

Civil service management and corruption: What we know and what we don't

Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling¹  | Kim Sass Mikkelsen² |

Christian Schuster³ 

¹School of Politics, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

²Department of Public Administration, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark

³School of Public Policy, University College London, London, UK

Correspondence

Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling, School of Politics, University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD, UK.

Email: j.meyer-sahling@nottingham.ac.uk

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Numerous studies have linked a range of economic, social, and institutional variables with corruption in government. Yet, most of this literature overlooks the management of public officials themselves. This is a relevant omission: almost all corrupt exchanges involve public officials. This article reviews studies—36 in total—that do address civil service management and anti-corruption. It finds that prior works assess a narrow set of civil service management structures. Meritocratic recruitment and, less robustly, pay levels have been associated with lower corruption. By contrast, robust evidence on how corruption relates to other established public personnel management areas—such as distinct pay structures (rather than levels), promotion, transfer, and job stability practices—is largely unavailable. The article thus calls for research assessing the effects of a broader set of civil service management practices to gain a deeper understanding of corruption, and how to curb it.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Since the early days of public administration as a research field, corruption containment has been among the central aims civil service reforms have sought to achieve (Wilson 1887). At the political level, part of the impetus for civil service reform, particularly in the United States, came from the wish to fight back against corruption pursued through spoils (see e.g., Rubin and Whitford 2008). To this day, civil service professionalization is regarded as an important tool for containing corruption among academics and practitioners (Rauch and Evans 2000; Dahlström et al. 2012; Neshkova and Kostadinova 2012).

Nonetheless, as we shall argue in this article, empirical evidence on how the organization and management of civil service systems relate to corruption remains scant. The bulk of the corruption literature does not address the structure and management of executive government, instead focusing its search for corruption correlates on society, the economy, and macro-political institutions (for overviews, see e.g., Treisman 2007; Olken and Pande 2012).

This is a serious limitation. From a scholarly standpoint, studying public servants and their organizations means studying the people who are the primary actors in corrupt behaviour. After all, corruption is usually defined as the abuse of public office for private gain. Not focusing on studying public servants means forgoing a more fundamental understanding of why corruption occurs and how it can be contained. From a practitioner standpoint, studying the management of public employees provides an opportunity to derive actionable policy recommendations that studies of society, the economy, or political institutions cannot give.

This article reviews what we know about civil service management and corruption. Following Berman's (2015, p. 114) definition of 'technical human resource management' (henceforth simply HRM), we understand civil service management in this article as 'functions for the day-to-day operations of managing people in [public] organizations'. Core civil service management functions include recruitment, selection, remuneration, promotion, performance appraisal, transfer, employment protection and dismissals. To retain a manageable and clear scope, our review is circumscribed to this conceptualization. We thus exclude the literatures on broader strategic and cultural areas of human resource management (e.g., Berman 2015), and on oversight and monitoring and corruption (e.g. Di Tella and Schargrodsky 2003; Olken 2007).

In total, our review comprises the critical assessment of 36 studies. We identified these studies as follows: first, we searched the online archives of nine high-ranking journals in political science and public administration for all articles published since 2000 that had corruption in their titles or abstracts (using the truncation corrupt*). The journals and the number of articles identified in each are listed in Table 1. Second, we excluded from these studies those that did not focus on any aspect of civil service management as an independent variable or corruption as a dependent variable. Lastly, we searched the references of the selected articles and papers or books referencing them using the same criteria. In addition, we included any relevant studies that we were aware of, but did not reach using this search. As indicated in Table 1, this search led us from our initial journal selection focused on political science and public administration into other fields—most prominently economics but also area studies, criminology, and business ethics. Thus, the study of corruption and civil service management is very much interdisciplinary.

TABLE 1 Overview of journals searched and methodology applied

Journal	Article count	Approach		
		Experimental	Other quantitative	Qualitative
<i>Public Administration</i>	2		1	1
<i>Governance</i>	4		2	2
<i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i>	1		1	
<i>Public Administration Review</i>	4		1	3
<i>International Public Management Journal</i>	2		1	1
<i>American Journal of Political Science</i>				
<i>American Political Science Review</i>				
<i>Journal of Politics</i>	1		1	
<i>Comparative Political Studies</i>	1	1		
Other journals (public administration, policy, and political science)	16		7	9
Other journals (economics)	12	5	7	
Other journals (other fields)	14		3	11
Total	57	6	24	27

Note: The overview excludes three books and two unpublished working papers; two of which use qualitative methods while three use observational quantitative data.

In total, we reviewed 62 studies (57 journal articles, three books, and two unpublished working papers). Of these studies, 27 are qualitative, and 30 quantitative; six of the quantitative studies are experimental. The distribution of articles and their methodological approach across journals is shown in Table 1. As this table shows, most experimental work is published in economics journals, while articles published in public administration and political science are divided almost evenly among mostly observational quantitative and qualitative studies. Most studies focus on Europe and Asia (17 studies each), followed by global or cross-regional studies (10), Latin America (six), Africa (five), and North America (five) (see the online appendix for further detail). We cite and discuss the 36 that contribute to our discussion in terms of separate theoretical arguments and/or robust or dissenting evidence.

Our review finds that most existing literature has focused on recruitment, selection and levels of remuneration—yet not other HRM practices. We still know little about how transfer or promotions (though see Kwon 2014; Charron et al. 2017), pay structures, stable careers or turnover, to name a few, affect corruption. We build on these gaps to present an agenda for future research, which draws on a more complete pallet of HRM practices and more encompassing set of research methodologies. Producing such research would provide important guidance to policy-makers seeking to manage people in ways that minimize corruption risks.

2 | WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE DON'T

The literature linking civil service management to corruption has, as noted, largely focused on recruitment, selection, and remuneration. We cover below the research on each, followed by discussions of the smaller literature on other HRM functions: promotions, performance, transfers, job stability, and employment protection.

2.1 | Recruitment and selection

Prior studies have variably focused on two aspects of recruitment and selection: the criteria determining recruitment and selection outcomes (in particular: merit vs. political criteria); and the process through which candidates are selected (in particular: examinations vs. appointments).

Merit- and exam-based recruitment and selection have, at times interchangeably, been linked to lower corruption through at least three mechanisms. First, officials recruited based on their educational achievements or through competitive examinations are argued to be more concerned with their reputation among colleagues, leading to greater adherence to norms of behaviour such as honesty (Rauch and Evans 2000). Second, merit recruitment has been argued to shift accountability. With meritocratic recruitment comes a corps of civil servants whose interests diverge from those of their political masters. This gives both politicians and bureaucrats an incentive to hold each other to account and check corrupt behaviour (Dahlström et al. 2012). Third and relatedly, Neshkova and Kostadinova (2012, p. 327) argue that the relationship to politics is central to how recruitment contains corruption. The absence of political criteria in recruitment shelters administrative decisions from political rent-seeking and makes civil servants better able to withstand political pressure since their career is not on the line to the same extent and since they do not owe their appointments to political superiors. Note that, interestingly, simple technical capacity does not feature in most accounts (e.g., Dahlström et al. 2012), perhaps because these skills are also useful to 'formalize' and 'legalize' corrupt deals (Janscisc and Jávör 2012).

A range of studies has provided empirical evidence for the theorized association between merit- or exam-based selection and lower corruption, all suggesting that merit curbs corruption. Initial evidence came from a cross-national study by Rauch and Evans (2000). This was followed by country-level cross-national evidence in Dahlström et al. (2012) and, based on civil service legislation, Neshkova and Kostadinova (2012). Recanatini et al. (2005) provide additional evidence from African and Latin American agencies, although their measurement strategy renders distinction between recruitment and promotion impossible. More recently, Meyer-Sahling et al. (2016) provide evidence based on individual-level data from a survey of public servants in five Eastern European countries; and

Oliveros and Schuster (2017) conduct a conjoint experiment in the Dominican Republic, finding the, to our knowledge, first (survey) experimental support for the argument that merit recruitment limits corruption. Finally, Berschet al. (2017) use administrative data from Brazilian agencies to show a positive correlation between agency politicization and corruption. This finding is supported by Heywood and Meyer-Sahling's (2013) qualitative analysis of the Polish ministerial bureaucracy.

In sum, the literature provides several theoretical arguments linking merit- and exam-based selection to lower corruption, as well as quantitative and qualitative evidence for a corresponding association. At the same time, which mechanism(s) sustains this association has not been empirically explored. This is unfortunate as most of the proposed mechanisms are, as seen from empirical analyses in the current literature, observationally equivalent. Moreover, which of the theorized—or other—mechanisms are at play is likely to depend on context. In organizations staffed by professions such as nurses, police officers, or teachers, Rauch and Evans' (2000) theory intuitively carries some punch. Collegial influences on employee intent and behaviour in such contexts are well documented (Brehm and Gates 1999 famously referred to this as 'solidary rewards'). In organizations with weaker professions, however, meritocratic recruitment is arguably much less likely to create the requisite *esprit de corps* to curb corruption. Similarly, whether politicians are capable of holding public employees accountable for corruption as Dahlström et al. (2012) theorize will depend on several factors. Street-level bureaucrats, for instance, are notoriously difficult to observe and even managers cannot effectively monitor employee behaviour (Brehm and Gates 1999). Finally, in systematically corrupt settings, an attraction-selection mechanism may be at work: individuals self-select into the public sector based on expected future corrupt gains (Banerjee et al. 2015; Engvall 2015). In that case, rather than altering norms or incentives after selection, meritocratic recruitment may change the pool of available candidates, since corrupt individuals may be unwilling to invest in subject expertise to gain access.

To understand the potential and limits of merit recruitment as a corruption-curbing institution, future research would thus do well to disentangle empirically which of these distinct theoretical mechanisms holds in practice in which contexts. No less important, the literature provides little guidance on which recruitment and selection modalities, in fact, are causes. At the most aggregate level, it remains unclear whether recruitment modalities—such as a switch to public competition for positions and thus a change in the pool of available candidates away from party affiliates—or selection modalities—such as written or oral examinations, or other types of assessments—underlie the effect on corruption. Existing research provides little guidance on these, from the perspective of policy-makers, crucial questions.

2.2 | Remuneration

Existing studies of remuneration—and HRM and corruption at large—have mostly focused on the effects of pay levels. Theoretically, scholars have argued that higher wages (including future wages and other delayed rewards such as pensions appropriately discounted) raise the opportunity cost of corruption for the perpetrator if caught. This is the 'shirking model' and the associated 'efficiency wage' examined in van Rijckeghem and Weder's (2001) prominent study. Alternatively, officials' corruption intent may also be affected by whether officials are able to live from their salaries without having to resort to corrupt income and consider their salaries to be 'fair' (van Rijckeghem and Weder 2001). At the same time, however, higher pecuniary rewards have also been argued to crowd out pro-social motivation and make officials more corruption prone (Navot et al. 2015).

Empirical evidence for the link between pay levels and corruption is mixed. Observationally, Van Rijckeghem and Weder (2001) find a negative correlation between wage levels and corruption, although this is not robust to a fixed effects specification. Rauch and Evans (2000), Dahlström et al. (2012) and Treisman (2000) do not find a correlation between wages and corruption in their cross-sections of countries. Alt and Lassen (2003) and Dong and Torgler (2013), in turn, find a negative correlation in a cross-section of American states and a panel of Chinese provinces, respectively. A few studies even find a positive correlation between country public wage levels and corruption (Karahan et al. 2006; Navot et al. 2015). Finally, Di Tella and Schargrodsky (2003) find that wage levels are

negatively associated with corruption but only when auditing intensity is at intermediate levels. Experimental work to date is similarly mixed, finding that remuneration and corruption are either inversely related (Armantier and Boly 2011; Van Veldhuizen 2013; cf. Azfar and Nelson 2007) or unrelated (Barr et al. 2009).

In sum, the literature provides important theoretical arguments linking pay levels with corruption, albeit mixed evidence with regard to their validity. This may not be surprising: the effect of pay levels on corruption may well be context specific, depending on a range of other factors. One set of context factors is likely to consist of other aspects of pay systems. How large is pay progression (or compression) from bottom to top levels? How predictable is salary progression? How equitable is salary setting between public officials with similar responsibilities? To what extent is pay determined by performance, rather than other factors such as political proximity or seniority? Whether public servants consider their salary to be fair, whether they perceive their long-run income to be sufficient to meet household needs, and how large the opportunity costs of corruption are to them all depend not only on pay levels, but also on these other features of public pay systems. Yet, to date, studies of corruption have omitted to study them.

2.3 | Promotions, career systems, performance, and transfers

Evidence for HRM functions beyond recruitment and remuneration is only provided in isolated studies. Promotion systems have been studied in select works, typically with a view to assessing whether closed Weberian career systems are more effective than open systems in curbing corruption. The evidence on internal promotions is mixed. Rauch and Evans (2000) and Dahlström et al. (2012) find no evidence linking them to lower corruption. Recanatini et al. (2005) do find such evidence, but are unable to distinguish between recruitment and promotion.

Whether outsiders may compete for higher-level jobs is, of course, only one of many characteristics of promotion systems. Beyond the issue of the candidate pool, promotion criteria and methods may matter. Importantly, performance-based promotions may be useful as an anti-corruption tool if corrupt behaviour trades off against measured performance (Kwon 2014). Employees striving for promotions may not risk prioritizing corrupt gains over meeting standards. A similar point applies to performance evaluations. If evaluative standards do not permit sleaze or corruption, corruption may become less attractive (Segal 2002). Promotion standards may, however, also induce corruption. Analogous to recruitment and selection, promotion can be subject to undue political control or pressure. Where career prospects improve for employees when they 'steal for the team', promotion opportunities can incentivize party-directed corruption (Gingerich 2013). Moreover, seniority-based promotions may affect corruption incentives. In particular, where career advancements are determined solely based on seniority and unrelated to performance, incentives for employees to dismantle performance-reducing corrupt systems are stomped (Segal 2002, p. 448). At the same time, seniority-based promotions may curb corruption by protecting employees from political pressure and enhancing the predictability of future pay rises—and thus opportunity costs of corruption.

Empirically, only indirect evidence for any of these assertions is available. Kwon (2014) associates favourable attitudes towards performance-related promotion with less permissive attitudes towards corruption in a sample of South Korean public servants. However, in his study, it is not possible to separate the effect of promotions from the associated pay rise. Charron et al. (2017) find that a proxy for corruption in public procurement in European regions is associated with a view among public servants that hard work, as opposed to luck or connections, contributes to success in the public sector. Their analysis thus provides indirect evidence that merit-based promotion incentives can help reduce corruption. On the other hand, Gingerich (2013) finds that officials with a chance of future political careers are more willing to 'steal for the team'; and Gong and Xiao (2017) show that the need to please superiors in the web of relations within the Chinese bureaucracy tempts lower-level employees into position-related extravagance. On the other hand, Herron et al. (2016) find in a study of Ukraine's electoral administration that professionalization of higher administrative tiers, which they argue is a function of promotion practices, coexists with (a proxy for) corruption.

Thus, there is no guarantee that promotion opportunities reduce corruption; instead, the effect of promotions appears to depend on the criteria upon which promotion decisions are made. Direct evidence for whether this

assertion holds empirically is, however, still lacking. Important avenues for future research thus remain. The same holds for a related topic, personnel transfers. Classically, Wade (1982, 1985) argued that the strategic use of transfers was a major propellant of corruption in India's bureaucracy. Like promotions, superiors can use the promise of favourable transfers to tempt public servants into participation in corrupt transactions or networks; and the threat of involuntary transfer to posts in undesirable locations or handling undesirable tasks to push hesitant public servants into corruption.

While these are plausible arguments, we only have scant, qualitative evidence for them to date. Moreover, little remains known about other relevant aspects of transfer systems, including whether the frequency of transfers affects corruption, or whether transfers are undertaken within or also between organizations and sectors.

Summing up, existing studies do point to several plausible links between different aspects of promotion, performance and transfer systems and corruption. Empirical evidence is thin, however, and many aspects of promotion and transfer systems remain unexplored. This is thus an HRM area that is, with respect to corruption, ripe for study.

2.4 | Job stability and tenure protection

Tenure protections and job stability have been linked on a theoretical level to both lower and higher corruption. Early public administration research considered protection from politically motivated dismissal a key guard post against undue political pressure and consequent unethical or corrupt behaviour. If elected officials are free to dismiss employees, they may be able to pressure them into politically motivated corruption (Rubin and Whitford 2008; Neshkova and Kostadinova 2012).

Beyond creating a bulwark against political pressure, employment protection contributes to a central Weberian bureaucracy characteristic that may further contain corruption: job stability. Job stability paves the way for long-term socialization processes, which may help establish an *esprit de corps* that can curb corruption (Rauch and Evans 2000; Dahlström et al. 2012; Bersch et al. 2017). In addition, the expectation of a stable public service career, as opposed to a short or uncertain appointment, may make employees less prone to take the risk of short-term corrupt gains (Heywood and Meyer-Sahling 2013; Herron et al. 2016; Bersch et al. 2017).

Employment protections may, however, also have the opposite effect. While employees are protected from political pressure to engage in corrupt activities, they are also protected against dismissal unless unlawful behaviour can be proven, which is often difficult for covert behaviour such as corruption (Oliveros and Schuster 2017). Hence, while employment protection can protect honest employees from corrupt politicians and managers, it can also protect corrupt employees from honest politicians and managers (Segal 2002). If this happens, the long-term socialization from job stability may be ineffective as colleagues do not report colleagues, or backfire when veterans socialize newcomers to corrupt behaviour (De Graaf and Huberts 2008).

Furthermore, for public employees with frequent contact with a fixed set of clients, job stability improves opportunities to build relationships and networks for corrupt transactions (Choi 2007; De Graaf and Huberts 2008; Jancsics and Jávör 2012; Sundström 2016). On the other hand, however, networks may also be important for corruption containment as they permit potential whistleblowers access to information sharing through informal channels (Navot et al. 2015).

Theoretically, we may thus expect the effects of employment protection and job stability to be highly context dependent. It depends in part on whether such protections shield principled agents from unprincipled principals, or unprincipled agents from principled principals. Empirically, the evidence is thin. Rauch and Evans (2000), Dahlström et al. (2012), and Rubin and Whitford (2008) find no significant associations between job stability and corruption in cross-sectional country-level data. Similarly, in a conjoint experiment in the Dominican Republic, Oliveros and Schuster (2017) do not identify a significant effect.

In sum, the literature on employment protection and job stability provides plausible arguments that their effect depends on a number of factors, but little empirical evidence to back them up. Assessing these arguments empirically thus remains an important field of enquiry. Furthermore, there is a need to engage with the contextual

complexities of how stable careers and employment protection interact with other HRM functions. Employment protection, for instance, is sometimes granted to 'blanket in' political appointees to protect them from succeeding governments. The theoretically corruption propelling effects of political appointments may thus interact with the theoretically corruption containing effects of employment protection. The literature to date is silent on these types of interactions.

3 | LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE

At least four broad lessons about civil service management practices and corruption may be drawn from the literature. First, the only theoretically and empirically (relatively) robust relationship in the literature is between merit recruitment and corruption. Where employees are recruited based on their professional merit—rather than political or personal criteria—they tend to be less corrupt. This may be because of the emergence of an *esprit de corps*, reciprocal accountability or greater shelter from political pressure, among other mechanisms. Which of these mechanisms hold empirically in what contexts remains unclear, however. Moreover, which practices are required to bring about merit recruitment in weak institutional contexts—be these different recruitment (e.g., public competition) or different selection (e.g., written examinations or interviews) mechanisms—remains largely unclear. This is a curious omission in the literature. Knowing through which recruitment and selection methods corruption can be curbed is arguably more actionable to policy-makers than knowing to select professionally qualified employees.

Second, studies have associated pay levels with corruption, both theoretically and empirically. Nonetheless, the relationship between pay levels and corruption remains contested. This could well be as the effect of pay levels on corruption is likely to depend on how the pay system at large is structured, including how large and predictable pay progression is, how equitable salary setting between public officials is, and whether salaries are determined based on qualifications, performance, seniority or political and personal relations. Future studies would thus do well to assess the effect of—and provide evidence to policy-makers on—public pay characteristics beyond pay levels.

Third, the literature provides only limited evidence for the effects of other HRM functions, such as promotions, transfers, or job stability protections. Other core areas of civil service management, such as performance appraisals, do not seem to have been researched at all in relation to corruption (Kwon 2014 is a partial exception). These are important omissions. How promotions, transfers, performance appraisals or job stability are managed may well affect bureaucratic corruption more forcefully than, for instance, initial recruitment. To illustrate, how important is initial non-meritocratic recruitment to a middle manager after 20 years of working in her agency? We know surprisingly little about whether and how more temporally proximate, relative to more temporally distant, personnel management decisions affect corruption.

All of this suggests that the literature would greatly benefit from considering a broader set of personnel management practices in the study of civil service management and corruption. When doing so, the literature can also shift towards greater consideration of the interdependency of distinct civil service management practices. The effect of any given civil service management practice on corruption is likely to depend on other civil service management practices in place. The challenge for studies is thus clear: develop and robustly assess middle-range theoretical arguments around the effects of civil service management practices that take into account these context specificities.

Our review of the literature also suggests lessons on how scholars may methodologically best shed light on these substantive questions. Early scholarship on civil service management and corruption largely drew inferences from qualitative research and country-level correlations (e.g., Rauch and Evans 2000; Segal 2002). Yet, studying whether and how varying and interdependent civil service management practices affect corruption frequently requires organizational or individual-level data on civil service management and corruption. To obtain such data, recent studies have usefully turned towards surveying public servants to improve inferences about the effects of

civil service management practices (e.g., Gingerich 2013; Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen 2016; Oliveros and Schuster 2017).

Since corruption is a sensitive subject, this approach, of course, has its own pitfall: survey responses to corruption questions may suffer from bias. Recent studies point to two solutions: survey experimental methods, such as list experiments, randomized response techniques and conjoint experiments (e.g., Gingerich 2013; Oliveros and Schuster 2017); and the use of 'big data' proxy measures for corruption, such as measures of competition in public procurement (Charron et al. 2017).

These methodological innovations have clear potential to improve corruption measurement and inferences about the effects of civil service management practices. At the same time, they are no panacea. Survey and administrative measures arguably remain imperfect tools to identify effects of management practices which have complex and potentially unanticipated context-dependent effects. As detailed in the next section, they also fall short of strong causal identification by themselves. Other research designs—including qualitative research—will thus continue to play important roles in furthering our understanding of civil service management and corruption.

4 | AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON CIVIL SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND CORRUPTION

Public servants are central to almost all corruption. Not studying how the management of public servants shapes corrupt behaviour implies missing an important opportunity to gather actionable evidence to reduce corruption.

This article suggests that existing research does well to provide insights on some aspects of civil service management, albeit not others; and does well to draw on an increasingly innovative—albeit still incomplete—set of methodologies. The article thus concludes with a call to research neglected areas in civil service management and anti-corruption, and to do so with a more encompassing and plural set of methodological approaches.

We see as the first—and most obvious—future area for research the study of civil service management functions whose effects have been neglected in the literature to date. While merit recruitment and pay levels have seen some research, rigorous evidence on the effects of other civil service management practices—such as promotions, transfers or job stability protections—remains scarce to non-existent. Moreover, other aspects of pay and recruitment—such as pay equity or the effects of recruitment versus selection methods—remain unexplored.

Moving towards the study of a broader range of civil service management practices would also enable researchers to address context-specific effects more seriously. Interdependencies with organizational context and other civil service management practices are likely to loom large. To cite just two examples: the effects of job stability may well depend on whether public servants are recruited based on merit or personal connections; and the effects of higher pay levels on whether seniority, performance or favouritism determine pay increases. To tease out how variation in context shapes effects, future research would greatly benefit from studying the effects of civil service management practices across contexts; for instance, across institutions or countries.

Several methodological approaches hold promise in this regard. Qualitative studies can shed important light on unanticipated interaction effects and on the mechanisms through which specific civil service management practices achieve a reduction (or increase) in corruption. They can also be useful in describing civil service management practices in sufficient depth to enable actionable recommendations to policy-makers. Surveys of public servants, in turn, can provide statistical associations between civil service management practices and corruption, moderated by organizational contexts and practices. This approach is particularly insightful where it is undertaken across country contexts and draws on recent advances in experimental or administrative measures of corruption.

Scholars seeking statistical causal identification will, of course, wish to go beyond associations towards field experiments, regression discontinuity designs (RDDs), or (other) instrumental variables. Strong causal identification has been a blind spot in the literature to date (with few exceptions, e.g., Barr et al. 2009; Armantier and Boly 2011; Oliveros and Schuster 2017). As Table 1 shows, experiments are few and far between and are mostly concentrated

in economics journals. This is even though research on other outcomes—such as motivation—underscores the feasibility of such approaches (Dal Bó et al. 2013). Bringing them to the study of civil service management and corruption could thus yield large pay-offs. Their applicability is likely to be constrained, though. Practical and legal obstacles may preclude randomizing many civil service management practices, such as job stability; and strong instruments and discontinuities are challenging to identify.

Delivering on a boundary-pushing agenda which addresses the many gaps in our understanding of civil service management and corruption thus requires a substantially and methodologically plural way forward. Policy-makers looking to address bureaucratic corruption would stand to benefit.

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ORCID

Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8981-8201>

Christian Schuster  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0126-2681>

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