



Supplement to:

Kwon, Hye Won, Jani Erola. 2026. "Access to Higher Education and Support for Meritocracy: Effort, Skill, and Education as Components of Merit" Sociological Science 13: 997-1017.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS FOR KWON AND EROLA (2026)

Appendix A1. Descriptive statistics ($N = 30,135$)

Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max
Education-based meritocracy	3.58	0.90	1	5
Skill-based meritocracy	4.10	0.75	1	5
Effort-based meritocracy	3.99	0.79	1	5
Age	44.55	11.18	25	64
	(-0.00)	(11.18)	(-19.55)	(19.45)
Female	0.55	0.50	0	1
Married	0.63	0.48	0	1
College	0.20	0.40	0	1
<i>Social mobility</i>				
• Downward mobility	0.12	0.32	0	1
• No mobility	0.70	0.46	0	1
• Upward mobility	0.18	0.38	0	1
Gini index	36.46	9.59	24.8	63
	(-0.00)	(9.59)	(-11.66)	(26.54)
GDP per capita (logged)	9.91	0.84	8.54	11.28
	(-0.00)	(0.84)	(-1.36)	(1.38)
Proportion of tertiary education	26.08	13.39	3.6	60.6
	(0.00)	(13.39)	(-22.48)	(34.52)

Note. Continuous independent variables at the individual (age) and country levels (Gini index, logged GDP per capita, proportion of tertiary education) are grand-mean centered. Descriptive statistics of mean-centered variables are in parentheses.

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Appendix A2. Multilevel analysis of support for meritocracy on education and social mobility ($N = 30,135$; Country $N = 32$)

	Education-based meritocracy			Skill-based meritocracy			Effort-based meritocracy		
	M1.1	M1.2	M1.3	M2.1	M2.2	M2.3	M3.1	M3.2	M3.3
Gini index	0.016*** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.005)	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)	0.001 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)
GDP per capita (logged)	-0.092 (0.051)	-0.091 (0.051)	-0.090 (0.051)	-0.071* (0.036)	-0.071* (0.036)	-0.070 (0.036)	-0.057 (0.047)	-0.062 (0.047)	-0.060 (0.047)
Proportion of tertiary education	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Age	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)
Female (=1)	0.102*** (0.010)	0.101*** (0.010)	0.101*** (0.010)	0.004 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)	0.038*** (0.009)	0.038*** (0.009)	0.038*** (0.009)
Married (=1)	0.013 (0.011)	0.014 (0.011)	0.015 (0.011)	0.001 (0.009)	0.001 (0.009)	0.001 (0.009)	0.019* (0.010)	0.019* (0.010)	0.019* (0.010)
College (=1)	0.113*** (0.028)	0.094** (0.029)	0.093** (0.029)	0.079*** (0.015)	0.077*** (0.015)	0.076*** (0.015)	-0.064** (0.020)	-0.059** (0.020)	-0.059** (0.020)
College * Tertiary education		0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)		0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)		-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)
Subjective social mobility (Ref=No mobility)									
Downward mobility			0.023 (0.016)			0.030* (0.014)			0.033* (0.014)
Upward mobility			0.020 (0.013)			0.042*** (0.011)			0.035** (0.012)
Constant	3.501*** (0.036)	3.504*** (0.035)	3.498*** (0.035)	4.095*** (0.025)	4.095*** (0.025)	4.084*** (0.025)	3.990*** (0.032)	3.990*** (0.032)	3.980*** (0.032)
Random slope variance (College)	0.019	0.020	0.020	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.008	0.008	0.008
Random intercept variance	0.035	0.034	0.034	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.027	0.027	0.027
Residual variance	0.720	0.719	0.719	0.538	0.538	0.537	0.596	0.596	0.595
Intra-class correlation	0.047	0.045	0.045	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.044	0.044	0.044
AIC	75799.44	75787.16	75787.44	66970.12	66971.78	66959.54	70086.08	70086.5	70078.63

Note. Unstandardized coefficients appear above the standard errors in parentheses. All continuous variables are grand-mean centered.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).

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Appendix A3. A robustness check using a dummy for WEIRD countries

	Education-based meritocracy			Skill-based meritocracy			Effort-based meritocracy		
	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3	M1	M2	M3
Gini index	0.017*** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.005)	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)	0.000 (0.004)	0.000 (0.005)	0.000 (0.005)
GDP per capita (logged)	-0.047 (0.099)	-0.049 (0.099)	-0.049 (0.099)	-0.047 (0.068)	-0.047 (0.069)	-0.047 (0.069)	-0.070 (0.090)	-0.076 (0.090)	-0.075 (0.090)
Proportion of tertiary education	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.003** (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Age	0.001 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)
Female (=1)	0.102*** (0.010)	0.101*** (0.010)	0.101*** (0.010)	0.004 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)	0.038*** (0.009)	0.038*** (0.009)	0.038*** (0.009)
Married (=1)	0.013 (0.011)	0.014 (0.011)	0.015 (0.011)	0.001 (0.009)	0.001 (0.009)	0.001 (0.009)	0.019* (0.010)	0.019* (0.010)	0.019* (0.010)
College (=1)	0.113*** (0.028)	0.094** (0.029)	0.093** (0.029)	0.079*** (0.015)	0.077*** (0.015)	0.076*** (0.015)	-0.064** (0.020)	-0.059** (0.020)	-0.059** (0.020)
College * Tertiary education		0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)		0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)		-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)
Subjective social mobility (Ref=No mobility)									
Downward mobility			0.023 (0.016)			0.030* (0.014)			0.033* (0.014)
Upward mobility			0.020 (0.013)			0.042*** (0.011)			0.035** (0.012)
WEIRD countries (=1)	-0.073 (0.140)	-0.069 (0.139)	-0.068 (0.140)	-0.042 (0.097)	-0.042 (0.097)	-0.041 (0.097)	0.023 (0.127)	0.023 (0.127)	0.024 (0.127)
Constant	3.539*** (0.082)	3.540*** (0.081)	3.534*** (0.081)	4.117*** (0.057)	4.117*** (0.057)	4.106*** (0.057)	3.978*** (0.074)	3.978*** (0.074)	3.968*** (0.074)
Random slope variance (College)	0.019	0.020	0.020	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.008	0.008	0.008
Random intercept variance	0.035	0.033	0.034	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.027	0.027	0.027
Residual variance	0.720	0.719	0.719	0.538	0.538	0.537	0.596	0.596	0.595
Intra-class correlation	0.047	0.044	0.045	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.044	0.044	0.044
AIC	75801.17	75788.92	75789.21	66971.95	66973.6	66961.38	70088.05	70088.46	70080.6
Observations	30,135	30,135	30,135	30,135	30,135	30,135	30,135	30,135	30,135
Country N	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32

Note. Unstandardized coefficients appear above the standard errors in parentheses. All continuous variables are grand-mean centered.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests).