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Published in:
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory

DOI:
10.1093/jopart/muab028

Publication date:
2022

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Schuster, C., Mikkelsen, K. S., Correa, I., & Meyer-Sahling, J.-H. (2022). Exit, Voice, and Sabotage: Public Service Motivation and Guerrilla Bureaucracy in Times of Unprincipled Political Principals. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *32*(2), 416-435. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muab028

Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 2021, 1–20
https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muab028
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Exit, Voice, and Sabotage: Public Service Motivation and Guerrilla Bureaucracy in Times of Unprincipled Political Principals

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Abstract

Democratic backsliding has multiplied "unprincipled" political principals: governments with weak commitment to the public interest. Why do some bureaucrats engage in voice and guerrilla sabotage to thwart policies against the public interest under "unprincipled principals," yet others do not? Despite its centrality in contemporary governance, this conundrum has not seen quantitative research. We address this gap with survey evidence from 1,700 Brazilian public servants during the Temer Presidency, widely perceived to lack democratic legitimacy and integrity. We focus on one key explanator: public service motivation (PSM). We argue that bureaucrats with greater PSM are more likely to engage in voice and sabotage of "unprincipled policies," *and* exit to avoid implementing "unprincipled policies." Structural equation models support these hypotheses. Public service-motivated bureaucracies are thus short-run stalwarts against "unprincipled" political principals. Over time, they look to depart, however, leaving "unprincipled" principals a freer hand to pursue policies against the public interest.

Abstract

A onda de retrocessos democráticos ao redor do mundo multiplicou o número de principals políticos "sem princípios," ou seja, governos com fraco compromisso com o interesse público. Por que alguns burocratas se engajam em voz e sabotagem para frustrar políticas públicas contra o interesse público adotadas por esses principals, e outros burocratas não? Apesar de sua centralidade no debate contemporâneo, este questionamento ainda não foi explorado em pesquisa quantitativa. Endereçamos essa lacuna trazendo evidências de um survey respondido por 1.700 servidores públicos federais brasileiros durante a presidência de Temer, amplamente percebida como desprovida de legitimidade democrática e integridade. Nos concentramos em uma explicação principal para responder a pergunta acima: motivação para o serviço público (Public Service Motivation - PSM). Argumentamos que burocratas com maior PSM são mais propensos a se engajar em voz e sabotagem em relação à "políticas públicas sem princípios," e a sair da administração para evitar implementar "políticas públicas sem princípios." Modelos de equações estruturais sustentam nossas hipóteses. Burocratas motivados para o serviço público

são, portanto, baluartes de curto prazo contra principals políticos "sem princípios." Com o tempo, eles procuram se afastar da administração, deixando, no entanto, os referidos principals "sem princípios" mais livres para perseguir políticas públicas contra o interesse público.

Introduction

"President Trump is facing a test to his presidency unlike any faced by a modern American leader," wrote an anonymous author, later revealed to be Trump Homeland Security appointee Miles Taylor, to the *New York Time*s. Taylor was referencing many public officials who "have vowed to do what we can to preserve our democratic institutions while thwarting Mr. Trump's more misguided impulses until he is out of office" (The New York Times 2018). A subset of public officials within Trump's own administration thus sought to frustrate a presidential agenda which they perceived as undemocratic, unjust, and against the public interest.

These actions were what O'Leary (2013, xi) classically called guerrilla government: "the actions taken by public servants who work against the wishes—either implicitly or explicitly communicated—of their superiors." Guerrilla government attests to the power of public officials, their ability to go against the will of political principals, and their motivation to perform what they are convinced is ethical, appropriate, and right. In principal-agent terms, guerrilla bureaucrats conceive of themselves as "principled agents" who seek to convince "unprincipled" principals of "principled policies" (voice) and, when this fails, seek to exploit principal-agent problems in bureaucracy to thwart the policies of "unprincipled" political principals (guerrilla sabotage).

Democratic backsliding—an increasing number of populist governments and governments with weak commitment to ethical values and the public interest—has multiplied "unprincipled political principals" around the world (Inglehart and Norris 2016). Freedom House (2021), for instance, notes that 75% of the world's population lives in countries experiencing democratic declines. This proliferation of "unprincipled principals" arguably enhances the relevance in contemporary governance of "principled bureaucratic agents" who are willing to engage in voice and guerrilla sabotage to preserve good government.

A core task for public administration scholarship is thus to assess the causes of guerrilla bureaucracy. Why do some bureaucrats engage in voice and guerrilla sabotage to thwart policies they perceive to be against public interest under "unprincipled principals," yet others do not? Despite the centrality of this research question in times of democratic backsliding, there has been hardly any quantitative research on guerrilla bureaucracy in public administration.[1]

Building on O'Leary's (2013) classic qualitative work on guerrilla government, scholarship on whistleblowing, and the management literature on constructive deviance, our study helps address this gap. We focus on one potential cause and research question in particular—namely whether public service motivation (PSM) shapes guerrilla activity. Our focus is motivated by the importance of PSM in public administration scholarship (cf. Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann 2016) and practice (Perry 2020), as well as findings from prior studies on PSM and ethical behavior, which suggest that PSM might potentially represent a potent explanator of guerrilla behavior.

Theoretically, we argue that bureaucrats with greater PSM are more likely to engage in both voice and sabotage, seeking to convince "unprincipled" principals of "principled policies" (voice) and to frustrate the implementation of "unprincipled policies" (sabotage). However, we also expect them to be more likely to leave (exit) to avoid contributing to the implementation of "unprincipled policies."

Empirically, we provide evidence for our argument through an original survey of over 1,700 public servants in Brazil's Federal Government in 2017, during the Michel Temer Presidency. The Temer Presidency is a propitious case for studying bureaucratic responses to "unprincipled" political principals. President Temer had come to power when the democratically elected President—Dilma Rousseff—was impeached in a process which many observers deemed undemocratic and a legislative coup (Taub 2016; Watson 2017). A month before our survey, Temer was caught on tape appearing to engage in bribery (Phillips 2017; Watts 2017). After leaving office, Temer was detained on corruption, racketeering, and obstruction of justice charges (Bloomberg 2019). In September 2017, the last month of our survey, Temer's approval rating had fallen to 3% in some polls (Marcello 2017; Verdélio 2017). The former Brazilian President thus both lacked democratic legitimacy and was engaged in a range of policies and actions against the public interest in office—from corruption to obstruction of justice. Our survey can thus shed light on how career bureaucrats in Brazil's Federal Government

1 To our knowledge, Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander's (2020) study is the sole exception. Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander (2020) assess the characteristics of *policies and contexts* (such as the probability of harm to society) which make bureaucrats rebel. We assess the characteristics of *bureaucrats* associated with guerrilla bureaucracy.

react to "unprincipled" political principals and policies. It does so through an original measurement scale of O'Leary's (2013) guerrilla sabotage activities.

In line with our predictions, we find, using structural equation models (SEM), that bureaucrats with greater PSM are more likely to engage in voice, sabotage, *and* exit when tasked with implementing policies they perceive to be against the public interest.

Our findings suggest that public service-motivated bureaucracies act as a stalwart against "unprincipled" political principals. This stalwartness, however, appears to come with an expiration date. Public service-motivated bureaucrats also disproportionately intend to leave when working under "unprincipled political principals." Political decay thus appears to trigger bureaucratic decay. With more public service-oriented bureaucrats more intent on leaving, bureaucracies on average become more "unprincipled," leaving "unprincipled" principals a freer hand to pursue policies against the public interest, without clandestine sabotage or protest by bureaucrats. Our findings thus contribute both theoretically and empirically to the scholarly understanding of the determinants of guerrilla bureaucracy, and the role of PSM in explaining exit, voice, and sabotage under "unprincipled" principals. Our findings also underscore the feasibility of studying guerrilla sabotage quantitatively, including by developing and validating a new measurement scale for guerrilla sabotage. We encourage others to replicate this scale to better understand guerrilla bureaucracy in comparative perspective.

The Determinants of Guerrilla Bureaucracy

Why do some bureaucrats engage in guerrilla activities to thwart policies against the public interest under "unprincipled principals," yet others do not? Three strands in the literature offer insights and inform our hypothesis development: the literature on guerrilla government, the management literature on constructive deviance, and studies of whistleblowing and ethical behavior in public sector organizations, in particular of PSM and ethical behavior.

Classically, O'Leary (2013) popularized "guerrilla government" in public administration scholarship. In her account, guerrilla government arises from bureaucrats "who are dissatisfied with the actions of public organizations [and] programs," and sabotage them "clandestinely" (O'Leary 2010, 8). Principal-agent problems in bureaucracy—high levels of discretion of bureaucratic agents coupled with imperfect monitoring by managerial and political principals—enable such guerrilla sabotage by bureaucrats.

In cases of dissent, guerrilla sabotage is only one of several courses of action available to bureaucrats. Among others, bureaucrats may choose to raise concerns about the policy with their principals (voice), leave the organization to avoid helping implement the "unprincipled" policy (exit), or, alternatively, implement the policy faithfully despite their concerns (loyalty) (cf. Hirschmann 1970). Beyond active responses (exit, voice, and sabotage) and loyalty (implementing the policy faithfully), bureaucrats may also respond with what Brehm and Gates (1997, 30) label "dissent shirking": "not working because one is opposed to a particular policy output." Brehm and Gates (1997, 30) juxtapose this to sabotage as "the production of negative output." The dividing line between sabotage and shirking (i.e., non-implementation) can be blurred, however, as non-implementation *can* sabotage a policy. As detailed below, O'Leary (2013, 108) thus includes non-implementation among guerrilla sabotage actions. We follow O' Leary's (2013, 2019) foundational work on guerrilla government, and thus conceptualize alternative responses to unprincipled principals as sabotage (including dissent shirking), voice, exit, and, lastly, loyalty (as the residual alternative if none of the other courses of action are taken).[2]

While the motivations driving guerrillas can be diverse, according to O'Leary (2013), bureaucrats tend to prioritize guerrilla tactics when alternative courses of action are either costlier or ineffective and, most of all, when "unprincipled" policies violate a public servant's perceived ethical obligations—that is their understanding of what is morally right and wrong.

Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander (2020) provide quantitative (conjoint) evidence for several of O'Leary's (2013) assertions about the characteristics of *policies* which make bureaucrats rebel—such as the probability that the policy causes harm, that public servants would face retribution for rebelling or that it violates a public servant's ethical standards. However, as Waldo's (1980) map of the ethical obligations of public servants—which O'Leary (2013) draws on—underscores, public servants' ethical standards—their understandings of what is morally right and wrong—can differ as different public officials react to different ethical obligations. To understand guerrilla bureaucracy in government, we thus need to understand not only the characteristics of *policies* that make bureaucrats rebel, but also the characteristics of rebelling *bureaucrats* themselves. Our hypotheses address this gap.

The management literature on constructive deviance—focused mostly on private sector enterprises—complements this insight by shedding light on the

2 In our empirical analyses, our findings about the effects of PSM on sabotage are equally robust when conceptualizing sabotage in omission of Brehm and Gates' (1997) dissent shirking, that is, without measures of non-implementation of policies (see supplementary appendix 8).

psychological mechanisms underlying constructive deviance. Contrary to the public administration literature on guerrilla government, it offers significant large-*n* evidence. Vadera, Pratt, and Mishra's (2013) review, for instance, comprised 152 articles. Constructive deviance is thereby understood as "intentional behaviours that depart from the norms of a reference group [often management] in honourable ways," wherein honorable acts are those that improve the human condition and impact society at large (Spreitzer and Sonenshein 2003, 209).

Constructive deviance is proximate to, though not equal to, guerrilla government as conceptualized in O'Leary (2013). For O'Leary (2013), guerrillas need not engage, or be motivated by, "constructive" deviance, but can instead engage in "destructive deviance" guerrilla activity, including for petty, self-interested concerns. As we are concerned with bureaucratic responses to "unprincipled" political principals, we follow the management literature and limit our scope of inquiry to explaining not all guerrilla activity, but only guerrilla sabotage motivated by "constructive deviance" concerns.

The dividing lines between "constructive" and "destructive" deviance and "principled" and "unprincipled" principals can, of course, be blurry. Policies bureaucrats perceive as "unprincipled" need not be. Instead, bureaucratic perceptions may simply reflect value conflicts between bureaucrats and political principals and diverging views of what the "public interest" constitutes given the multitude of public values (see, e.g., Gailmard 2010; Jensen, Andersen, and Jacobsen 2019). Political principals may, in a democratic society, prioritize specific values over others, without this necessarily being unprincipled (cf. Jørgensen and Bozeman 2007). Bureaucrats' superimposition of their own value preferences over those of elected political principals through guerrilla sabotage may thus run counter to and undermine—rather than further—democratic norms and the public interest (cf. O'Leary 2013). In other words, it may constitute "destructive" rather than "constructive" guerrilla sabotage. However, political principals may also pursue policies which are *not* in the public interest—for instance to enrich themselves personally—and, where they do, guerrilla activity is arguably a form of constructive deviance. With our Brazilian data detailed below, we plausibly assess a case of this nature, and can thus bracket these normative concerns by empirically assessing guerrilla activity under an "unprincipled" political principal.

Beyond this conceptual clarification of constructive deviance, the management literature sheds light on three underlying psychological mechanisms of constructive deviance: intrinsic motivation, felt obligation, and psychological empowerment (cf. Vadera, Pratt, and Mishra 2013). Intrinsically motivated employees find constructive deviance more rewarding, for instance by taking risks to impact society positively (e.g., Eisenberger and Aselage 2009).[3] Constructive deviance is also more likely when employees feel an obligation to deviate, for instance because of their attitude towards their organization (e.g., Detert and Trevino 2010; Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, and Kamdar 2011). Finally, psychological empowerment can foster constructive deviance—for instance because of a more proactive personality (e.g., LePine and Van Dyne 2001).

While this literature thus underscores several attitudes, traits, and values which foster guerrilla activity motivated by constructive deviance, the public administration literature on whistleblowing and ethical behavior adds that PSM—a "particular form of altruism or prosocial motivation that is animated by specific dispositions and values arising from public institutions and missions" (Perry and Hondeghem 2008, 3)—is, plausibly, a further important set of values and attitudes underlying guerrilla activity in government. To be clear, this literature has *not* focused on guerrilla sabotage as defined by O'Leary (2013). Rather, it has assessed other forms of constructive deviance, such as whistleblowing and the reporting of ethical problems. It has found not only that PSM has real behavioral consequences for, for instance, performance, prosocial, and honest behavior (Bellé 2013; Esteve et al. 2016; Olsen et al. 2019) but also that it foments other forms of constructive deviance, including the reporting of ethical problems and whistleblowing (see, e.g., Brewer and Selden 1998; Caillier 2017; Cho and Song 2015; Lavena 2016; Meyer-Sahling, Mikkelsen, and Schuster 2019; Near and Miceli 2008). For these alternative forms of constructive deviance, PSM is identified as a potent explanator. For instance, Lavena's (2016, 128) study of a range of individual- and organizational-level determinants of whistleblowing in the US Federal Government finds that "being norm-based and affectively motivated to public service is the strongest significant characteristic." We take from this literature the importance of assessing PSM as a potentially potent determinant of guerrilla activity by bureaucrats.

In addition, we can build on theoretical mechanisms linking PSM and its four component dimensions—self-sacrifice, commitment to public values, attraction to public service, and compassion[4]—to constructive deviance and ethical behavior. Ethical behavior—such

3 Though the management literature utilizes the term "intrinsic motivation," other scholars would refer to it as internalized extrinsic motivation, as it is targeted towards an external consequence (doing good to society) (cf. Vandenabeele 2007).

4 For congruence with our empirical test, we discuss the PSM dimensions developed in Kim et al. (2013), rather than Perry's (1996) original four dimensions.

as whistleblowing—often requires self-sacrificing one's interest (Wright, Hassan, and Park 2016). Ethical behavior is more consistent with one's values where commitment to public values is high (Stazyk and Davis 2015). Ethical behavior and contributing to the common good is more meaningful to individuals attracted to public service (Brewer and Selden 1998); and ethical behavior is more emotionally compelling to compassionate individuals, who are more sympathetic to the welfare of others (Meyer-Sahling, Mikkelsen, and Schuster 2019).

In conclusion, the "guerrilla government" literature suggests that bureaucrats engage in "guerrilla sabotage" when "unprincipled" policies violate their perceived ethical obligations. The management literature on constructive deviance adds certain attitudes and values—including intrinsic motivation and a felt obligation—matter, partly as they determine what bureaucrats see as their ethical obligation. Lastly, the literature on ethical behavior in public administration points to PSM as an important explanator of constructive deviance, and offers several plausible theoretical mechanisms. In sum, prior works underscore that PSM *could* be a determinant of guerrilla bureaucracy and offer theoretical mechanisms to build on. They do not explicitly theoretically develop or quantitatively assess this claim, however. Our next sections address this gap.

PSM, Guerrilla Sabotage, Voice, and Exit in Times of Bad Government

To understand and explain how bureaucrats react to the proliferation of "unprincipled" principals around the world, we link PSM theoretically to three courses of action bureaucrats can take when faced with "unprincipled" principals: guerrilla sabotage, voice, and exit. Loyalty—the faithful implementation of policies of unprincipled principals—is arguably the residual alternative when none of these three actions are taken (cf. Hirschmann 1970).

Consider, first, the relationship between PSM and guerrilla sabotage. Extrapolating from the literature reviewed above, all four PSM component dimensions may be expected to affect bureaucratic willingness to sabotage "unprincipled" principals. Bureaucrats with greater willingness to self-sacrifice for the common good may be expected to be more willing to take the risks for their own careers associated with clandestinely sabotaging "unprincipled" policies. Bureaucrats with greater compassion may be expected to be more sympathetic to the welfare of those harmed by "unprincipled" policies, and thus affectively drawn to guerrilla sabotage. Bureaucrats with greater commitment to public values have a stronger normative commitment to protecting the public interest and common good. Lastly, bureaucrats more attracted to public service may sabotage "unprincipled" policies for instrumental motives: they find it more meaningful and rewarding to engage in activities which advance the public interest, including sabotage of "unprincipled" policies (cf. Gailmard 2010). In short, all four PSM component dimensions suggest that bureaucrats with greater PSM become more "principled" bureaucratic agents, who are more likely to seek to sabotage "unprincipled" policies of principals. We thus hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Bureaucrats with greater PSM are more willing to clandestinely sabotage "unprincipled" policies of principals

All four PSM dimensions may, similarly, be expected to enhance voice against "unprincipled" policies: bureaucrats voicing their objections with principals—in informal conversations, meetings or memoranda, for instance—to convince them to stop or modify "unprincipled" policies (cf. Hirschmann 1970). When speaking out against "unprincipled" policies, bureaucrats openly signal to principals that they disagree with their policies. In return, they might face reprisals. Bureaucrats with greater willingness to self-sacrifice may be expected to be more willing to take this risk (cf. Wright, Hassan, and Park 2016). Likewise, bureaucrats with greater compassion, who are more sympathetic to the welfare of those harmed by "unprincipled policies," could be expected to be more willing to voice their concerns to principals (cf. Le Grand 2003). A commitment to public values in turn may be expected to normatively compel bureaucrats to signal concern about "unprincipled" policies. Lastly, bureaucrats more attracted to public service may be expected to find it more meaningful to raise voice against "unprincipled" policies. We thus expect a positive relationship with PSM:

Hypotheses 2 (H2): Bureaucrats with greater PSM are more willing to attempt to convince principals to stop "unprincipled" policies

Lastly, we also expect a positive effect of all four PSM dimensions on bureaucratic resignations to avoid helping implement "unprincipled" policies. Bureaucrats more willing to self-sacrifice may be expected to be more willing to incur the personal costs—the loss of their jobs—of this course of action. Bureaucrats with greater compassion may be expected to be more affectively motivated to resign to avoid implementing "unprincipled" policies which harm the welfare of others. Bureaucrats more committed to public values in turn may be normatively

driven to resign to avoid implementing "unprincipled" policies which violate the values they are committed to. Lastly, bureaucrats attracted to public service may find implementation of "unprincipled" policies without meaning and thus become more inclined to resign (cf. Bright 2008). All four PSM dimensions thus give us reason to believe that:

> **Hypothesis 3 (H3):** Bureaucrats with greater PSM are more willing to resign to avoid implementing "unprincipled" policies of principals

Contrary to **H1** and **H2**, however, the prediction for **H3** is less clear-cut. If more "principled" bureaucratic agents (with greater PSM) intend to leave organizations when tasked with implementing "unprincipled" policies, bureaucratic agents in public sector organizations, over time, become less "principled" on average when tasked with implementing "unprincipled" policies. With fewer "principled" bureaucratic agents in organizations, fewer bureaucrats may be expected to engage in voice and guerrilla sabotage of "unprincipled" policies. As a result, "unprincipled" principals face fewer principal-agent problems in public sector organizations when implementing "unprincipled" policies. They may thus become more able to implement "unprincipled" policies when "principled" agents leave—albeit only, of course, if those "principled" bureaucratic agents do not have unique expertise principals need to implement their policies.

Where bureaucrats with greater PSM foresee this risk—that their departure would enhance the ability of principals to implement "unprincipled" policies—the effects of PSM on exit are less clear-cut. On the one hand, bureaucrats with high PSM are more willing to sacrifice their jobs and find "unprincipled" policies juxtaposed to their commitment to public values, compassion with the welfare of others and what makes public service meaningful to them. This is reflected in **H3**. On the other hand, a greater commitment to public values—and thus protection of the public interest—and compassion with the welfare of those harmed in the longer-run by "unprincipled" policies might compel high-PSM bureaucrats to remain within the organization to curb, through sabotage and voice, "unprincipled" policies.[5] These competing expectations put a premium on assessing **H3** empirically.

Method and Data

We assess our hypotheses through original survey data from Brazil's Federal Government. As noted, most prior studies of guerrilla sabotage in public administration are qualitative in nature, providing fine-grained insights into guerrilla government and the ethics of dissent (cf. O'Leary 2013; as detailed above, Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander [2020] is the one exception). We complement this evidence with large-*n* data on guerrilla sabotage, exit, and voice of bureaucrats under an "unprincipled" principal, which enables us to draw inferences about the particular role played by PSM.

We conducted our survey (a broader civil service management survey) in collaboration with Brazil's Ministry of Planning, Development and Management (*Ministério do Planejamento, Desenvolvimento e Gestão*) and the National School of Public Administration (*Escola Nacional de Administração Pública*). Respondents were not compensated for participation. Ethics approval for the survey was obtained at the University of Nottingham (January 18, 2017). Our survey was fielded during the Temer Presidency, between July 5 and September 23, 2017. As detailed in the "Introduction" section, focusing on an unelected political principal without democratic legitimacy, who engaged in widespread corruption and featured a 3% approval rating at the time of our survey,[6] allows us to plausibly sidestep normative concerns about "principled" or "unprincipled" principals by empirically assessing guerrilla activity under what is plausibly an "unprincipled" political principal. Our inferences are thus limited to the determinants of "constructive" guerrilla activity.

At the same time, the Brazilian context allows us to explore guerrilla activity in a traditional Weberian career public service, marked by significant bureaucratic autonomy. With the exception of managerial and advisory positions (Direção e Assessoramento Superior [DAS])—to which Presidents and Ministers do make several thousand appointments, thus constituting an important mechanism for political control of bureaucracy (Lopez and Praça 2018)—civil servants are recruited through written exams, employed on permanent contracts with strong protections from dismissal, and promoted based on years of service principally in practice (OECD 2010). In fact, even in higher-level positions (DAS 1–5) of the federal government, only 19% of bureaucrats indicate that political alignment was important for their appointment, and only a minority have party affiliations, suggesting

5 This would, however, only hold if high-PSM bureaucrats are "act-irrelevant." If they are "act-relevant"—that is, motivated not only by outcomes in the public interest, but by the warm glow of actions leading to those outcomes (cf. Le Grand 2003, 36)—high-PSM bureaucrats may exit when required to implement "unprincipled policies."

6 By way of illustration, Bolsonaro—Brazil's current highly controversial populist President—held an approval rating of 30% even after Brazil became the second-biggest COVID-19 hotspot in the world (Reuters 2020).

relatively low levels of politicization of bureaucracy, particularly below the very senior echelons (Lopez and Praça 2018; Lopez and Moreira da Silva 2019). The majority of federal government civil servants are, moreover, members of unions, which frequently undertake collective action to protect employee rights (OECD 2010; Pichler and Menegotto 2015). When inquired about public service values, federal employees in Brazil—according to feedback of 58,000 officials—prioritize values which are akin to public service values in other OECD countries, such as impartiality, integrity and public service commitment (CGU 2021). As we discuss further in the conclusion, our findings are thus plausibly generalizable to other Weberian career civil services, such as those in continental Europe.

Our survey was conducted online on Qualtrics. The survey frame comprised all public servants in 14 federal government institutions based in Brasilia—26,616 public servants in total. We focused on public servants in Brasilia due to their greater proximity to the Temer Presidency.[7] The sampled institutions cover a broad range of federal government ministries and agencies: Ministry of Finance; Treasury; Tax Administration; Institute for Social Security; Ministry of Planning, Development and Management; Ministry of Industry and Commerce; Office of Comptroller General; Ministry of Social Development; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Labour; Ministry of Transport, Ports and Civil Aviation; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation; and Ministry of Cities.

3,999 public servants responded to the survey (15% response rate). 1,695 respondents completed all survey questions in both the PSM and guerrilla sabotage batteries. Our respondents are diverse in gender, age, education, rank, and years of experience (table 1). In line with the Weberian nature of Brazil's career civil service, 24% of respondents have been in public service for over 30 years, and an additional 17% have been in public service for over 20 years.

Comparing our respondents to survey population data, we find they are roughly representative on gender and age, but more (university) educated than the average federal government bureaucrat (table 2).

While overrepresentation of more educated respondents is typical in online surveys (Keeter and McGeeney 2015), this overrepresentation and the relatively low response rate implicate that we cannot claim that our respondents are fully representative—though our sample significantly improves upon the representativeness of prior surveys of guerrilla bureaucrats.[8] Descriptive inferences—for instance about the prevalence of guerrilla activity among bureaucrats in Brazil—should thus be interpreted with caution, and this is a limitation of our article. While descriptive means may be affected, we do not see reason why the association *between* variables—and thus our core inferences—are biased by our response rate. With that said, as two duties of care, we include a range of controls to curb bias from lack of representativeness on observables, and, as detailed below, assess potential unobservable non-response bias by estimating whether PSM levels are higher for early survey respondents (who were plausibly more motivated to respond).

To ensure the meaning of our survey questions was well understood, we pre-tested our questionnaire extensively, including through revisions of survey items with staff in Brazil's Ministry of Planning, Development and Management, and the National School for Public Administration, and 10 cognitive interviews with bureaucrats across institutions and levels of hierarchy. Prior to these cognitive interviews—and as our PSM battery was developed in English—a professional translator translated survey items to foster congruence between the meaning of questions in Portuguese and English (see supplementary appendix 1 for PSM survey items in Portuguese). These duties of care increase

Table 1. Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Gender	
Male	57%
Female	43%
Age	
29 or under	4%
30–39	29%
40–49	22%
50–59	32%
60 or older	13%
Education	
High school	8%
Technical-vocational degree	2%
Bachelor	39%
Post-graduate studies	37%
Master	11%
PhD	3%
Years of service in public administration	
0–5 years	11%
6–10 years	22%
11–20 years	27%
21–30 years	17%
Over 30 years	24%

7 In four institutions—Finance, Tax, Social Security, and the Comptroller General—our survey frame lacked information about the location of public servants. We thus invited all of their public servants to participate.

8 Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander's (2020) survey of federal bureaucrats in the United States had a 3.7% response rate (relative to the sampling frame), and only assesses representativeness relative to the US general population, not the survey population (the US federal bureaucracy).

Table 2. Survey Representativeness

	Survey Sample	Survey Population Data[9] (Federal Government)
Gender (percentage female)	43%	45%
Age (mean age)	47.6	46
Education (percentage university-educated)	90%	75%

Source: Government of Brazil (2018).

Table 3. Survey Items: PSM Construct

Item ID	Survey Item
Attraction to public service	
APS1	I admire people who initiate or are involved in activities to aid my community
APS2	It is important to contribute to activities that tackle social problems
APS3	Meaningful public service is very important to me
APS4	It is important for me to contribute to the common good
Commitment to public values	
CPV1	I think equal opportunities for citizens are very important
CPV2	It is important that citizens can rely on the continuous provision of public services
CPV3	It is fundamental that the interests of future generations are taken into account when developing public policies
CPV4	To act ethically is essential for public servants
Compassion	
COM1	I feel sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged
COM2	I empathize with other people who face difficulties
COM3	I get very upset when I see other people being treated unfairly
COM4	Considering the welfare of others is very important
Self-sacrifice	
SS1	I am prepared to make sacrifices for the good of society
SS2	I believe in putting civic duty before self
SS3	I am willing to risk personal loss to help society
SS4	I would agree to a good plan to make a better life for the poor, even if it costs me money

confidence that respondents understood our measures in the intended fashion.

For our PSM measurement, we replicate the international PSM measurement scale developed by Kim et al. (2013). While PSM measurement is characterized by an ongoing debate (cf. Perry and Vandenabeele 2015), at least some consider Kim et al. the "current authority" (Prebble 2016, 2). Kim et al.'s measurement scale comprises four dimensions and 16 items: self-sacrifice (SS), compassion (COM), commitment to public values (CPV), and attraction to public service (APS) (table 3).

For our dependent variables—guerrilla sabotage, exit, and voice under "unprincipled policies"—by contrast, no measurement scale exists.[10] We thus developed an original scale, drawing on O'Leary's (2013, 108) qualitative compilation of 30 "methods utilized by dissatisfied public servants to address perceived wrongs." Her compilation includes actions of voice (such as "Confront the issue directly with the person involved"), exit (such as "Quit" or "Arrange for, or go along with, a transfer to another office"), and, most extensively, sabotage.

O'Leary's (2013, 108–09) guerrilla sabotage actions fall conceptually broadly into at least four categories: clandestine disobedience and nonimplementation of the policy (e.g., "Neglect policies and directives you disagree with—stall," "Fail to implement orders you think are unfair," "Obey your superiors in public, disobey them in private"); clandestine attempts to convince colleagues to disobey and not implement a policy (e.g., "Hold clandestine meetings to plot a unified staff strategy," "Build partnerships among entities at all levels of government"); clandestine sabotage of policies inside a government agency (e.g., "Fail to correct superiors' mistakes: let them fall"); and clandestine information to outside groups about the harm of a policy to enlist their support to stop the policy (e.g., "Leak information," "Forge links with other outside groups: other professionals, nongovernmental organizations, concerned citizens," "Ghostwrite letters, testimony, and studies for supportive interest groups").

9 Survey population data is from 2018; our survey was conducted in 2017.

10 Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander's (2020) conjoint experiment features outcome measures which include several of O'Leary's (2013, 108–09) guerrilla sabotage actions—without, however, offering a measurement scale of bureaucratic guerrilla activity.

Table 4. Survey Items: Guerrilla Sabotage, Exit, and Voice

Item ID	Survey Item
Imagine that management insisted public servants implement a government policy that you are convinced is against the interest of the public and could cause society significant harm. How frequently would you expect to react in the following ways?	
Guerrilla Sabotage	
GUER1	I would, in private, try to disobey and not implement the policy
GUER2	I would, in private, try to convince colleagues not to implement the policy
GUER3	I would, in private, try to find ways to undermine the implementation of the policy inside my agency
GUER4	I would, in private, try to inform outside groups or the media about harm I thought the policy inflicted on society
Exit	
EXIT	I would quit my position if I had to implement the policy
Voice	
VOICE	I would try to convince management to stop the policy

Our measurement scale of bureaucratic guerrilla activity against perceived "unprincipled" policies reflects this four-fold categorization. We asked respondents how frequently they would undertake these four types of guerrilla actions on a five-point scale ("Never," "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," or "Always or almost always"; table 4; see supplementary appendix 2 for the items in Portuguese). This was preceded by a short description to embed these actions in a context of perceived "unprincipled" policies:

> "Imagine that management insisted public servants implement a government policy that you are convinced is against the interest of the public and could cause society significant harm. How frequently would you expect to react in the following ways?"[11,12]

This four-item measure of guerrilla sabotage was complemented by one-item measures of voice ("I would try to convince management to stop the policy") and exit ("I would quit my position if I had to implement the policy"). Our cognitive interviews suggest that respondents understood these items as intended as guerrilla sabotage, voice, and exit in contexts of perceived "unprincipled" policies. As a limitation—and as in other quantitative studies of guerrilla government (Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander 2020)—our survey measures are only measures of behavioral *intent*. We return to this limitation in the conclusion.

We analyze these data in an SEM framework.[13] We, first, evaluate the fit of our latent constructs, PSM and sabotage, in a measurement model using confirmative factor analysis (CFA). Subsequently, we report results from SEMs in the "Results" section. For both analyses, as all items are measured on ordinal scales and as particularly the observed PSM items show signs of skew, we rely on the diagonally weighted least squares (DWLS) estimator. Across all models, we identify latent variables using effects coding. This identification scheme utilizes constraints across factor loadings and item intercepts to identify latent variables and—which greatly eases interpretation of regression estimates—to ensure that they are on the same scale as their indicators.

To evaluate model fit in both CFA and SEM, we rely on the comparative fit index (CFI) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) with benchmarks for good fit of 0.95 (or above) and 0.06 (or below), respectively (e.g., Hu and Bentler 1999). We also report chi-squared tests of model fit. However, as significance in this test is sensitive to large samples such as ours, we do not place too much emphasis on this measure of fit.

Beginning with our CFA, we test whether guerrilla sabotage and PSM are meaningful constructs in the Brazilian setting. Table 5 contains the path coefficients for the PSM measurement model. Alongside most prior works, we use a second-order reflective measurement model, rather than the sometimes discussed but rarely used first-order reflective, second-order formative measurement alternative (cf. Kim 2011; Mikkelsen, Schuster, and Meyer-Sahling 2020). The model fits the data well (χ^2 = 191.435 [df = 100, p < .001], CFI = 0.991, RMSEA = 0.020). We, further, assessed

11 Our scenario thus holds constant several policy and situational characteristics (such as the policy causing harm) which Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander (2020) associate with guerrilla activity.

12 In line with our ambition to assess guerrilla sabotage motivated by constructive deviance, we measure how bureaucrats respond to policies they perceive to be against the public interest and causing society significant harm in a context of a political principal that is "unprincipled." In less extreme cases—with political principals that are less overtly "unprincipled"—legitimate value conflicts between bureaucrats and political principals about what the "public interest" is may, of course, arise (cf. O'Leary (2013). Our measurement scale replicated in such contexts would thus potentially measure guerrilla sabotage more generally (destructive or constructive), rather than guerrilla sabotage motivated by constructive deviance.

13 All analyses were conducted using the lavaan package for R (Rosseel 2012).

Table 5. PSM Measurement Model

	Item	Estimate		Item	Estimate
APS	APS1	1.008 (.000)	CPV	CPV1	1.395 (.000)
	APS2	1.171 (.000)		CPV2	1.196 (.000)
	APS3	0.901 (.000)		CPV3	1.032 (.000)
	APS4	0.919 (.000)		CPV4	0.376 (.000)
COM	COM1	1.280 (.000)	SS	SS1	1.038 (.000)
	COM2	1.235 (.000)		SS2	0.828 (.000)
	COM3	0.545 (.000)		SS3	1.069 (.000)
	COM4	0.940 (.000)		SS4	1.065 (.000)
PSM	APS	1.067 (.000)			
	CPV	0.476 (.000)			
	COM	1.060 (.000)			
	SS	1.396 (.000)			
	N	2,363			
	χ^2	191.435 [df = 100, $p < .001$]			
	CFI	0.991			
	RMSEA	0.020			
	SRMR	0.044			

Note: Results from confirmatory factor analysis employing effects coding and estimated using DWLS; *p* values in parentheses.
SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

the scale reliability of the four PSM component dimensions. Ordinal alpha for every dimension is higher than standard benchmarks (0.91 for APS, 0.87 for CPV, 0.85 for COM, and 0.88 for SS). Moreover, in terms of internal discriminant validity, a four-dimensional model performs better in terms of fit than a one-dimensional model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1001.140$ [df = 4, $p < .001$], ΔCFI = 0.103, ΔRMSEA = 0.048). Lastly, we followed Kim et al. (2013, 91) and assessed the correlations between the four PSM dimensions. These range from 0.365 (between CPV and SS) to 0.670 (between APS and COM), and are always significantly lower than 1.00, providing evidence of discriminant validity by both the Kline's (requiring correlations less than 0.85) and the Bagozzi et al.'s (requiring significant differences from unity) criteria (Kline 2011). The PSM scale thus shows acceptable validity and reliability.

Similarly, we find acceptable validity and reliability of our novel four-item guerrilla sabotage scale. Ordinal alpha for the four items is above conventional benchmarks (0.90), and the measurement model fits the data well ($\chi^2 = 0.864$ [df = 2, $p = .649$]).[14] Table 6 shows the estimated factor loadings of the construct.

To further assess the validity of our scale, we examined discriminant validity. A plausible conjecture could be that we are simply measuring CPV using different items with our guerrilla battery. However, a comparison of models including SABOTAGE items as a separate construct and as part of CPV does not support this idea ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1{,}065.797$ [df = 4, $p = .007$], ΔCFI = 0.098, ΔRMSEA = 0.050). The successful validation of our scale suggests that future studies interested in measuring guerrilla bureaucracy may benefit from replicating our guerrilla sabotage scale.

Table 6. Guerrilla Sabotage Measurement Model

Index	Item	Estimate
SABOTAGE	DISOBEY	1.065 (.000)
	CONVINCE	1.025 (.000)
	PREVENT	1.083 (.000)
	REPORT	0.827 (.000)
	N	1,857
	χ^2	0.864 [df = 2, $p = .649$]
	CFI	1.000
	RMSEA	0.000
	SRMR	0.006

Note: Results from confirmatory factor analysis employing effects coding and estimated using DWLS; *p* values in parentheses.
SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

We control, in a baseline SEM, for the gender, university education, income (measured in three income bands), years of work experience in public administration, rank in hierarchy (administrative assistant, technical-professional level, managerial level), position type (whether bureaucrats are in contact with citizens in their job), and institution of the respondent. Controlling for age instead of years of experience yields similar results.[15] Institutional fixed effects imply that all differences between institutions are controlled for. Supplementary appendix 3 contains descriptive statistics for our variables.

14 CFI and RMSEA are not reported as the χ^2 is smaller than the degrees of freedom and the two fit measures will, consequently, always indicate perfect fit.

15 Controlling for both leads, due to collinearity, to uninvertable matrices.

Results

We present our results in three steps. First, we provide descriptive statistics on guerrilla sabotage, voice, and exit. They show that bureaucrats vary sharply in their willingness to engage in each of these actions in response to "unprincipled" policies. Subsequently, we assess the determinants of this variation and find support for our hypotheses. Lastly, we subject our findings to several robustness checks.

Figure 1 visualizes means for voice, exit, and sabotage, all of which range theoretically from zero to four. It underscores, first, variation in bureaucratic responses to unprincipled policies. Congruent with O'Leary's (2013) qualitative finding, sabotage is the least common response to "unprincipled" policies. Voice (convincing principals to amend policies) and, to a lesser extent, exit (quitting to avoid helping implement the policy) are more frequent.

In fact, only a minority of bureaucrats are willing to consistently engage in sabotage of "unprincipled" policies. Depending on the form of guerrilla sabotage, between 24.4% and 38.3% of respondents would be willing to undertake a given sabotage activity "Almost or Almost Always" or "Often" when faced with a government policy they are convinced is against the interest of the public and would cause society significant harm (figure 2). About 12.3% would be willing to engage at least often in *all* forms of guerrilla sabotage. Trying to convince colleagues not to implement the policy is the most frequent act of (willingness to) sabotage (38.3% at least "Often"), followed by informing outside groups or the media about harm of the policy (30.4% at least "Often"). Significantly fewer are willing to disobey and not implement the policy (25.1% at least "Often")—that is engage in what Brehm and Gates (1997) term dissent shirking—and even fewer are willing to find ways to undermine the implementation of the policy inside their agency (24.4% at least "Often").

By contrast, most (64.3%) respondents are willing to engage in voice and try to convince management to stop the policy. Exit is less common than voice, but somewhat more common than sabotage: 33.7% of respondents indicate that they would quit their position at least "Often" if they had to implement a policy they perceive to be against the public interest (figure 3; see supplementary appendix 3 for descriptive statistics).

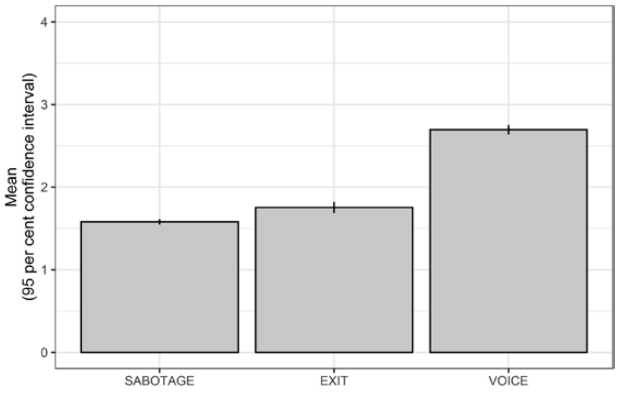

Figure 1. Means of exit, voice, and guerrilla sabotage by bureaucrats.
Note: 0–4 frequency scale: 0 = Never or Almost Never to 4 = Always or Almost Always.

Most bureaucratic agents are thus willing to take some actions (voice), but not others (exit and sabotage) in response to "unprincipled" policies. Where bureaucrats are willing to engage in any form of sabotage (at least "Often"), however, they typically seek to counter "unprincipled" policies through multiple channels: they are in their majority also willing to engage in voice (73.7% at least "Often") and, to a lesser extent, exit (40.2% at least "Often"). Sabotage, voice, and exit are thus complementary, rather than alternative, forms of actions for guerrilla bureaucrats to counter "unprincipled" policies. Vice versa, a significant minority of bureaucrats (7.5%) are plausibly loyal agents of "unprincipled" principals: they are never or rarely willing to engage in any form of voice, exit or sabotage.

What explains this variation in bureaucratic responses to "unprincipled" policies? Consistent with our hypotheses, PSM is one important determinant. Figure 2 shows structural regression estimates for the association between PSM and exit, voice, and sabotage. The effects are significant at the 1% level. Substantively, a one-point increase in PSM is associated with a 0.7-point increase (0.5 SD) in the frequency of voice (on a 0–4 scale), a 0.5-point (0.3 SD) increase in the frequency of exit, and a 0.2-point (0.2 SD) increase in the frequency of sabotage (figure 4).

The estimates for other significant controls enhance confidence in the plausibility of our finding (see table 7). Respondents with more years of experience, closer to the end of their careers, are significantly more likely to exit (5% level), but not more likely to engage in voice or sabotage. Managers are significantly less likely to sabotage (1% level), but significantly more likely to engage in voice (1% level) and exit (5% level)—a finding we return to below.[16]

We also find in separate regressions with the same control variables that each PSM component dimension is positively and significantly associated (at the 5% level) with greater voice, exit and, with the exception of CPV, guerrilla sabotage (figure 3; see supplementary appendix 4 for regression tables). At the same time, estimate sizes differ notably. In particular, APS is by a factor of 3.3–7.7 more strongly associated with sabotage than other PSM dimensions (figure 5).[17]

To further gauge the importance of different PSM dimensions for exit, voice, and sabotage, we

16 Treating the unwillingness to engage in either exit, voice or sabotage as a measure of loyalty, we also find in a linear probability model that PSM is associated with significantly lower loyalty towards unprincipled principals (see supplementary appendix 10).

17 APS also has a significantly (at the 5% level) larger association with voice than compassion and self-sacrifice. We do not observe statistically significant differences in the estimated coefficients for exit between PSM dimensions.

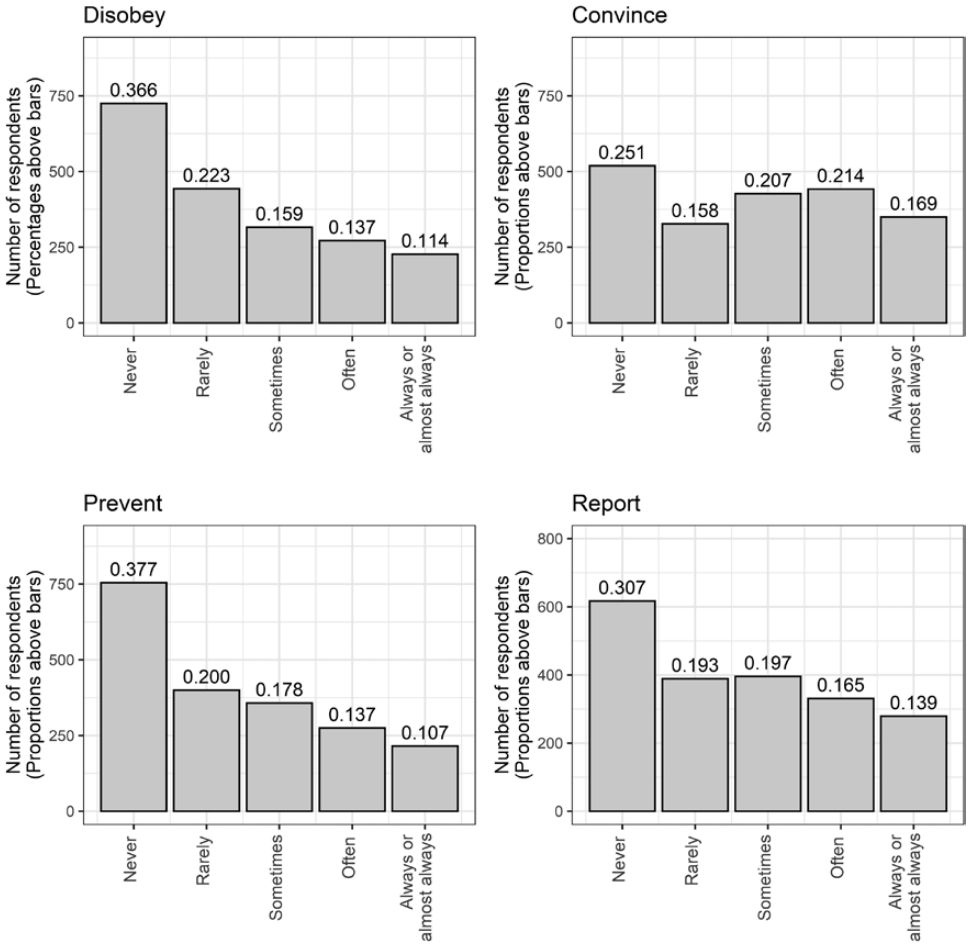

Figure 2. Histograms of responses to guerrilla sabotage items.

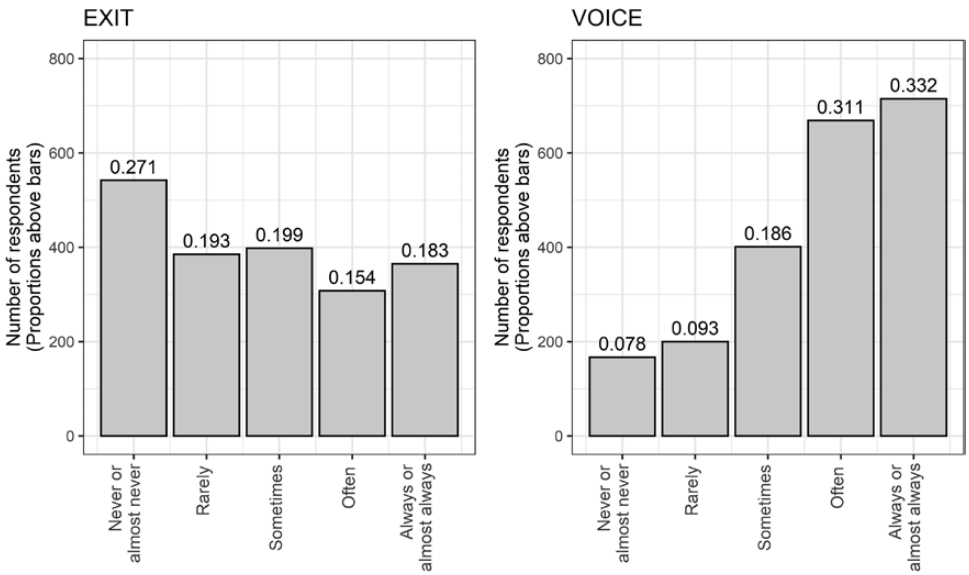

Figure 3. Histogram of responses to exit and voice items.

regress these outcomes on all PSM dimensions simultaneously (supplementary appendix 5). This is suggestive only: since the dimensions are reflective indicators of the same second-order latent construct (PSM), analyzing them separately may erode statistical support (though our analyses have acceptable variance inflation factors across outcome measures). With this caveat in mind, we find that only APS is

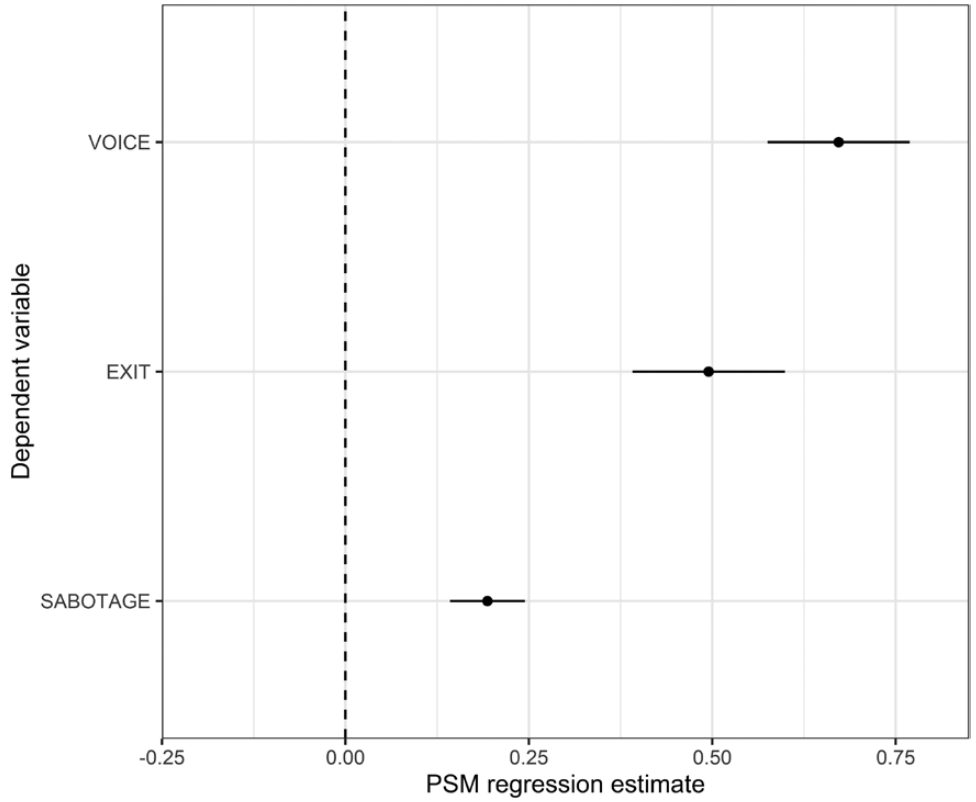

Figure 4. Regression results: PSM and exit, voice, and guerrilla sabotage.

Note: Structural regression estimates for PSM from a multivariate SEM, including all controls and ministry fixed effects. Estimates are shown with 95% confidence intervals.

Table 7. Main Regression Results

	Exit	Voice	Sabotage
PSM	0.495 (.000)	0.672 (.000)	0.194 (.000)
Gender	0.119 (.190)	−0.132 (.078)	0.025 (.557)
Years of service	0.010 (.047)	0.006 (.136)	−0.001 (.607)
Contacts with citizens	−0.093 (.283)	0.112 (.121)	0.047 (.258)
University graduate	−0.013 (.953)	0.247 (.203)	−0.161 (.137)
Middle income	0.031 (.875)	0.060 (.712)	−0.057 (.536)
High income	0.142 (.541)	0.222 (.247)	−0.175 (.109)
Management	0.286 (.021)	0.287 (.003)	−0.159 (.008)
Administrative support	−0.285 (.214)	−0.094 (.640)	0.044 (.693)
N	1,481		
χ^2	1245.653 [df = 600, $p < .001$]		
CFI	0.940		
RMSEA	0.027		
SRMR	0.032		

Note: Results from structural equation model with institutional fixed effects; *p* values in parentheses.
SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

significantly associated with guerrilla sabotage when controlling for all PSM dimensions simultaneously. APS is also significantly associated with voice, whereas self-sacrifice is significantly associated with voice and exit. Cautiously, then, our analyses of PSM dimensions underscore the importance of APS in particular for guerrilla sabotage.

To mitigate concerns with spuriousness, we subject our core findings to several robustness checks. To begin with, to address potential omitted variable bias concerns, we assess whether our findings hold when additionally controlling for management and leadership variables. While we control for institutional fixed effects—and thus differences in management across

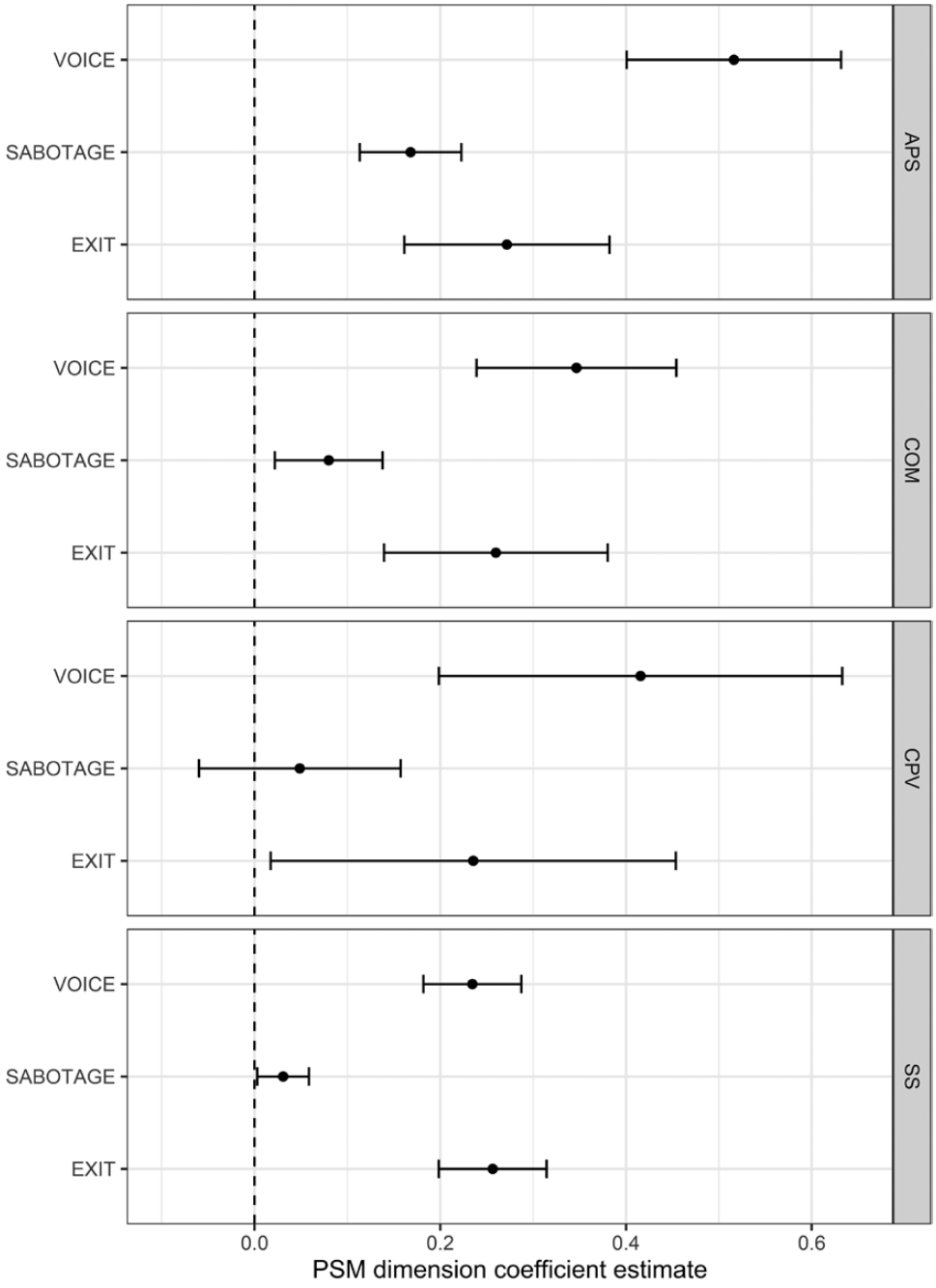

Figure 5. PSM dimensions and exit, voice, and sabotage.

Note: Estimated structural regression estimates for PSM dimensions from multivariate SEM, including all controls and ministry fixed effects. Estimates are shown with 95% confidence intervals.

institutions—management and leadership practices might vary inside institutions, and shape both PSM and willingness to sabotage, exit, or raise voice. This could lead to spurious correlations. To address this concern, we, first, assess whether our findings are robust to differences in perceived monitoring and sanctioning of high-PSM bureaucrats (supplementary appendix 6). High-PSM bureaucrats might have performed better on the job and are thus less easily dismissed. As a result, they might be more able to engage in voice or sabotage without fear of sanctions. We thus add a control for perceived job stability ("It would be difficult to dismiss me from the public sector"; five-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree). We find that bureaucrats who fear they can be easily dismissed are less willing to engage in sabotage (significant at the 1% level); we find no significant association between fear of dismissal and either exit or voice. At the same time, our PSM estimates remain significant (at the 1% level).

Public servants with greater PSM might also perceive that they are less closely monitored in their work than less "principled" bureaucratic agents. As a result, they might be more able to engage in sabotage without being found out. We thus add a control for supervision (agreement with the statement "My work is closely supervised."). We find that those whose work is closely supervised are less willing to engage in guerrilla sabotage (at the 1% level). Closer supervision has no significant association with either voice or exit. Our PSM estimates remain significant (at the 1% level).

Second, we control for leadership practices of direct superiors, including transformational leadership ("My superior communicates and generates enthusiasm for the mission and vision of this organization") and ethical leadership ("My superior communicates clear ethical standards to subordinates"). This matters as leadership practices can enhance PSM (e.g., Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010) but might also reduce the willingness of employees to sabotage (cf. O'Leary 2013), causing spurious correlations between PSM and sabotage. We measure both indicators on a five-point scale, from "Never" to "Always or Almost Always." PSM remains a significant predictor in both models (at the 1% level) and fully mediates the effects of transformational leadership on exit, voice, and sabotage and the effect of ethical leadership on sabotage and exit (see supplementary appendix 7).[18]

Third, given the our relatively low response rate, we assessed potential bias from non-response. We do so by exploiting survey implementation over time. Public servants who responded early to the survey were arguably more motivated to respond than public servants who only responded after several follow-up emails before survey closure two months later. A decrease in average responses to PSM variables over time would imply that higher PSM public servants are more likely to respond to the survey, and potentially bias our findings. We do not find this to be the case for any of the PSM items (supplementary appendix 9). While we lack data from those who never responded and thus cannot conclusively rule out non-response bias—and this is a limitation of this article—the data we have does not give us reason to believe that non-response biases our findings.

Fourth, we assessed the robustness of our findings to alternative conceptualizations of sabotage. As aforementioned, O'Leary's (2013) sabotage concept includes Brehm and Gates' (1997) dissent shirking. To assess whether our findings hold using Brehm and Gates' (1997) sabotage concept, we re-estimate the associations between PSM and sabotage with the "dissent shirking" measure ("I would, in private, try to disobey and not implement the policy") excluded. Our findings remain robust (see supplementary appendix 8).

18 In addition, PSM partially mediates the association between ethical leadership and voice.

Discussion

For bureaucracies around the world, our core finding—bureaucrats with greater PSM are more willing to engage in voice, sabotage, and exit when tasked with implementing policies they perceive to be against the public interest—is good and bad news.

On an upside, it suggests that public service-motivated bureaucracies act as stalwarts against "unprincipled" political principals. They are more willing to convince their principals to stop "unprincipled" policies. They are also more willing to sabotage them in implementation, by disobeying and failing to implement policies, convincing colleagues to do the same, undermining policy implementation inside their organization, and informing outside groups about societal harms of these policies. Our findings thus add to the literature on PSM and ethical behavior, underscoring that PSM is not only associated with ethical behaviors such as whistleblowing (e.g., Brewer and Selden 1998), reporting of ethical problems to management (e.g., Meyer-Sahling, Mikkelsen, and Schuster 2019), and honesty (e.g., Olsen et al. 2019), but also guerrilla sabotage of "unprincipled" policies. This further underscores the importance of PSM for public service ethics.

Our results, however, are also bad news for bureaucracy in times of bad political government. Our findings suggest that "principled" bureaucracies with high-PSM bureaucrats come with an expiration date under "unprincipled" political principals. While turnover intent, of course, does not always translate into exit (e.g., Cho and Lewis 2012), our findings do suggest that, over time, there is a risk that public service-motivated bureaucrats leave when working under "unprincipled" political principals. This turns the typically negative relationship between PSM and turnover intent identified in prior work upside down (Ritz, Brewer, and Neumann 2016). With more public service-oriented bureaucrats more willing to leave, bureaucracies become more "unprincipled." To illustrate, respondents who are willing to quit (at least often) when tasked with implementing "unprincipled" policies are also much more willing to engage in voice (79%) than those less frequently willing to quit (56%), and almost four times more willing to engage in sabotage (11%). In fact, those who do not contemplate exit (at least "Often") and prefer to remain in the organization hardly engage in sabotage of unprincipled policies at all (3%). This leaves unprincipled

principals a much freer hand in implementing unprincipled policies through a, then, more unprincipled bureaucracy. Political decay thus appears to trigger bureaucratic decay.

Our data also shed light on the particular public service motives accounting for different behavioral responses to "unprincipled" principals. In line with our theoretical argument, we find suggestive evidence (in models controlling for one PSM dimension at a time) that all four PSM dimensions are associated with exit, voice, and with the notable exception of the association of CPV sabotage. For sabotage, we observe the largest and most robust association for APS. Compared to an affective motive (compassion with those harmed by the policy), or a sense of self-sacrifice or a normative motive (internalization of public values), an instrumental motive thus appears to be most important for guerrilla bureaucrats: sabotaging "unprincipled" policies is part of meaningful public service to them. By contrast, we find that self-sacrifice is the most robust predictor of "exit" in response to "unprincipled" principals (in models controlling for all PSM dimensions simultaneously). While inferences drawn from these models are only suggestive, our findings indicate that different values motivate different behavioral responses to "unprincipled" principals. Those most willing to self-sacrifice are most willing to lose their jobs and exit. By contrast, those most motivated by meaningful public service are most willing to sabotage.

Our robustness checks also suggest that PSM is an important, but not the only determinant of bureaucratic responses to "unprincipled" policies. Our results also speak to the power of management and workplace incentives in shaping guerrilla bureaucracy. Bureaucrats whose work is closely supervised and who believe they can be easily dismissed, for instance, are less willing to engage in sabotage. Bureaucratic autonomy matters for guerrilla sabotage. In that sense, our findings from Brazil differ from Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander's (2020) study, who do not find a significant effect on the probability and type of retribution on guerrilla behavioral intent in the United States. Our data are, however, consistent with such an effect: bureaucrats who face a greater probability of being caught (as they are more closely supervised) and potentially greater retribution (as they can be easily dismissed) are less likely to engage in guerrilla sabotage. The (somewhat surprising) lack of effect of punishment incentives on guerrilla behavior in the US bureaucracy thus does not appear to be generalizable to countries such as Brazil. This might be as in countries with weaker private employment alternatives such as Brazil, workplace incentives—in particular the incentive to retain one's job—may shape bureaucratic behavior more forcefully.

Transformational and ethical leadership practices are also found to be associated with voice, exit, and sabotage. Remarkably, though, these associations are largely indirect through PSM. This underscores, on the one hand, the importance of PSM to understand bureaucratic responses to "unprincipled" principals. On the other hand, it points to deeper antecedents of guerrilla behavior in public service. Transformational and ethical leaders in the public sector appear to enhance the PSM of their employees (see also Jensen and Bro 2018) and, in doing so, lay the groundwork for employees to become guerrilla bureaucrats when "unprincipled" political principals come into office. In other words, generating enthusiasm for the mission of the organization can lead to greater sabotage of principals of that organization when those are perceived as "unprincipled." This finding further nuances the literature on the behavioral implications of transformational and ethical leadership inside government (e.g., Hassan, Wright, and Yukl 2014; Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright, 2012).

Our findings also speak to the behavior of public managers themselves when faced with "unprincipled" principals. Public managers are *less* likely to engage in sabotage, but *more* likely to engage in voice and exit. This suggests that managers differ from lower ranks in how they weigh competing ethical obligations when deciding how to respond to "unprincipled policies" (cf. Waldo 1980). On the one hand, they prioritize duty towards political principals to a greater extent by not sabotaging them. On the other, they prioritize duty towards citizens to a greater extent by exiting the organization to not participate in implementing unprincipled policies—for which they plausibly bear greater responsibility as senior officials—and by seeking to persuade principals to drop the policy. Sabotage is thus more the purview of middle and lower ranks, while voice and exit are the more typical behavioral responses of senior officials to unprincipled principals.

Conclusion

Recent years have seen a proliferation of populist governments and governments with weak commitment to ethical values and the public interest. Freedom House (2021), for instance, estimates that 75% of the world's population lives in countries experiencing democratic declines. For public administration research, this democratic backsliding puts a premium on, first, understanding how bureaucrats react to "unprincipled" principals and policies; and, second, explaining why different bureaucrats react differently. Despite the centrality of these conundrums in contemporary governance, hardly any quantitative public administration research has sought to resolve them. We address this gap through survey evidence from Brazil, with

an original measurement scale of bureaucratic guerrilla sabotage of "unprincipled" policies. We focus on one key explanator: PSM. We argue and find evidence that bureaucrats with greater PSM are more likely to engage in voice, sabotage, and exit when faced with "unprincipled policies." Public service-motivated bureaucracies thus appear to be short-run stalwarts against "unprincipled" political principals. Over time, "principled bureaucrats" intend to depart, leaving "unprincipled" principals a freer hand to pursue policies against the public interest. Democratic backsliding thus risks leading to bureaucratic backsliding.

For democracies and bureaucracies around the world, this is a concerning finding. It suggests that, if "unprincipled" political principals are here to stay, their damage to the public interest will magnify: with longer rule, "unprincipled" political principals become less and less constrained in their policies by an increasingly "unprincipled" bureaucracy.

Our findings underscore the importance of studying guerrilla bureaucracy and bureaucratic responses to "unprincipled" political principals. They also underscore the feasibility of doing so, including by constructing a new measurement scale for guerrilla sabotage, which can be replicated in other contexts to compare the prevalence, determinants and consequences of guerrilla bureaucracy across countries and time. We thus hope our findings encourage further quantitative research on guerrilla bureaucracy. Several avenues for further research stand out.

Most obviously, future research could assess exit, voice, and sabotage by public servants under "unprincipled" political principals outside Brazil. May we expect similar effects of PSM? Brazil's Federal Government is marked by a traditional Weberian career civil service with strong tenure protections. Our findings are thus most plausibly generalizable to other Weberian career civil services, for instance in continental Europe. Whether they also travel to, for instance, politicized civil service systems in which bureaucratic agents are less autonomous from principals—or whether disincentives to sabotage due to, for instance, principals' dismissal powers trump any effect of PSM—remains an empirical question.

Future research could also look to other determinants of exit, voice, and sabotage of bureaucrats under "unprincipled" political principals. We found that other factors—including incentives emanating from monitoring and sanctioning, and leadership practices—matter. Future research could explore other determinants more thoroughly. It could also explore organizational dynamics and bureaucratic infighting surrounding guerrilla sabotage. For instance, how do low-PSM bureaucrats react to guerrilla sabotage of high-PSM bureaucrats? Do bureaucrats report to management when observing guerrillas, and does this depend on PSM? We cannot speak to these questions with our data, but believe future research ought to.

Similarly, future research could seek to quantitatively assess the ethical dilemmas and trade-offs facing guerrilla bureaucrats with greater nuance. Our measurement is based on a scenario in which public servants are asked to implement a government policy that they are convinced is against the interest of the public and would cause society significant harm. The scenario pits perceived bureaucratic obligations to serve society against obligations to be loyal to the political principal, in a case in which this principal is widely perceived to be "unprincipled." Building on O'Leary (2013), future quantitative works could look in more depth at the underlying ethics of bureaucratic dissent, particularly in cases where principals are less universally considered "unprincipled." In other words, beyond understanding what characteristics of bureaucrats (as in our study) or what kind of policies (as in Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander 2020) lead bureaucrats to rebel, it would be important to understand under what conditions bureaucrats' sense that they *should* judge what "public interest" is, and how they determine "public interest" in times of bad government in the first place, among several remaining conundrums. This might help also disentangle further the determinants of "constructive" and "destructive" deviance and sabotage in government.

Lastly, future works could make methodological advances. Our inferences come from cross-sectional data and survey measures of behavioral intent. They thus have several limitations. First, we measure loyalty of bureaucrats towards unprincipled principals only indirectly (as a residual course of action in the absence of exit, voice and sabotage), rather than directly. Second, as in the only prior quantitative study of guerrilla bureaucracy (Hollibaugh, Miles, and Newswander 2020), we measure guerrilla intent rather than behavior. Intent, of course, often predicts behavior, and turnover intent, for instance, is correlated with turnover behavior in prior studies (e.g., Cho and Lewis 2012). Panel data which traces, for instance, actual exit of bureaucrats, however, would provide firmer grounds. Second, we estimate correlations rather than causal effects. Experiments which exogenously manipulate PSM to assess its effect on guerrilla behavior could provide evidence on causal effects (see, e.g., Meyer-Sahling, Mikkelsen, and Schuster 2019). Third, as most other survey-based research in public administration, we cannot rule out common source bias and, in particular social desirability bias (SDB), which might affect responses to both PSM and exit, voice, and sabotage (cf. Meier and O'Toole 2012). Remarkably, however, PSM is

consistently associated with three outcomes (exit, voice, and sabotage) which plausibly vary in social desirability, while other variables which may also be prone to SDB (such as leadership) have differential effects on them. This suggests that our core inferences are not merely due to SDB, though we cannot conclusively rule out this possibility. Given that statistical solutions to common source—and social desirability—bias are typically ineffectual (cf. Favero and Bullock 2015), future studies of guerrilla bureaucracy would do well to find administrative measures of sabotage. The challenge is clear: guerrilla sabotage is by definition clandestine and thus hard to track in administrative data.

Exciting ground to expand the quantitative study of guerrilla bureaucracy thus remains.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary data are available at *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* online.

Acknowledgments

Authors are ordered using a rotation principle. All authors contributed equally to this article. We thank Brazil's Ministry of Planning, Development and Management (Ministério do Planejamento, Desenvolvimento e Gestão) and the National School of Public Administration (Escola Nacional de Administração Pública) for their support and collaboration in the survey underlying this manuscript. We gratefully acknowledge financial support for this research from the British Academy–UK Department for International Development (BA/DFID) Anti-Corruption Evidence Partnership.

Data Availability

An anonymized version of the dataset—which, to protect respondent anonymity, only includes a reduced set of aggregate demographic variables and removes the institution identifier—is available at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/1WE9EH.

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