

Bureaucratic Selection and Weberian Values: Lab-in-the-Field Evidence from Indonesia

Nicholas Kuipers, Princeton University

The meritocratic recruitment of bureaucrats is thought to promote “Weberian” values through two distinct properties. The first concerns the use of examinations to sort aspirants on the basis of traits considered desirable for bureaucrats. The second relates to nondiscretionary selection, whereby recruits do not owe their position to a politician’s patronage, making them less likely to be captured. Using a lab-in-the-field experiment among aspirants to the Indonesian bureaucracy, I disentangle the relative importance of these mechanisms by manipulating how “public officials” are chosen from groups to perform tasks on behalf of others. I find no differences on tasks gauging commitment to Weberian values across public officials selected via the merit system or lotteries—although both perform better than those selected under patronage. Because both the merit system and lotteries are nondiscretionary, the results question examinations as the ideal tool for selecting bureaucrats.

The meritocratic recruitment of public servants is widely held to be the ideal mechanism for bureaucratic selection. A large and robust literature has demonstrated that the introduction of meritocratic recruitment leads to large gains in the quality of service delivery (Evans and Rauch 1999). A tendency toward Weberian values—impartiality, specialization, and a respect for hierarchy—among meritocratically selected bureaucrats is at the heart of these findings (Oliveros and Schuster 2018). Yet the precise mechanisms through which the “merit system” promotes a commitment to Weberian values remain unclear. On the one hand, it could be that the merit system effectively screens applicants on the basis of these traits (Dal Bó, Finan, and Rossi 2013).¹ On the other hand, it might be that the nondiscretionary nature of recruitment under the merit system forges public officials’ commitment to the public broadly rather than to the clientelistic benevolence of a specific politician to whom they owe their job (Brierley 2020).² If bureaucrats are unmoored from political pressures, after all, they may be empowered to carry

out their job in the spirit of public service, as Max Weber described—rather than in service of elected officials’ politically motivated goals.

The core innovation of this article is to propose a theoretical solution for disentangling the comparative magnitude of these twin mechanisms’ effects on bureaucrats’ commitment to Weberian values. To do so, I conceptualize types of bureaucratic selection in terms of two properties: (1) the extent to which selection procedures screen applicants on the basis of certain traits thought to be desirable for bureaucrats and (2) the extent of discretion possessed by politicians in recruitment decisions. These properties are hypothesized to harbor distinct effects on potential bureaucrats’ commitment to Weberian values. I call these the “filtering effect” and “nondiscretionary effect,” respectively. To capture the filtering effect, this article proposes to compare individuals’ commitment to Weberian values under meritocratic selection and lottery-based selection. Both mechanisms are nondiscretionary but vary in the extent to which they filter applicants,

Nicholas Kuipers (nkuipers@princeton.edu) is an assistant professor of politics at Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08540.

This research was supported by the National University of Singapore Presidential Young Professor Whitespace Fund (WBS-A-8000553-01-00) and was reviewed and approved by the NUS IRB (NUS-IRB-2022-670). The preanalysis plan associated with this research can be found on the EGAP registry (no. 20230308AB). Replication files are available in the *JOP* Dataverse (<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/jop>). The empirical analysis has been successfully replicated by the *JOP* replication analyst. An online appendix with supplementary material is available at <https://doi.org/10.1086/734258>.

1. Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister of Singapore, is perhaps the most vocal champion of this view, arguing that, “to get good government, you must have good people in charge of government” (Allison, Blackwill, and Wyne 2013, 32).

2. Theodore Roosevelt, the former president of the United States, argued that it was from this feature that the merit system derived its comparative advantage: “the minute that we make [civil servants’] bread and butter depend upon their political action, that action ceases to be influenced by considerations of the public weal” (Roosevelt 1895).

Published online September 10, 2025.

The Journal of Politics, volume 88, number 1, January 2026. © 2025 Southern Political Science Association. All rights reserved. Published by The University of Chicago Press for the Southern Political Science Association. <https://doi.org/10.1086/734258>

meaning any differences in observed inclination toward Weberian values can be attributed to this latter feature. In turn, any residual gains observed under meritocratic selection over a third condition in which politicians wield discretion in the selection of bureaucrats (i.e., patronage) not accounted for by the filtering effect can be attributed to the nondiscretionary effect.

Empirically testing the comparative magnitude of these twin mechanisms is dogged by serious inferential concerns, however. For one, few national or subnational governments have adopted lotteries for the selection of public servants, making observational analyses impossible. To work around these difficulties, I conducted a lab-in-the-field experiment that enables an isolation of the chief estimands of interest. Specifically, I recruited 537 aspirants to the Indonesian civil service to play a group-based variant of the dictator game on an online platform.³ Participants were segmented into groups of three and informed that a single public official would be selected from among them. Crucially, the means by which the public official was chosen was randomly assigned to one of the three conditions of interest: merit, patronage, or lottery. Groups assigned to the merit condition answered a sampling of questions from the 2021 civil service examination, with the top-scoring candidate selected as a public official. For those assigned to patronage, one player was randomly chosen to serve as the “patron” who was asked to select a public official. To imitate the logic of patronage, the patron was shown the demographic traits of the two remaining players and allowed to chat with them to assist in their selection of a public official. Lotteries proceeded through a process of simple random sampling.

The central assumption of this framework is that the proposed game credibly imitates core aspects of the citizen-bureaucrat encounter in which I am interested. After the selection process, the public official then performs two tasks designed to imitate important aspects bureaucrats’ workload and capture an inclination toward Weberian values. First, participants were asked to read a series of ambiguous hypothetical vignettes that pitted morally desirable behaviors (e.g., generosity, efficiency, politeness) against standard Weberian bureaucratic principles (e.g., procedure, impartiality). As a placebo check, players not selected as public officials were also asked to answer these questions. Second, and irrespective of their answers to the vignettes, the public officials were then given a sum of money (200,000 Indonesian rupiah [IDR],

approximately US\$15) to decide, at their discretion, whether to allocate some of the winnings to the other participants or to keep the money for themselves. This latter step was designed to capture public officials’ inclination to hoard putatively public resources for themselves.

I establish three core findings. First, consistent with the existing literature (e.g., Kuipers and Sahn 2023), the method of selection affects who becomes a public official: older and better educated participants were more likely to be selected under the merit system, whereas public officials selected under lotteries are indistinguishable from the overall population. Second, I detect no differences in the inclination toward Weberian bureaucratic values across public officials selected under both merit and lottery, although, crucially, both score higher than the public officials selected under patronage. I interpret this as evidence that the nondiscretion effect looms larger than the filtering one: compared to those screened on the results of an examination designed to measure merit, randomly chosen participants are evidently similarly inclined to Weberian bureaucratic principles. Turning to prosociality, third, I show that public officials selected under both merit and patronage keep greater shares of the money than public officials selected under a lottery. Although the precise mechanism behind this final finding remain elusive, my preferred conjecture is that a lottery imprints neither the sense of entitlement nor the sense of obligation found among those chosen under the merit system and patronage, respectively.

The results of this experiment are intended to spur future research on the institutional design of bureaucratic selection. In recent years, academics and commentators have taken aim at the merit system writ large, focusing on the tendency of privileged groups to outperform marginalized groups on the entrance exams that are the hallmark of meritocratic selection (Markovits 2019; Sandel 2020). In other words, these critiques take issue with what I call meritocratic selection’s filtering property, especially in governing access to elite universities in the United States. This article is motivated by these concerns but focuses on the wholly different context of civil service recruitment, training its sights on the task of unbundling the merit system’s mechanisms in the hopes of uncovering evidence that may nuance a wholesale condemnation of meritocratic selection. Recall that the results suggest that the nondiscretionary property may be more consequential than the filtering one—a finding that suggests lotteries may hold promise for selecting civil servants. The results of this experiment are thus hoped to justify future research into alternative modes of bureaucratic recruitment that boost the quality of service delivery without occasioning the representational imbalances that arise when filtering applicants on the basis of certain traits.

3. Specifically, I screened participants on a question gauging whether they intend to apply for a civil service job in the upcoming cycle or whether they have ever applied to a civil service job in the past.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

All governments face decisions over how to staff their bureaucracies. At stake are a vast array of developmental outcomes ranging from the quality of service delivery to aggregate economic growth.⁴ The stunning economic growth witnessed in the so-called East Asian Tigers—including South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan—has been partially attributed to the meritocratic recruitment of civil servants, for instance (Haggard 1990). Selecting public servants via patronage, meanwhile, has been shown to undermine the quality of service delivery and increase the incidence of corruption (Rose-Ackerman 1999). Even grander outcomes are at stake, as well. Weber (1978, 983–87) argued that it was the transformation from patrimonial to meritocratic modes of bureaucratic recruitment—the act of tying politicians’ hands—that created modern states.

These and other studies of bureaucratic performance leverage diachronic or cross-sectional variation in the means by which civil servants are recruited, conceptualizing this variation in terms of the discretion offered to politicians in the selection public servants (Grindle 2012). On one extreme is the meritocratic selection of civil servants, which tends to be implemented through competitive written examinations, and in which selection is nondiscretionary insofar as it is purely a function of aspirants’ scores. On the other extreme is patronage, which Brierley et al. (2023, 6) define as “government officials selected at the discretion of a political actor.” This discretion is often wielded by politicians for personal enrichment: one study in Indonesia found that bureaucrats in one city paid, on average, 24.7 million IDR to politicians for their position—approximately one year’s salary at the time (Kristiansen and Ramli 2006). This pattern mirrors widely documented trends in political selection: Brierley and Nathan (2021), for instance, show how parties select better connected and wealthier individuals as brokers in Ghanaian elections. Some evidence indicates that the sale of public office may not necessarily undermine service delivery, however, if willingness-to-pay is positively correlated with, say, applicants’ education (Weaver 2021).

In this article, I introduce a new axis along bureaucratic selection also varies: the extent to which such institutions “filter” applicants on the basis of certain ex ante specified competencies.⁵ In practice, the institutional design of bureaucratic

Table 1. A Typology of Bureaucratic Recruitment

	Filtering	Nonfiltering
Discretionary	Meritocratic	Patronage Lottery
Nondiscretionary		

selection adopts filtering principles that optimize for competencies rather than characteristics, which may harbor implications for selected applicants’ inclination toward, say, Weberian values. Table 1 typifies these conditions in a two-by-two framework. Consider, in turn, whether meritocratic selection and patronage filter applicants on the basis of certain prespecified traits. On the first count, meritocratic selection is, first and foremost, designed to select for officials with stronger skills and greater knowledge, as well as a commitment to Weberian values, such as neutrality and impartiality. Yet, a large body of literature in sociology and education has demonstrated how entrenched inequalities in education and wealth across ascriptive cleavages conspire to make individuals from marginalized groups poorly positioned to compete successfully on written examinations, as they often do not have access to expensive tutoring services or received lower quality childhood education. The consequence is that aspirants to public service from marginalized groups are less likely to win employment in public service under meritocratic recruitment procedures—even if the traits being selected for relate to a putatively group-neutral concern over “good-governance.” Max Weber (1978, 999), despite championing written examinations for the recruitment of civil servants, acknowledge this possibility, fearing that “examinations and patents of education will create a privileged ‘caste.’”

On the second count, under patronage, politicians may wield their discretionary authority in the recruitment of bureaucrats toward either filtering or nonfiltering ends. Owing to its discretionary property, patronage is a flexible institution, and politicians may choose to select aspirants to public service on the basis of whatever traits they desire—including, say, competence or loyalty (Toral 2022). Grindle (2012) describes how it was ironically bureaucrats appointed under patronage who championed civil service reform. But the history of patronage is also populated with instances in which politicians have wielded their discretionary authority to allocate jobs on the basis of certain ascriptive traits. In a comparative study of Lebanon and Yemen, Corstange (2016) argues that “clientelism and ethnic favoritism appear to go hand in hand in many diverse societies in the developing world.”

4. To be sure, other elements of bureaucratic structure also matter for these outcomes—including, say, the extent to which political and bureaucratic careers are intertwined, as described by Dahlström and Lapuente (2017). These analyses are beyond the scope of the present analysis, which instead focuses specifically on bureaucratic recruitment.

5. To be clear, “filtering” is outcome-oriented but outcome-agnostic. Rulers may adopt selection mechanisms that filter on any number of com-

petencies (thus it is agnostic), but in order to be considered filtering it must specify ex ante those traits on which they intend to filter.

Introducing this new axis of variation also reveals that existing scholarship has overlooked a form of bureaucratic recruitment that is nondiscretionary and nonfiltering. Here, crucially, I propose that lotteries (i.e., random selection) satisfies these two conditions. On the one hand, lotteries are mechanistic insofar as recruits are chosen for public service by lot, meaning politicians have little recourse to discretionary interventions, which may insulate public officials from forms of elite capture (Bagg 2022). On the other hand, owing to the nature of random selection, recruits are moreover chosen without concern for underlying competencies or characteristics, meaning, in expectation, there ought not to emerge any differences across selected and unselected individuals. There is, moreover, historical precedent for the use of lotteries in the allocation of government jobs. Countries around the world use lotteries to select recruits for military service, for instance. And there is a long history of using lotteries for the selection of political representatives dating back to ancient Athens (Cirone and Van Coppenolle 2019). Leaders in the Florentine republic were selected via lottery through the fifteenth century (Abramson 2023). It is precisely the absence of a filtering tendency under lottery that is thought to generate superior measures of descriptive representation, especially for marginalized groups (Landemore 2020).

This article is chiefly preoccupied with understanding how the mechanisms of bureaucratic selection affect individuals' inclination toward Weberian values. I conceptualize Weberian values as a respect for hierarchy and formal rules, division of labor, specialization, and an emphasis on impersonality (Weber 1978, 993–1010). These are virtues frequently challenged in contexts characterized by low bureaucratic performance, as public servants bend rules and regulations for personal or family gain, for instance. These values depend, further, on public sector employees possessing some measure of public spiritedness—or a willingness to engage in behavior that is intended to benefit others, rather than simply oneself. This idea shares important intuitions with what Dan Honig calls “mission driven bureaucrats”: public officials who possess deep pools of intrinsic motivation (Honig 2024). Owing to its ineffable nature, public spiritedness is difficult to measure but is nonetheless important for the achieving of Weberian values by pushing bureaucrats to elevate abstract principles above an inclination to capture public resources for their personal gain.

The immediate outcome of interest throughout this article is a commitment to Weberian values rather than service delivery writ large.⁶ This distinction matters particularly in the

context of bureaucratic recruitment under patronage, where Weberian values may be undermined, but overall service delivery benefits from a political alignment between principals and agents (Akhtari, Moreira, and Trucco 2022). Especially in clientelistic and low-capacity settings, patronage may enable a degree of interpersonal trust that facilitates—rather than impedes—service delivery. Focusing on the Brazilian context, for instance, Toral (2022) shows how patronage appointments of school principals leads to alignment that benefits overall service delivery of education. More common, of course, are those contexts where Weberian values spur gains in the quality of service delivery (Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell 2012). But the observation that gains in quality do not always follow the entrenchment of these values merits their analytic separation.

It is important to underscore that, although analytically distinct, a broad commitment to Weberian values on the part of bureaucrats is nonetheless positively correlated with the quality of service delivery.⁷ To evaluate this proposition, I draw on data from the World Values Survey measuring whether respondents believe it is ever acceptable (e.g., in times of need) for individuals to skip paying a public transit fare (on a 10-point Likert scale). In theory, focusing on the country-level responses of public sector employees ($N = 51,532$), this item ought to capture a broader commitment to a rules-bound Weberian bureaucracy: similar to the vignettes that constitute the main outcomes of the analysis below, this survey instrument captures respondents' inclination to prioritize a rule-based order over other normative principles. In the appendix (fig. A2), I correlate the country-level averages with a measure of “government effectiveness” drawn from the Worldwide Governance Indicators, showing that there exists a strong relationship: countries with a lower (higher) share of civil servants reporting it is acceptable to skip a public transit fare have higher (lower) measures of government effectiveness (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2012). To be sure, the correlation between a commitment to Weberian values and the quality of service delivery is imperfect, as other factors influence the production of governance and I cannot rule out concerns over reverse causality. But overall, the results of this analysis bolster the interpretation that a commitment to Weberian values on the part of public sector employees may be influential for the achievement of high quality service delivery.

“generalist” roles where these values hold special significance, rather than those positions for which a “specialist” competency is required.

7. Cornell, Knutsen, and Teorell (2020, 2248) propose an analogous distinction, arguing that Weberian bureaucracy is a “description of how state administrations are organized and should be distinguished from outcome-centered concepts . . . such as quality of government.”

6. This distinction anticipates a caveat: namely, that the value of sortition in selecting bureaucrats may hold greater promise in the context of

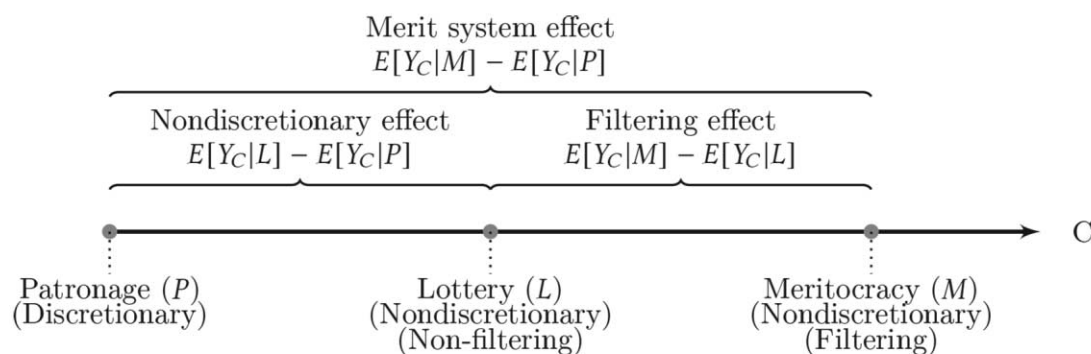


Figure 1. Graphical depiction of main hypothesis.

Building on the foregoing discussion, I am interested in decomposing the comparative magnitude of the effects of public officials being selected by either lottery or meritocracy, benchmarked against the condition in which public officials were recruited via patronage. However, recall that meritocratic selection is conceptualized here as a composite treatment, containing both (1) a filtering mechanism and (2) a nondiscretionary mechanism. To capture the contribution of these two mechanisms to the overall “merit effect,” I develop the primary hypothesis, wherein I leverage the observation that both a lottery and merit possess nondiscretionary properties. But selection under merit filters applicants whereas selection under a lottery does not, meaning any gains of the former over the latter can be attributed to the filtering effect alone. As long as these two properties represent the universe of causal mechanisms, moreover, any residual gains of lotteries over patronage are thus attributable to the nondiscretionary property.⁸ I present the intuition undergirding this decomposition graphically in figure 1.

To be clear, I expect that an inclination toward Weberian values of applicants selected via meritocracy to be the highest of the three conditions. But I expect the commitment of applicants selected under a lottery will also be higher than the patronage condition. The crucial comparison, however, is between the “nondiscretionary effect” and the “filtering effect.” Here, I expect that the lion’s share of the gains from

the merit system derive from the nondiscretionary mechanism, rather than its filtering mechanism. For ease of interpretation, I also formalize this hypothesis: $E[Y_C|M] - E[Y_C|L] < E[Y_C|L] - E[Y_C|P]$, where Y_C denotes a measure of Weberian values and M , P , and L refer to the three treatment conditions—meritocracy, patronage, and lotteries.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND CONTEXT

The core task of this article is to estimate the effect of different modes of selecting bureaucrats on their inclination toward Weberian values. Credibly capturing this effect faces several serious inferential hurdles. The first relates to variation in the independent variable, construed as the method of bureaucratic selection (i.e., merit, patronage, or a lottery). Natural experimental or observational variation are scarce or nonexistent owing to too few contexts recruiting bureaucrats through lotteries.⁹ Any attempt to leverage cross-sectional variation to estimate the effects of bureaucratic selection on the outcomes of interest is likely to suffer from endogeneity, however. Meanwhile, field experiments are infeasible owing to both ethical concerns and the hesitancy on the part of potential partners to agree on allowing bureaucrats to be recruited through patronage, in particular. To accommodate these difficulties I implement a “lab-in-the-field” experiment that manipulates the method by which public officials are chosen from among their peers to perform tasks on behalf of others.

This approach, however, presents a second inferential challenge that relates to the measurement of “Weberian values” in a laboratory setting. Here, participants will play a modified version of the dictator game.¹⁰ In the conventional setup, the

8. In practice, there exist other mechanisms through which modes of bureaucratic selection might affect an inclination toward Weberian values. Chief among these is how bureaucratic selection affects an esprit de corps among officials selected under meritocratic recruitment, as they may forge a greater sense of camaraderie, jointly believing they are the “best” and thereby fostering expectations of impartiality to sustain their belief. As Dahlström et al (2012, 658) argue, “This esprit de corps would generate a set of common norms within the bureaucracy, fostering impartial and noncorrupt behavior.” But, importantly for the research design presented in the next section, there should be little concern about the impact of this differential esprit de corps biasing the results, as it ought to be absent from all treatment conditions.

9. There are some examples of US municipalities, such as Philadelphia, using a lottery to fill contracts for day laborers.

10. The research complied with all relevant ethical regulations in Indonesia. I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board at the National University of Singapore. All participants in the survey affirmed their consent to participate in the experiment before it began and are free

dictator game involves two participants, where one is randomly chosen as the dictator and given a sum of money to decide, at his or her discretion, to keep the money or to share some percentage with the other participant. The share of money given by the dictator to the other participant is typically interpreted as a measure of prosociality. I modify the dictator game such that the group involves three participants, and the public official (“dictator”) is chosen by one of the three methods of selection. The public official then performs two tasks that are designed to imitate standard bureaucratic activities. First, answering the situational vignettes enables a measurement of both the public official’s willingness to engage in costly cognitive labor and their commitment to Weberian values. In the second stage, upon receipt of the cash, the decision to share the fruits of one’s labor is a measure of prosociality, capturing the extent to which the public official possesses this trait. Importantly, taken together, the sequence of events mirrors incidents of bureaucratic malfeasance: civil servants performing duties on behalf of the public but guarding the upshot of their labor for private gain.

I carried out the experiment among a sample of adult Indonesians on the platform oTree. Indonesia is a uniquely well-suited case for carrying out this research: for one, bureaucratic competence and malfeasance are salient issues and remain a topic of considerable debate. Reflecting this interest, I received dozens of emails from research participants who are active civil servants in Indonesia in which they indicated their interest in seeing the results. Importantly, there is significant variation in the extent to which Indonesians believe that public office can be justifiably used for private gain, thus making it likely that the outcomes of interest will not run up against either floor or ceiling effects. Crucially, there exists significant variation in the nature of bureaucratic selection in Indonesia, meaning the different conditions are unlikely to be foreign. Historically, patronage has been the standard mechanism for bureaucratic selection, with local politicians filling the ranks of government with their supporters—or simply the highest bidder. There is some evidence that these dynamics persist in the context of hiring the huge numbers of temporary employees that carry out the bulk of frontline service delivery in Indonesia (Pierskalla and Sacks 2020). Starting in 2018, for the selection of permanent civil servants (pegawai negeri sipil) Indonesia introduced an incorruptible computer-based test that appears to have rooted out foul play (Beschel et al. 2018). An increasingly meritocratic civil service has introduced new lines of debate, however, as selection and

promotion patterns increasingly correlate with demographic traits (Pierskalla et al. 2021).

Participants were recruited via Facebook, where we targeted the advertisement toward individuals with at least a high school degree, which is the minimum education required for recruitment into the Indonesian civil service. Specifically, in March 2023, I posted an advertisement indicating that researchers at the National University of Singapore were recruiting participants for an online experiment. Prospective participants were then screened on (1) an expressed interest in a future role as a bureaucrat or (2) a history of having applied for a position in the civil service in the past.¹¹ These conditions were not overly restrictive: 60% of prospective participants satisfied these conditions—a proportion that conforms to the overwhelming demand for government jobs in Indonesia. Importantly, 48.7% of individuals indicated that they had applied for a government job before, which conforms to the estimated 51.7% of college graduates who, in an unrelated survey conducted in May 2021, indicated that they had applied for a government job in the previous 10 years. The advertisement indicated that the experiment would take approximately fifteen minutes and that participants would receive 50,000 IDR for their participation and would also have the opportunity to earn up to 250,000 IDR. If respondents satisfied the conditions and agreed to participate, they were prompted to provide their phone number, which would be used to provide them with a link to participate in the experiment the following week.

Appendix table A2 shows the composition of the experimental sample, compared against the demographics of the universe of 3,626,323 individuals who applied for government jobs in Indonesia in 2018–2019.¹² These administrative data were obtained from the Indonesian civil service agency. The sample reflects important differences from the broader population of applicants to the Indonesian civil service. The experiment was carried out on a population that is, on average, six years older than the actual pool of applicants. This skew likely reflects that the experiment partly screened on individuals’ past experiences having applied for a government job, whereas actual applicants are prohibited from applying

to refuse to answer any question and may leave the experiment at any time.

11. Specifically, the advertisement called for research participants for a study on bureaucracy in Indonesia. Interested individuals were immediately taken to a form where they were asked (1) their age, (2) whether they have ever applied for a position in the civil services (Pegawai Negeri Sipil), and (3) if not, if they are planning on applying during the next cycle.

12. In other words, approximately 1.3% of the entire population applied for 180,623 vacancies in 2018. This is an impressive figure considering that the exam was limited to individuals with a college degree between the ages of 1834, meaning 46.2% of all eligible Indonesians applied for a job in the civil service in 2018.

after they reach 35 years of age. Compared to applicants to the civil service in 2019, the experimental sample also includes fewer women and a greater share of respondents from Java, which likely reflect both internet penetration rates among those from Java and the fact that 2019 saw an unusually large number of vacancies for nursing positions—an occupation that disproportionately draws female candidates. The composition of participants according to religion looks indistinguishable from the broader population of applicants.

Experimental protocol

The experimental protocol contains five phases, which are depicted graphically in figure 2. After piloting, the experiment was carried out over five days. At the same time, respondents were contacted via SMS in “batches” of 500–1,000 participants. Over the course of implementation, I sent 5,244 SMS messages. These messages contained a unique link that took them to the baseline questionnaire and informed consent form. After completing this stage, participants were taken to a pregame lobby to wait for other participants to join. All in, 888 participants made it to this stage, for a first-stage response rate of 16.9%. Once three participants were in the lobby, a group would be formed and randomly assigned to one of three treatments and taken to the instructions page.¹³ This approach reflects coordination problems: respondents would likely drop out of the game if they were not able to proceed with the first available grouping.

In the second stage, the group received instructions on how a single individual (the public official) would be selected. The method of this selection is the core experimental manipulation, which had three different treatments. Importantly, the language of the instructions cued respondents to the study being concerned with bureaucratic selection, making repeated reference to the dictator as a “public official” (pejabat). The first treatment is “merit,” where respondents were given a five-question examination with questions drawn from the 2021 Indonesian civil service examination. The top-scoring participant is notified of their score and selected as the public official. Ties were decided by lot.¹⁴ The second treatment is “a lottery” whereby a participant was randomly selected to serve as the “public official.” The third treatment is “patronage.” In this condition, one participant was selected at random to serve as the “patron” and was notified of their role. The patron was then informed that they could select one person to serve as the public official, who would answer a complete a series of cognitive tasks and then be asked to distribute the money. To simulate the negotiated

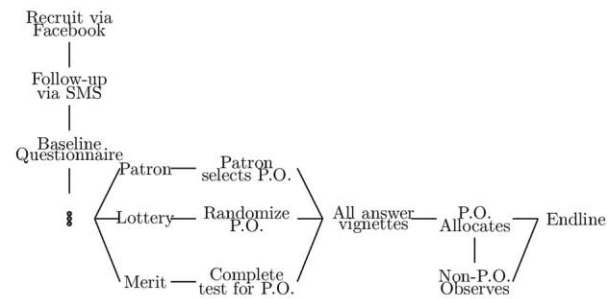


Figure 2. Experimental protocol. P.O., public official.

nature of patronage, participants were able to access a chat box and the patron was also able to view key characteristics of each participant (age, ethnicity, religion, gender, and education). The language of the instructions also primed participants to the logic of patronage, making repeated reference to the patronage as the boss (bos). After receiving instructions, participants immediately proceeded through the assigned selection procedure.

Afterwards, in the third stage, all participants were shown hypothetical scenarios in which they were asked how they would respond to an ambiguous situation if serving in a bureaucratic role. The text of these scenarios can be seen in table 2. Each scenario is designed to capture a moral dilemma that pits bureaucratic principles (impartiality, hierarchy, written rules, etc) against some other normatively desirable behavior (efficiency, politeness, equity, etc). Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a course of action on a five-point Likert scale. There is good reason to believe these vignettes capture genuinely ambiguous scenarios: the mean value for the first vignette (out of 5) was 3.3, with a standard deviation of 1.5. The public official was informed that they had to answer each question before they could receive the sum of cash.

Irrespective of his or her answers, in the fourth stage, upon completion of the vignettes the public official was taken to a separate page and asked how to distribute the money. The other participants were taken to a waiting page until the allocations had been made and were then notified of the sums they had been granted. Afterwards, participants proceeded to the fifth and final stage, where they were prompted to complete an endline survey with modules gauging satisfaction and frustration with the process, as well as a general measure of trust. In total, 182 groups comprising 546 individuals completed the endline survey—two groups in excess of the target of 180 groups and representing a 60.4% completion rate among those who began the experiment.

It is worth digressing to reflect on two features of the experimental protocol that may challenge its verisimilitude.

13. See app. sec. C.1 for a detailed description of the instructions.

14. Ties in the meritocratic condition were observed in 31% of groups.

Table 2. Weberian Vignette Questions

Questions
(1) You are a doctor working on the prioritization of patients based on severity of illness and urgency of treatment. At the triage, you were approached by a patient with a bad headache, who asked to jump ahead of the queue number he's been given. He says it is because he is here during his lunch break and needs to return to the office soon. On a scale of 1–5, how likely are you to allow the patient to move forward in the queue? (2) You are working on awarding a contract for road maintenance to a private company. The best and most cost-efficient bid, from ABC Corporation, was submitted a day after the deadline for tender had expired. You haven't started reviewing bids yet. The CEO of ABC Corporation also emailed you with an apology. On a scale of 1–5, how likely are you to accept the bid from ABC Corporation? (3) You are a district manager in a local office. Recently, you heard rumors that one of your subordinates, John, had privately expressed a lack of confidence in your leadership to one colleague and does not like you personally. He is also looking to be promoted out of your department. Today, a project was assigned to your department that requires a team leader. You know that John is the best choice for team leader, but giving him this role will increase his influence in the office and his chances of promotion. On a scale of 1 to 5, how likely are you to assign John to the role of team leader?

For one, the dictator game is played with participants who were not selected to serve as the “public official,” a feature that may drive up the share of resources chosen to distribute out of, say, a sense of guilt, which may challenge the credibility of the experiment. In principle, this concern ought to affect all treatment groups equally, thus canceling out any biases in the ensuing analyses. More concretely, however, the idea that public officials are asked to serve a population who themselves failed to secure government employment at one point is indeed an accurate portrait of Indonesian bureaucracy: in an unrelated survey conducted in May 2021, 34.5% of respondents reported ever having applied for a government job in the last 10 years—a feature that bolsters the verisimilitude of the experimental design.¹⁵

Second, although the merit- and lottery-based treatment conditions effectively imitate their real-world analogs, the patronage condition aims to capture a more elusive referent, owing to its inherent flexibility. In the ensuing analysis, it is worth underscoring that patronage serves chiefly as a benchmark condition, with the main estimand of interest being the comparison between public officials' behavior under lottery- and merit-based selection. Yet readers may wonder if the “boss” under the game is more inclined to select a public official believed to be more likely to share resources, which initiates a measure of positive selection and does not neces-

sarily correspond with prevailing scholarship on the logic of patronage. Importantly, this tendency would drive up the share of resources being shared—and away from the sort of “corrupt” behavior typically associated with patronage—thus making this design choice a null-biasing one.

Analysis plan

The analysis adopts a simple difference-in-means framework, implemented using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. Owing to the possibility that outcomes are differently distributed across treatment conditions, I calculate heteroskedastic consistent standard errors. As the primary outcomes of interest are individual actions that are carried out by the public official in each experimental group, for the main analyses, I subset the sample to selected participants. I isolate the effect of different selection procedures on the outcomes of interest using the following baseline specification:

$$Y_c = \alpha + \beta_1 M_c + \beta_2 P_c + \epsilon_c, \quad (1)$$

where Y is a stand-in for the outcome of interest for group c . M_c is one of two treatment assignment vector that takes three values. If group c is assigned the meritocracy condition it takes a “1,” a “0” if group c is assigned to a lottery, and a not applicable (NA) otherwise. Likewise, P_c is the treatment assignment vector for a lottery, which takes a “1” if group c is assigned to patronage, a “0” if they are assigned to a lottery, and an NA otherwise.¹⁶ I am chiefly interested in β_1 and β_2 ,

15. These figures are drawn from an Indonesian survey drawn from a convenience sample provided by the online pollster Pollfish ($N = 2,846$). This number increases to 51.1% and 57.9% for individuals holding a university or graduate degree, respectively. An identical module was included on an online survey carried out on a Cint-provided panel in December 2023 ($N = 1,650$), showing similar results: 42.9% of all respondents reported having ever applied for a government job—a figure that similarly increases to 50.5% for those with a college degree.

16. I also specify a second model to measure the gains in meritocratic selection over patronage, not captured in the main specification, but also using OLS: $Y_c = \alpha + \beta_3 MS_c + \epsilon_c$, where, again, Y is a stand-in for the outcome of interest for group c . MS_c is the treatment assignment vector that takes a “1” if group c is assigned to meritocracy, a “0” if it is assigned to a lottery, and an NA otherwise.

as these are the parameters that capture the effect of the merit system and patronage over lotteries, respectively.

I examine several outcomes that capture different elements of Weberian values. First, I examine a measure of prosociality, which I construe to be an important component of Weberian values, wherein I focus on the behavior of the public official in distributing the cash to the other participants. Here, I construct three variables. The first is a binary outcome that captures whether the public official gives any money at all. The second is a percentage of the sum of money that was allocated to other participants. The third captures inequality in distribution and is a Herfindahl index: $Y_c = \sum_{i=1}^N S_i^2$, where S_i is the share of money given to participant i in group c . Second, I also create indices based on the public officials' responses to the previously described vignettes. Specifically, I look at an index of average "Weberianness" as well as an index that captures whether a respondent privileged Weberian values over other moral values for all vignettes.

RESULTS

First stage: Who gets selected?

To begin, I start by investigating how the method of selecting the public official affects who gets chosen. In the case of random selection, for instance, theory dictates that on

average the public officials ought to look indistinguishable from the population from which they were chosen. In table 3, I subset participants to their respective treatment condition and regress an indicator variable capturing whether or not they were chosen as the public official on their demographic characteristics. Column 1 presents the estimates for participants assigned to meritocratic recruitment. Here, consistent with strong theoretical priors, I find that individuals with college education were much more likely to be selected as the public official, at least compared to those with only a high school degree. Moreover, members of the plurality ethnic group (Javanese) were less likely to be selected—a finding that appears to mainly reflect the comparative strength of the second largest ethnic group (Sundanese) in correctly answering the civil service examination questions. Meanwhile, Muslims, as well as participants who are men, were both more likely to be selected as the public official compared to non-Muslims and women, respectively. These results generally reflect the demographic correlates of success on the genuine civil service exam in Indonesia, with the exception of the finding on gender. During the 2019 civil service exam, in actuality, women did on average 5 percentage points better than men.

In column 2, I look at the predictors of being selected as the public official under a lottery, finding that selection

Table 3. The Effect of Selection Mode on Characteristics of Public Official

	Dependent Variable = Selected		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Gender: Male	.161** (.071)	-.055 (.068)	.008 (.076)
Education: College	.165** (.072)	-.020 (.079)	-.057 (.082)
Ethnicity: Javanese	-.214*** (.073)	-.035 (.069)	-.015 (.079)
Religion: Muslim	.228** (.093)	-.030 (.087)	.136 (.097)
Age	.126* (.072)	.011 (.067)	.075 (.077)
Constant	-.016 (.100)	.411*** (.116)	.232** (.105)
Observations	174	205	165
Selection	Merit	Sortition	Patronage

Note. Beta coefficients from OLS regression. Standard errors were calculated using the Huber-White correction. The outcomes measure is whether a player was chosen as the public official, where each column represents one of the different treatment conditions.

* $p < .1$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

is unrelated to any underlying demographic features. Meanwhile, column 3 presents *prima facie* evidence that participants' demographic traits have little-to-no impact on their probability of being chosen as a public official selected under patronage. These results do not reflect the correspondence in identic ties across patrons and public officials, however, which may be more influential (Corstange 2016). In appendix table A14, I assess whether a correspondence between the patron and the participants' demographic traits increases the probability of selection. To do so, I construct indicator variables for ethnicity, gender, location, religion, and educational status that capture a match between a given participant and the patron on each factor. Then I regress these indicator variables on an indicator capturing selection as the public official. I detect no evidence that patrons privilege participants with whom they share a religious or an ethnic tie, although they do down-weight those with whom they share a gender. The preference for out-gendered selection is driven entirely by men preferring to select women, perhaps a function of the perception that women are more trustworthy.

What explains these results, which appear to cut against the theoretical expectations concerning the practice of patronage? For one, the experimental protocol holds important differences with the actual practice of patronage, in which relationships are iterated; part of the difference may thus stem from challenges of external validity. Part of the divergence, however, may also arise from important contextual differences between African contexts—from which comes much of the literature establishing the coethnic patronage tendency—and Indonesia, where ethnicity is a comparatively weaker tie. Bolstering this possibility, in figure A1 in the ap-

pendix, I draw on the results of a conjoint experiment conducted in Indonesia in November 2023 among 800 candidates for local legislative office, in which respondents were quizzed about the traits of their preferred vote broker—a question that captures the logic of patronage-based selection. Here, again, I observe that a shared ethnic tie has no effect on probability of selection.

Situational vignette outcomes

Next, I study how the method of bureaucratic selection affects public officials' responses to the situational vignettes gauging individuals' inclinations toward Weberian values. Recall that these vignettes asked respondents to consider how they would respond in situations that pitted one desirable principle (loyalty, efficiency, decency) against a principle consistent with Weberian bureaucracy (neutrality, impartiality). Again, the full text of these vignettes is available in appendix section C.2. Respondents offered their answers on a five-point Likert scale. I construct three indices based on the individual preregistered vignettes: (1) an index capturing the average score on the three vignettes; (2) an indicator capturing whether the respondent offered an answer consistent with Weberian values to any of the three vignettes; (3) an indicator capturing whether the respondent chose the option consistent with Weberian values in all three of the vignettes.

My preferred interpretation is graphical and presented in figure 3, although I also present the results in tabular form in appendix table A4. Figure 3A looks at the main index, which captures public officials' average inclination toward Weberian values. The values are scaled out of 5. Consistent with the preregistered hypotheses, I find that public officials

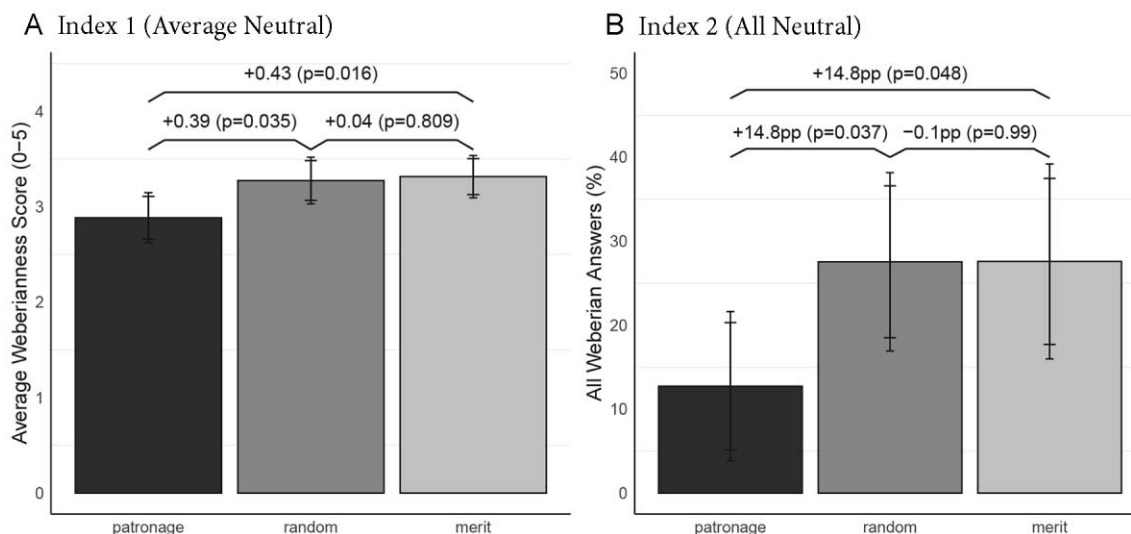


Figure 3. Effect of selection mode on Weberian values. (A) Effect of different methods of selecting public officials on their average responses to a battery of vignettes gauging preference for Weberian values. (B) Analogous index capturing whether respondents support indicated support for Weberian values in all vignettes. Group differences indicated above brackets, with standard errors calculated using the Huber-White correction.

selected under a lottery score approximately 0.33 points higher than those selected under patronage, corresponding to a 12.7% increase ($p < .05$). I find a similar gain among those selected via meritocratic procedures, who score 0.41 points higher than those selected under patronage, corresponding to a 14.1% increase ($p < .05$). Strikingly, I detect no differences in the extent to which public officials privilege Weberian values across those selected under a lottery versus merit. This is especially surprising given the first stage results that showed that public officials selected under meritocratic selection are demographically different than those selected under a lottery.

Figure 3B trains its sights on a more restrictive binary index capturing whether public officials privileged Weberian values over alternatives in all hypothetical vignettes. For reference, across all treatment groups, an average of 23.5% of public officials agreed with Weberian values to the exclusion of others. Looking first at public officials selected under merit, I find that they were 14.6 percentage points more likely than public officials selected via patronage to side with Weberian values over other competing values ($p < .05$), corresponding to a near-doubling in likelihood. Similarly, I find that public officials selected via lotteries were 15.3 percentage points more likely to indicate an inclination toward Weberian values in all hypothetical situations, as compared to public officials selected via patronage ($p < .05$). Again, I find that public official selected via a lottery and merit are equally inclined toward Weberian values.

What explains these findings? My preferred interpretation, in the first place, is that the logic of patronage makes it acceptable for public officials to subvert principles of Weberian values in favor of other goals. Having gotten their position through someone else's discretion, bureaucrats may feel more comfortable wielding discretion on their own once in a position of authority. Meanwhile, given that those selected under merit are evidently more educated and older than those selected under lotteries, yet both sets of public officials appear equally inclined toward Weberian values, it would appear that demographic differences do not explain the gains associated with these selection modes. Consistent with the main hypothesis, the filtering effect appears to harbor a weak impact on Weberian values. Instead, what distinguishes merit and a lottery from patronage is that both are nondiscretionary: public officials selected under these mechanisms are less likely to be captured by a specific individual or interest to whom they owe their position.

Prosociality outcomes

Next, I examine the effects of the different selection mechanisms on the tendency for public officials to hoard puta-

tively public resources for themselves. Recall that after answering the vignette-based questions the public officials were given sums of 200,000 IDR (approximately US\$15) and asked to distribute the money at their discretion among the three participants. As the game is a one-off with no opportunity for other players to sanction the public official, the rational strategy is for the public official to hoard all the resources. The share of resources given to other participants is thus entirely a function of altruism or prosociality, making the game a good measure of inclination toward engaging in service on behalf of others. Broadly consistent with existing research, I find that across all three treatment arms, public officials are not strictly rational: on average, they kept 58% of the money for themselves (115,989 IDR).

Again, my preferred interpretation of the results is graphical and is presented in figure 4. Yet I also present the results in tabular form in appendix table A7. Figure 4A examines the absolute quantity of money kept by the public official, on average, across the three treatments. Consistent with the pre-registered hypotheses, I find that public officials selected via a lottery keep a significantly smaller share of the cash (53.0%) than do those selected via patronage (58.9%) or via merit (62.8%). Only the difference between merit and a lottery is statistically significant, however. Figure 4 captures these differences in absolute terms: compared to those selected via merit, public officials selected under a lottery keep 19,700 IDR less ($p < .05$), corresponding to an 18.5% drop. Public officials selected under patronage, meanwhile, keep 11,600 more than those selected under a lottery and 8,000 IDR less than those selected under merit. These two latter comparisons concerning prosociality under patronage are directionally consistent with the preregistered hypotheses, but I am unable to rule out the possibility that these differences arise from chance alone.

Figure 4B adopts a different measure to capture the prosociality of public officials across different treatment conditions. Here, I calculate the commonly used Herfindahl index, which is a measure of market concentration typically used to assess whether monopolistic conditions prevail among a group of firms. It is widely used in political science to study vote shares in elections, capturing the dominance of a specific party. In the present case, it captures the extent to which the money was distributed equitably across all three players: $Y_c = \sum_{i=1}^N S_i^2$, where S_i is the share of money given to participant i in group c . A value of "1" indicates total capture of the resources by a single player, while a value of "1/3" is the lowest possible value in the present case and captures a perfectly equitable distribution across the three players. Looking at the Herfindahl index across treatment conditions, I find that public officials selected under a lottery

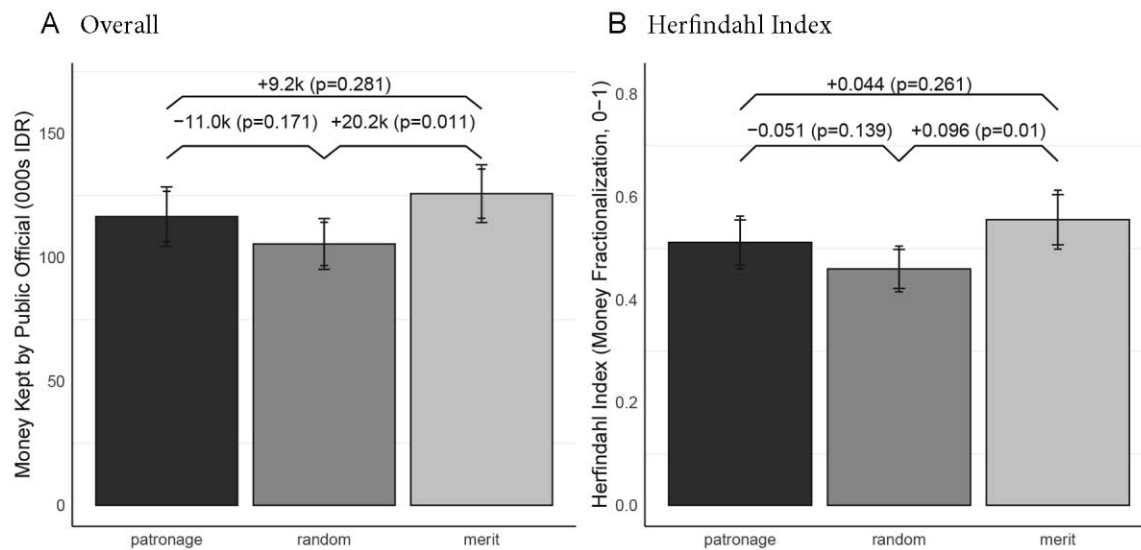


Figure 4. Effect of selection mode on prosociality. (A) Effect of different methods of selecting public officials on the share of money they kept for themselves. (B) Index capturing the extent to which the money was distributed equitably across all three players. Group differences indicated above brackets, with standard errors calculated using the Huber-White correction.

are more equitable than those selected under both merit and patronage. For instance, those selected under a lottery have a Herfindahl index of 0.463, whereas those selected under merit report 0.556, a 0.093 difference ($p < .05$).

The results of the analyses looking at the distributional outcomes, similar to the situational vignettes, show lottery-based selection to promote impartiality: public officials selected via a lottery share larger sums of money with the other participants, compared to public officials selected under merit or patronage. This finding challenges the primacy of the filtering effect, as randomly chosen respondents behave with evidently higher commitment to the public they ostensibly serve than those selected via merit and patronage. But it also nuances the role of nondiscretion. Despite it being non-discretionary, those selected via the merit system were inclined to hoard the greatest share of public resources. My preferred interpretation of this result is that a lottery imprints neither the sense of entitlement nor the sense of obligation found among those chosen under the merit system and patronage, respectively. In other words, it may be the case that applicants either externalize or internalize the reasons for their successful selection under nondiscretionary mechanisms, with implications for bureaucratic behavior.

Attitudinal outcomes

As a final set of outcomes, I quizzed respondents with a series of questions measuring their attitudes toward the game in an endline questionnaire. These questions gauged satisfaction with the process and sum of money received, as well

as respondents' perceptions of the public official who was selected. Recall that I hypothesized that these attitudinal measures would differ across those selected as public officials and those who were not. But moreover, I also hypothesized that the scale of these differences would vary across treatment groups, with nonpublic officials being more dissatisfied under meritocratic selection than other treatment conditions. To capture these estimands, I implement an interaction model with OLS. Specifically, I interact an indicator capturing whether a given respondent was a public official or not with the categorical treatment condition variable and regress it on the attitudinal outcomes.

Appendix table A15 summarizes the results of the analyses. The first row looks at the attitudinal measures across those who were either selected as public officials under a lottery versus those who were selected under merit and patronage. Columns 1 and 3 indicate that individuals selected as public officials under a lottery were both more likely to believe the selection process was fair as well as a greater inclination to indicate that the ultimate allocation of resources was fair. Column 5 looks at a generalized measure of trust in which respondents were asked to indicate whether or not people are trustworthy. Here, I find that participants who were selected as public officials under a lottery were less trusting than their peers. This is ultimately puzzling, as I had hypothesized that this effect would be present for nonpublic officials, but perhaps reflects the tendency for public officials selected under a lottery to reflect especially poorly on their tendency to keep more than an equitable share of the resources—despite

having been more altruistic than their peers in other conditions. Their pessimistic outlook might reflect a degree of introspection regarding their selfish behavior.

The chief estimands of interest in appendix table A15, however, are those that capture differences in attitudes among public officials and their peers, across different treatment conditions. Here, I implement interaction models in the final two rows. I detect few differences across these conditions. However, column 5 shows that individuals selected as public officials in the merit condition, compared to participants under other conditions, are more likely to indicate a higher measure of general trust than those not selected as public officials. This is partially consistent with the pre-registered hypothesis that meritocratic selection, as opposed to other forms, imprints a sense of self-satisfaction on public officials.

ROBUSTNESS AND EXTENSIONS

Readers may be concerned about several threats to the inferences drawn in this article. First, readers might interpret the results as a function of the group-level treatment assignment, rather than the individual experience of selection under the different conditions. It might be the case that all respondents assigned to the meritocratic selection condition are primed to take the ensuing vignettes more seriously, being in a more, say, academic frame of mind. If all participants assigned to a lottery and merit—irrespective of outcome—were more inclined toward Weberian values than those assigned to patronage, it would cast doubt on my preferred interpretation of the main results as being driven by differences in the manner of selection. This concern relates to commonly cited demand effects, whereby research participants conform their responses and behaviors to the perceived expectations of the researcher. To evaluate this possibility, I compare the responses of individuals not selected as the public official to the vignettes. I present the results in appendix table A8, detecting no differences across the responses offered by non-public officials assigned to a lottery, patronage, or merit. These findings drive home the role of selection mechanisms as crucibles: the manner in which individuals are elevated to positions of authority appears to exert an independent effect on their behavior—above and beyond what can be explained by any hypothesized filtering effect.

The second threat relates to the possibility of differential attrition driving the results. Online behavioral experiments suffer from considerable problems of attrition, as participants may leave the platform at any time. If one participant in a group drops out, the entire group must be dropped. If the tendency to drop out is correlated with certain pretreatment characteristics of participants, it may introduce biases

into the observed estimates. Appendix table A9 examines the probability of attrition according to different demographic traits. Here, I regress an indicator capturing whether all participants in their group completed the experiment on a host of demographic variables. The results indicate that the only statistically significant predictor of attrition is age. Although the underlying mechanisms behind this correlation are unclear, it seems plausible that older participants may have been more likely to discount the promise of compensation at the end of the experiment.

To investigate whether this differential attrition, albeit slight, is driving the observed main results, I construct inverse-propensity weights to account for the possibility of differential attrition. This follows the recommendation of Gerber and Green (2012) whereby I regress a host of pretreatment covariates on an indicator capturing attrition and using the predicted values to construct weights that reflect the inverse probability of selection into the sample. I present the results of the benchmark analyses implemented with OLS using the inverse-propensity weights in appendix tables A10 and A11. The results of these analyses are substantively and statistically identical to those presented in the main benchmark analyses. Using these weights, for instance, I estimate that public official selected under merit kept 18,100 IDR more than those selected under a lottery—a comparable estimate to the 19,700 IDR found in the benchmark specification.

A third and final concern relates to imbalances in pretreatment characteristics across the treatment conditions. Recall that the balance table revealed that there were slight imbalances in the share of participants across the three groups in terms of age and the share of participants with college degrees. Specifically, the average age of participants assigned to a lottery was 35.1 years, compared to 33.1 and 33.2 in the patronage and merit conditions, respectively. As a result of this imbalance, the share of individuals in the lottery group that have a college degree is also slightly higher than the other groups. These imbalances do not appear related to attrition and likely arise from chance alone. Nonetheless, I include these variables as controls in appendix tables A4 and A5. The estimates obtained from these supplemental analyses are indistinguishable from those contained in the benchmark naive regressions, suggesting that the results are not driven by differences in the underlying demographic features of respondents across the different treatment groups.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

I have presented evidence from a lab-in-the-field experiment among aspirants to the Indonesian civil service gauging how the method of selection affects bureaucratic behavior and commitment to Weberian values. The experimental protocol

manipulates the condition under which individuals were chosen from among a group of their peers to serve as a “public official” tasked with performing cognitive assessments and allocating a sum of money on behalf of the others. The cognitive assessments took the form of ambiguous situational vignettes that asked participants to pretend to serve as a bureaucrat in a scenario that pitted morally desirable behaviors against principles of Weberian values. The results indicate that those selected via merit and a lottery are equally inclined toward bureaucratic Weberian principles, whereas both public officials perform better than those public officials selected under patronage. I have argued that this finding gestures toward the predominance of the role of (non)discretion in questions of bureaucratic selection in driving an inclination toward Weberian values—a result that supports the conclusion of prior work by Oliveros and Schuster (2018) who find that “the primary benefit of examinations . . . thus appears to be . . . a less clientelistic [civil service.]” In other words, it appears that capture looms larger than credentials.

There are several limitations to the results contained in this article that circumscribe the scope of the conclusions. For one, readers may wonder about the durability of the observed effects. Recall the main finding is that the nondiscretionary nature of selection imprints a larger impact on behavior than the so-called filtering effect. An outstanding question is whether this effect persists, especially given that bureaucrats are typically hired into positions with tenure. This concern points to a likely scope condition of the results: it seems likely that the observed effects are most likely to persist in conditions in which nondiscretionary selection comes with tenure whereas patronage-based selection is coupled with contingent contracts. The knowledge that one’s job may be revoked is likely to ensnare bureaucrats in a clientelistic relationship that undermines a commitment to Weberian values. A second question relates to how the nature of selection procedure affects which sorts of individuals select into applying for government jobs in the first place: it seems possible, for instance, that a recruitment procedure characterized by patronage will dissuade prosocial individuals from applying in the first place. Investigating these challenges calls for future research that prioritizes field or natural experimental settings.

The most narrow interpretation of the results in this article relates to a literature in behavioral and experimental economics investigating why actors behave out of step with their material self-interest. Recall that the experimental protocol was a modified version of a one-shot dictator game. The optimal strategy for public officials is thus to keep 100% of the money. Yet, in the event, across all three treatment groups, public officials kept an average of 58%. This compares with 72% established in a global meta study (Engel 2011) and,

strikingly, is identical to the 58% average offer found in a similar study of the slightly different ultimatum game also carried out in the Indonesian context (Cameron 1999). My study is, to the best of my knowledge, the first to experimentally manipulate the selection procedure for identifying the “dictator.” Again, the optimal strategy does not change across these three conditions: rational public officials ought to hoard all resources to themselves as they face no possibility of sanction. But the results find significant differences across the three groups—a finding that calls attention to the ways in which selection mechanisms harbor independent effects on public officials’ behavior—above and beyond simply screening aspirants.

A broader contribution of this article is to present empirical evidence that joins a growing chorus of scholars advocating for a greater consideration of lotteries as a device for selecting public officials in lieu of meritocratic or electoral procedures (Haslam et al. 1998). These accounts have chiefly focused on lotteries as a device for selecting politicians (Bagg 2022; Cirone 2019; Landemore 2020; Manin 1997). To be sure, many of the challenges that plague elections—for example, a tendency to select for undesirable psychological traits such as narcissism—could also be at work with meritocratic recruitment mechanisms (Nai 2019). But the selection of bureaucrats is different from the selection of politicians (or students in the case of educational meritocracies, for that matter) for at least two reasons. First, because a principal-agent problem is the overarching challenge facing bureaucrats, the potential for capture is especially salient, making the mode of selection crucial. Second, applicants to bureaucratic posts typically draw from an *a priori* educated tranche of society—to a degree that is not the case for aspiring politicians or students, many of whom may be genuinely unprepared. Applying to the Indonesian bureaucracy, meanwhile, requires individuals to have a college degree in most cases. This sort of bounded lottery may hold promise as a policy solution to the challenges presented by meritocratic selection in bureaucratic recruitment, at least as compared to unbounded lotteries. It is also in line with Sandel (2020), who suggests that selection into elite universities in the United States ought to proceed via random selection, conditional on some initial measure of merit. The virtue of this procedure of conditional lottery in the context of bureaucratic selection is to safeguard some measure of preparedness while detaching the winners from an inflated sense of self-satisfaction that may have socially deleterious consequences.

Because this was a behavioral experiment carried out in a laboratory setting, the findings presented in this article fall short of making the case for an overhaul to the way in which bureaucratic selection is carried out in diverse contexts around

the world. But the results suggest future avenues for research that may bolster the case. For one, the research presented in this article offers *prima facie* evidence that a lottery may be a productive strategy for boosting commitments to Weberian values—or at least as good as what is observed under the merit system. Yet the findings are circumscribed by the admittedly contrived laboratory context in which they were obtained. One concern remains the applicability of lotteries for different types of bureaucratic roles: for one, lotteries introduce greater variance in the quality of selected applicants which may present challenges for high-stakes positions. More generally, although random selection may optimize for neutrality, it may also select for applicants ill-suited to the positions for which they are being selected. Lotteries may therefore be more suitable in the selection of generalist roles—rather than those for which specialized skills are necessary. Similarly, senior posts may be less suited to selection under lotteries, as compared with entry-level positions. Future work will profit from investigating these and other questions by working with institutional partners to implement analogous field experiments to examine whether these results are externally valid. A lottery may even be a politically feasible intervention for institutional partners in many contexts: as the demand for government jobs is extremely high in most countries around the world, politicians face tremendous pressure to make the hiring of public officials equitable. The chief virtue of a lottery is that it satisfies these concerns.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For comments on previous versions of this article, I thank Tom Pepinsky, Bhumi Purohit, Alexander Sahn, Seth Soderborg, and seminar participants at the Australian Society for Quantitative Political Science, the Singapore Quantitative Social Science Workshop, Southeast Asia Research Group, and the University of Washington Political Economy Forum. Deon Kiew and Phoebe Virginia provided excellent research assistance.

REFERENCES

- Abramson, Scott. 2023. "The Economic Effects of Leaders' Economic Interests: Evidence from Election by Lot in the Florentine Republic." *Journal of Politics* 86 (2): 535–50.
- Akhtari, Mitra, Diana Moreira, and Laura Trucco. 2022. "Political Turnover, Bureaucratic Turnover, and the Quality of Public Services." *American Economic Review* 112 (2): 442–93.
- Allison, Graham, Robert D. Blackwill, and Ali Wyne. 2013. *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World*. MIT Press.
- Bagg, Samuel. 2022. "Sortition as Anti-Corruption: Popular Oversight Against Elite Capture." *American Journal of Political Science* 68 (1): 93–105.
- Beschel, Robert P., Blair James Cameron, Jana Kunicova, and C. Bernard Myers. 2018. "Improving Public Sector Performance: Through Innovation and Inter-Agency Coordination." Technical report, World Bank.
- Brierley, Sarah. 2020. "Unprincipled Principals: Co-Opted Bureaucrats and Corruption in Ghana." *American Journal of Political Science* 64 (2): 209–22.
- Brierley, Sarah, Kenneth Lowande, Rachel Augustine Potter, and Guillermo Toral. 2023. "Bureaucratic Politics: Blind Spots and Opportunities in Political Science." *Annual Review of Political Science* 26:271–90.
- Brierley, Sarah, and Noah L. Nathan. 2021. "The Connections of Party Brokers: Which Brokers Do Parties Select?" *Journal of Politics* 83 (3): 884–901.
- Cameron, Lisa A. 1999. "Raising the Stakes in the Ultimatum Game: Experimental Evidence from Indonesia." *Economic Inquiry* 37 (1): 47–59.
- Cirone, Alexandra. 2019. "When Democracy Is Broken, Roll the Dice: Lotteries in Political Selection." *American Political Science Association Comparative Politics Newsletter* 29 (2): 26–33.
- Cirone, Alexandra, and Brenda Van Coppenolle. 2019. "Bridging the Gap: Lottery-Based Procedures in Early Parliamentaryization." *World Politics* 71 (2): 197–235.
- Cornell, Agnes, Carl Henrik Knutsen, and Jan Teorell. 2020. "Bureaucracy and Growth." *Comparative Political Studies* 53 (14): 2246–82.
- Corstange, Daniel. 2016. *The Price of a Vote in The Middle East: Clientelism and Communal Politics in Lebanon and Yemen*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dahlström, Carl, and Victor Lapuente. 2017. *Organizing Leviathan: Politicians, Bureaucrats, and the Making of Good Government*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dahlström, Carl, Victor Lapuente, and Jan Teorell. 2012. "The Merit of Meritocratization: Politics, Bureaucracy, and the Institutional Determinants of Corruption." *Political Research Quarterly* 65 (3): 656–68.
- Dal Bó, Ernesto, Frederico Finan, and Martín A. Rossi. 2013. "Strengthening State Capabilities: The Role of Financial Incentives in the Call to Public Service." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 128 (3): 1169–218.
- Engel, Christoph. 2011. "Dictator Games: A Meta Study." *Experimental Economics* 14:583–610.
- Evans, Peter, and James E. Rauch. 1999. "Bureaucracy and Growth: A Cross-National Analysis of the Effects of 'Weberian' State Structures on Economic Growth." *American Sociological Review* 64 (5): 748–65.
- Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 2012. *Field Experiments: Design, Analysis, and Interpretation*. W. W. Norton.
- Grindle, Merilee S. 2012. *Jobs for the Boys*. Harvard University Press.
- Haggard, Stephan. 1990. *Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrializing Countries*. Cornell University Press.
- Haslam, S. Alexander, Craig McGarty, Patricia M. Brown, Rachael A. Egghs, Brenda E. Morrison, and Katherine J. Reynolds. 1998. "Inspecting the Emperor's Clothes: Evidence that Random Selection of Leaders Can Enhance Group Performance." *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 2 (3): 168.
- Honig, Dan. 2024. *Mission Driven Bureaucrats Mission Driven Bureaucrats: Empowering People to Help Government Do Better*. Oxford University Press.
- Kaufmann, Daniel, Aart Kraay, and Massimo Mastruzzi. 2012. "Governance Matters VI: Aggregate and Individual Governance Indicators, 1996–2006." Policy Research Working Paper Series no. 4280, World Bank.
- Kristiansen, Stein, and Muhid Ramli. 2006. "Buying an Income: The Market for Civil Service Positions in Indonesia." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 28 (2): 207–33.
- Kuipers, Nicholas, and Alexander Sahn. 2023. "The Representational Consequences of Municipal Civil Service Reform." *American Political Science Review* 117 (1): 200–16.
- Landemore, Hélène. 2020. *Open Democracy: Reinventing Popular Rule for the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton University Press.
- Manin, Bernard. 1997. *The Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge University Press.
- Markovits, Daniel. 2019. *The Meritocracy Trap*. Penguin.

- Nai, Alessandro. 2019. "The Electoral Success of Angels and Demons: Big Five, Dark Triad, and Performance at the Ballot Box." *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 7 (2): 830–62.
- Oliveros, Virginia, and Christian Schuster. 2018. "Merit, Tenure, and Bureaucratic Behavior: Evidence from a Conjoint Experiment in the Dominican Republic." *Comparative Political Studies* 51 (6): 759–92.
- Pierskalla, Jan H., Adam Lauretig, Andrew S. Rosenberg, and Audrey Sacks. 2021. "Democratization and Representative Bureaucracy: An Analysis of Promotion Patterns in Indonesia's Civil Service, 1980–2015." *American Journal of Political Science* 65 (2): 261–77.
- Pierskalla, Jan H., and Audrey Sacks. 2020. "Personnel Politics: Elections, Clientelistic Competition and Teacher Hiring in Indonesia." *British Journal of Political Science* 50 (4): 1283–305.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. 1895. "The Present Status of Civil Service Reform." *The Atlantic*, February.
- Rose-Ackerman, Susan. 1999. *Corruption and Government: Causes, Consequences, and Reform*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sandel, Michael J. 2020. *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* Penguin.
- Toral, Guillermo. 2022. "How Patronage Delivers: Political Appointments, Bureaucratic Accountability, and Service Delivery in Brazil." *American Journal of Political Science* 68 (2): 797–815.
- Weaver, Jeffrey. 2021. "Jobs for Sale: Corruption and Misallocation in Hiring." *American Economic Review* 111 (10): 3093–122.
- Weber, Max. 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. University of California Press.