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Why Brokers Don't Betray: Social Status and Brokerage Activity in Central Java

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During the highly contested 2011–2012 election for the local regency head (*pilkada*) in Pati, a successful trader and businessman had committed to serving as a broker (*sabet*) for one of the candidates. As a broker, Suparso (which is a surname) acts as an intermediary for a candidate and attempts to recruit support among voters for his candidate, sometimes by providing gifts and even cash payments in exchange for citizens' support on Election Day.¹ Suparso is also a leader in his community and well respected by the citizens in his village. He is often sought after by candidates running for local and even provincial elections because of his influence over voters in the Central Java regency of Pati. During the campaign, a rival candidate visited Suparso's home numerous times attempting to convince him to abandon his candidate and defect to the rival campaign's

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team (*tim sukses* or “success team”). The rival candidate made several offers that included monetary incentives greater than what Suparso was currently being paid and even, at one point, offered marriage agreements for their children. Despite these significant financial incentives, Suparso remained loyal to his original candidate. Asked why he did not switch campaigns, Suparso adamantly stated in Javanese, “*aku wis nyanggupi calon kae, yo neng wong-wong raiku kekke ning ndi*,” (roughly translated as, “I have committed to this candidate and to the people, how would I face them if I switched?”). While gaining significant financial rewards for defection, in other words, Suparso also faced the prospect of damaging his personal and business reputation within the community in which he lived.

This paper explores the common dilemma facing many Indonesian vote brokers that involves cross-pressure between significant financial (and often social) rewards to betray their candidate, on the one hand, and the social pressure to maintain their reputations as leaders within their respective communities, on the other. While defection and betrayal can be profitable for such brokers, in other words, they also can carry a heavy social cost. Based on in-depth interviews and field observations in two villages in the Central Java regencies of Pati and Demak from 2011–6, we find that personal and professional reputation, along with other forms of social pressure, act as a mechanism compelling brokers to remain loyal to a candidate once they commit to serving on that candidate’s success team. By introducing a social and cultural mechanism into explanations of brokerage activity, we seek to build upon existing theoretical frameworks that place heavy focus on economic and electoral factors.² Economic and electoral factors do indeed provide powerful incentives for brokers to betray their candidates, but brokers also act in a social setting that can sometimes create counter-incentives to remain loyal. We therefore argue that a more complete explanation of brokerage activity requires the recognition that brokerage activity cannot be differentiated from the broker’s place in society and the intersection of social norms and social relations in which they live their daily lives.

In the sections below, we provide a background on brokerage activity and the theoretical frameworks that help explain this activity in Indonesian elections. We then describe the methods used for this study, including the selection of elections, regencies, and brokers for our interviews and field observations. Then we turn to our main findings from these interviews and field observations regarding the role of social status and community reputations as a mechanism to explain why some brokers who otherwise have a strong financial incentive to defect nonetheless remain loyal to their candidate. Our analysis includes interviews with brokers, candidates, and observations from the field regarding how brokers in these areas sought to recruit support for their respective candidates. Finally, we discuss the potential implications of this research for studies of vote-buying in Indonesia and abroad.

Brokerage Activity and Vote-Buying in Indonesia

Although Indonesia is a somewhat newer democracy, having transitioned from the Suharto era in 1998, the election of village leaders can be traced back to Dutch colonial rule. In fact, the practice of vote-buying and patronage politics more broadly are thought to have begun at the village level well before Indonesia declared itself an independent state in 1945.³ One village elder in the Pati regency (who was 97 years old at the time) spoke about village elections during the Dutch colonial era and had very clear recollections of the existence of brokers and their role in these elections as mediators between the candidates and the voters.⁴ Historically, brokers used to operate as an indicator of social support for a candidate running for village head. During the early years, brokers were not hired by the candidates nor offered material incentives but instead represented factional support among the people over whom the brokers had influence.

It is difficult to trace the transition from this early form of brokerage to the rise of patronage politics, especially vote-buying, but institutional and legal changes in the years following the transition from Suharto's regime have facilitated patronage politics in elections for higher political offices. One of these changes involves the role of political parties in electoral politics. Since the 2004 elections, the Indonesian electoral system has become more candidate-centered, as those competing for elected office increasingly rely on personal support instead of acquiring support from party loyalists. Previously, candidates were chosen from party lists and thus required support from the political parties to win office. Today, candidates for local and legislative office frequently compete against members of their own party on ballot lists where voters can choose individual candidates instead of party-line voting. The candidate who wins the most votes, even if their name is not first on the list of nominees from their party, will win the legislative seat. This creates an incentive for candidates to compete for votes and, again, often find themselves in competition against members of this own party.⁵ During this period, the political parties began to disengage from mobilization efforts—including the distribution of gifts and cash to voters—which lead to a system where candidates took on the campaign responsibilities previously overseen by the parties during the 2009 elections.⁶

Today, the overwhelming majority of candidates across Indonesia rely on brokers as intermediaries between themselves and the voters.⁷ The term “broker” is similar to the management literature in which brokers operate as an independent agent used by industries.⁸ Because candidates are responsible for their own voter mobilization efforts, they often rely on teams of professional consultants that operate outside of the party structure (e.g., success teams). The necessity of campaign teams, including brokers, is not simply a matter of professionalization of candidate activity in Indonesian elections. There is also a long tradition of candidates being distant from the voters, often having never visited the villages

and cities they would represent. Thus, candidates are often distant from the local communities and social networks that influence voting behavior in Indonesia, which creates significant uncertainty among voters about the candidates' credibility and their commitment to their respective communities.⁹ This requires candidates to rely on brokers who are familiar with the villages and the voters to establish personal and emotional connections with voters in order to win their support. This is one reason why brokerage activity is far more frequent in village elections and other local elections than provincial or presidential contests.¹⁰ Finally, despite economic development and urbanization over the past several decades, most Indonesians still live in villages as opposed to larger cities.

A growing body of literature has sought to explain the activities and behavior of brokers operating within this newly expanded candidate-centered political system in Indonesia. The first serious effort to create a theoretical framework to explain brokerage activity was Aspinall's influential study about betrayal and loyalty of brokers to their candidates.¹¹ Because vote-buying is illegal in Indonesia, there are no formal legal contracts between the candidates and the brokers responsible for giving the money to voters. Thus, brokers can enrich themselves by simply keeping the money intended for citizens (what Aspinall calls "predation") or they can join a rival campaign's success team if that candidate offers better financial incentives (what Aspinall calls "defection").¹² In other situations, brokers can work simultaneously for opposing candidates and distribute money on behalf of all the candidates to voters, essentially nullifying the efforts of those campaigns.¹³

Aspinall's theoretical model explains situations in which brokers are most likely to betray their candidates (either through predation or defection) according to the electoral prospects of a candidate as well as the financial resources available to that candidate. Loyalty is most likely when the broker believes the candidate has a good chance of winning the election and when that candidate has fewer material resources to distribute to voters. Predation is most likely among resource-rich campaigns that have less chance of winning, but it can be found among resource-rich campaigns in which the candidate is likely to win. Finally, defection is most likely among resource-poor campaigns whose candidate has less chance of winning the contest (p. 561). Other research has found that candidates are deeply worried about betrayal by brokers and try to adopt methods of ensuring loyalty. One candidate, for example, in the Pati Regency hired women brokers because they were supposed to be more trustworthy.¹⁴ Other candidates in Central Java attempted to closely monitor the voter lists supplied by brokers to ensure that brokers were not including supporters of the rival campaign.¹⁵

These studies have suggested that one way for candidates to minimize the risk of defection is to target brokers who have close personal ties to the candidate or those who are community leaders. These types of brokers are generally (but not always) thought to be less likely to betray the candidate and, partly because of them not keeping the money, more effective at generating support for the candidate.

Other research draws the comparison between “profit-oriented” brokers who are more likely to betray their candidates versus “honest and loyal” brokers that “were typically those who were tied to the candidate through a party or personal relationship.”¹⁶ The predatory behavior among the “profit-driven” brokers resulted in the money not being delivered to voters, resulting in fewer votes for the candidate.

The other side of brokerage effectiveness has to do with influence that the broker wields within his/her community. “The ultimate goal was to be able to connect the candidate,” write Aspinall and Sukmajati, “at the apex of the pyramid [of success team hierarchy], to the individual voters at the household level, and to do so by way of brokers who had intimate relationships with those individuals.”¹⁷ Often candidates would recruit community leaders, including religious leaders, as brokers precisely because of those leaders’ influence within their respective communities. One study of East Java likewise found that candidates often attempted to win support among leaders of social organizations and thereby tap into social networks and the large numbers of voters that belong to them.¹⁸ These community leaders have very close relationships with the voters in their areas, and they can use this knowledge to influence voters or, at the very least, to notify the candidate of significant shifts in support within their communities.

This growing body of research about brokerage behavior points to two important points about broker loyalty. First, despite often-significant financial incentives to betray a candidate, some brokers remain loyal because of close personal (often family) ties to the candidate or the party. Such brokers could risk losing status within their party or, worse, risk losing a friendship or creating disharmony among family members by betraying the candidate. These personal costs are significant enough that, for some brokers, they outweigh the financial gains they would receive by defecting to another success team or keeping the money intended for voters. Second, brokerage activity is deeply embedded in a social and community environment. This is especially true in rural villages where, “traditional authority figures and social structures continue to wield considerable influence...with local notables being able to deliver blocs of votes in their communities.”¹⁹ Candidates seek out community leaders specifically for their influence over and close relationships with the voters whose support the candidate wants.

One aspect of brokerage activity that has received less attention, however, is the social cost of betrayal facing brokers within their local communities.²⁰ People become leaders in their community because they are respected and trusted by their neighbors and fellow members of the community. As our interviews and field observations demonstrate below, these brokers often make public pronouncements of support for a candidate well before Election Day. Some of their activity involves negotiating with candidates for community projects and even the amount of money that a candidate will provide to voters. Once a community leader has committed to one candidate, the citizens of the community will know if that leader defects to another campaign or fails to deliver the promised money to the voters.

Such dishonest behavior can carry a very high social price in the form of loss of trust within the community and even loss of business. Followers of a religious leader who demonstrates dishonest behavior, for example, might leave and join another mosque. In rural areas, business owners and religious leaders are often consulted to resolve family disputes and other social conflicts. Behavior in the political sphere that casts doubt on the person's honesty and integrity could result in a loss of social status within the community. Put simply, in several areas in Indonesia, especially villages and rural areas (where vote buying and brokerage behavior is most intense), behavior in the political sphere is not distinguishable from behavior in other areas of society. This represents a significant cost in terms of social status (and often business) to community leaders serving as brokers for political campaigns.

We would note that while much of this discussion, as well as the analysis below, focuses on vote-buying practices specifically, the social pressure and incentives also extend to other brokerage activity such as endorsing candidates and rallying supporters for the campaign. In rural areas of Central Java, a common campaign theme involves the personal qualities of the candidate, such as trustworthiness, religious devotion, and integrity. Brokers often attempt to convince voters through appeals to these personal traits and brokers can easily undermine their respect and trust within their local communities if they switch support in the middle of a campaign, especially if it appears that the broker's defection was the result of higher payment from the rival candidate.

Case Selection and Methods

Criticism has been levied at small-N case studies for purposes of testing hypotheses derived from social science theories.²¹ However, these methods also have a strength for purposes of hypothesis formation and theory building,²² and case-study methodology has become more broadly accepted and refined for these purposes.²³ This paper employs an exploratory case-study design to examine the role that social status has on brokerage activity, especially betrayal versus loyalty to a candidate. Because much of the activity involved with brokerage activity is illegal in Indonesia, it is often difficult to acquire consent from candidates and brokers to discuss their activities.

We relied upon established, long-standing connections with candidates, party leaders, and brokers in two villages located in Central Java who were open to interviews and to allowing the authors to observe their activities in their respective villages. The Dukutalit Village has approximately 3,709 residents and is located in the Juwana District within the Pati Regency. The Mranggen Village has approximately 17,524 residents and is located in the Mranggen District within the Demak Regency.²⁴ Thus, both villages are somewhat rural and both have a long history of intense patronage politics, including vote buying that involves the use of brokers.

We interviewed a total of 21 brokers who collectively worked for eight separate candidates across four election cycles in both villages. The four elections included: 2011–2 regency head election (*pilkada*); 2015 regency head election (*pilkada*); 2012 village head election (*pilkades*); 2016 village head election (*pilkades*). All eight of the candidates agreed to interviews and also to sharing information about the brokers they had hired. The 21 brokers were selected to vary according to background and social status. Eight of the brokers were community leaders with backgrounds ranging from former village leaders, religious leaders, business owners, and independently wealthy individuals. The remaining 13 brokers were ordinary citizens, most of them laborers, while approximately three to four were unemployed or otherwise did not work regular jobs. Interviews and field observations were conducted during the weeks prior to each election cycle, when brokerage activity is most intense. We also conducted informal conversations with voters in the two villages to verify that brokers had or had not shared money, the amounts of money distributed, and other information provided by the candidates and brokers.

“A Good Man in the Community”—Community Leaders and Broker Loyalty

A candidate running for office in Demak, when asked about what kind of people he desires as brokers, responded that he wanted “people who are part of a large family, who have lots of friends, and have lots of influence ...it is important that they can influence people to vote for me.” He then quickly added, “also, he must be a good man in the community ...in order to trust them so that, sure, money will be distributed [to the voters].” These two considerations—influence and honesty—were common concerns raised by candidates during the interviews about the brokers they sought for their success teams. More specifically, candidates looked for brokers who had large social networks, were influential within their communities (independent of social network size), and who had a “good” reputation within their communities. The size of the personal network was obviously a concern because it indicated more potential support for the candidate. Often brokers were sought out because they were leaders of prominent civic, social, or business organizations with large memberships. Influence was cited by most of the candidates as a potential measure of how effective the broker would be. Candidates would sometimes bypass leaders of large organizations in favor of community leaders who had smaller social networks but nonetheless wielded significant influence over those voters. This often included situations in which the relationship between the broker was overtly clientelistic, such as a business owner with several employees or local political leaders who gave government jobs to supporters as a reward for their loyalty. It also included religious leaders who could speak to the candidate’s honesty and devoutness to their religion.

Candidates also cited the broker's reputation or the amount of respect the person had among members of their local communities, including how much the community trusts the person and the degree to which they view the broker as moral and honest. While obviously this attribute is related to influence—a person who is viewed as immoral and untrustworthy will have less influence over voters—candidates talked about reputation as being different from influence. The concern about honesty and trustworthiness was more strongly related to candidates' concerns about whether the broker could be trusted to work earnestly on behalf of the candidate. Thus, the interviews with candidates strongly suggested that network size and influence were about the effectiveness of the broker to gather support while reputation was discussed more so (but not exclusively) in terms of broker loyalty.

Candidates were not only concerned about brokers keeping the money intended for voters, but also about how hard the broker would work on behalf of the candidate. Brokers will often engage in mobilization activities such as going house-to-house speaking directly with voters or organizing events that bring modest numbers of voters together so the broker can promote the candidate. For example, one broker organized a gymnastics event the week prior to the election and invited the candidate to attend. Another broker organized a *pengajian* forum (a religious studies gathering) that allowed the candidate to speak with local members about their religious practices. This was in addition to brokers visiting directly with voters and distributing money or gifts provided by the candidate. These activities highlight the social nature of brokerage activity that extends beyond vote-buying and other forms of patronage distributed to voters. Many brokers, in other words, are not merely couriers who deliver goods to the public. Rather, many brokers are also responsible for organizing community and religious activities that are used to promoting their candidates' involvement with the community and their personal attributes such as generosity and religious devotion. When selecting brokers, candidates expressed a desire to have people on their success teams who could effectively organize these types of events and who could effectively persuade voters to support the candidate.

Given this wide range of brokerage activity, many candidates selected brokers from diverse backgrounds and occupations. Two of the brokers interviewed, for instance, are religious leaders in their village and were recruited because of their connections to large religious organizations. Suparso, in contrast, is a local entrepreneur who trades produce in the marketplace and employs a large number of workers. Other brokers are prominent leaders of large youth organizations and had a large network of friends in their respective villages while another broker was a freelancer who is often hired for temporary construction projects and other light work such as delivering goods. One broker, Nunung, is a housewife and entrepreneur, but is also very active in *pengajian* forums. Candidates indicated that they sought out brokers from a wide variety of backgrounds precisely

because of the different groups of voters over whom they held influence. Having multiple surrogates promoting the candidate within various social networks expands the population of voters that the candidate can persuade, increasing their chances of winning a largest percent of the vote on Election Day.

What all of these types of brokers have in common, however, is that they are respected leaders within their communities. They have cultivated deep relationships in their villages and spent years (often decades) establishing a reputation of honesty and trustworthiness that breeds loyalty among members of their community and enhances their credibility. These brokers expressed significant concern that citizens in their villages do not distinguish between political and non-political activities. They feared that acting in a dishonest and untrustworthy manner during the election—by defecting for another campaign or renegeing on their promise to distribute patronage provided by the candidate—would lead their neighbors and friends to view them as dishonest and untrustworthy people in other aspects of their lives. Moreover, they explained that such damage to their personal reputations would have wide-ranging implications for their personal lives, potentially costing them long-term friendships, status in their respective organizations, or even losing customers for their businesses.

Some of these community leaders went to great lengths to protect their personal reputations. In most cases, this meant maintaining their reputations at the expense of financial incentives to defect to another candidate or keeping the sometimes large sums of money distributed by the candidate. Among the brokers who were also community leaders, this was not a difficult tradeoff because many of them are personally wealthy and do not need the extra money. In one case that we observed, the broker (whose surname is Sabeni) had agreed to work on his friend's success team. Sabeni was motivated by friendship and sought to elevate his status within the community, not by financial incentives. Based on promises made by the candidate, Sabeni had publicly told voters in his village that they would receive a specific amount of cash from the candidate. Sabeni had hired his own team of brokers to help distribute this money. On Election Night, however, the candidate renegeed on the promise and left Sabeni without any money to give to the voters. Sabeni paid the brokers he hired with his own money and was left to apologize to the citizens for the broken promise. The next election cycle, Sabeni worked for a different candidate and distributed his own money to voters to help restore his reputation following the broken promise. Sabeni's also ended his friendship with the previous candidate because, according to Sabeni, the candidate was not honest with him and the incident had damaged Sabeni's reputation among the community.²⁵

Surprisingly, winning the election was not an overriding concern among many of these community leaders serving as brokers. Their motivations for serving on success teams varied greatly, but a common theme was gaining social prestige or positioning themselves for future campaigns in which they could occupy more prestigious positions in the success team (which would also increase their social

prestige). This required that they maintain their reputations within the community, something that candidates indicated they valued when hiring brokers. As discussed above, Suparso believed that his commitment was not merely to the candidate but also to the community at large. He feared a loss of reputation within his community if he defected or was otherwise disloyal. Similarly, another broker surnamed Arief cited the reaction by the community if he were to defect or betray the candidate. "The people know that I committed to support this candidate," he told us, "man is based on his mouth; when he makes a promise, it is done." Another broker, Nunung, was not driven by financial motives at all. "I am just having fun, not to seek money," she said. Yet even Nunung mentioned social reputation as a reason to remain loyal, claiming "I am not seduced by the money of the candidates; I do not want to be embarrassed [by betraying the candidate]." In one instance, a broker was very anxious because the candidate was late delivering the money to him and declared in a somewhat hyperbolic manner, "I will not go home [to face the voters] without money!"

In sum, our interviews and field observations revealed a common concern among brokers who were community leaders and other prominent members of their villages about the damage that betrayal could do to their social reputations and even their businesses. The public nature of their work means that it would be obvious to the community if they engaged in disloyal behavior during an election, and the social environment in which this work occurs creates an extra cost for betrayal in the form of damage to their personal and professional reputations within the community. This makes betrayal by brokers who are community leaders less likely even in situations where the incentive structure favors disloyalty. For many brokers, put simply, the social costs outweigh the financial benefits of betrayal.²⁶ Moreover, many community leaders join a success team to raise their prestige and status within their communities, and they often do so in order to gain even more prestigious positions in future elections. An obvious betrayal, such as keeping the money or failing to work earnestly to promote their candidate, would be viewed negatively by future candidates who are seeking "a good man in the community" that they can trust to remain loyal to them throughout the campaign.

If brokers who have deep roots in their local communities, who are not motivated by financial gain, and who are concerned with maintaining their social status in their communities are less likely to betray their candidates, why would candidates not hire community leaders exclusively for their success teams? Part of the answer lies in the small population of rural villages and legislative districts in Central Java. Put simply, there are often fewer community leaders than candidates running for office. The hiring of brokers is not a strict employer–employee relationship, especially at the higher levels of the success team organization. Candidates seek out the most reputable and effective brokers and often these prospective brokers will insist on meeting a candidate (or multiple candidates) before agreeing to serve on their success team. The process can sometimes seem like the broker

is interviewing the candidate more than the reverse. Moreover, these community leaders frequently work for a single candidate at a time instead of working for multiple campaigns. Thus, the supply of quality, trustworthy brokers is often much lower than the demand for their services.

Another reason why candidates would entrust their money with less reputable brokers involves the social backgrounds of the community leaders. Religious leaders especially are sometimes reluctant to distribute money and gifts to voters because of the illegal nature of the practice. Two of the brokers that we interviewed, for example, were religious leaders. One of them, Arief, talked with voters about certain forms of patronage, such as the candidate's promise to provide resources to build a mosque in the village, but refused to give money directly to the voters. He felt that it would be considered taboo for a leader to openly engage in criminal behavior in front of his followers. The other broker, however, did distribute money directly to members of his organization but expressed worry about losing respect among those members. Thus, among the more trustworthy and reputable brokers, at least some of them are hired with the understanding that they will not be the ones distributing cash on Election Day. This was true of about half of the community leaders that we interviewed for this study. Candidates must therefore sometimes hire other, less reputable individuals to act as "couriers" to distribute the money. We found that betrayal was far more common (although not ubiquitous, as we examine in the next section) among these "non-elite" or "courier" brokers than among those who were community leaders that were more concerned with their social reputations.

"Here is a Shipwreck"—Couriers and Broker Disloyalty

The problem of broker disloyalty has been described as, "a sense that one's operatives in the neighborhoods, towns and boroughs may be parasites and traitors is omnipresent"²⁷ This perception and concern about loyalty stems from the illegal nature of vote buying in Indonesia and the expansive nature of success teams. Because the practice is illegal, there are no official contracts between the candidates and the brokers, and thus there are no legal ramifications for betrayal. A candidate who reports the "theft" of his money to police will be admitting to a criminal act himself—attempting to distribute money in exchange for people's votes. Moreover, success teams are extremely hierarchical and are often massive organizations. Especially in large rural areas (such as Central Java), it is very difficult for candidates to engage in oversight of success team members. One study found that some candidates attempt to oversee brokerage activity through supervision, even to the point of having a trusted advisor follow the broker when the money is distributed while other candidates excerpt looser control over brokers.²⁸ Less oversight, according to this study, led to greater opportunities for betrayal by brokers.

The lack of control and oversight can also be partly traced to the distant nature of some candidates who run for office in districts or villages they rarely visit. The detachment from the local community can make it difficult for these candidates to know which individuals are the most trustworthy and reputable. Moreover, as discussed in the previous section, these candidates often fail to convince the community leaders to join their teams and are thus forced to rely on other individuals. And even when they attract reputable members of the community, there are instances where the brokers (especially religious leaders) will be reluctant to distribute the money to voters. Thus, candidates are often forced to rely on individuals who have lower social status and reputations within their communities to act as “couriers” for their campaign.

In our interviews with these “non-elite” or “courier” brokers, we found a wide range of motivations and perspectives about their participation in the success teams. Some were motivated out of party loyalty or personal connections to the candidate (sometimes including clientelistic relationships), while others appeared to be predominantly motivated by the financial incentives that the candidates were offering. There was also variation in the level of concern among these “courier” brokers regarding their reputations within their local communities. Two examples of especially egregious disloyalty involve brokers surnamed Bayu and Sarmin. Bayu acted as a “double agent” by simultaneously working for two opposing candidates to distribute money on their behalf. On Election Day, Bayu only distributed the money for one of the candidates and not the other while keeping the money he was paid by both candidates for his work. The candidate that Bayu betrayed was not able to find a replacement broker at the last minute. Sarmin, on the other hand, defected from his original candidate for a rival campaign and, while he did distribute money on behalf of the rival candidate, his defection created problems for the original candidate to whom he committed. Sarmin cited the reason for his defection in simple terms—“Here is a shipwreck ...he gave me more.” A “shipwreck” is Indonesian slang for finding a large amount of money. Both brokers cited the financial incentives as reasons for their betrayal of the candidates.

Bayu and Sarmin are not leaders in their community, are not wealthy, and generally are regarded as occupying a lower social status in their village. Nor were they hired to promote the candidates through social organizations or community events. They were simply hired by the campaigns to deliver the money and were promised a salary in exchange. This “courier” type of brokers is most common at the lower levels of the success teams, especially when higher-level brokers are unwilling to distribute the money themselves. In contrast to the community leaders discussed in the previous section, Bayu and Sarmin were less concerned by the negative perceptions that their behavior created among members of the community. In fact, Bayu’s behavior did not come as a surprise to the community considering that he had a reputation for disloyal and dishonest behavior from past campaigns. Even members of his own family acknowledged this past behavior and

were aware that he was acting as a “double agent.” Bayu and Sarmin were both aware that the community would view their actions as a breach of social norms, and they were aware that there was a social expectation among their community that they should remain loyal to their original candidate. Both brokers intimated that their social and financial circumstances would not greatly suffer as a consequence of violating these social norms. Because they had little to lose socially, and much to gain financially (especially considering that their regular salaries were not very high), the benefit of defection and predation outweighed the cost in loss of social reputations that were already not very high.

While the majority of the “courier” brokers that we interviewed engaged in some form of betrayal—either defection or predation—we did find some interesting cases of loyalty to the candidate. Two of the cases involved clientelistic relationships with higher-level brokers. Brokers hired at higher levels in the success team often hire friends, family members, and employees to work under them and help distribute the money in lower level electoral districts.²⁹ Two of the “courier” brokers (surnamed Sofwan and Sobar) that we interviewed, for example, worked as laborers for two of the “community leader” brokers that we interviewed. During the election, both brokers dutifully shared the money with voters and indicated their loyalty was to their respective employers, not necessarily the candidates. Where the “courier” brokers had familiar or business relations with the higher-level “community leader” brokers, betrayals were much rarer than among “courier” brokers who had no similar relations with their superiors on the success teams or with their respective candidates. These brokers were only hired as couriers to distribute the money to voters and, because they did not have positions of high social status within their communities, had the best opportunity to keep the money for themselves or to defect to a success team that paid them a higher salary. Yet they also had to consider the social risk of harming family relationships, personal friendships, and even the prospect of harming their employment prospects as a result of such betrayal.

Conclusion

Our study of elections in two Central Java villages has examined the social setting in which brokerage activity occurs and its influence on the loyalty brokers display toward candidates during an election. The interviews and field observations from these two villages demonstrate how social reputation and the social environment can act as an intervening mechanism that, in some instances, can override the powerful financial incentives for brokers to betray their candidates (both defection and predation). In particular, community leaders who serve as brokers have an additional cost—loss of reputation and even business within their communities – to consider when deciding whether to remain loyal to the candidate who has hired them. Even among brokers hired simply as couriers to distribute the

money and who hold positions of lower social status in their communities, there are sometimes strong clientelistic relationships they must consider before defecting to another success team or keeping the money intended for voters.

In highlighting the role of the social environment in shaping brokers' loyalty, we are not minimizing nor dismissing the powerful financial incentives that can tempt brokers to betray their candidates. Aspinall's influential theory and more recent studies of brokerage activity in Indonesia represent the first serious efforts to explain broker loyalty in a systematic manner. The financial and electoral factors identified by this growing body of literature are extremely important explanations for broker loyalty. Our argument is simply that these factors interact with the social environment in ways that can sometimes create situations in which brokers who otherwise might betray their candidates nonetheless remain loyal to them. "Loyalty" in this case refers to the decision by brokers to fulfill the job they were hired to do—organize community events, persuade voters to support the candidate, distribute money to voters, and so forth. It does not necessarily indicate an altruistic or moral decision by brokers; it simply means that they have fulfilled the tasks for which they were hired by the campaign to complete. Absent their concerns about loss of social reputation (or even business), future work on upcoming campaigns, or damage to friendships and family relations, many of the "community leader" brokers might have chosen to betray their candidates.

We also found some tentative evidence that the candidate-broker relationship is more nuanced and complex than previous studies have suggested. Previous studies tend to give the impression of brokers as analogous to employees hired by the candidate to complete certain tasks. Yet the case of Sabeni, along with comments by other "community leader" brokers that we interviewed, suggests that a lot of these brokers interview the candidate as much, if not more so, than the reverse. Community leaders who agree to join a success team risk damaging their reputations within their village if the candidate breaks his promise to give money to voters or to donate to local projects. Some of these brokers would actually incur large financial losses in order to maintain their reputations within their respective communities if a candidate broke their promises to voters regarding distributing money. Thus, community leaders must also consider the trustworthiness of the candidates and their ability to deliver the goods promised to voters before agreeing to join their success teams. This represents a more complex dynamic of brokerage behavior and suggests that some types of brokers (e.g., community leaders) are selective about which success teams they join during an election cycle. Put simply, instead of simply being employees of a campaign, certain types of brokers might have much more power in the candidate-broker relationship than previously thought.

Moreover, the cases of Sofwan and Sobar further suggest that power dynamics between brokers at different layers in the success team hierarchy could be more complex and clientelistic in nature. What appears to be loyalty to the candidate by

a “courier” broker could, in some instances, actually be loyalty to an employer or a family member. This has the potential to create a compounding effect, as disloyalty by higher-level brokers results in lower-level brokers following the lead of the employer or family member who hired them. Thus, a candidate who hires brokers for higher-level positions in the success team must also be concerned about the “couriers” who were hired to work under them. Clientelistic relationships between brokers at different levels of the success team hierarchy would seem especially prone to these types of mass defections or betrayals.

Our findings also have implications for understanding patronage politics, especially vote-buying behavior, outside of Indonesia. The role of community leaders in vote buying has received some mention in studies of patronage politics in other countries. One study examined reciprocity and vote-buying in Paraguay, noting that, “politicians hire respected community leaders in each village to interact with voters to promote their candidacy and offer them money and other forms of aid in exchange for the promise of their vote.”³⁰ Likewise, vote brokers in Taiwan, “were usually recruited among individuals with significant influence within their community (such as village heads, businessmen, or teachers)—that is, among any social group able to deliver a block of votes.”³¹ This included criminal gang leaders who both had deep ties in local communities and corrupt relationships with local government that shielded them from prosecution. Thus, the use of community leaders and other prominent leaders is somewhat common in various countries experiencing patronage politics and vote buying practices. The various and sometimes conflicting incentives among brokers that are hired to promote a candidate can create different patterns of loyalty toward the candidate. Future research could examine the interplay of social and financial incentives that influence broker loyalty and the various power dynamics involved between brokers and candidates as well as between brokers of different social status and positions in campaign hierarchies.

Finally, the interviews and field observations presented above are from two villages located in two regencies in Central Java that cover four local and village elections. While the villages are fairly typical of their respective regencies and represent the two largest cultural groups in Java, the analysis presented is obviously not representative of the entire island of Java, let alone the entire nation of Indonesia. It is possible that brokerage activity varies across Indonesia in terms of its frequency and intensity as well as the different tasks that brokers are expected to perform during the campaign. Citizens might also differ in terms of social expectations in some parts of Indonesia compared to Central Java and the two villages examined in this paper. The goal of this paper is not to make sweeping declarations and generalizations about brokerage behavior across a large and diverse nation such as Indonesia. Instead, the goal is to examine the ways in which the social environment interacts with financial and electoral factors to help provide a fuller and more nuanced understanding of brokerage behavior.

NOTES

1. All of the names used in this paper are surnames. Many of the activities that brokers engage in, especially vote buying or giving cash and gifts to voters in exchange for their votes, is illegal in Indonesia. Thus, the identities of all of the brokers interviewed during the elections examined in this study, along with the candidates they worked for, are kept anonymous.

2. Edward Aspinall, "When Brokers Betray: Clientelism, Social Networks, and Electoral Politics in Indonesia," *Critical Asian Studies*, 46 (2014): 545–70.

3. The village (*desa*) is the lowest administrative area in Indonesia. Often these villages involve non-industrial, agricultural communities.

4. The earliest recollections of this village elder were that brokers originally did not give gifts to voters on behalf of the candidates. He recalled several pre-World War II elections in which brokers were hired to represent their candidates as fighters in the village center. Voters would then often support the candidate whose broker won the public fight.

5. The political parties create a list of nominees for a particular office, in other words. But voters can choose individual candidates from those lists regardless of their order on the list. Thus, a candidate whose name is fourth on their party's list of nominees will win the election if they receive the most votes among candidates on the party list (and their party received enough votes to win a seat in the legislature). This shift from "closed list proportional representation" to "open list proportional representation" means that candidates have electoral incentives to campaign for votes instead of currying favor within their party in order to appear first or second on the party's list of nominees. See Aspinall and Sukmajati for a discussion about the role of open-list proportional representation in patronage politics.

6. George T.I. Tawakkal, "Peran Partai Politik Dalam Mobilisasi Pemilih Studi Kegagalan Parpol Pada Pemilu Legislatif Di Kabupaten Demak," *Tesis Ilmu Politik Universitas Diponegoro* (2009): S2.

7. Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati, "Patronage and Clientelism in Indonesian Electoral Politics," in *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia*, ed. Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati, (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016): 1–38.

8. Rosann L. Spiro, William J. Stanton, and Gregory A. Rich, *Management of a Sales Force* (Boston: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2003).

9. Noor Rohman, "Pati, Central Java: Targets, Techniques and Meanings of Vote Buying." In *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia*, ed. Edward Apinall and Mada Sukmajati. (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016): 233–48.

10. Another reason is population size. Villages and local electoral districts (e.g., DPRD) tend to be more sparsely populated. The amount of money necessary to offer money to voters in these less populated areas—some districts only have a few thousand residents—is relatively small. Giving cash and money to millions of citizens in a large city or across a large province tends to be prohibitively expensive for candidates.

11. Aspinall, "When Brokers Betray," 547.

12. We heard one story about a broker who kept the money from one candidate for himself, defected to the opposing candidate's team, and distributed that candidate's money to voters.

13. Zusiana Elly Triantini, 2016. "Blora, Central Java: Local Brokers and Vote Buying." In *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia*, ed. Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016): 249–63.

14. Rohman, "Pati, Central Java," 236.

15. Triantini, "Blora, Central Java," 259

16. Ahmad Zainul Hamdi, "Madiun, East Java: Brokers in Territorial, Social Network and Vote-buying Strategies," in *Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia*, ed. Edward Aspinall and Mada Sukmajati. (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016): 269.

17. Aspinall and Sukmajati, "Patronage and Clientelism," 32.

18. Hamdi, "Madiun, East Java," 285–7. See also Aspinall and Sukmajati 2016 and Triantini 2016 for a discussion about social networks and brokers.

19. Aspinall and Sukmajati, "Patronage and Clientelism," 35.

20. Though, see Frederico Finan and Laura Schechter, "Vote-Buying And Reciprocity," *Econometrica* 80 (2012): 864; and also Olli Hellmann, "Electoral Reform in Asia: Institutional Engineering

against 'Money Politics,'" *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 15 (2014): 283 for exceptions in other countries.

21. Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing social inquiry: scientific inference in qualitative research* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

22. Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2005).

23. Kristin G. Esterberg, *Qualitative Methods in Social Research* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

24. The Juwana District has a population of 92,089 while the Pati Regency has a population of 1,259,551. In contrast, the Mranggen District has a population of 157,515, while the Demak Regency has a population of 1,106,328. Specific demographic information for the two villages is difficult to locate, and information from government sources is sometimes unreliable due to differences in the quality of record keeping at the village level. However, both villages reflect the religious and cultural majorities of their respective regencies with the Mranggen Village dominated by the more orthodox Satri Muslim community and the Dukalit Village dominated by the less orthodox (and somewhat syncretic) Abangan Muslim community. Satri and Abangan represent the two largest cultural/religious populations in Javanese society.

25. This situation was actually more complicated than it appears. The candidate did indeed leave Sabeni without money to distribute, and Sabeni was unable to contact the candidate on the night of the election. Sabeni believes that the candidate was bought out by his rival and betrayed him. However, another possibility based on interviews with the candidate and other brokers is that the candidate was being funded by a wealthy benefactor and the benefactor failed to deliver the money. The candidate might have felt shamed by his inability to fulfill the promise to voters and avoided talking with Sabeni about the situation. Sabeni distributed his own money the following election cycle because the candidate who hired him admitted that he did not have enough money to share with voters. Sabeni told us that he appreciated the candidate's honesty and decided to use his own finances to help fund the candidate's campaign.

26. This is not intended as a deterministic prediction about all community leader brokers. Recent studies have found instances of community leaders either betraying their candidate or failing to deliver the promised votes from their followers and supporters. Among the eight community leaders interviewed, we did not find evidence that any of them kept the money or otherwise engaged in dishonest behavior. But we are aware of cases in neighboring villages where this did occur. Our point is that we should expect community leaders to be more loyal to their candidates than brokers who are less worried about their social reputation and status within their respective communities.

27. Susan Stokes, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco, *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 20.

28. Triantini, "Blora, Central Java," 253.

29. Aspinall and Sukmajati, "Patronage and Clientelism," 34.

30. Finan and Schechter, "Vote-Buying And Reciprocity," 864.

31. Hellmann, "Electoral Reform in Asia," 283.