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Individuals in Institutions: Evidence from the World Bank and IMF

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How do international organizations (IOs) assign their staff members to countries and projects? Though it is increasingly clear that bureaucrats impact policy outcomes in IOs, we have little understanding of how institutions manage such individual influence. We study these dynamics in international financial institutions, in which bureaucrats represent their institution in dealings with client countries. We develop a formal model showing that institutional managers assign their "best" staffers to their most important member states in order to elicit these countries' cooperation. However, since quality is often difficult to observe in practice, IOs assign bureaucrats with privileged identity characteristics (encompassing nationality, professional background, and gender) to economically powerful countries. We test our theoretical propositions with original data on the staff members that are the face of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in their negotiations with member states, finding support for our argument. Our project advances scholarship on international bureaucracy by offering a strategic explanation for delegation, modeling the assignment process, and considering the implications of these dynamics for diversity in global governance.

Keywords: bureaucracy, World Bank, IMF, international organizations, identity

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For many decades, international organizations (IOs) were primarily theorized as expressions of the will of powerful states. Scholars disagreed about the extent to which IOs mattered independently of their powerful state backers but shared a focus on states as the primary actors responsible for these institutions (Keohane 1984; Mearsheimer 1995) and their policymaking (Copelovitch 2010; Stone 2011; Lim and Vreeland 2013). To the extent that the individual staff members employed by these institutions mattered, they were viewed primarily as interchangeable agents of those state principals, and they could fulfill their responsibilities or slack in response to top-down incentives and monitoring (Hawkins et al. 2006).

In contrast, recent work contends that these individuals play a significant role in the work of IOs. Their diverse personal backgrounds (Weaver 2008; Lang, Wellner and Kentikelenis 2024), ideas (Cormier and Manger 2021), and experiences (Clark and Zucker 2023) shape their propensity to engage in violent misbehavior (Karim and Beardsley 2016; Bove, Ruffa and Ruggeri 2020), the economic policies they advance (Chwieroth 2009), and organizational performance (Heinzel 2022; Heinzel and Liese 2021). Individual bureaucrats can even promote the founding of new IOs (Johnson 2014). In sum, the individuals that make up IOs are not interchangeable cogs in a machine, but humans with unique perspectives and with the opportunity and agency to shape global governance.

But just because individuals "matter" in these unique and human ways does not mean that institutions do not matter. Clark and Dolan (2021) propose that staff members exercise their autonomy in ways that nevertheless anticipate the preferences of powerful principals. In this paper, we contend that just as individuals strategically react to the behaviors of institutional management, institutions strategically anticipate the influence of individual bureaucrats, whom they deploy to maximize institutional effectiveness.

Existing accounts fail to account for this strategic interplay between management and staff in IOs. Principal-agent theories focus primarily on how managers handle the trade-off

between discretion and knowledge, hoping to benefit from their agents' expertise without permitting them to go rogue (Hawkins et al. 2006; Woods 2007; Honig 2018). But expert knowledge is just one attribute of an individual bureaucrat; many others — such as their professional experience or aspects of their identity — may shape how they represent their institution. Organizational theories focus on rules, routines, and cultures that permit certain perspectives to dominate (Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Weaver 2008), but they do not describe the strategic interactions that manifest between management and staff. Scholarship has not typically conceived of bureaucrats as individuals who interact simultaneously both with the outside world as well as with institutional management.

Our project examines one way that institutions strategically respond to individual bureaucrats' influence: personnel assignment decisions. Institutional management regularly makes decisions about which individuals should be assigned to which projects or tasks and, in an international context, in which countries. We offer a theory of staff assignment in which management assigns staff members with more privileged identity characteristics to their most powerful partner countries. Their goal is to elicit the cooperation of client countries, who will judge the IO's investment in their relationship based on the quality (or, observably, the prestigiousness of the identity characteristics) of the staffer assigned to them. But IOs care more about their work with some countries than with others, and so they assign "better" staffers to their most important clients. We describe the logic of this interaction in the paper and provide a formal model in the Supplementary Information.

We test our theory in the context of the two most significant international financial institutions (IFIs): the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).[2] We collect data on the personal backgrounds of 3,643 World Bank Task Team Leaders (TTLs) and 431 IMF Resident Representatives, and we model their assignments to countries. Consistent

[2]Throughout the paper, we refer to both IOs and IFIs. Our theory is general to IOs but our empirical focus, and the substantive issues we engage with, pertain to the IFIs.

with our hypotheses, we find that individuals who come from more privileged backgrounds — those with Western nationalities, advanced degrees from elite universities, and work experience in Fortune 500 companies — are assigned to richer and more powerful countries than individuals who come from more marginalized backgrounds. Women are assigned to countries with higher degrees of women's empowerment where gender presumably matters less for perceptions of a bureaucrat's competence.

This paper significantly revises the conventional wisdom on the role individual bureaucrats play in institutions generally and IOs in particular. First, our model explains why bureaucrats matter for institutional outcomes: IOs give agency to individual staffers as a credible commitment designed to elicit cooperation from client countries. This is a novel explanation for delegation in IOs (Hawkins et al. 2006) and the impact of bureaucrats on institutional performance (Heinzel 2022). Second, given that individual bureaucrats matter, we show that management assigns them strategically to benefit the institution. This process of staff assignment is especially important as institutions become more diverse (Eckhard and Ege 2016; Parízek 2017; Parizek and Stephen 2021) and individuals more prone to discrimination in client countries (Monga 2020). Our model suggests that institutions strategically react to the discrimination their agents experience abroad by assigning their staff members in a biased way, which could exacerbate inequalities within the organization. While we study this in the context of IOs, we believe this insight generalizes to many other institutions with diverse staffs. Third, within the IO literature, we focus on managers as influential individuals due to their control over how staff advance the goals of state principals. This class of individuals has not been studied as extensively as individual bureaucrats or individual leaders (though see Copelovitch and Rickard 2021 on institutional leaders). Last, we highlight the importance of endogenous selection processes that determine which bureaucrats show up in which countries. While such assignment and rotation schemes are not present in all cases (Lang, Wellner and Kentikelenis 2024), they

should be considered when making inferences about how individuals impact outcomes in their institutions (Heinzel and Liese 2021).

Bureaucrats, Institutions, and Biases

Individuals play a crucial role at all levels of international organizations. At the top, a leader's personal views and identity matter for the policies they pursue and the way their organization is perceived (Copelovitch and Rickard 2021; Jackson, Lee and Lipscy 2023). We build on a burgeoning literature, focusing on the thousands of individuals who form IO bureaucracies. Individual bureaucrats internalize the ideas they are exposed to and put those into practice in the policies they write (Cormier and Manger 2021). They also apply their lived experiences, such as time spent working in a climate vulnerable country, when assessing countries' needs and risks (Clark and Zucker 2023). Women emphasize gender mainstreaming in their work (Heinzel, Weaver and Jorgensen 2021).[3] And, of course, some bureaucrats are simply better (i.e., mobilize resources and navigate institutions more effectively) than others.[4] Bureaucrat fixed effects have a jointly significant role in explaining variation in project performance ratings at the World Bank (Denizer, Kaufmann and Kraay 2013; Bulman, Kolkma and Kraay 2017; Limodio 2021) and country compliance with World Bank conditions (Heinzel and Liese 2021).

An important subset of international bureaucrats are field agents — those assigned to work in and with particular countries (for example, as mission chiefs or peacekeepers). These individuals broker the relationship between an IO and policy officials in the host or client country. To do so, they must be able to manage or execute logistics in the field, establish diplomatic rapport with in-country counterparts, and navigate their own institution

[3]This way of thinking is typical of the "biographical approach" to international relations, which maintains that personal attributes and experiences can systematically predict elite behavior (Krcmaric, Nelson and Roberts 2020).

[4]On measuring and defining IO performance, see Gutner and Thompson (2010); Tallberg et al. (2016).

effectively. Personal backgrounds are relevant for all of these activities. Nationality, in particular, equips bureaucrats with unique networks and knowledge that may be unavailable to bureaucrats from other countries (Eckhard 2021). Diverse staffs may possess complementary expertise and can promote more participative and productive norms; for instance, more diverse UN peacekeeping missions are associated with lower rates of sexual abuse (Karim and Beardsley 2016) and fewer civilian casualties (Bove, Ruffa and Ruggeri 2020). Sectoral experience may also help a bureaucrat carry out their work (Heinzel 2022).

Why assign bureaucrats to countries, often requiring them to live or work in the field, when they are difficult to monitor abroad? For some employees, such as peacekeepers, the answer is obvious: they must be in the field in order to do their work. For more senior staffers, who could theoretically operate more remotely, the answer is more complex. IO administrators would point out that these positions improve the quality of information the IO receives from the country, allowing them to respond more effectively and successfully.[5] Stationing an agent in the field helps with this (Honig 2020), and giving these agents a considerable amount of autonomy allows them to work more effectively overall (Honig 2024).[6] In fact, many of the representatives we study enjoy a fair amount of autonomy, and their exact role is sometimes left up to them.[7] In this way, agents are encouraged to represent the country's preferences and needs to the IO. This is consistent with the values of "country ownership" or "local knowledge" that IFIs have long desired but often struggled to achieve (Best 2007). Affording this representation to countries, who otherwise have very little formal voice in these IOs (see Kaya 2015), is one way to obtain their buy-in and willingness to invest in cooperative work.

The particular IFI-recipient relationships we describe are cooperative ones. Both the

[5] *Bank Information Center*. 2024, `https://bit.ly/4csdGgf`

[6] Such bureaucrats can be full-time employees of the institution or contractors drawn from local populations. The World Bank, for example, utilizes a mix of the two, in part to balance commitment to the organization with local knowledge.

[7] *IMF*, 2009, BP/09/07, `https://bit.ly/3VDJp72`.

institution and the recipient want to disburse institutional resources quickly and put them to productive use. In other settings, such as the monitoring of country compliance with institutional rules, client countries might desire "worse" bureaucrats who are willing to look the other way or unable to detect misbehavior. Our focus is instead on interactions in which the IFI and recipient both wish to execute a project or address an economic situation, which requires the IFI to successfully mobilize resources and the recipient to corral support for the project or make complementary policy changes. By assigning a staffer to a specific country, IFIs empower an agent (albeit in a limited way) to specifically represent that country's needs to them, providing enough voice in an otherwise asymmetric relationship to encourage the recipient country's vital cooperation.

While a country desires a "good" bureaucrat in this context, its policymakers are likely to judge staffers not on their records but on the basis of their race, gender, nationality, and other easily available heuristics.[8] To domestic economists and central bankers, elite educational degrees are a potent heuristic device leveraged to help policymakers assess a bureaucrat's competence at macroeconomic management (Nelson 2017). Leaders and staff of IFIs have been historically white, male economists with degrees from elite universities (Jackson, Lee and Lipscy 2023; Weaver 2008; Chwieroth 2015). Stereotypes, therefore, may cause white, male bureaucrats with elite educational backgrounds to be viewed as more qualified, and domestic policymakers may have less faith in bureaucrats who do not fit this mold.

Even if domestic officials can assess a bureaucrat's quality free from bias, they may rationally question whether a bureaucrat without these markers commands respect and authority in their own institution. IOs notoriously have their own reputations for racism and sexism (*Proposal to End Racial Discrimination at the World Bank* 2015).[9] Any negotiator

[8] See e.g., Monga (2020).

[9] It's not just that discrimination exists within these institutions. Their very founding, membership, and historical interactions with client countries have been long critiqued by voices from the developing world as

knows to avoid bargaining with someone who lacks power in their own chain of command. Policy officials may be concerned that their efforts to engage a bureaucrat will be meaningless if that bureaucrat's own institution discriminates against them.

For example, Célestin Monga, former chief economist at the African Development Bank and senior economic advisor at the World Bank, wrote in 2020 about his experiences while working for the World Bank. He reports that at least one European country refused to work with him because they were appalled that the Bank had appointed an African (Cameroonian) economist to assist them with economic reforms (Monga 2020). He also describes subtler interactions, which he attributes to internalized racism, with African elites who assumed his white assistant was the leader. Kasirim Nwuke, a Nigerian economist who spent his career at the UN Economic Commission for Africa, disagrees with this explanation for the bias Monga encountered while in Africa: "African government officials are rational actors. They know that many Africans working in international organizations, until recently, have very little influence in the decisions that their employers make due to the racism that they face [...] Really, why waste scarce resources on someone whom you know is unlikely to further the outcome you desire in an expeditious manner?" (Nwuke 2020). In either case, the result is that when international bureaucrats look different from preconceived notions of who works for and commands respect in their organizations, their interactions with client countries may be less productive.

In sum, IOs rely on individual bureaucrats to elicit cooperation from their counterparts in client countries. However, stereotyping and bias may interfere with these relationships. Managers of IOs must bear these considerations in mind when choosing how to assign which staff members to which countries.

hierarchical, exclusive, and paternalistic (Stiglitz 2002; Kothari 2006; Lipscy and Zhou 2024; Singh 2021). Given this long-standing critique, we think it quite understandable why policy officials would assume that staff members from non-traditional backgrounds are unlikely to be respected in their workplaces.

A Strategic Theory of Assignment

Here, we describe a theory involving an interaction between three main types of actors: IOs (that is, their managers), IO representatives (i.e., IO agents assigned to a recipient country), and recipient countries (i.e., policy officials representing country interests). Our key claim is that IOs should assign representatives with more prestigious / privileged identity characteristics to more powerful partner countries. This theory is described in more depth in a formal model in *SI Appendix 4*.

The key decision in our account is which representative an IO assigns to a particular recipient country. In assigning bureaucrats, the IO must anticipate how the representative and the recipient country will collaborate on a development project or policy agenda. These projects are a product of joint investment: the recipient country invests in certain reforms or efforts, and the IO representative marshals resources from the IO to complement these efforts. For example, a country that receives an IMF loan decides how zealously to follow through on previously-agreed conditions, and the Resident Representative decides how dedicated to be in getting funds out the door as they observe those reforms. For both sides, these efforts are costly: recipient countries would prefer to reform as little as possible, and IOs and their agents would prefer to invest as few resources as possible, except to further the success of the project. For both sides, the payoffs are complementary: an IO's investments are more productive when a recipient country is willing to reform, and vice versa.

Assigning an agent to represent the IO's interests — especially a talented or well-connected agent — is a double-edged sword for the IO. On one hand, agents have their own interests and may invest greater resources than the IO would prefer. Once an agent is in country, they are likely to want to see a project succeed, both for their own reputation and for their country partners. This is particularly true of a high-quality agent, who

can marshal more resources with less effort. On the other hand, the promise of greater IO resources also incentivizes recipient countries to follow through on their own economic reforms and investments. If the recipient country believes that the agent is talented or well-connected, they will see greater benefit in spending their own effort, which benefits both sides. Therefore, delegating decision to an agent who is talented or well-connected (or at least perceived to be so by the recipient country) works as a *commitment mechanism*. Assigning a high-quality agent means committing to greater effort, but it also elicits greater effort from the partner country.

Recipient countries, however, generally do not observe an IO representative's quality directly. Instead, they rely on a *representative's identity*, ranging from *marginalized* to *privileged*. A representative has a privileged identity if they possess identity characteristics that bolster their authority and ability to perform their work in the eyes of member states. Conversely, a representative has a marginalized identity if aspects of their identity lead others to question their decision-making authority and/or their ability to do their job. As we have argued above, perceived competence can (and often does) diverge from actual competence, and client country officials are often guilty of stereotyping in assessing staff quality (Monga 2020).

In the context of international finance, we focus on a few specific characteristics that we believe contribute to perceptions of bureaucrats' authority and/or abilities.[10]

- Nationality from a powerful country. Individuals with these nationalities may be viewed as more authoritative.
- Education obtained in a powerful country or from an elite institution. These universities may be perceived as equipping the individual with more knowledge and expertise than other universities.

[10]We notably exclude race and sexual orientation from this list. We do so because self-identification is important (or essential) for accurate coding of these identity traits, and we are unable to measure bureaucrats' self-identification in most cases. Race is also highly correlated with nationality. Since nationality is more easily approximated from online sources, we opt to theorize in terms of nationality rather than race.

- Experience working for a well-known company (Fortune 500) in the private sector. These individuals may be seen as more successful in financial matters.
- Gender. Men are likely to be seen as more authoritative than women. We elaborate on gender dynamics below.[11]

These identity and background characteristics are critical to how individuals are perceived as they carry out their work. We also believe them to be visible in this setting, as CVs and personal biographies are easily shared with client countries when these international bureaucrats take up their positions. Insofar as decisionmakers in partner countries view these identity characteristics as an indicator of representatives' quality, they would prefer to be assigned a more privileged agent. With limited resources at international organizations, recipient countries care primarily about whether their assigned IO representative has the skills and connections to access such resources, not whether they share policy preferences with the client or possess local knowledge. IOs, for their part, decide whether to assign high-prestige / high-quality agents to recipient countries.

The other key consideration that IOs must weigh is how *powerful* the recipient country is: how much value the IO places on the project's success and how favorable the country's other options are aside from the IO in question. Given our focus on financial institutions, we focus on economic power and IFIs' desire to retain economically powerful countries as clients, though we consider exit options for robustness. For any bank, lending to stable clients bolsters its fiduciary health, allowing a bank with a social policy agenda to also pursue riskier loans while remaining creditworthy.[12] IFIs desire legitimacy and the ability to pursue (and sometimes expand) their mandate, but they are increasingly hampered by geopolitical tensions and face greater competition from China and Chinese-led institutions

[11] Identity is often intersectional — an individual may have certain identity characteristics associated with privilege and others that are not, and such attributes may interact in dynamic ways. Such intersectionalities are beyond the scope of this paper, though we would expect them to dampen rather than enhance an individual's perceived authority in most cases.

[12] For example, India is an essential borrower at the World Bank's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

(see Dreher et al. 2022; Kaya, Kilby and Kay 2021). Economically powerful countries can also rhetorically support an IFI to shore up its legitimacy (Dellmuth and Tallberg 2023). For all these reasons, if economically powerful countries turn to outside options, the future of the IFI may be at risk. Given their importance to the IFI's work, economically powerful countries may be able to get more of what they want from IFIs, or they may be able to shirk difficult obligations more easily (Zeitz 2021). Existing research shows that countries that are tied to economic powerhouses, including the U.S. and G-5, receive breaks on loan conditions at the World Bank and IMF (Copelovitch 2010; Stone 2011; Clark and Dolan 2021).[13] Even transient positions of power, like membership on the United Nations Security Council, have been linked to more favorable treatment by IFIs (Dreher, Sturm and Vreeland 2015).

In most cases, we argue that IOs and recipient countries are likely to broadly agree that representatives' identity is a noisy indicator of quality. In lieu of more reliable and detailed information, an IO and a recipient country are both likely to perceive, for example, a Harvard-educated American economist who worked for Chase, Inc. as more likely to be talented and well-connected than other potential representatives. Likewise, we expect that recipient countries often share the same perceptions or biases: a policy official in Colombia is equally likely as a policy official in Nigeria to discriminate against an IMF official hailing from a developing country. While specific ethnic preconceptions will depend on local context, we expect favoritism toward nationals of powerful countries with elite degrees and professional experience to be fairly uniform.[14] We do not feel comfortable theorizing which actors discriminate more than others, and we think there sufficient evidence to believe that well-known biases are uniformly present.

In these environments, IOs face the trade-off described above: higher-quality represen-

[13] See Kilby (2011); Lim and Vreeland (2013) for similar findings regarding Japan and the ADB.

[14] While we do not engage with race per se, evidence suggests the existence of a pro-White bias in homogeneous Black societies in Africa (Marshall et al. 2022).

tatives on average draw more IO resources toward their countries and projects and compel partner countries to invest in valuable reforms. The more economically powerful the partner country is, the greater resources the IO will be willing to sacrifice to elicit the country's cooperation. Therefore, IOs should assign representatives with more privileged backgrounds to more powerful recipient countries.[15]

Hypothesis 1. *Staff members with privileged identity characteristics are more likely to be assigned to more powerful countries.*

While we argue that recipient countries and IOs will generally perceive representatives' identities similarly, there are some contexts in which we might expect them to hold systematically different views. In particular, we expect significantly more heterogeneity on views of gender than on views of nationality and education. Countries with fewer women in positions of authority and greater bias against women are less likely to view them as reliable and effective partners. While gender-based biases exist throughout the world, a policy official in Afghanistan is simply far less likely than a policy official in Kenya to treat a female IMF staffer as authoritative. These biases should be evident and measurable both to us and in IFIs.

In these contexts, the same theory predicts quite different assignment decisions. If IOs understand the biases of recipient countries, they can cater to those biases while shirking on their own effort. As long as the representatives' identity is received well by the partner country — in other words, as long as the country perceives the agent to be highly qualified — the IO can assign an agent who they themselves perceive to be less qualified. For example, if a recipient country's government is well known to hold significant gender biases, an

[15] Alternatively, the IO may face a "budget constraint" of representatives with privileged identities and choose to "spend" it on valuable partners. In recent years, IOs have faced pressure to diversify their bureaucracies to build legitimacy with global audiences (Jackson, Lee and Lipscy 2023; Steinberg and McDowell 2024).

IO can assign a representative with fewer other qualifications as long as that representative is male. This enables the IO to elicit favorable behavior from the partner country while avoiding more costly investments on their own part. Therefore, we expect IOs to send female representatives to countries where they will be most likely to be perceived as credible — namely, settings with less gender discrimination. Similar patterns are evident in the case of ambassadorial assignment, in which female ambassadors are more often assigned to gender-empowered countries (Towns and Niklasson 2017). As such, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2. *Female staff members are more likely to be assigned to countries with strong gender empowerment norms.*

Data and Empirical Strategy

To test our hypotheses, we collect original data on relevant sets of staff members at the World Bank and IMF. We learn about their backgrounds and professional experiences in order to model how they are assigned to different countries. At each institution, we focus on one type of position to hold constant characteristics that vary across jobs. Since our hypotheses focus on how staff are assigned to countries, we identify the position at each institution in which bureaucrats spend a significant amount of time interacting and negotiating with governments of client countries.

At the World Bank, we collect data on Task Team Leaders (TTLs). TTLs are assigned to projects, each of which is associated with just one country.[16] The TTL is appointed by a Country Director to head a project, and they are tasked with leading multiple missions to the recipient country to plan, execute, and assess the project. They are responsible for drafting all major documents relevant to program design, and they lead planning on procurement,

[16]Projects are sometimes associated with a region rather than project; we exclude these from our analysis.

financial management, project objectives, risk identification, and project instruments. Most important for our purposes, TTLs "head the negotiation team of the World Bank in the final negotiations with the recipient [...] they prepare the documents that the executive board uses when approving projects" (Heinzel and Liese 2021, 629). Because TTLs are the primary agents involved in negotiations with the recipient, the World Bank should care a great deal about how they are perceived in that country (i.e., whether they are credible or not). Our focus on TTLs is consistent with other work that tries to understand diversity, assignment, and the influence of individuals at the World Bank (Heinzel and Liese 2021; Limodio 2021). To identify our sample of TTLs, we utilized the World Bank API to retrieve all known projects and the individuals listed as TTLs on those projects. We identified 3,643 unique individuals who ever served as a TTL. Because TTLs often served as a TTL multiple times, we have data on 12,287 TTL assignments. We are able to collect all TTLs between the years 2000 and 2022.[17]

At the IMF, our focus is on Resident Representatives. Resident Representatives take up residence in a client country, which may or may not have an active IMF program, typically for a period of 2-3 years, at which point they are often relocated to a new country.[18] While on assignment, Resident Representatives offer technical assistance to their client countries and facilitate the process of preparing Article IV reports, an annual assessment of the country's macroeconomic needs. They also play an important role in program design and implementation should their assigned country begin negotiations with the Fund. Our focus on Resident Representatives complements Clark and Zucker (2023). There was no comprehensive set of documentation on historical Resident Representatives,[19] and so we

[17]Some of the TTLs we coded appear on projects that go through 2023, but they currently drop out of our analysis due to lack of country covariates in 2023.

[18]Resident Representatives were initially (in the 1970s and 1980s) assigned only to countries subject to IMF programs. Today, most member states have one.

[19]Clark and Zucker (2023) look only at Resident Representatives associated with Article IV reports that discuss climate — a small subset of the total population of Resident Representatives.

manually searched both Google and the IMF website, country by country, to reconstruct the history of individual occupants of the position (see Appendix §A for details). We excluded anyone who served as a Resident Representative before the year 2000 and not after, and we ended our search in 2023. We identified 431 unique individuals who served as Resident Representative, and we can identify the Resident Representative who held office in over 90% of country-years. This is shown in Figure 1. Because Resident Representatives often took up another Resident Representative position later on, we have data on 789 instances of Resident Representative assignment.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Having identified the individuals of interest, we then used publicly available online information to code information about their identities and personal and professional backgrounds. We relied most heavily on the institutions' own websites, biographies available from their subsequent or former employers, and LinkedIn.[20]

Staff Member Covariates

Our first independent variable of interest is nationality. While individuals sometimes list nationality on their CVs, we more often infer nationality based on other parts of their profile. For instance, we would likely infer that an individual who receives their undergraduate degree in Peru and spent time working for the Peruvian Ministry of Finance held a Peruvian nationality. Even with these inferences, there is considerable missingness in our nationality data, and we likely underestimate individuals who became U.S. citizens during their many years living in Washington, DC. At least one nationality is available for 65% of the World

[20]See Clark (2021); Clark and Zucker (2023) for similar uses of LinkedIn. To support research on individuals in global governance, we plan to make our data available to other researchers. However, it is impossible to anonymize these data. While the data we collect are all from public sources, it often required extensive effort to assemble an individual's record, and we are circumspect about making too available the identifiable profiles of so many. International bureaucrats did not sign up for a public life. As such, we plan to share our data with any researchers who request them for research purposes and agree not to further distribute them. Additional ethical considerations are discussed in Appendix § C.

Bank staff members and 80% of the IMF staff members.

Figure 2 shows the number of staff members hailing from each country in our data. As expected, many come from the U.S. and Western Europe. We operationalize our nationality variable as a dummy indicating whether the staff member holds nationality from a G5 country — the U.S., UK, France, Germany, and Japan (G5 NATIONALITY). We do so because existing research identifies these countries as the primary drivers of policymaking in the Bretton Woods institutions (Copelovitch 2010; Clark and Dolan 2021). They are the organizations' largest funders and hold the most votes in each institution (Kaya 2015). Staffers from these countries may thus appear more authoritative. 20% of the World Bank TTLs and 40% of IMF Resident Representatives are from G5 countries. Descriptive statistics for these and all staff-level covariates, as well as a numerical breakdown of staff nationality by country, appear in Appendix §A.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

We collect information on an individual's education and employment history primarily through biographies, sites like LinkedIn, and Google searches that may yield student or alumni activities or work at other institutions. We assign an individual a 1 if they received an advanced degree in economics (MA or PhD) from a top department, and a 0 otherwise (ELITE EDUCATION).[21] Since macroeconomic policy officials are interconnected, and since economics program reputations are well-defined and associated with specific ideologies, economists from these programs in particular may be viewed as more authoritative and/or representative of the institution (Nelson 2017). 12% of World Bank TTLs and 16% of IMF Resident Representatives received an advanced degree from one of these institutions.

[21] We follow Chwieroth (2015) in classifying top economics departments. The specific departments of interest are University of California (Berkeley), Brown University, New York University, Carnegie Mellon University, Northwestern University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Chicago, Princeton University, Harvard University, Stanford University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, University of Wisconsin, Yale University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Last, while there are many features of an individual's work history we could model, we are most interested in whether the individual has experience working for a well-known private sector company. We utilize an indicator equal to an 1 if an individual previously worked for a company in the Fortune 500 (U.S. or Global), and 0 otherwise (FORTUNE 500). 7% of IMF Resident Representatives worked for a Fortune 500, as did 3% of World Bank TTLs.

Gender is our final staff-level covariate of interest. For both institutions, we hand-coded the gender of the staffer. We prioritized any pronouns we saw associated with the staff member, and otherwise, considered names and images in our coding. Only 13% of IMF Resident Representatives and 34% of World Bank TTLs are women in our sample.

Country Covariates

Our theory expects staff members' identities to interact with two sources of country-level variation: how powerful the country is, and how progressive its gender norms are. As a relatively straightforward measure of a country's economic power, we use logged GDP PER CAPITA from the World Development Indicators. This measure, though high-level, is simple and highly visible both to staff members of client country governments and to IFI management making assignment decisions.[22] For robustness, we also consider countries' exit options in line with our model of country importance, and results are consistent across these measures.

To measure the gender norms in a country, we use the WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT index from V-Dem. We would expect countries that excel on this index — due to their civil liberties, strong participation of women in civil society, and representation of women in

[22]World Bank managers consider the total lending volume of a country to represent its significance to the Bank, and they tend to be very careful that their teams in those countries are well resourced with excellent staff that fit the program needs well. Interview with former TTL / current practice manager, January 6, 2025. In our next revision, we plan to measure country importance this way, although we expect it is likely correlated with GDP per capita.

politics — to also be contexts in which gender biases are less pronounced. While the index itself may not be on managers' minds when assigning staff members, it likely correlates with impressions they may have of which countries may be more or less receptive to women in positions of power.

Empirical Model

To model staff member assignment, we generate a data set consisting of all possible staff members who could be assigned to each project (at the World Bank) or country (at the IMF) as well as all possible project or country assignments in a given year. We then create an assignment variable that is equal to 1 for the staff member(s) ultimately assigned to the project/country and 0 for all staff members who were not assigned to that case. At the World Bank, we consider a staff member eligible for assignment if they were a TTL assigned to a project during that year, and we consider all the projects that occurred during that year as possible assignments.[23] At the IMF (where we have data on start and end years of employment as a Resident Representative), we consider a staff member eligible for assignment if they started at the IMF before that year, and a country eligible for assignment if there was a Resident Representative office open during that year.

Using these simulated data, we then model staff member assignment. We regress our assignment variable on each of our explanatory variables and interact them with our main country-level covariates, GDP per capita and gender empowerment. Our model specification is LPM.[24] The coefficients on the interaction terms, our main estimands of interest,

[23]Since the mid-2000s, there is a formal process by which World Bank staff members are accredited to become TTLs through a series of trainings and, often, through first serving as co-support staff or co-TTL on a project (Interviews with TTLs, January 3, 2025 and January 6, 2025). See the "Interview Evidence" section below for additional details on interviews. Ideally, our sample would consist of all available staff, but this would expand the data collection burden exponentially. In restricting to current TTLs, we are identifying most-likely TTL candidates and omitting individuals who have not yet been promoted. We do not expect this limitation to influence our results, as patterns of assignment and promotion may exhibit similar characteristics.

[24]We opt for LPM for ease of interpretation and given recent research verifying its appropriateness in

indicate the relationship between the staff member's background and the type of country to which they are assigned. We include year fixed effects to account for over-time changes in the makeup and assignment dynamics of these institutions, and we cluster our standard errors by country. We exclude country fixed effects since we are interested in how bureaucrats are deployed across rather than within specific country settings.[25]

Existing accounts discuss why the World Bank and IMF may assign their staff members to work in their own country of origin. Historically, these institutions opposed sending staffers to their country of origin, fearful that they may be overly sympathetic to the country's perspective (Honig 2018; Heinzel 2022). However, as localization and country ownership have taken hold as key principles in foreign aid, donors increasingly recruit staff from local populations and deploy co-nationals to their countries of origin. This can be advantageous for IOs since such bureaucrats possess superior context-specific knowledge and access to local networks. Given the importance of co-nationality in managers' decisionmaking over where to send bureaucrats, we control for co-nationality in all tests. This means we primarily explain variation in how staff members are assigned to a country other than the one from which they hail. Accounting for co-nationality also helps us to control for language proficiency; individuals that have nationality in a given country may have language skills that help guide assignment decisions.

Tables A5–A6 present descriptive statistics from the data sets we use for our analyses, including all variables described above. These data are at the bureaucrat-country-year unit of analysis since we are interested in determining which bureaucrats are assigned to which countries in a given year.[26]

similar settings (Gomila 2021).

[25]In our next revision, we plan to include sector fixed effects for our World Bank model. This is because TTLs bring technical expertise to an assignment; a water management specialist will be TTL for several water management projects and is unlikely to be assigned to a digital government project, for instance. Including these fixed effects should add precision to our World Bank models. This inclusion is unnecessary at the IMF, where technical expertise is more homogeneous.

[26]While gender empowerment and GDPPC are positively correlated (correlation coefficient = 0.29), we

Results

Since we are primarily interested in the interaction between individual characteristics and country characteristics, we present our results as marginal effects plots to ease interpretation. The full regression tables appear in Appendix §B.

We first look at the importance of nationality to staff assignment (Figure 3). At the IMF, we find the expected relationship: individuals with nationalities from the G5 countries are more likely to be assigned to relatively wealthy countries, while they are less likely to be assigned to relatively poor countries. This result does not appear at the World Bank, however, where G5 nationals are no more or less likely to be assigned to relatively wealthy or poor countries. We discuss this result more subsequently.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Elite education, however, matters similarly at both the World Bank and the IMF (Figure 4). Across both institutions, having an elite advanced degree increases an individual's probability of assignment to a relatively wealthy country. Relatively poor countries, however, are less likely to receive staff members with the most prestigious degrees. This accords with our interpretation that sending individuals with these credentials recognizes the status of the relatively wealthy countries to which they are sent.

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Recognizable professional experiences can similarly qualify an individual to work in a relatively wealthy country. Figure 5 shows the relationship between an individual's experience working for a Fortune 500 firm and their assignment within an IFI. These bureaucrats with private sector experience are much more likely to go to wealthier countries at the IMF, but not at the World Bank. We discuss this discrepancy further below.

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

have distinct theoretical expectations for each and therefore model them separately.

Our theoretical model implies that country importance can relate both to economic might (as proxied by per capita GDP) and a country's exit options, or their ability to forgo financing from the IMF or World Bank. While our primary focus is on the former in this paper for empirical tractability and because it is easily discernible for managers in these institutions, we test the latter for robustness and present the results in the appendix. We specifically utilize principal components analysis to construct an index of a country's exit options. For the World Bank analysis, the index includes the amount of interest a country paid on its World Bank loans in a given year, which captures how much a country contributes to the Bank's financial independence, the number of other multilateral development banks a country belongs to as a measure of available outside options, and a country's per capita GDP since richer countries may be able to forgo financial assistance or else mobilize private capital. For the IMF analysis, it includes the volume of Chinese financing received given China's rise to prominence as a lender, a country's quota at the Fund, which captures the importance of a country to the institution's financial health, and a country's per capita GDP.[27] We swap per capita GDP for these indices, otherwise replicating our main models.[28] The results are consistent with those presented above (Tables A9–A10).

Finally, we find strong support for our gender hypothesis. As shown in Figure 6, both institutions are much more likely to send men to countries with lower gender empowerment scores, reserving their (few) women for countries where gender empowerment is the highest. This is a logical way for the institutions to deploy their staff members where they will be most effective. Descriptively, at the World Bank, 41 percent of female TTL assignments are to countries in the upper quartile of women's empowerment (using the V-DEM measure). At the IMF, meanwhile, the figure is 39 percent. The countries that receive

[27]Data on development bank membership comes from Clark (2021). Data on Chinese finance comes from Dreher et al. (2022). Data on IMF quotas comes from the IMF website. Data on interest payments at the World Bank comes from the World Bank website.

[28]The exit indices highly correlate with per capita GDP (cor = .49 for IMF, cor = 0.46 for World Bank).

the lowest share of female TTLs from the World Bank and Resident Representatives from IMF are Oman (13.5 percent) and Chile (0 percent) respectively — both countries have relatively poor records on women's empowerment.

[FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE]

We consider several possible alternative explanations for how institutions assign their personnel. First, we consider how staff quality drives their assignment. At the World Bank, we are able to incorporate two measures of bureaucratic quality. We construct a measure that captures the number of projects a TTL has previously worked on that they were able to bring to completion (i.e., disbursement). A TTL's primary goal is to get funds disbursed quickly (Weaver 2008), and this measure captures a bureaucrat's ability to do so. We also utilize the project-level performance data from Michael (2024), and we compute TTL-level performance by taking the mean performance rating across all projects on which a bureaucrat served as TTL. Our indicators of prestige only weakly positively correlate with these performance measures (Figure A1). In the appendix, we also present results for the World Bank both controlling for the interaction between our quality measures and per capita GDP (Table A11 and A12) and swapping our identity characteristics for our quality measures (Table A13 and A14). When accounting for the interaction between each quality measure and per capita GDP, results remain similar to the above; elite education retains a significant and positive interaction effect with per capita GDP. This suggests prestige may matter above and beyond quality, perhaps because identity characteristics are more easily observable to management and member states than underlying bureaucratic quality. When swapping our identity characteristics for the quality measures, we identify a positive and statistically significant interaction between bureaucratic quality as measured by the number of projects completed and per capita GDP. We do not identify significant results for the interaction between bureaucratic performance and per capita GDP, however. These tests suggest that the Bank may send higher quality as well as more prestigious bureaucrats

to more important / more powerful countries. We are unable to replicate this analysis at the IMF because there is no commensurate measure of bureaucratic quality for Resident Representatives.

A second potential alternative explanation is that individuals select into these assignments. Being assigned to an economically powerful country could bolster a bureaucrat's CV and boost their chances of promotion. However, we do not believe self-selection to be sufficient to explain our findings. This is because, in practice, the Bretton Woods IOs have significant control over where field agents are deployed; we subsequently provide further evidence in this vein gleaned from interviews. At the IMF, existing work details how Resident Representatives have very little opportunity to impact their countries of assignment, and they are deliberately rotated to a different region every few years (Clark and Zucker 2023). Similar dynamics are present at the World Bank — largely because the institution is concerned bureaucrats may develop too much sympathy for clients to dutifully represent their employer in negotiations (see Honig 2018). This is not to say that bureaucrats have no say over where they are sent; they are able to list preferences in each institution and may apply for specific country posts. However, the final decision rests with managers who are likely to privilege organizational mandates and performance over the desires of individual staffers.

Ideally, we would account for self-selection in our empirical tests. However, it is difficult in practice to disentangle self-selection from strategic assignment for the above reasons. Instead, we employ a measure of the desirability of a posting as an alternative independent variable for robustness. We specifically make use of data from the U.S. State Department on hardship pay percentages; the State Department offers percentage bonus pay to individuals stationed in difficult or undesirable locations.[29] Gray (2018) utilizes

[29]The State Department's hardship pay rates vary by month for most years and also can vary by city or region within a country. For simplicity and ease of interpretation, especially since we do not know exactly where individual staff members are stationed within a country, we compute the average hardship pay rate

these data to account for the desirability of IO headquarters locations among prospective employees. Insofar as higher hardship pay rates correlate with less desirable deployments, this measure enables us to account for a potential driver of staff selection. Hardship pay rate correlates highly with per capita GDP (cor = -0.68). We thus swap per capita GDP for hardship pay rate in interaction with elite education, G-5 nationality, and Fortune 500 experience, otherwise replicating our main models, and present the results for the World Bank and IMF in the appendix (Tables A15 and A16 respectively). We obtain similar results to those presented above — we identify a negative and statistically significant interaction between all three identity measures and hardship pay rate at the IMF and between elite education and hardship pay rate at the World Bank. These results illustrate the difficulty in separating self-selection from strategic assignment and suggest that both likely matter. We intend to conduct qualitative interviews with managers and staff at the Bretton Woods institutions to test these mechanisms more precisely.

Last, local recruitment could bias our estimates. While we address this in all specifications by controlling for co-nationality, we also subset our analyses to TTLs and Resident Representatives who work in multiple countries throughout their careers and therefore are unlikely to be these short-term contractors. The results are the same (Tables A17–A18).

Discussion

In this section, we first discuss sources of heterogeneity in our quantitative results before providing qualitative evidence from interviews with Resident Representatives at the IMF to bolster our assumptions and core findings.

across a given country in a given year.

Heterogeneity

Does strategic staff assignment vary by institution? We see fairly similar results at the World Bank and the IMF, with two exceptions: the role of nationality and prior professional experience. Unlike the IMF, the World Bank does not appear to send individuals with G-5 nationalities or Fortune 500 experience to relatively more powerful countries. This may reflect the relatively greater degree of representation that lower income countries with more diverse professional backgrounds have at the World Bank as well as the relatively higher weight placed on local knowledge at the World Bank than at the IMF. The Bank's Program-for-Results financing instrument, created in 2012, is illustrative of the institution's concern for local knowledge and buy-in. Such financing makes use of recipient countries' own institutions and processes and provides countries with flexibility in how funds are spent.[30] Our strong results at the IMF may also speak to the importance of perceived credibility at the Fund given its emphasis on extracting costly concessions from clients in the form of conditionality. Such coercive negotiations may lead the institution to pay special attention to how bureaucrats are received.

Does strategic staff assignment vary over time? We plot the coefficients on our main interaction terms of interest by year of data in order to see whether staff assignment has become more or less strategic over time. The opportunity to assign staff strategically may have increased with a greater diversity of staff members to draw from, although increasingly progressive gender and racial norms in client states may have reduced the need to do so. The results, presented in Figures A2-A5, show no consistent time trends in our interaction effects; strategic assignment appears relatively constant over time at both the Fund and World Bank.

What types of country power matter for strategic staff assignment? We replicate our

[30]"Program-for-Results," 2024, `https://bit.ly/4eHIU4B`

analysis using a country's UNSC membership and its voting similarity to the U.S. at the UNGA in place of GDPPC. We find that neither measure of power seems to guide IO personnel assignment decisions (Tables A19–A20). None of our background characteristics achieve statistical significance when interacted with these alternative power measures. These results suggest that managers are making their assignment decisions more on the basis of basic economic power dynamics than via a more politically sophisticated, short-term assessment of strategic relationships.

Interview Evidence

To clarify the process through which individuals are assigned to countries at the Bretton Woods institutions, we conducted a handful of interviews with relevant officials. To recruit interviewees, we sent emails to a random sample of current and former TTLs and Resident Representatives; the text of the recruitment email appears in Appendix §E.[31] We then conducted semi-structured interviews with these officials over Zoom (the question list appears in the Appendix).

Our randomly selected sample exhibited substantive and regional heterogeneity and included multiple individuals well-positioned to speak to the processes we model. At the World Bank, we interviewed two current TTLs and one former TTL who has since become a practice manager responsible for supervising and assigning TTLs. The TTLs represented three different sectors (water management, digital development, and social protection), have worked in several countries across multiple regions (MENA, Latin America, East Africa, and South Asia), and have decades of experience with the Bank. Our three interviewees from the IMF were all former Resident Representatives who have since moved on from the Fund. The fact that they no longer work at the Fund was beneficial, allowing them

[31] At the World Bank, we e-mailed 33 TTLs and completed 3 interviews in December 2024/January 2025. At the IMF, we emailed 17 Resident Representatives and completed 3 interviews in November 2024.

to be forthcoming about their experiences. Their work jointly spanned three decades (the 1990s through the 2010s) and three continents. Despite the variation in their professional experiences, the officials we interviewed across both institutions shared similar reflections on their assignments.

To start, we sought to bolster our assumption that assignments are made by managers within the IFIs. As discussed above, staff selection into assignments represents an empirical challenge. Interviews confirmed that although staff may express their interest in an assignment, the final decisions ultimately rest with management.

At the World Bank, the practice manager is formally responsible for hiring and managing TTLs. In the words of the practice manager we interviewed, "My job is to manage the TTLs who run these programs. In my day to day, I think about who would be good in this job or who would take this job or who is worthy of a promotion."[32] When there is a vacancy for a TTL, the practice manager will first consider whether others on their team can fill the position, but will also try to recruit individuals in other parts of the institution to join their team with a view toward making them TTL. In the practice manager's words, "A big part of my job is to prowl the World Bank who find the really talented people like the kind of crazy, high impact, high intensity work that we do on our team ... A big way I can attract the best people is by talking about this really cool project I have, and telling them, look, you are a superstar, I'm going to hire you, but my inducement is that when I hire you, I will allow you to be the TTL of this massive, complicated, high impact project."[33] Of course, staff can make their interests known to managers. One TTL said, "You can definitely express your passion for a particular country to management. If you're interested in becoming a TTL for a particular project or country, you can get involved as a team member, and then

[32]The practice manager is primarily associated with a practice (sector/division) but specializes in a region. They will usually consult with the country manager, responsible for all sectoral operations in-country, when making hiring decisions in order to make sure that the TTL and country manager will work well together. Interview with former TTL / current practice manager, January 6, 2025.

[33]Interview with former TTL / current practice manager, January 6, 2025.

accompany them on a mission."[34] But especially when a practice manager receives a lot of interest in a TTL opportunity, the manager will ultimately determine who receives the position and can also recruit candidates to the position. Moreover, "in some cases, they say we need a person in this country, and then you need to be there."[35]

At the IMF, the relevant manager is typically the Mission Chief. One interviewee noted, "The Mission Chief is the one who can refuse certain individuals or select among willing candidates."[36] When a Resident Representative position opens in a given country, any qualified individual within the Fund's bureaucracy can apply. However, two of our three interviewees from the IMF noted that managers directly encouraged them to apply on the basis of their "fit" for the position, including their language skills, the nature of their prior work (e.g., whether they had worked on similar countries' desks), and their "general competence."[37] In other words, while language and technical skills matter, so too do assessments of the quality of the bureaucrat. Moreover, if individuals apply because they are encouraged to do so, Mission Chiefs are implicitly choosing from the potential candidates they know.

When managers are selecting staff members, they must think both about how the staff member will work with the institution as well as with the client country. All World Bank TTLs we spoke to emphasized that their role was to put together a project that was valuable and feasible in client countries and which they could also sell to the Bank. One TTL said, "The TTLs need to design the project on a common ground where the country's objectives overlap Bank's objectives. You can't always be fully on behalf of the client because you won't necessarily meet the Bank's standards and expectations or fully with the Bank because you won't meet your client's expectations and implementation capacity."[38]

[34]Interview with TTL, January 3, 2025.
[35]Interview with TTL, January 3, 2025.
[36]Interview with former IMF Resident Representative, October 30, 2024.
[37]Interviews with former IMF Resident Representatives, November 1, 2024 and November 7, 2024.
[38]Interview with TTL, January 3, 2025.

The practice manager included ability to work with the Bank bureaucracy and ability to work with client countries as two of the four dimensions he evaluates employees on (in addition to teamwork skills and technical proficiency).[39] However, who will work well with each country or even with each ministry involves "intangibles" and a "je ne sais quoi" factor.[40] One of his TTLs brings ingredients for his government counterpart's favorite recipe with him when he travels.

Similarly, at the IMF, a Resident Representative's primary objective is to "build trust with authorities and identify priority areas ... they are there every day, seeing the authorities every day, and they are trying to maintain a relationship through and after the program."[41] There are no strict requirements on how a Resident Representative spends their time, giving them substantial leeway to build relationships and work in policy areas they believe will be most fruitful. In short, they liaise between target governments and the IMF bureaucracy, and their ability to do so is directly shaped by how they are perceived by local policy officials. Also consistent with our theory, managers seem to allocate their best staff members to the most significant countries. For example, one interviewee reported that for "important" countries like "South Africa [or] Nigeria [managers] look for experienced and qualified Resident Representatives."[42]

Identity characteristics are often impossible to separate from other attributes when considering who is a good fit for a client. The World Bank practice manager reflected, "There is a ton of consideration about what government official (like a Minister of Finance) is on the other side of the table and whether this TTL is going to be treated with respect as someone representing the World Bank."[43] He described having only recently succeeded, after years of pushback, in assigning an African TTL to a specific African country where

[39]Interview with former TTL / current practice manager, January 6, 2025.
[40]Interview with former TTL / current practice manager, January 6, 2025.
[41]Interview with former IMF Resident Representative, October 30, 2024.
[42]Interview with former IMF Resident Representative, November 7, 2024.
[43]Interview with former TTL / current practice manager, January 6, 2025.

ethnicity is highly salient and complicated. Once they were assigned, the practice manager and the TTL explicitly discussed ways that the TTL could build respectful relations with the client in light of their identity. Similarly, the IMF is extremely concerned with how a given official is likely to be received by the government: "For these reasons, you don't send a Pakistani to India or a Jewish staff member to an Arab country, and so on."[44]

In sum, our conversations with staff members and management support several of our theoretical claims. Management has significant discretion over the assignment of staff members and considers how those staff members will be perceived in client countries. Identity may factor into these decisions both consciously, through considering local country norms, and potentially subconsciously, in the assessment of "fit."

Conclusion

We have shown that managers of IOs consider how a bureaucrat's profile will be viewed by a client country when they make personnel assignment decisions. We doubt this is the only factor they consider, but it is an important one, since the institution is only as successful as the individuals it sends to represent it.

We offer a strategic logic of staff assignment that could be pertinent to the study of other institutions. In fact, Towns and Niklasson (2017) notice a similar dynamic at work in the assignment of ambassadors, where female ambassadors are more likely to be sent to countries with higher gender empowerment scores. Gender and the other factors we highlight could similarly inform the assignment of international judges to cases (Puig and Strezhnev 2022), legislators to committees (Frisch and Kelly 2006), or other cases of delegation to individuals. Organizational theories of individual assignment tend to emphasize performance, incentives, and missions (Besley and Ghatak 2005; Limodio 2021), while political theories have focused on partisanship and patronage (Palmer 2016; Arias and Smith

[44]Interview with former IMF Resident Representative, November 1, 2024.

2018). Our explanation instead focuses on how identity shapes interpersonal interactions with geopolitical consequences.

Our study of staff assignment brings together scholarship that has focused mostly on the importance of powerful states in IOs, or the remarkable impact of their staffs, but rarely considers the interaction between the two. We do not believe that international bureaucrats are the main agents of change in global governance. Even (and especially) when their unique perspectives matter most, they are deployed to serve their institution. But that is not to trivialize their importance, as their perspectives and identities undoubtedly shape what are, in the end, interpersonal relationships with client countries. To focus entirely on structural factors when examining institutional behavior and outcomes misses the humans who cause the work to fail or succeed (Leftwich 2010). We would like to see more research modeling the kinds of strategic interactions that exist between management and personnel in IOs.

Our project is especially relevant to conversations about diversity in global governance. We agree that historically exclusive IOs should hire diverse bureaucracies that are more representative of their constituents (Meier, Wrinkle and Polinard 1999). IOs have long faced critique and resistance from the developing world for their one-size-fits-all approaches (Stiglitz 2002), exclusive forms of knowledge (Kothari 2002, 2006), institutional racism (von Billerbeck and Oksamytna 2023; Lipscy and Zhou 2024), and narrow worldviews (Weaver 2008). Leaders of IOs have overwhelmingly been white and male (Jackson, Lee and Lipscy 2023), and so too are the bureaucracies they hire (Parízek 2017; Gray 2018; Badache 2020; Haack 2022). Kilby (2013) finds that Americans are promoted more often at the World Bank regardless of their performance. Despite some modest over-time improvement in staffing diversity (Parizek and Stephen 2021), women, individuals from lower- and middle-income countries, and individuals with non-Western educational backgrounds remain severely underrepresented in IOs (Weaver et al. 2022). This should change.

Our study implies that the effects of greater staff diversity will depend on how staff are assigned. In the case of the World Bank and IMF, we expect the most underrepresented staffers to go to the least powerful countries. Arguably, this is a normatively desirable outcome, as the cases in greatest need of assistance will more likely be handled by staff members who may have broader perspectives and value non-traditional insights, in contrast to the representatives these countries historically received. Although, to the extent that these assignments do little to advance a bureaucrat's career, these patterns could reinforce biases in promotion that create glass ceilings for underrepresented staffers. Different patterns of assignment may exist at other institutions. What we have shown is that while increasing staff diversity is desirable, its impacts will depend on how institutions make use of their staff members.

For managers of these IOs, we wish to underscore that diversity can be an asset to their goals. IOs may be better represented by certain types of individuals in some countries than in others. Having a diverse pool of individuals to select from allows institutions to respond to varying contexts. We are supportive of strategic staff assignment, although we encourage these IOs to be more flexible and adaptive than the decision framework we have modeled in this paper. Anticipating the particular biases that individual representatives might face is challenging, and concerns that "other people" might expect a certain type of IO bureaucrat could inadvertently solidify this category. We hope these managers take away from our paper that they can and should be strategic about staff assignment but should carefully consider the consequences of the algorithm they use.

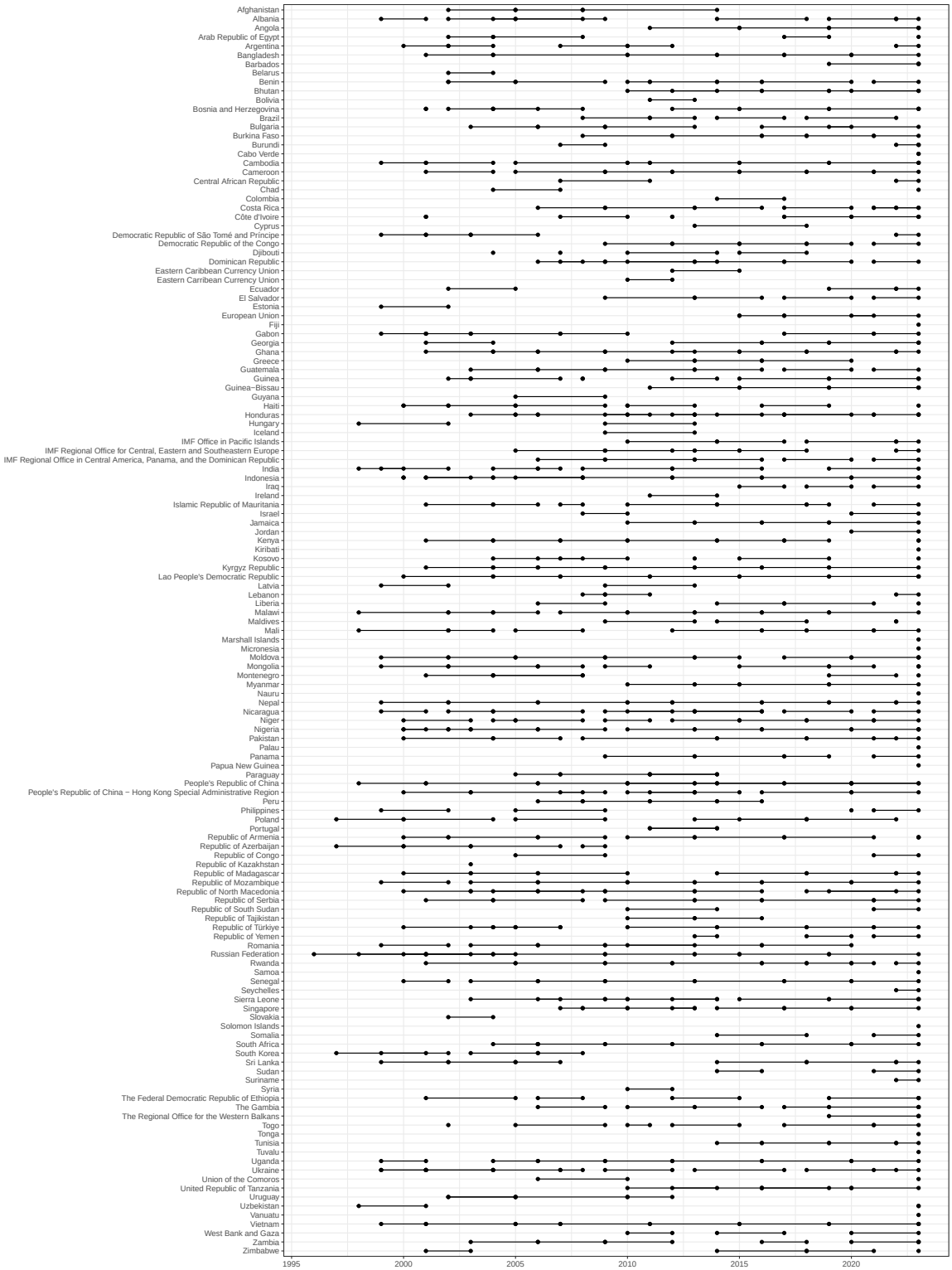
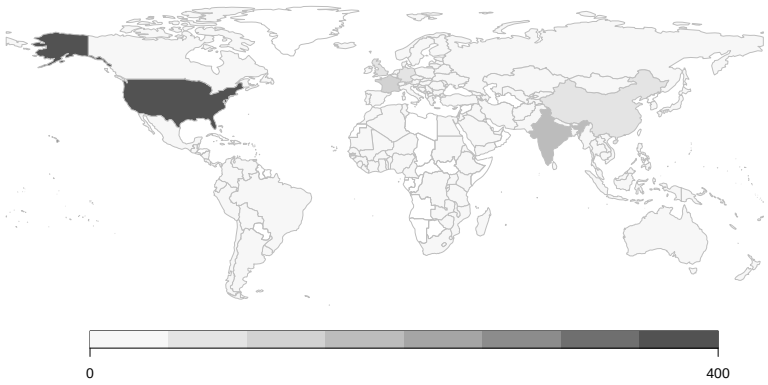
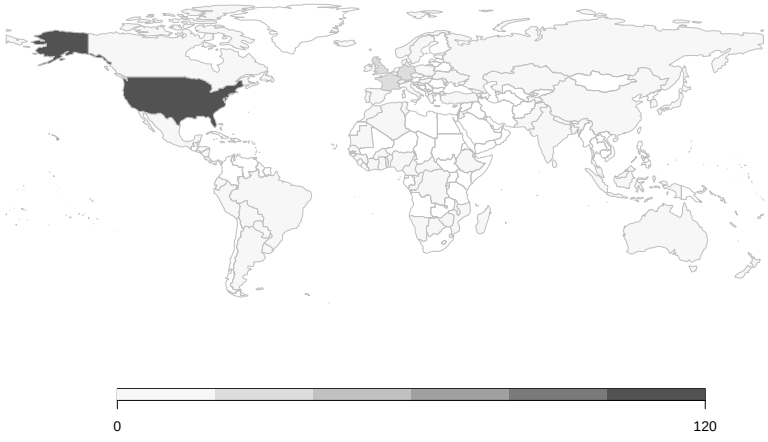


Figure 1: Coverage of IMF Resident Representatives.

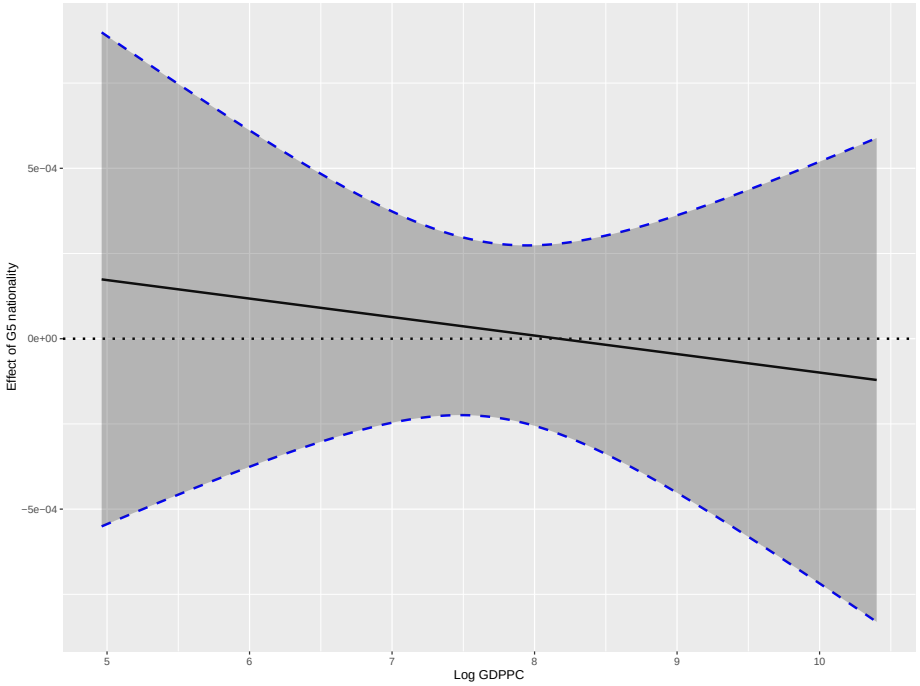


(a) World Bank

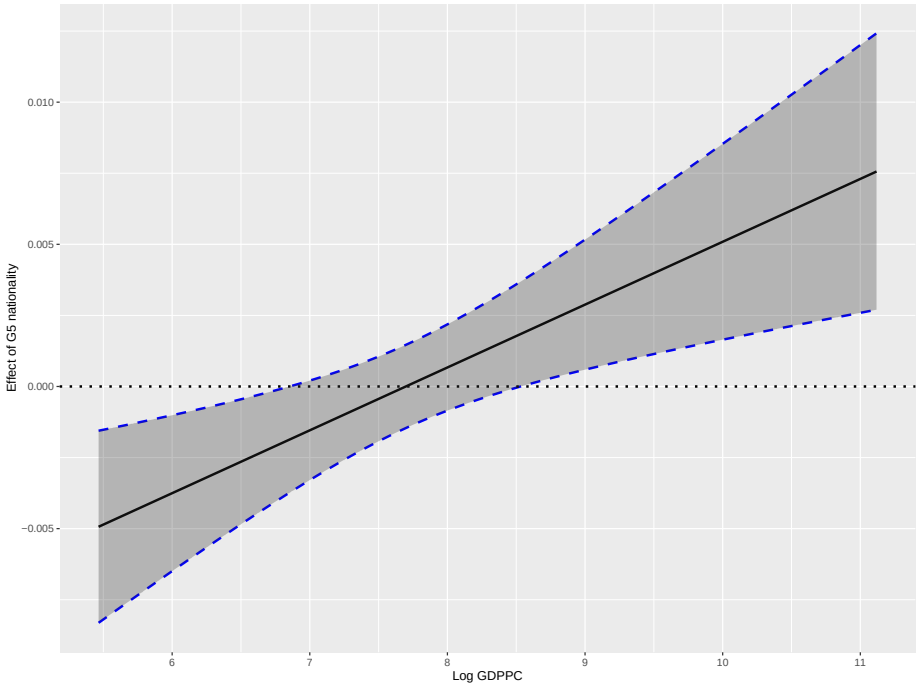


(b) IMF

Figure 2: Number of Staff by Nationality.

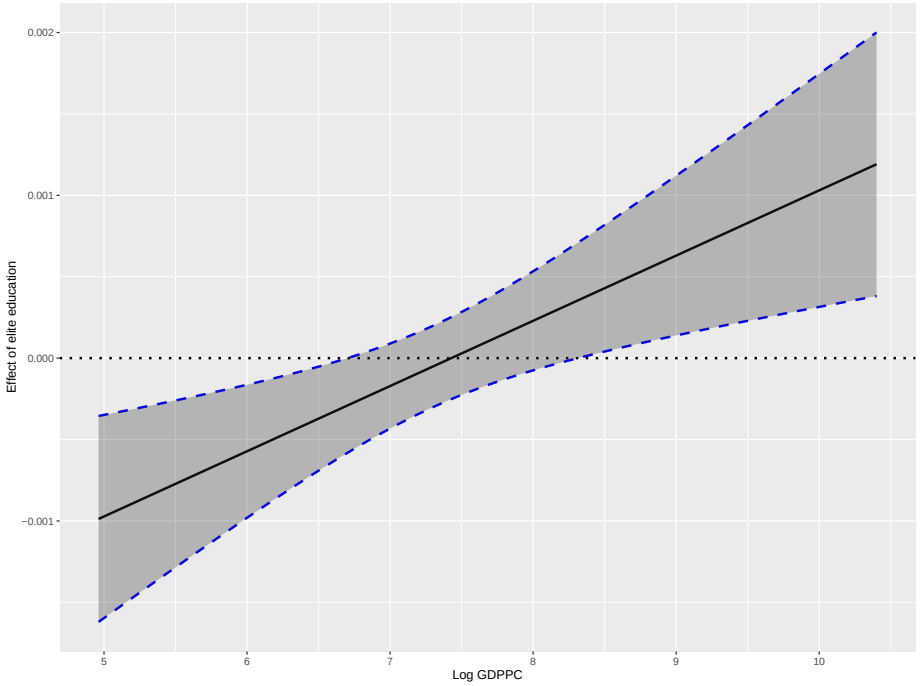


(a) World Bank

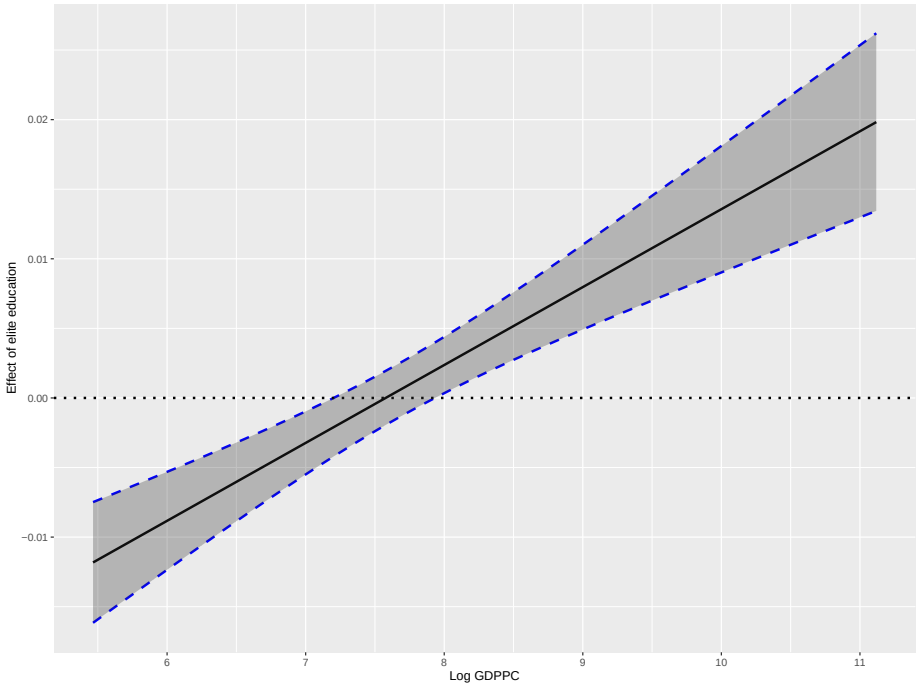


(b) IMF

Figure 3: Marginal Effects of G5 Nationality X GDP per capita.

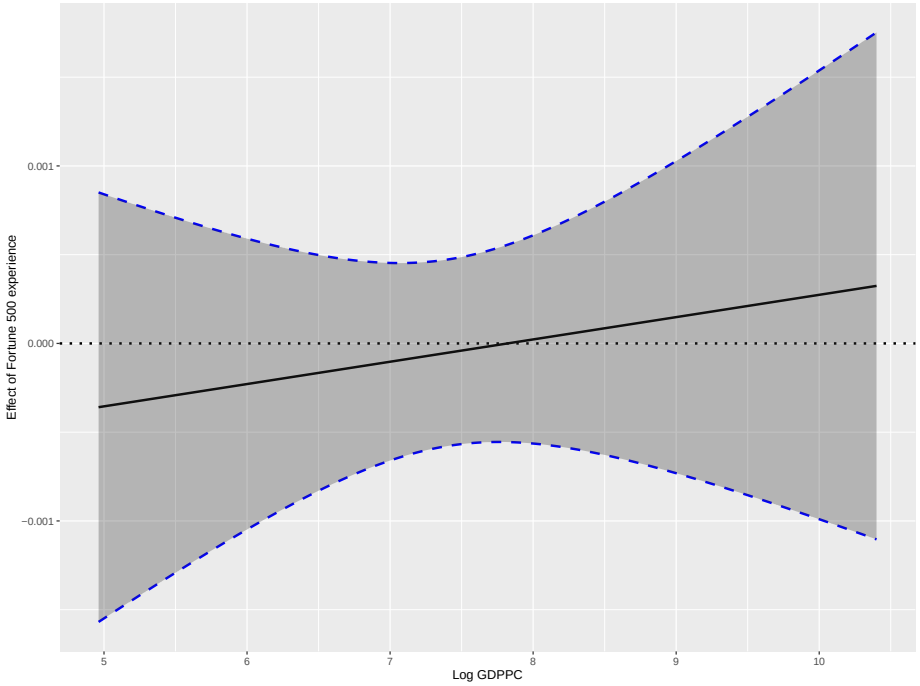


(a) World Bank

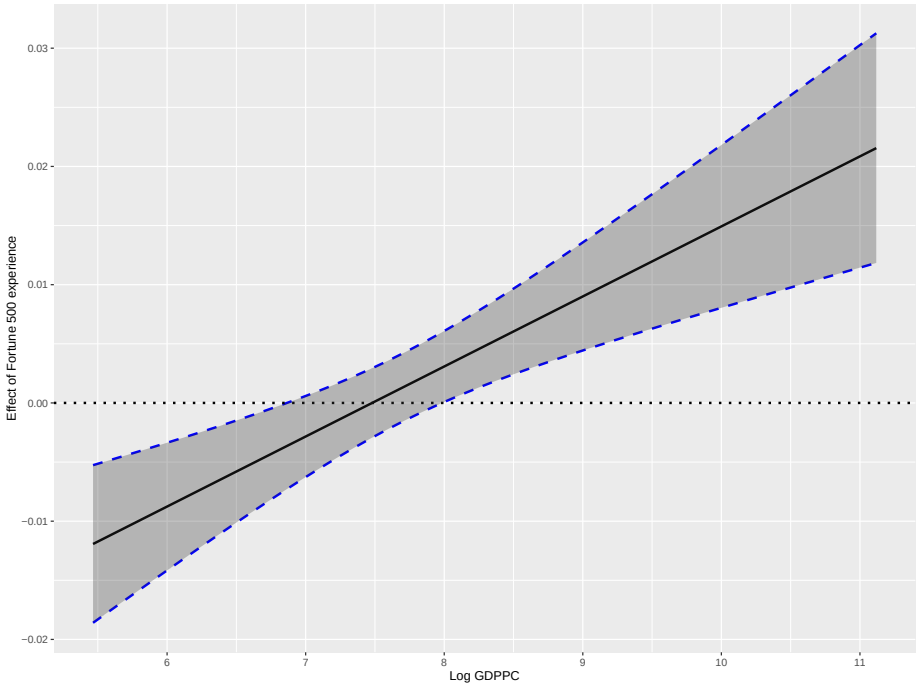


(b) IMF

Figure 4: Marginal Effects of Elite Education X GDP per capita.

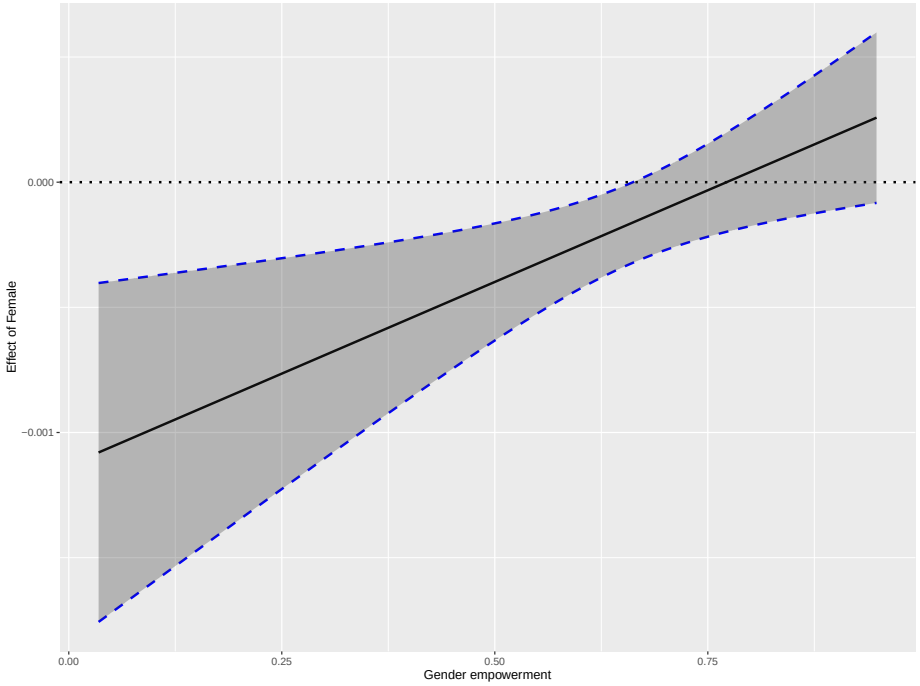


(a) World Bank

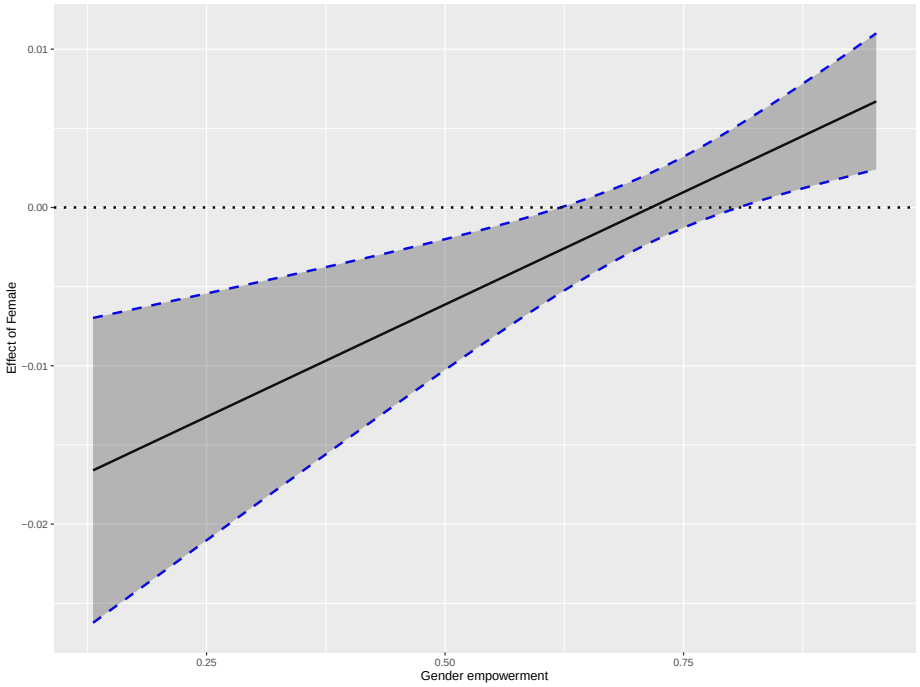


(b) IMF

Figure 5: Marginal Effects of Fortune 500 X GDP per capita.



(a) World Bank



(b) IMF

Figure 6: Marginal Effects of Female X Women's Empowerment.

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Individuals in Institutions: Evidence from the World Bank and IMF

Online Appendices

Contents

A. Data Collection

To collect data on TTLs and Resident Representatives (RRs), we first sought to identity the universe of TTLs and RRs employed by the Bretton Woods institutions both recently and historically. For TTLs, we were able to utilize the World Bank API to identify the names of TTLs assigned to World Bank projects historically, though some projects did not have names associated with them. We are unable to include such projects in our analysis. For the IMF, RAs used historical documents from the IMF, the IMF website, and conducted open-ended searches to identify when an RR first appeared in a given country (RRs initially were only sent to countries with programs, e.g., in the 1970s) and the career trajectories of each RR.

We then tasked RAs with manually searching the World Bank and IMF websites respectively. Some individuals, especially those that eventually reach the upper echelons of their institution, have biographies or CVs listed directly on their institution's website.

However, this is relatively rare. Therefore, we also tasked RAs with conducting more open-ended searches on Google. LinkedIn was an especially important resource identified through this approach. Given that the World Bank and IMF are major liberal international organizations headquartered in Washington, D.C., and given that LinkedIn is the primary corporate social media platform used in the West, LinkedIn profiles are an important currency for bureaucrats. The overwhelming majority of bureaucrats in our sample maintain LinkedIn profiles and update them regularly, listing their educational backgrounds, employment histories, nationalities, and sometimes using pronouns that enable us to code gender. In other cases, open-ended Google searches yielded individual websites, especially for bureaucrats who transitioned in research roles, or biographies on firms' websites for those who ultimately moved into the private sector.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
G5 nationality	3304	0.20	0.40	0	1
G5 education	3304	0.48	0.50	0	1
Elite education	3304	0.12	0.32	0	1
Female	3239	0.34	0.47	0.00	1.00

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics (World Bank TTLs).

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Fortune 500	431	0.07	0.25	0	1
G5 nationality	431	0.40	0.49	0	1
G5 education	431	0.57	0.50	0	1
Elite education	431	0.16	0.37	0	1
Female	429	0.13	0.34	0	1

Table A2: Descriptive Statistics (IMF Resident Representatives).

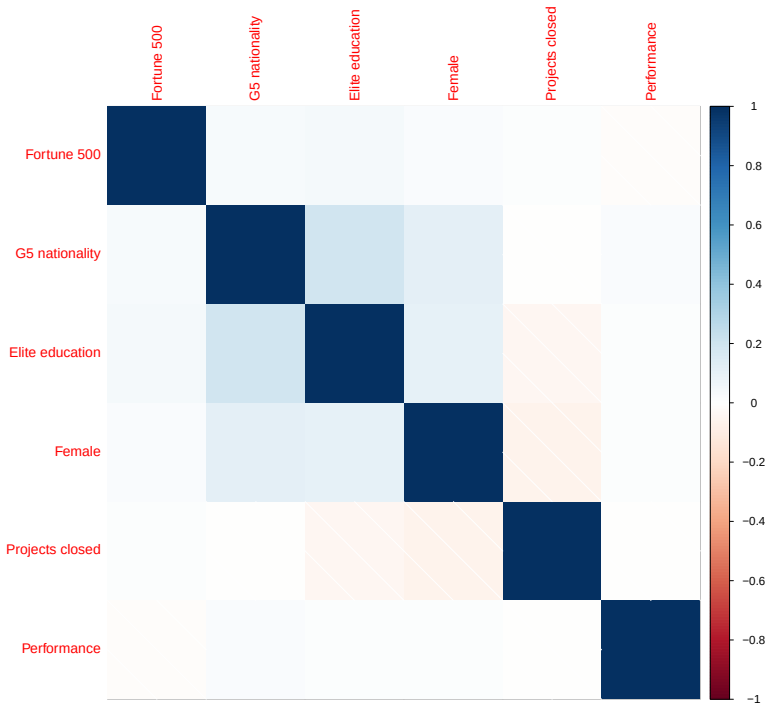


Figure A1: Correlation Plot. This plot serves to illustrate the correlations between bureaucratic quality/performance and our indicators of prestige at the World Bank.

Country	Count
Algeria	1
Argentina	7
Armenia	3
Australia	6
Bangladesh	2
Barbados	1
Belgium	4
Benin	1
Bolivia	1
Botswana	1
Brazil	6
Burkina Faso	2
Cameroon	6
Canada	4
Central African Republic	2
China	7
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	2
Congo, Republic of the	1
Costa Rica	1
Cote d'Ivoire	1
Croatia	2
Czech Republic	1
Denmark	6
Ecuador	1
El Salvador	2
Ethiopia	2
France	28
Georgia	3
Germany	22
Ghana	2
Greece	1
Grenada	1
Guinea	4
Hungary	1
Iceland	2
India	6
Indonesia	1
Ireland	2
Italy	7
Jamaica	2
Japan	1
Jordan	3
Kazakhstan	1
Korea, South	1
Lebanon	5

Country	Count
Macedonia	1
Madagascar	1
Malawi	3
Malaysia	1
Mauritania	1
Mexico	5
Montenegro	1
Morocco	3
Mozambique	1
Namibia	1
Nepal	1
Netherlands	9
New Zealand	1
Nicaragua	1
Nigeria	1
Norway	4
Pakistan	4
Paraguay	2
Peru	3
Poland	1
Portugal	3
Russia	6
Rwanda	3
Saint Lucia	1
Scotland	1
Senegal	4
Senegal	2
Seychelles	1
Sierra Leone	3
Singapore	1
South Korea	3
Spain	6
Sri Lanka	1
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	1
Swaziland	1
Sweden	3
Switzerland	4
Tajikistan	2
Trinidad and Tobago	1
Tunisia	2
Turkey	4
Ukraine	2
United Kingdom	26
United States	111
Uruguay	4
Zimbabwe	1

Table A3: Count of IMF Resident Representatives by Nationality. Representatives with multiple nationalities are counted twice – once for each country.

Country	Count
Afghanistan	7
Albania	8
Algeria	1
Argentina	31
Armenia	8
Australia	41
Austria	14
Azerbaijan	6
Bangladesh	32
Barbados	1
Belarus	3
Belgium	8
Benin	9
Bhutan	1
Bolivia	7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5
Brazil	40
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	8
Burma	1
Burundi	5
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	11
Canada	38
Chile	5
China	47
Colombia	37
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	2
Costa Rica	2
Cote d'Ivoire	9
Croatia	5

Country	Count
Cyprus	1
Czech Republic	2
Denmark	12
Dominican Republic	4
Ecuador	4
Egypt	14
El Salvador	1
Eritrea	1
Estonia	2
Ethiopia	33
Fiji	1
Finland	4
France	129
French Guiana	1
Gambia, The	2
Gaza Strip	1
Georgia	5
Germany	39
Ghana	16
Greece	5
Guadeloupe	1
Guatemala	4
Guinea	2
Hong Kong	1
Hungary	5

Country	Count
India	153
Indonesia	20
Iran	2
Iraq	4
Ireland	2
Israel	3
Italy	41
Jamaica	1
Japan	42
Jordan	2
Kazakhstan	3
Kenya	22
Korea, South	13
Kyrgyzstan	8
Laos	3
Latvia	2
Lebanon	27
Lesotho	1
Liberia	1
Lithuania	4
Macedonia	2
Madagascar	8
Malawi	8
Malaysia	3
Mali	3

Country	Count
Mauritania	3
Mexico	25
Moldova	4
Mongolia	3
Morocco	9
Mozambique	6
Nepal	13
Netherlands	19
New Zealand	10
Nicaragua	3
Niger	3
Nigeria	16
Norway	4
Pakistan	39
Papua New Guinea	2
Peru	14
Philippines	12
Poland	6
Portugal	8
Romania	11
Russia	21
Rwanda	7
Saudi Arabia	2
Senegal	17
Serbia	11

Country	Count
Sierra Leone	1
Singapore	10
Slovakia	1
Slovenia	1
South Africa	11
Spain	43
Sri Lanka	13
Sudan	1
Swaziland	1
Sweden	9
Switzerland	8
Tajikistan	4
Tanzania	8
Thailand	7
Togo	3
Trinidad and Tobago	2
Tunisia	11
Turkey	20
Uganda	20
Ukraine	16
United Arab Emirates	2
United Kingdom	81
United States	290
Uruguay	2
Uzbekistan	6
Venezuela	3
Vietnam	35
West Bank	3
Yemen	2
Zambia	6
Zimbabwe	9

Table A4: Count of World Bank TTLs by Nationality. Representatives with multiple nationalities are counted twice – once for each country.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Assigned	4599709	0.003	0.05	0	1
G5 nationality	4599709	0.17	0.38	0	1
G5 education	4599709	0.40	0.49	0	1
Elite education	4599709	0.08	0.28	0	1
Female	4071809	0.31	0.46	0.00	1.00
Projects completed	4599709	2.38	2.55	0	22
Co-nationality	4071809	0.0002	0.02	0.00	1.00
Gender empowerment	4446140	0.70	0.14	0.04	0.95
GDPPC	4569468	3002.04	3249.91	141.91	32882.19

Table A5: Descriptive Statistics (Data Set for Main World Bank Analysis).

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Assigned	162926	0.02	0.13	0	1
Fortune 500	162926	0.07	0.26	0	1
G5 nationality	162926	0.39	0.49	0	1
G5 education	162926	0.58	0.49	0	1
Elite education	162926	0.15	0.36	0	1
Female	162390	0.13	0.34	0.00	1.00
Co-nationality	162390	0.002	0.05	0.00	1.00
Gender empowerment	150238	0.72	0.14	0.13	0.95
GDPPC	148534	4217.17	7140.50	235.43	67359.79

Table A6: Descriptive Statistics (Data Set for Main IMF Analysis).

B. Additional Analysis

	Dependent variable:			
	Staff assignment			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	−0.001***			
	(0.0004)			
Gender empowerment	−0.0005**			
	(0.0002)			
G5 nationality		0.0004		
		(0.001)		
Elite education			−0.003***	
			(0.001)	
Fortune 500				−0.001
				(0.002)
Log GDPPC		0.00002	−0.00003	0.00001
		(0.00004)	(0.00003)	(0.00003)
Co-nationality	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Female X Gender empowerment	0.001***			
	(0.001)			
G5 nationality X Log GDPPC		−0.0001		
		(0.0001)		
Elite education X Log GDPPC			0.0004***	
			(0.0001)	
Fortune 500 X Log GDPPC				0.0001
				(0.0002)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,357,486	4,478,181	4,478,181	4,478,181
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A7: Backgrounds and Staff Assignment (World Bank). Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:			
	Staff assignment			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	-0.016^{***}			
	(0.004)			
Gender empowerment	-0.001			
	(0.003)			
G5 nationality		-0.018^{***}		
		(0.005)		
Elite education			-0.033^{***}	
			(0.007)	
Fortune 500				-0.050^{***}
				(0.011)
Log GDPPC		-0.001	-0.0003	-0.0001
		(0.0004)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Co-nationality	0.057^{***}	0.056^{***}	0.056^{***}	0.056^{***}
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Female X Gender empowerment	0.023^{***}			
	(0.006)			
G5 nationality X Log GDPPC		0.002^{***}		
		(0.001)		
Elite education X Log GDPPC			0.004^{***}	
			(0.001)	
Fortune 500 X Log GDPPC				0.007^{***}
				(0.002)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	149,710	148,039	148,039	148,039
Adjusted R^2	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A8: Backgrounds and Staff Assignment (IMF). Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:		
	Staff assignment		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
G5 nationality	0.00003		
	(0.0001)		
Elite education		0.00004	
		(0.0001)	
Fortune 500			−0.00003
			(0.0003)
Log GDPPC	0.0001*	−0.00000	0.00004
	(0.00004)	(0.00004)	(0.00003)
Co-nationality	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
G5 nationality X Exit index	−0.0001		
	(0.0001)		
Elite education X Exit index		0.0004***	
		(0.0001)	
Fortune 500 X Exit index			−0.0001
			(0.0001)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,478,181	4,478,181	4,478,181
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A9: Exit Options Robustness Check. In this specification, we swap our measure of economic power (per capita GDP) for an index that measures the extent to which a country can access exit options in a given year. The measure is comprised of per capita GDP, membership in alternative multilateral development institutions (data from Clark 2021), and interest paid on IBRD loans. Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:		
	Staff assignment		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
G5 nationality	−0.00003		
	(0.001)		
Elite education		0.0001	
		(0.001)	
Fortune 500			0.001
			(0.001)
Exit index	0.00004	0.0002	0.001**
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0003)
Co-nationality	0.056***	0.055***	0.056***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
G5 nationality X Exit index	0.002***		
	(0.001)		
Elite education X Exit index		0.004***	
		(0.001)	
Fortune 500 X Exit index			0.001
			(0.001)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	137,872	137,872	137,872
Adjusted R^2	0.014	0.014	0.014
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A10: Exit Options Robustness Check (IMF). Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:			
	Staff assignment			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	-0.001^{***}			
	(0.0004)			
Gender empowerment	-0.001^{***}			
	(0.0004)			
G5 nationality		0.0003		
		(0.001)		
Elite education			-0.003^{***}	
			(0.001)	
Fortune 500				-0.001
				(0.002)
Log GDPPC		-0.0003^{***}	-0.0003^{***}	-0.0003^{***}
		(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Co-nationality	0.103^{***}	0.103^{***}	0.103^{***}	0.103^{***}
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Projects closed	-0.0001	-0.001^{***}	-0.001^{***}	-0.001^{***}
	(0.0001)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Projects closed X Log GDPPC		0.0001^{***}	0.0001^{***}	0.0001^{***}
		(0.00003)	(0.00003)	(0.00003)
Female X Gender empowerment	0.002^{***}			
	(0.001)			
Projects closed X Gender empowerment	0.0003^{**}			
	(0.0001)			
G5 nationality X Log GDPPC		-0.00003		
		(0.0001)		
Elite education X Log GDPPC			0.0004^{***}	
			(0.0001)	
Fortune 500 X Log GDPPC				0.0001
				(0.0002)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,357,486	4,478,181	4,478,181	4,478,181
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A11: Quality Control Robustness Check (World Bank). Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:			
	Staff assignment			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	−0.001			
	(0.0005)			
Gender empowerment	−0.001			
	(0.004)			
G5 nationality		0.0003		
		(0.001)		
Elite education			−0.004***	
			(0.001)	
Fortune 500				−0.0003
				(0.002)
Log GDPPC		−0.001	−0.001	−0.001
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Co-nationality	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Performance	−0.00003	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Performance X Log GDPPC		0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
		(0.0002)	(0.0002)	(0.0002)
Female X Gender empowerment	0.001			
	(0.001)			
Performance X Gender empowerment	0.0001			
	(0.001)			
G5 nationality X Log GDPPC		−0.00005		
		(0.0002)		
Elite education X Log GDPPC			0.0005***	
			(0.0002)	
Fortune 500 X Log GDPPC				0.00005
				(0.0003)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,008,298	3,078,453	3,078,453	3,078,453
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A12: Performance Control Robustness Check (World Bank). Performance data at the project-level comes from Michael (2024). For each bureaucrat, we aggregate their average performance across all projects on which they are TTL. Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:
	Staff assignment
Projects closed	−0.001***
	(0.0002)
Log GDPPC	−0.0003***
	(0.0001)
Co-nationality	0.103***
	(0.013)
Projects closed X Log GDPPC	0.0001***
	(0.00003)
Year fixed effects	Yes
Observations	4,478,181
Adjusted R^2	0.001
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A13: Swap Quality for Prestige Robustness Check (World Bank). In this test, we swap a measure of bureaucratic quality (number of prior projects closed) for our identity measures. Results are similar. Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:
	Staff assignment
Performance	−0.001
	(0.001)
Log GDPPC	−0.001
	(0.001)
Co-nationality	0.103***
	(0.011)
Performance X Log GDPPC	0.0001
	(0.0002)
Year fixed effects	Yes
Observations	3,078,453
Adjusted R^2	0.001
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A14: Swap Performance for Prestige Robustness Check (World Bank). In this test, we swap a measure of bureaucratic performance from Michael (2024) for our identity measures. Results are similar. Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:		
	Staff assignment		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
G5 nationality	0.0003		
	(0.0003)		
Elite education		0.001**	
		(0.001)	
Fortune 500			0.0003
			(0.001)
Hardship pay rate	0.00000	0.00000	−0.00000
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Co-nationality	0.100***	0.100***	0.100***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
G5 nationality X Hardship pay rate	−0.00002		
	(0.00001)		
Elite education X Hardship pay rate		−0.0001**	
		(0.00002)	
Fortune 500 X Hardship pay rate			−0.00002
			(0.00002)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	4,167,047	4,167,047	4,167,047
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A15: Hardship pay rate robustness check (World Bank). We swap per capita GDP for hardship pay rate using data from the State Department — see Gray (2018). Robust standard errors clustered at country level. Model type is LPM.

	Dependent variable:		
	Staff assignment		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
G5 nationality	0.005***		
	(0.002)		
Elite education		0.016***	
		(0.003)	
Fortune 500			0.009**
			(0.004)
Hardship pay rate	0.0001*	0.0001**	0.00003
	(0.0001)	(0.00005)	(0.00004)
Co-nationality	0.053***	0.052***	0.052***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
G5 nationality X Hardship pay rate	−0.0003***		
	(0.0001)		
Elite education X Hardship pay rate		−0.001***	
		(0.0001)	
Fortune 500 X Hardship pay rate			−0.001***
			(0.0002)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	125,044	125,044	125,044
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

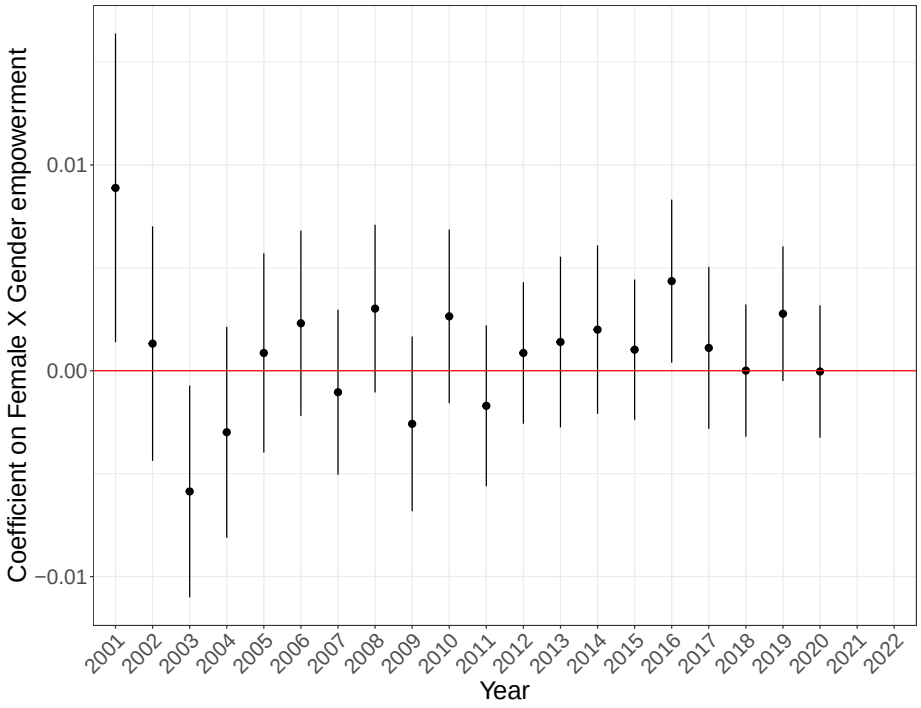
Table A16: Hardship pay rate robustness check (IMF). We swap per capita GDP for hardship pay rate using data from the State Department — see Gray (2018). Robust standard errors clustered at country level. Model type is LPM.

	Dependent variable:			
	Staff assignment			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	-0.001^{***}			
	(0.0004)			
Gender empowerment	-0.0001			
	(0.0003)			
G5 nationality		-0.0001		
		(0.001)		
Elite education			-0.004^{***}	
			(0.001)	
Fortune 500				-0.002
				(0.002)
Log GDPPC		0.00001	-0.00004	0.00001
		(0.00005)	(0.00004)	(0.00004)
Co-nationality	0.080^{***}	0.081^{***}	0.080^{***}	0.080^{***}
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Female X Gender empowerment	0.002^{***}			
	(0.001)			
G5 nationality X Log GDPPC		0.00001		
		(0.0001)		
Elite education X Log GDPPC			0.0005^{***}	
			(0.0001)	
Fortune 500 X Log GDPPC				0.0002
				(0.0003)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,357,395	3,448,433	3,448,433	3,448,433
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

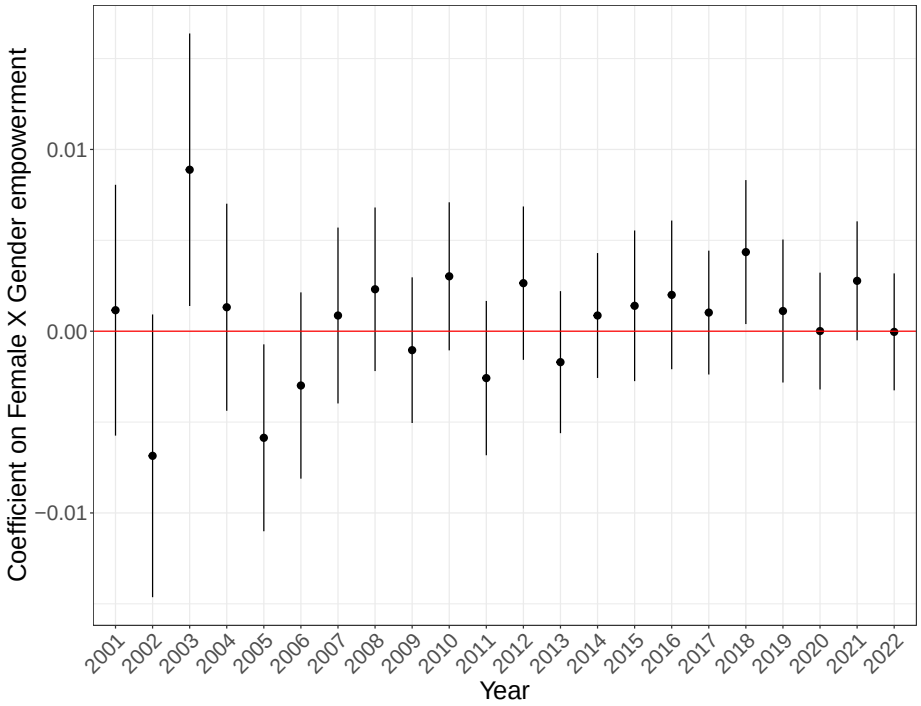
Table A17: TTLs Present in Multiple Countries Robustness Check. Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM. We restrict the World Bank sample to TTLs that appear in more than one country (i.e., we eliminate contract workers bound to one country).

	Dependent variable:			
	Staff assignment			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Female	−0.028***			
	(0.009)			
Gender empowerment	−0.003			
	(0.004)			
G5 nationality		−0.006		
		(0.007)		
Elite education			−0.033***	
			(0.009)	
Fortune 500				−0.049***
				(0.014)
Log GDPPC		0.00004	−0.0003	−0.0002
		(0.001)	(0.0005)	(0.0004)
Co-nationality	0.085***	0.080***	0.080***	0.080***
	(0.021)	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.020)
Female X Gender empowerment	0.041***			
	(0.012)			
G5 nationality X Log GDPPC		0.001		
		(0.001)		
Elite education X Log GDPPC			0.004***	
			(0.001)	
Fortune 500 X Log GDPPC				0.007***
				(0.002)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	84,967	82,642	82,642	82,642
Adjusted R^2	0.015	0.013	0.013	0.013
Note:				*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A18: RRs Present in Multiple Countries Robustness Check. Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM. We restrict the IMF sample to RRs that appear in more than one country (i.e., we eliminate contract workers bound to one country).

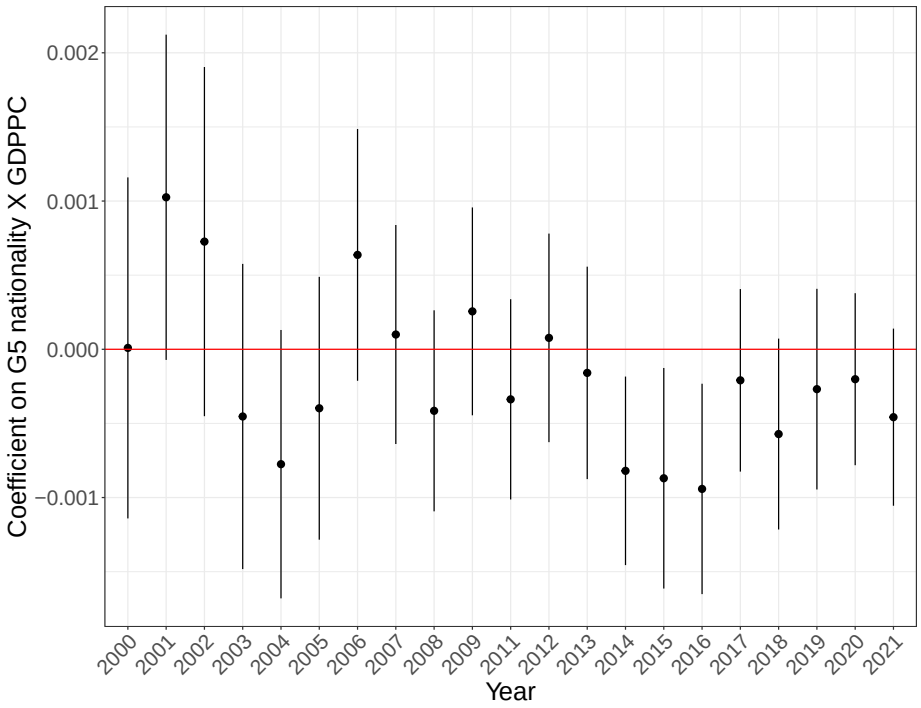


(a) World Bank

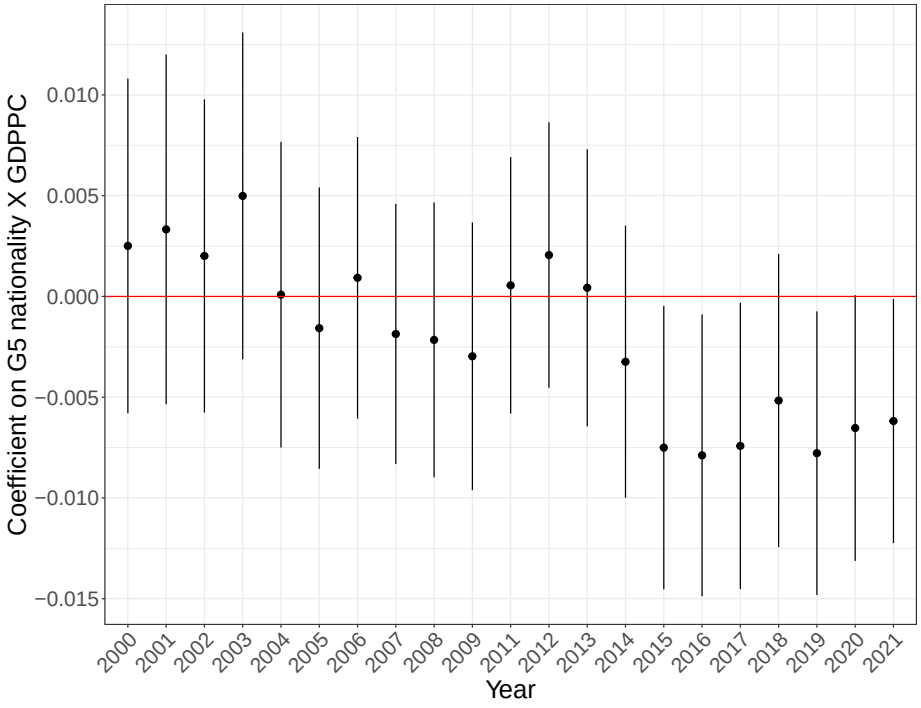


(b) IMF

Figure A2: Marginal Effects of Female X Women's Empowerment Over Time. Reference year is 2010 for IMF and 2000 for World Bank.

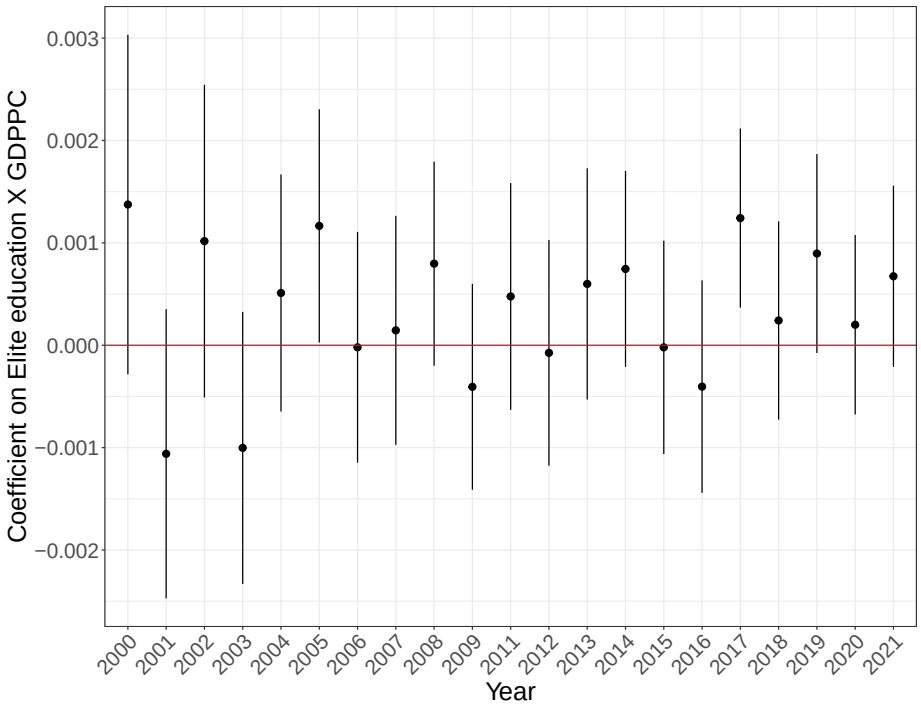


(a) World Bank

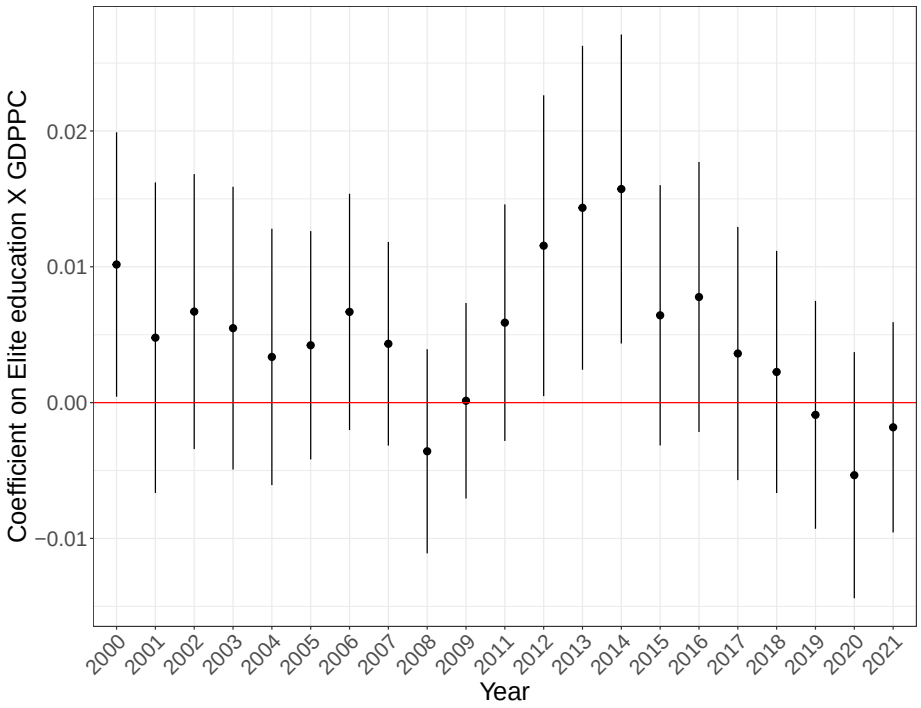


(b) IMF

Figure A3: Marginal Effects of G5 nationality X GDPPC Over Time. Reference year is 2010.

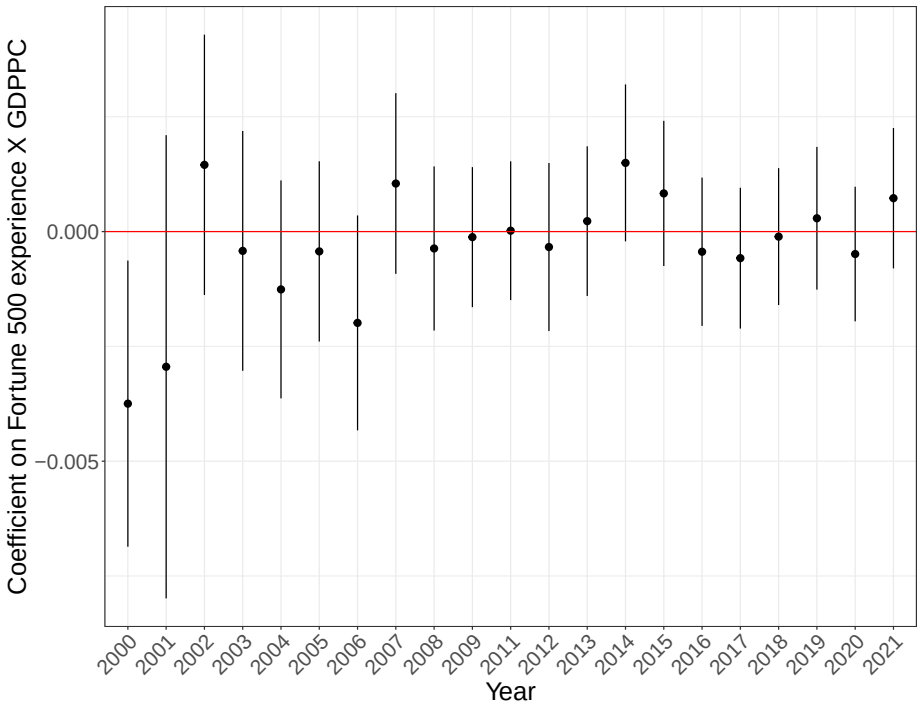


(a) World Bank

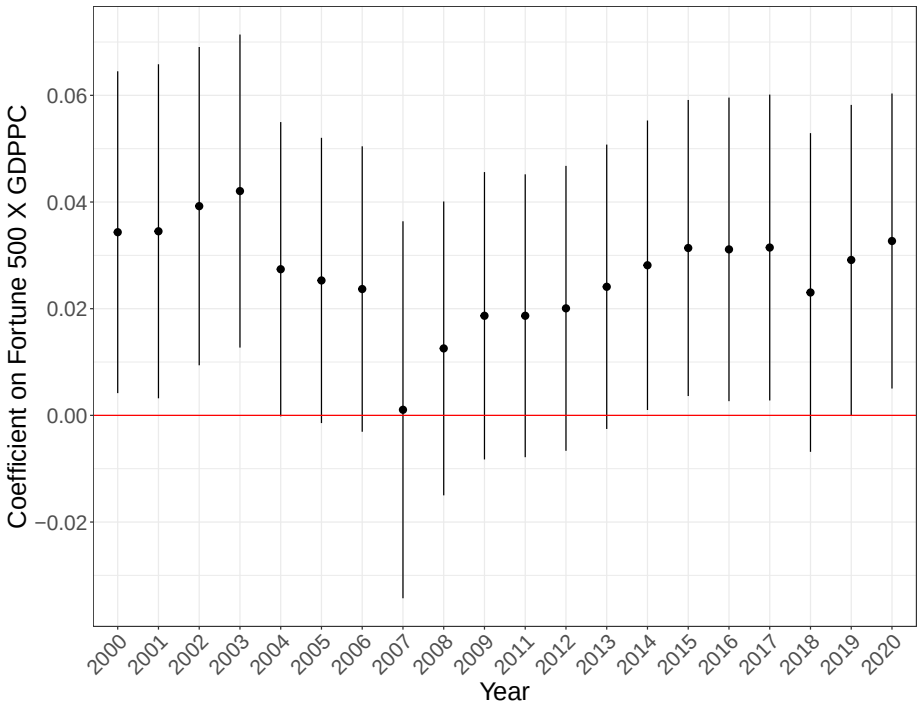


(b) IMF

Figure A4: Marginal Effects of Elite education X GDPPC Over Time. Reference year is 2010.



(a) World Bank



(b) IMF

Figure A5: Marginal Effects of Fortune 500 X GDPPC Over Time. Reference year is 2010.

	Dependent variable:					
	Staff assignment					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
G5 nationality	0.0003	0.00003				
	(0.0004)	(0.0001)				
Elite education			−0.0001	0.00003		
			(0.001)	(0.0001)		
Fortune 500					−0.001	−0.00001
					(0.001)	(0.0003)
UN voting (ideal pt dist from US)						
	(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)	
UNSC member		0.0001		0.0001		0.0002**
		(0.0001)		(0.0001)		(0.0001)
Co-nationality	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***	0.103***
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
G5 nationality X UN voting (ideal pt dist from US)	−0.0004					
	(0.001)					
Elite education X UN voting (ideal pt dist from US)		0.0002				
		(0.0004)				
Fortune 500 X UN voting (ideal pt dist from US)			0.0001			
			(0.001)			
G5 nationality X UNSC member				0.0005		
				(0.001)		
Elite education X UNSC member					0.001	
					(0.001)	
Fortune 500 X UNSC member						−0.0003
						(0.001)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Observations	4,388,752	4,507,813	4,388,752	4,507,813	4,388,752	4,507,813
Adjusted R^2	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Note:						*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A19: Alternate Power Measures Robustness Check (World Bank). Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

	Dependent variable:					
	Staff assignment					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
G5 nationality	0.003	0.001*				
	(0.006)	(0.001)				
Elite education			0.009	0.00003		
			(0.007)	(0.001)		
Fortune 500					0.007	0.005***
					(0.012)	(0.001)
UN voting (ideal pt dist from US)	−3.622***		−3.629***		−3.628***	
	(0.011)		(0.005)		(0.006)	
UNSC member		−0.001		−0.001		−0.001
		(0.002)		(0.002)		(0.002)
Co-nationality	0.058***	0.056***	0.058***	0.055***	0.058***	0.056***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.013)
G5 nationality X UN voting (ideal pt dist from US)	−0.005					
	(0.007)					
Elite education X UN voting (ideal pt dist from US)		0.001				
		(0.004)				
Fortune 500 X UN voting (ideal pt dist from US)			−0.010			
			(0.009)			
G5 nationality X UNSC member				0.0005		
				(0.005)		
Elite education X UNSC member					−0.009	
					(0.015)	
Fortune 500 X UNSC member						0.003
						(0.010)
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Observations	127,467	162,390	127,467	162,390	127,467	162,390
Adjusted R^2	0.014	0.013	0.014	0.013	0.014	0.013
Note:						*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table A20: Alternate Power Measures Robustness Check (IMF). Robust standard errors are clustered at the country-level. Models are LPM.

C. Research Ethics

This research conforms to all principles contained within the APSA *Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research*. Our data on bureaucrat backgrounds and career paths, which initially included individuals' names and photographs, is unavoidably identifiable. All such data were acquired from public sources, including bureaucrats' publication of their own information on LinkedIn, or information posted on the World Bank and IMF websites. Our data covers only public officials that were employed as Task Team Leaders at the World Bank and as Resident Representatives at the IMF 2000-2023. While we plan to make the data available to other researchers, we will do so on request to avoid posting the data publicly. This is in order to protect the staff members' personal information which, while drawn from public sources, is not otherwise connected in the way we do. We further conducted semi-structured interviews with TTLs and Resident Representatives. When quoting from said interviews, we anonymize the identities of the officials in line with their wishes. This research was deemed exempt by the Institutional Review Board at [[UNIVERSITY REDACTED]].

D. Formal Model

D.1. Model Setup

The model features three actors: an *international organization* (I), a *recipient country* (R), and an *agent of the IO* (A). At the beginning of the game, I must assign an agent A to collaborate on a project, such as a loan or development grant, with R. If R agrees to work with I, A and R will each invest costly effort in the project on behalf of their institutions. I's interest is to assign an agent who will invest sufficient effort so as to convince R to do the same, but not so much that the effort is overly costly to I.

Game Play:

1. I assigns an agent A with prestige $p > 0$.
    - I may or may not have knowledge of A's quality $q > 0$.
2. R accepts or rejects the relationship.
    - If R rejects, the game is over. If R accepts, the game continues to Steps 3 and 4.
3. R invests reforms r.
4. A invests effort e.

Utilities:

$$U_I = \begin{cases} er - \frac{e^2}{2v} & \text{if } R \text{ accepts} \\ 0 & \text{if } R \text{ rejects} \end{cases}$$

$$U_R = \begin{cases} \frac{er}{2} - \frac{r^3}{3} & \text{if } R \text{ accepts} \\ x & \text{if } R \text{ rejects} \end{cases}$$

$$U_A = \begin{cases} er - \frac{e^2}{2q} & \text{if } R \text{ accepts} \\ 0 & \text{if } R \text{ rejects} \end{cases}$$

Exogenous Parameters:

- $v > 0$: value of R's project to I
- $x > 0$: value of exit option to R

The efforts that R and A expend on the project are R's effort r may represent reforms or other efforts that a recipient country makes either as a condition of the agreement or in order to make the project successful. A's effort e may represent the resources that an IO's resident representative or task team leader can marshal from the IO on behalf of the project. The success of the project is a product of the efforts of the two actors, and the

efforts are complementary—the more one partner invests, the greater the payoff of the other's investment. The costs, meanwhile, accumulate exponentially: both actors can make "low-hanging fruit" efforts with relative ease, but the efforts become more and more costly the more effort is invested. This means that there should be an optimal investment when the marginal costs begin to match the marginal benefits. A's effort, importantly, depends on their underlying quality (q), representing their ability to marshal resources on behalf of the IO to support the project. The higher A's quality, the easier it is for them to bring resources to bear—especially if R has already invested extensive effort in the project which make further efforts fruitful (i.e. r is high). While A and I have similar interests—both would like the project to be successful and not overly costly—they differ on how much they weigh the costs. While A's costs depend on their quality, I's costs depend on how much value I places on the project's success (v). The higher this value, the more cost I is willing to endure, and therefore the higher effort from A they will engineer.

I's choice of agent hinges on the agent's prestige p. This prestige reflects the visible signs of the agent's ability—features like a G5 nationality, degrees from prestigious institutions, or male gender. This prestige matters insofar as I and R believe that it is an indicator of the agent's underlying quality (q). If R sees a p which suggests the agent is of a high quality, they will be more willing to invest in reforms and other efforts, knowing their efforts will be rewarded by A. I, therefore, would like to choose an agent who is prestigious enough to coax valuable effort out of R, but not one whose quality is so high that A's effort will be inordinately costly. The results of the model, therefore, depend critically on how much information I and R have about A's underlying quality given their level of prestige. We investigate several different versions of the model with different assumptions about information.

One other element that all actors must consider is R's exit option. If R does not anticipate that the value of the project will exceed the value of the outside option x, they will opt out of the project entirely. This value could represent the country choosing to take development into their own hands or to accept a competing loan/grant offer from another IO or donor country. The more competitive the donor market, the higher x will be. This sets an alternative constraint on I's choice of agent. I must choose an agent whose prestige indicates that R would be better off accepting I's project rather than a competing offer.

D.2. Solution

Case A: Perfect Information ($p = q$)

The simplest case is if both the international organization and recipient country have perfect information about the quality of the agent given their prestige—in other words, if $p = q$. If this is the case, the solution is relatively straightforward from backwards induction.

Step 4. A's optimal effort needs to maximize their utility given their quality and R's effort. The utility function is concave for values of $q > 0$ and $r \geq 0$, so there will be a single

maximum.

$$U_A = er - \frac{e^2}{2q}$$
$$\frac{dU_A}{de} = r - \frac{e^*}{q} = 0$$
$$e^* = qr$$

Step 3. Assuming R accepts the offer, they will similarly have an optimal reform effort that maximizes their utility given $p = q$.

$$U_R = \frac{e^* r^*}{2} - \frac{r^{*3}}{3}$$
$$\frac{dU_R}{dr} = pr^* - r^{*2} = 0$$
$$r^* = p$$

Step 2. Prior to this, R must additionally anticipate that this payoff will be great enough to outweigh their outside option, which puts an additional minimum on p.

$$\frac{e^* r^*}{2} - \frac{r^{*3}}{3} \geq x$$
$$\frac{p^3}{2} - \frac{p^3}{3} \geq x$$
$$p \geq (6x)^{\frac{1}{3}}$$

Step 1. I must therefore set p subject to two constraints. First, the minimum p necessary to attract R's compliance ($p = (6x)^{\frac{1}{3}}$) must at least bring a utility greater than zero for I.

$$U_I = e^* r^* - \frac{e^{*2}}{2v} \geq 0$$
$$p^3 - \frac{p^4}{2v} \geq 0$$
$$p^3 \geq \frac{p^4}{2v}$$
$$v \geq \frac{p}{2}$$
$$v \geq \frac{1}{2}(6x)^{\frac{1}{3}}$$

Assuming this is true, I either wants to set A's prestige / quality to maximize their own utility or set it at this alternative minimum if the minimum is higher than their otherwise

optimal choice of agent.

$$\begin{aligned} U_I &= e^* r^* - \frac{e^{*2}}{2v} \\ &= p^3 - \frac{p^4}{2v} \\ \frac{dU_I}{dp} = 3p^{*2} - \frac{2p^{*3}}{v} &= 0 \\ 3p^{*2} &= \frac{2p^{*3}}{v} \\ p^* &= \frac{3}{2}v \\ p^* &= \max\{\frac{3}{2}v, (6x)^{\frac{1}{3}}\} \end{aligned}$$

Case B: Symmetric Imperfect Information ($p = E[q]$)

A similar case is if the international organization and recipient country have limited but identical information about the quality of A. That is, I assigns A based on the prestige p, which in turn is correlated with q. The easiest way to represent this would be to have p represent the expectation of q, with some error on either side. Regardless of how the error is distributed, the logic remains similar to the first case.

Step 4. Identical to Case A.

Step 3. Assuming that the uncertainty is equally distributed around p, it should also be true that the r^* that maximizes $E[U_R(r,p)]$ is also the q^* that maximizes $U_R(r,E[q])$. For example, if q is distributed $U[p-\sigma, p+\sigma]$, then the following would be true.

$$\begin{aligned} E[U_A(p)] &= \int_{p-\sigma}^{p+\sigma} \frac{1}{2}qr^2 - \frac{1}{3}qr^3 dq \\ &= \frac{1}{4}r^2(p+\sigma)^2 - \frac{1}{3}r^3(p+\sigma) - [\frac{1}{4}r^2(p-\sigma)^2 - \frac{1}{3}r^3(p-\sigma)] \\ &= \sigma p r^2 - \frac{2}{3}\sigma r^3 \\ \frac{dE[U_A]}{dr} = 2\sigma p r^* - 2\sigma r^{*2} &= 0 \\ r^* &= p \end{aligned}$$

Step 2. The same principle holds true on the prior step. As long as the

$$p \geq (6x)^{\frac{1}{3}}$$

Step 1. The same principle holds true on the prior step: the p^* that maximizes $E[U_R(r,q)]$ is also the q^* that maximizes $U_R(r,E[q])$. This means that the constraint is very similar to the perfect information case.

$$p^* = \max\{\frac{3}{2}v, (6x)^{\frac{1}{3}}\}$$

Case C: Asymmetric Information

A third case is one in which I can select A knowing both p and q and R does not assume that p is an indication of q. This means that I can select a behavior in Step 4 without any way to credibly convey that information to R, which effectively unravels I's ability to credibly commit to investment on the back end.

Step 4. Same as Case A.

Step 3 and Step 1. These responses effectively work as simultaneous decisions.

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{dU_R}{dr} = \frac{e}{2} - r^2 &= 0 \\
r^* &= (\frac{e}{2})^{\frac{1}{2}} \\
\frac{dU_I}{de} = r - \frac{e}{v} &= 0 \\
e^* &= rv \\
e^* &= v(\frac{e^*}{2})^{\frac{1}{2}} \\
e^{*2} &= \frac{1}{2}v^2 e \\
e^* &= \frac{1}{2}v^2 \\
r^* &= \frac{1}{2}v \\
q^* &= v
\end{aligned}$$

In other words, I chooses an agent A who acts exactly as they would in the same situation, which dramatically reduces R's willingness to put in costly effort. The choice of p plays no role in the equilibrium because it does not affect anyone's behavior or utilities.

Case D: Biased Perception

The last case is one in which I can select A knowing both p and q, but R incorrectly believes that prestige is a credible signal of quality (i.e. $p = E[q]$). Though this is represented in this

case as I having perfect information and R having no information, this gives intuition for cases of biased perception in general, with p representing the source of biased perception and q representing I's (possibly also biased or at least only partial) knowledge of the agent's quality.

Step 4. Same as Case A.

Steps 3 and 2. Same as Case A. R acts as if $p = q$.

Step 1. I chooses a q so that A acts perfectly according to I's interest.

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dU_I}{de} = r - \frac{e}{v} &= 0 \\ e^* &= rv \\ qr &= rv \\ q &= v \end{aligned}$$

In this case, however, I can independently choose an agent with any value of p.

$$\begin{aligned} U_I &= er - \frac{e^2}{2v} \\ &= (rv)r - \frac{(rv)^2}{2v} \\ &= \frac{1}{2}vp^2 \end{aligned}$$

I's utility is monotonically increasing in p, so I has no reason to limit p except because of budget constraints or some factor that specifically ties the value of p to that of q. I's interest is to assign an agent whose actual quality is low ($q = v$) but whose prestige is arbitrarily high. The incentive to assign a high-prestige agent, moreover, increases in the value of the project (v).

E. Interviews

E.1. Recruitment Email

Dear [NAME],

We are academic researchers who study the [International Monetary Fund/World Bank]. We are currently working to understand the role of [Resident Representatives/Task Team Leaders] in designing and implementing [IMF/World Bank] programs. Would you have about 30 minutes to speak with one of us by Zoom?

In researching these institutions, we are committed to respecting your and your colleagues' valuable time. You are one of only a handful of individuals we have contacted,

and we will end this phase of our research as soon as we are confident in our understanding of this process. We would greatly appreciate your expertise so that we can model this policymaking process as accurately as possible.

We will solicit and honor any preferences you have regarding anonymity and confidentiality. There is no need for us to cite you by name. These interviews will primarily provide us with background information.

Please let us know if you would be willing to speak with us. Thanks for your consideration.

Best,

Richard Clark (University of Notre Dame) Lindsay Dolan (Wesleyan University)

E.2. Interview Questions

- We understand you had an opportunity to express some preferences about your assignments. What attributes did you prefer in a country assignment? Were certain countries easier or harder to work with?

- Do you think gender, educational background, or nationality play a role in any of this — e.g., a staff member's assignments, the way they are treated in their job, or their policy recommendations?

- To what extent do you feel that [Resident Representatives/TTLs] are able to influence the design of [IMF/World Bank] programs (e.g., number and content of conditions, priority areas)? What about the performance of programs? (e.g., speed of economic recovery, time to project completion)?