0.15** (0.07)
Budget (log)	0.08 (0.06)	0.14*** (0.05)
Vacancy	0.04 (0.10)	0.02 (0.10)
IG Years of Service	0.03 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)
President-Congress Policy Divergence	0.05 (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)
Congressional Hearing Topic Diversity	0.04 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)
IG's First Year	-0.13 (0.15)	-0.17 (0.15)
OIG Age	0.07 (0.05)	0.05 (0.04)
Law Enforcement Authority	-0.11 (0.10)	-0.08 (0.12)
Cabinet	0.10 (0.10)	0.24** (0.12)
Monitoring Diversity $_{t-1}$	0.51*** (0.08)	0.51*** (0.05)
Constant	0.04 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)
Observations	583	583
Adjusted R ²	0.28	0.34

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors clustered by OIG in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table B.3: OLS Estimates of the Moderating Effect of PAS IGs on the Political Environment, 2000-2016

	Model 3 All Issues	Model 4 Major Issues	Model 5 All Issues	Model 6 Major Issues
PAS IG	0.03 (0.12)	0.03 (0.12)	0.08 (0.15)	0.07 (0.14)
President-Congress Policy Divergence	0.05 (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)
Congressional Hearing Topic Diversity	0.04 (0.03)	0.12** (0.06)	0.06** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.05)
PAS IG \times Policy Divergence	0.51*** (0.08)	0.51*** (0.08)	0.51*** (0.05)	0.52*** (0.05)
PAS IG \times Hearing Diversity	-0.001 (0.07)		0.01 (0.07)	
Monitoring Diversity $_{t-1}$		-0.13** (0.06)		-0.10** (0.05)
Constant	0.04 (0.10)	0.03 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.10)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	583	583	583	583
Adjusted R ²	0.28	0.28	0.34	0.34

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors clustered by OIG in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table B.4: OLS Estimates of the Moderating Effect of Vacancies on the Political Environment, 2000-2016

	Model 7 All Issues	Model 8 Major Issues	Model 9 All Issues	Model 10 Major Issues
Vacancy	0.05 (0.10)	0.05 (0.10)	0.02 (0.10)	0.01 (0.10)
President-Congress Policy Divergence	0.07* (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	0.07* (0.04)	0.06* (0.03)
Congressional Hearing Topic Diversity	0.04 (0.03)	0.03 (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)	0.07** (0.03)
Vacancy \times Policy Divergence	-0.11 (0.07)		-0.10 (0.07)	
Vacancy \times Hearing Diversity		0.04 (0.07)		-0.05 (0.06)
Monitoring Diversity $_{t-1}$	0.51*** (0.08)	0.51*** (0.08)	0.52*** (0.05)	0.51*** (0.05)
Constant	0.04 (0.10)	0.04 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	583	583	583	583
Adjusted R ²	0.28	0.28	0.34	0.34

Note: Entries are standardized regression coefficients with standard errors clustered by OIG in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Appendix C

The sections below include summary statistics, additional estimates, and more information on the collection and coding of Government Accountability Office reports.

Table C.1: Summary Statistics

	N	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Number of Reports	13,950	6.04	2	12.32	0	228
Divided Government	13,950	0.41	0	0.49	0	1
Divided Congress	13,950	0.25	0	0.43	0	1
GAO Staff	13,950	4,123.37	3,350	1,119.64	2,849	5,763
Technical Complexity	13,950	0.08	0.06	0.22	-0.67	0.69
Agency Employees (log)	13,950	7.45	7.56	2.47	0.01	14.19
Ideological Opponent	13,950	0.38	0	0.49	0	1
House	13,950	0.50	0.5	0.50	0	1
Committee Staff	13,950	1,357.47	1,258	338.28	899	2,233
GAO Budget (log)	13,950	12.80	12.93	0.41	11.58	13.25

Collecting GAO Reports

The Government Accountability Office keeps extensive, publicly available records, but few of them are in a ready to use format. To build the primary dataset used in this study, I wrote a Python scraper that pulled the universe of GAO reports. It grabs everything in GAO's database, and the basic process is as follows:

1. Establish date range (e.g., January 1, 1974 – December 31, 2018)
2. Populate GAO's search function
 - <https://www.gao.gov/reports-testimonies/by-date/date-range/>
3. Gather report listing for all documents on the page
4. Move to next page
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until there are no pages left
6. Use report listing to access GAO's API
 - Paths look like: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-558>
7. Create folder with report ID
8. Gather information for report and write to a JSON file in a unique folder
 - Title, report identifier, release date, GAO topic(s), URL, pdf URL
9. Save pdf to report folder
10. Extract text from pdf and save to file
 - Most of the older reports have already been OCR'd. If they are not, the scraper also extracted the basic text via Tesseract.
11. Repeat steps 6 through 10

GAO Congressional Request Considerations

Due to limited time, resources, and authority, the Government Accountability Office does not accept every report request from members of Congress. In November 2018, I filed an information request with GAO for a list of requests from 2000 through 2016. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) does not cover GAO, but the office’s “disclosure policy follows the spirit of the act consistent with GAO's duties and functions as an agency with primary responsibility to the Congress”.³⁴ Figure C.1 contains a copy of my request sent to their Chief Quality Office.

Figure C.1: Records Request Submitted to GAO

U.S. Government Accountability Office
Chief Quality Officer
Room 5K21
441 G Street NW
Washington, DC 20548

To Whom It May Concern:

I am seeking a list of requests for Government Accountability Office audits, investigations, and inspections.

Specifically, I would like to know what Congressional offices (or committees and subcommittees) submitted a request from 2000 through 2016. In addition to Congressional offices, I would like information on work initiated at the request of the Comptroller General. An entry in such a log would generally include:

- The name of the member of Congress (or committee or subcommittee) who contacted the Government Accountability Office
- The date the Government Accountability Office was contacted
- The subject of the request (i.e. What was the nature of the work the member requested? Or what was the correspondence about?)
- When (and if) the request was completed
- If the request was denied, a reason for denial (i.e. Were resources insufficient to complete the request? Was the request outside the Government Accountability Office’s scope of authority and competency?)
- Similar information would be included for requests from the Comptroller General

³⁴ More information available here: <https://www.gao.gov/foia-requests/>

This request was denied by GAO in order to protect their confidential relationship with Congress. A copy of their response to my request is in Figure C.2. In short, my request directly fell under the purview of one of their records disclosure exceptions. Without these data, it is difficult to determine the full range of reasons that GAO denies a request, or whether the reasons for denial are systemic outside of resource requirements. Having these data would provide an additional test of the theoretical approaches in the main text and partisan biases would likely be much more prominent. My primary data only show fulfilled requests, meaning GAO already filtered out any overtly partisan requests.

Figure C.2: GAO's Response to Records Request



U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

441 G St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

PRI-19-043

January 23, 2019

Mr. Cody Drolc
University of Missouri
Department of Political Science
113 Professional Building
Columbia, MO 65211-6030

Via Email

Dear Mr. Drolc:

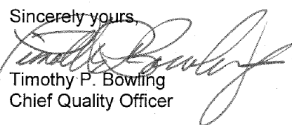
This letter responds to your November 19, 2018, request for a list of congressional requests for the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct audits, investigations and inspections. Specifically, you are interested in which Congressional offices submitted a request to GAO from 2000-2016, the date of such requests, the subject matter of each request, as well as when such requests were completed and/or reasons for denial of a request. You have also requested similar information on work initiated at the request of the Comptroller General.

As an agency responsible to the Congress, GAO is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act. However, GAO's disclosure policy follows the spirit of the act consistent with GAO's duties and functions as an agency with primary responsibility to the Congress. We are enclosing for your information a copy of our regulations concerning the availability of GAO records to the public, which are contained in 4 C.F.R. Part 81 (2018).

The information you have requested would require GAO to disclose the contents of correspondence between Congress and GAO, as well as internal communications and deliberations conducted by GAO personnel in connection with both congressional requests and work initiated by the Comptroller General. Accordingly, we decline to release the requested information pursuant to 4 C.F.R. §§ 81.6(a), which provides that congressional correspondence relating to work performed for Congress may not be disclosed; and 81.6(j), inter- or intra-agency memoranda, letters, or other materials that are protected under our deliberative process exemption.

In accordance with 4 C.F.R. § 81.4(d), further consideration of your request may be obtained by an appeal letter to the Comptroller General of the United States setting forth the basis for your belief that the denial of your request is unwarranted.

Sincerely yours,


Timothy P. Bowling
Chief Quality Officer

Enclosure

Despite some data limitations, we can get a sense of the reasons for denial from the office's protocols. GAO will only undertake work within the scope of its authority and competency.³⁵ Among other factors GAO considers the following when deciding whether to accept a request:

- the subject matter of the request
- GAO's statutory audit access authority, including whether the entity, program, or activity to be evaluated receives federal funds or is carried out under existing federal law
- GAO's professional standards and core values
- the amount of resources involved
- the extent of backlog within any applicable GAO team that would be responsible for the work
- other work being conducted for the requester
- whether any audit or investigation is ongoing or imminent by another government entity (e.g., agency Inspectors General)
- whether the matter is pending before administrative or judicial forums

Notable among these reasons is GAO's commitment to reducing redundancies in investigations. If an agency inspector general (IG) opens a similar issue, GAO will likely deny a Congressional requestor who would have to wait a similar amount of time for an IG's findings. Taken together, these reasons should bias against finding any partisan biases in GAO's observable agenda. Where even the most technical agencies are under an IG, there should be no systematic substitution for GAO's analyses.

Robustness Checks

I also consider negative binomial models with fixed effects for the chamber-agency pair. There is little reason to believe that, for example, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency in the Department of the Treasury has a unique relationship with the Senate. However, I still provide these estimates in Table C.2 below. An indicator for chamber (*House*) included in the main analysis has to be eliminated here because it is perfectly colinear with the fixed effects for chamber-agency pairs. As such, the estimates should not be *directly* compared to those in the main text. They do, however, provide substantively similar results.

³⁵ A full description of these protocols is available here: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-767G>

Table C.2: Estimates of the Number of Times and Agency is Investigated by GAO

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Ideological Opponent	0.07*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	-0.16*** (0.03)
Divided Government	0.10*** (0.01)	0.11*** (0.01)	0.19*** (0.03)
Technical Complexity	0.53*** (0.07)	0.54*** (0.07)	1.46*** (0.12)
Committee Staff	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)	0.01*** (0.01)
Ideological Opponent \times Divided Government		-0.02 (0.01)	
Ideological Opponent \times Committee Staff			0.01*** (0.01)
Divided Government \times Committee Staff			-0.01*** (0.01)
Technical Complexity \times Committee Staff			-0.01*** (0.01)
Agency Employees (log)	0.17*** (0.01)	0.17*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.01)
GAO Staff	-0.01*** (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.01)	-0.01*** (0.01)
GAO Budget (log)	0.34*** (0.09)	0.33*** (0.09)	0.34*** (0.09)
Divided Congress	-0.08*** (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)	-0.08*** (0.01)
Constant	-4.62*** (1.12)	-4.48*** (1.13)	-4.66*** (1.14)
Agency-Chamber FE	✓	✓	✓
Cubic Polynomials	✓	✓	✓
AIC	56571.98	56571.63	56412.98
BIC	60124.85	60132.04	59988.48
Agency-Chamber Pairs	460		460
N	13950		13950

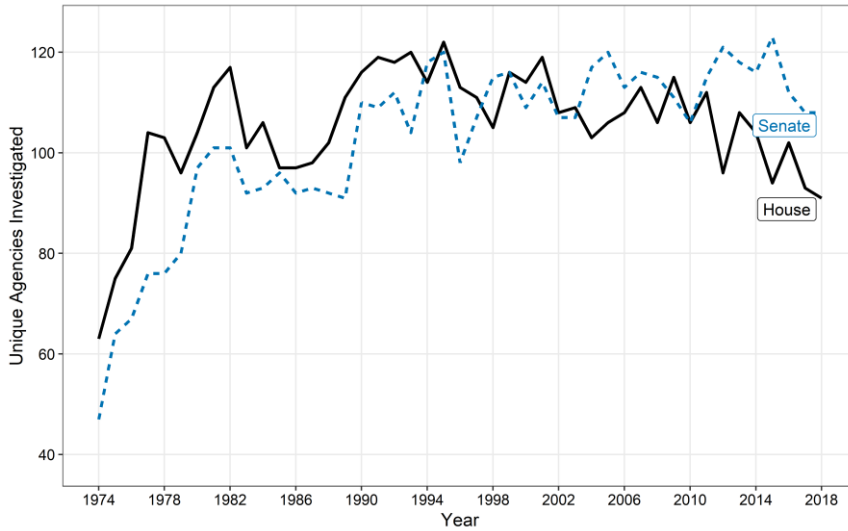
Note: Negative binomial regression estimates with standard errors clustered by agency-chamber pair reported in each cell. The panel is unbalanced because some agencies and departments were created after 1974.

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1

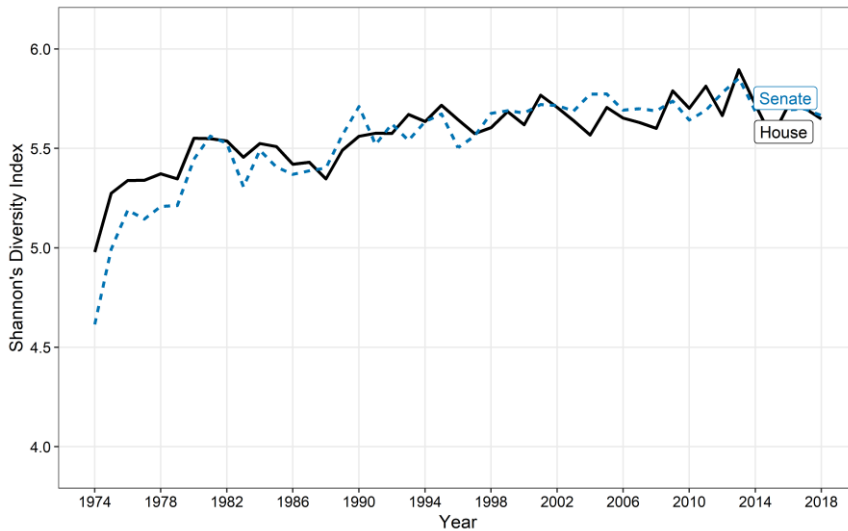
Diversity of Investigations

The House requests more reports from the GAO than the Senate, it investigates any individual agency fewer times as indicated by Table 4.1 and Figure 4.4 in the main text. Does the House investigate a greater number of agencies than the Senate? To answer this question, I first identify the unique number of agencies each chamber investigates every year. On average, the House investigates 105 agencies every year whereas the Senate investigates 103. These numbers are, for all intents and purposes, indistinguishable.

Figure C.3: Number of Unique Agencies and Diversity of Agencies by Chamber, 1974-2018

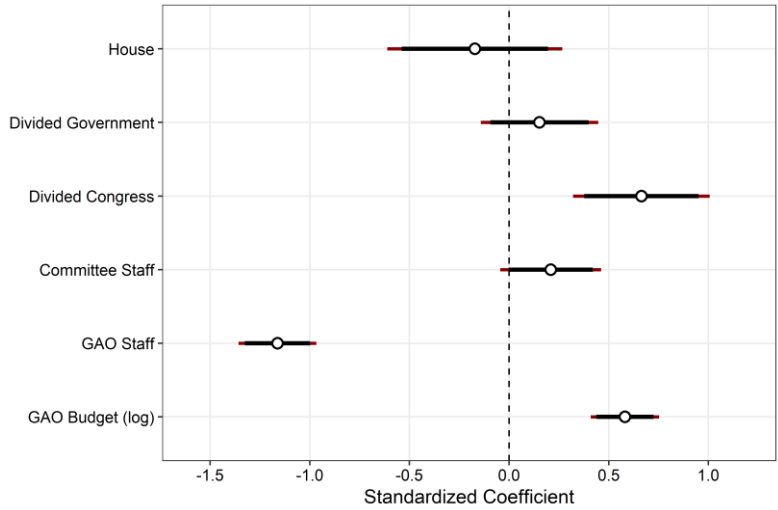


(a)

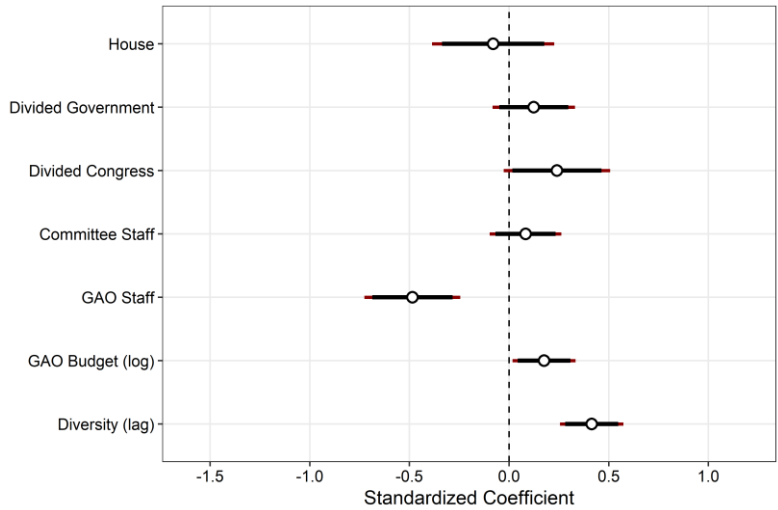


(b)

Figure C.4: Diversity Estimates by Chamber-Year



(a)



(b)

Note: N = 90 for panel a and N = 88 for panel b for each chamber-year. The bottom panel uses a lagged dependent variable to capture dependencies in investigation diversity. 90% and 95% confidence intervals shown.

The counts across the sample period are reported in the top panel of Figure C.3 below. As shown, the House tends to investigate a greater number of unique agencies until the 2000s when the number of unique investigations wanes. This is similar to the total number of requested reports by chamber.

Additionally, I consider the diversity of agencies investigated shown in the bottom panel of Figure C.3. I use Shannon's H to create a measure of diversity that is comparable across time for each chamber. Unlike the unique number of agencies, diversity of agencies investigated appears to be indistinguishable across time. There are small distinctions in the 1970s, but these differences wane as time goes on. Considering both figures, the number of unique agencies investigated has increased over time, but this trend should be expected with the growth of the administrative state and increasing oversight responsibilities of each chamber.

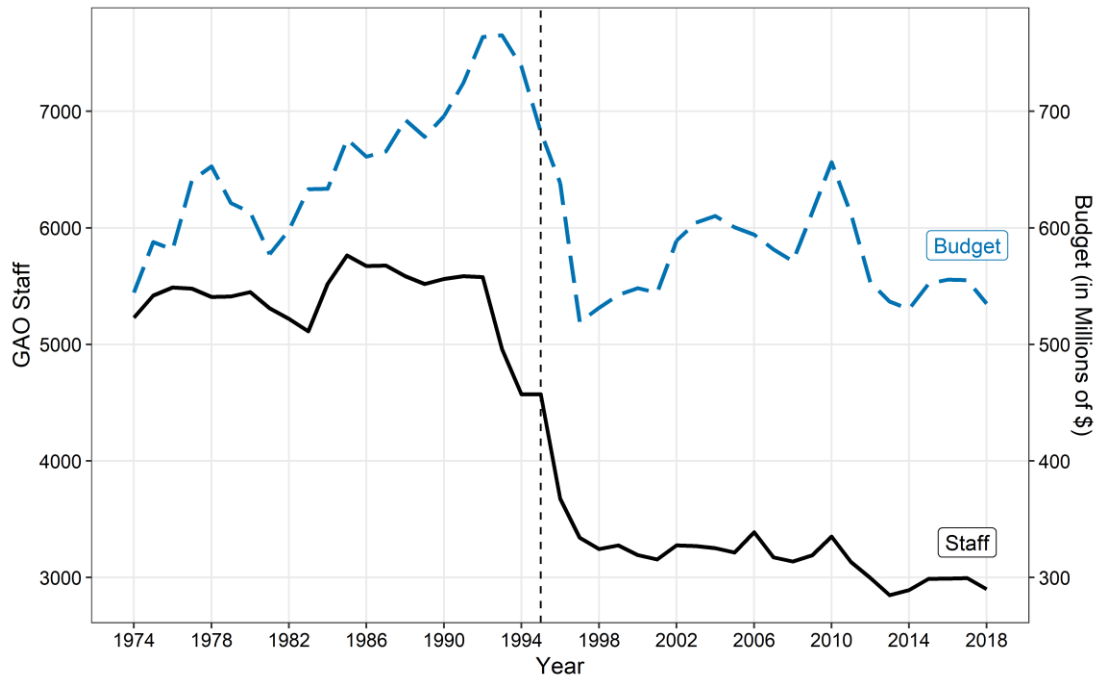
To better understand the descriptive evidence presented in Figure C.3, I also use

linear models estimate the chamber effect on diversity in agencies investigated. In addition to an indicator for chamber, I also control for the presence of divided government, divided Congress, the number of committee staff in each chamber, the number of GAO staff, and GAO’s budget (logged). These controls should help isolate the effect of chamber on investigation diversity. These results are presented as standardized regression coefficients in Figure C.4 where the bottom panel contains a lagged dependent variable and estimates in both plots are clustered by chamber. In both cases, chamber does not appear to influence the diversity of agencies investigated. *Divided Congress* has a positive effect, but it decreases when I include the lagged measure of diversity. It appears that the capacity of GAO (staff and budget) and diversity in the previous year are the only statistically and substantively significant predictors of agency investigation diversity.

NAPA Report Impact on GAO’s Agenda

The National Academy of Public Administration’s (NAPA) investigations into GAO’s audits and investigations found no evidence of deliberate partisan bias. Despite NAPA’s conclusion and subsequent committee hearings reaffirming the conclusion, the GAO and other agencies in the legislative branch lost a significant portion of their budget under Newt Gingrich’s 1995 budget. Figure C.5 shows GAO’s budget in real 2018 dollars from 1974-2018. Republicans cut GAO’s budget by 25% in 1995 and the cuts were almost exclusively applied to staff. As shown, GAO’s resources peaked shortly before Congressional Republicans in the House and Senate accused it of being a pawn for Democrats. Since the 1994 NAPA report and 1995 appropriations, GAO’s budget has not returned to 1990s levels and staffing levels have stagnated and declined in recent years.

Figure C.5: GAO’s Adjusted Budget and FTE Staff, 1974-2018



Note: Budget adjusted to 2018 dollars.

The NAPA report clearly had a lasting impact on GAO's resources, but did it influence how GAO interacts with Congress? In my interviews with GAO personnel, they indicated that the NAPA report and fallout is one of the first events covered for all new hires. GAO was scorned by the event and does not want to fall victim to another accusation (even if shown to be unfounded) of partisan bias. Although theory predicts that Congress would not change their behavior, GAO has enough discretion that it could minimize partisan effects on its agenda. That is, they could strategically deny more requests or refocus them so that the targeted agencies are not always opponents to Congressional requestors. The effects of divided government, however, should remain largely unaffected.

To investigate whether GAO's agenda changed in response to the NAPA report, I split the sample between pre- and post- 1995 and re-estimated Model 1 reported in the main text (Table 4.1). Figure C.6 reports the first differences of expected counts from similarly estimated fixed-effects negative binomial regressions.

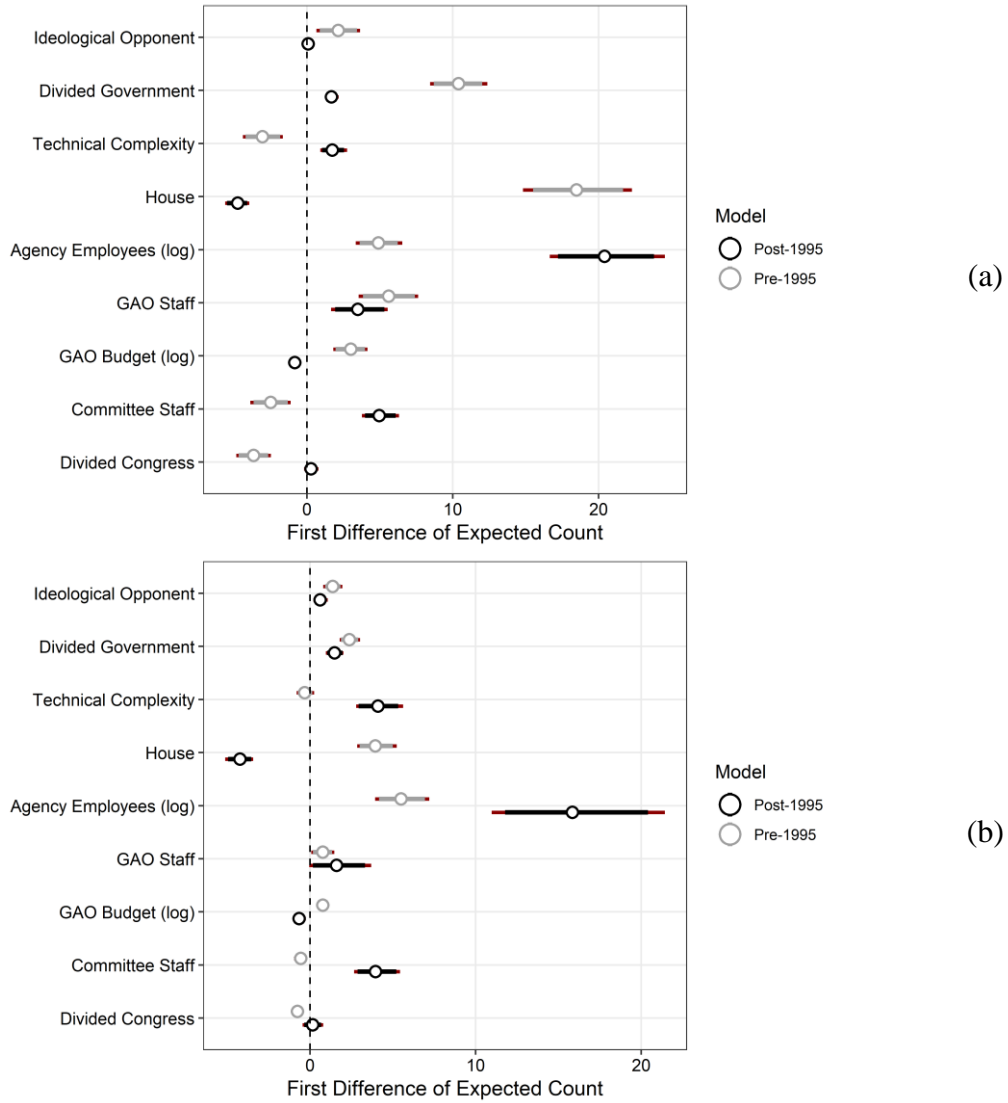
The top panel shows the first difference estimates without any corrections to the sample. The bottom panel, on the other hand, shows the first difference estimates for a comparable sample. To create the comparable sample, I retained agencies that existed for the entire 45-year period. Trimming added and dissolved agencies ensures that any changes that affect GAO's agenda are not attributed to shifts in the sample of agencies available for investigations. Overall, the effects before and after 1995 are comparable across most variables of interest in the bottom panel. Without creating a comparable sample, the effects before and after the NAPA report are much starker. Due to these discrepancies, I will focus on the bottom panel.

In terms of *ideological opponents*, the effects are statistically indistinguishable pre- and post-1995, and the effect is substantively similar to the pooled model. The effects of *divided government* are also statistically indistinguishable and substantively similar to the pooled results. However, the partisan effects are slightly smaller in both of these cases after the NAPA report and budget fallout in 1995.

Where the effects begin to diverge is with technical complexity. The effect is not statistically different from zero pre-1995 but becomes positive and of a similar magnitude to the pooled model post-1995. This effect could be driven by the elimination of the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) that was eliminated in 1995. Agencies with the highest levels of technical complexity are engaged in cutting-edge scientific work like NASA. Without the OTA, GAO picked up some of their duties, and this may be reflected in the increase in reports after its elimination.

These tests do not definitively indicate that GAO changed in response to the NAPA report. Indeed, it is difficult to disentangle whether any of the observed changes are due to internal negotiations or because Congress decided to use GAO for partisan endeavors less often. Regardless, the reported estimates do indicate that the partisan effects are not bound by time and still detectable even after GAO's most significant accusation of bias.

Figure C.6: First Differences of Expected Counts Before and After NAPA Report



Note: Agencies that did not exist for the entire series were eliminated in the bottom panel. 90% and 95% confidence intervals shown.

Vita

Cody Alan Drolc was born in Rapid City, South Dakota on January 29, 1994 and raised in Spearfish, South Dakota. He attended Spearfish High School before receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in political science from Black Hills State University in 2015, graduating *magna cum laude* with a University Scholar distinction. Cody then attended the University of Missouri to study political science and received his PhD in 2020. Beginning in the Fall of 2020, Cody will join the Department of Political Science at the University of South Carolina as an assistant professor of public administration and policy.