

Government Responsiveness in Developing Countries

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Abstract

When and how do governments deliver public good and service outputs in response to citizen preferences? We review a large current literature on government responsiveness, with a focus on public good and service delivery in developing countries. We identify three common types of actors present in these accounts: politicians, bureaucrats, and citizens. Much of this literature examines only interactions between dyads of these actors. Specifically, the study of electoral accountability and constituency service emphasizes relationships between citizens (or voters) and politicians. Studies of bureaucratic incentives and political oversight of bureaucrats emphasize interactions between politicians and bureaucrats. Finally, studies of bureaucratic embeddedness and citizen oversight of bureaucrats elaborate interactions between bureaucrats and citizens. We argue that an emerging literature that considers interactions between all three types of actors provides rich theoretical and empirical terrain for developing our understanding of responsiveness and accountability in low- and middle-income countries and beyond.

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When do governments deliver outputs that are responsive to citizen preferences? This question motivates a large body of literature in many contexts spanning different regime types, levels of development, and a wide array of political institutions. In this review, we focus on recent developments in the study of government responsiveness in low- and middle-income countries. While our empirical focus is circumscribed by national levels of economic development, many of the strategic interactions we highlight are relevant beyond these contexts.

Following Manin, Przeworski, and Stokes (1999: p. 9), we characterize a government as responsive if it “adopts policies that are signaled as preferred by citizens.” Consistent with this definition, we examine the conditions under which the preferences of citizen—as signaled by polls, individual, or collective actions—are reflected in policymaking. Beyond policymaking, however, we stress the importance of policy implementation in the study of government responsiveness. Particularly in settings with more limited bureaucratic or state capacity, how policies get implemented can impact a government’s ability or incentives to respond to citizen preferences.

While definitional accounts of responsiveness focus on the government and citizens, we find it useful—building on the influential framework of a long- and short-route of accountability (Kosack and Fung, 2014)—to disaggregate the “government” into two types of actors: politicians and bureaucrats. We therefore focus our discussion of government responsiveness on three classes of actors. First, politicians make policies and allocate budgets to shape government outputs. Second, citizens are viewed as the primary recipients of these outputs, generally public goods or services. In contexts with regular elections, citizens are also *voters* who collectively select politicians, thereby shaping politicians’ behavior. Third, bureaucrats are individuals who are generally supervised by, and at times hired by, politicians to produce public goods and services. In our discussions of bureaucrats, we focus most intently on the low- and mid-level bureaucrats tasked with implementing – but not making – policy.¹ These actors includes both *service administrators* and *frontline service providers*, often called street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980). Our discussion does not make distinctions within each class of actor (politicians, citizens, and bureaucrats) though we rec-

¹Much of the bureaucratic politics literature focused on the US focuses on *policymaking bureaucrats*, who generally include the top echelons of bureaucrats (see Galimard and Patty (2012) for a review).

ognize that, in some settings, differentiation of actors within these classes will generate additional insights.

We organize our discussion of responsiveness in terms of common strategic interactions between politicians, bureaucrats, and citizens. With few exceptions, existing works study subsets of these actors by elaborating the dyadic relationship between politicians and citizens (voters); politicians and bureaucrats; and bureaucrats and citizens. We therefore organize our review of the existing literature around these three “dyads” of actors. While existing work has important insights, described below, we argue that consideration of all three actors within a single framework is many a time needed for improving theory but also for reconciling some conflicting empirical findings. As such, a three-actor framework provides a fertile future research agenda, with substantial room for theoretical and empirical development. We demonstrate the utility of this approach with a discussion of recent works that integrate all three actors, including the opportunities and challenges that this charge presents.

We focus on the processes and interactions through which politicians and/or bureaucrats are more likely to implement policies congruent with citizen preferences. A necessary preliminary question is therefore “what policies do citizens prefer?” We do not thoroughly review the literature on public opinion that seeks to measure citizen preferences. However, much of the literature we describe assumes citizen preferences for public (or club) goods and services, spanning (among others) healthcare, education, security, roads, water, sanitation, electricity, and social services.

There are several reasons that these preferences are especially salient in low- and middle-income countries. First, political parties in many developing countries do not differentiate themselves programmatically (Bleck and Van de Walle, 2013). When politics is comparatively less ideological, the distribution of public goods and services across space and groups is arguably more important to citizens. Second, when government provision of services is more circumscribed, as is the case in many developing countries, citizens can be expected to prioritize improving basic service provision (such as access to clean water) to a greater extent.

Like much of the literature that we review, we assume a preference for better (or more) public

goods and services. To support this assumption, we compile survey data from Afrobarometer, Arabarometer, Asiabarometer, and LAPOP's Americasbarometer on citizen preferences. Since citizens have little reason to prefer "worse" or fewer services, we focus on the salience of these preferences. To do so, we categorize (generally) open-ended responses to citizens' "most important issue." For each respondent, we code a binary variable taking the value 1 if the citizen mentions a public service or public good and 0 otherwise. We are interested in the proportion of citizens that name one of these goods or services as their most important issue(s). Figure 1 depicts the distribution of this variable across subnational units (region, municipality etc.) in each country in our sample. Note that the regional surveys ask for different numbers of priorities, ranging from one to three. This graph uses all stated priorities. As such, the measures vary across regions (as reflected in the facet titles).

Figure 1 shows that, particularly in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East, these issues are cited by sizable shares – in some cases even a majority – of the population in many countries. These rates are lower in East Asia, where the Asiabarometer sample includes several high-income countries, such as Taiwan, Japan and Korea. There is heterogeneity in preferences within and across countries, as reflected by the density plots for each country. Notably, in many countries, substantial numbers of respondents also reported manifestations of "bad governance" (i.e., corruption, or concerns about democratic institutions) as their top issue. In the average low- or middle-income country in our sample, 33% of respondents cite public goods/services as their single most important issue while 16% cite poor governance.² In theory, "bad governance," adversely affect public service delivery outputs (Beekman, Bulte, and Nillesen, 2014).

We note that in addition to citizens' preferences there are other good reasons to focus on government's success at delivering public services. These include a normative concern – following Sen (1999) – with human development. Indeed, human development is arguably connected to both economic and political development.

As for the scope of this review, we abstract from some bodies of work that broadly relate to

²We refer to countries as low, middle or high-income based on the World Bank's classification, which is based on a measure of national income per person, or GNI per capita.

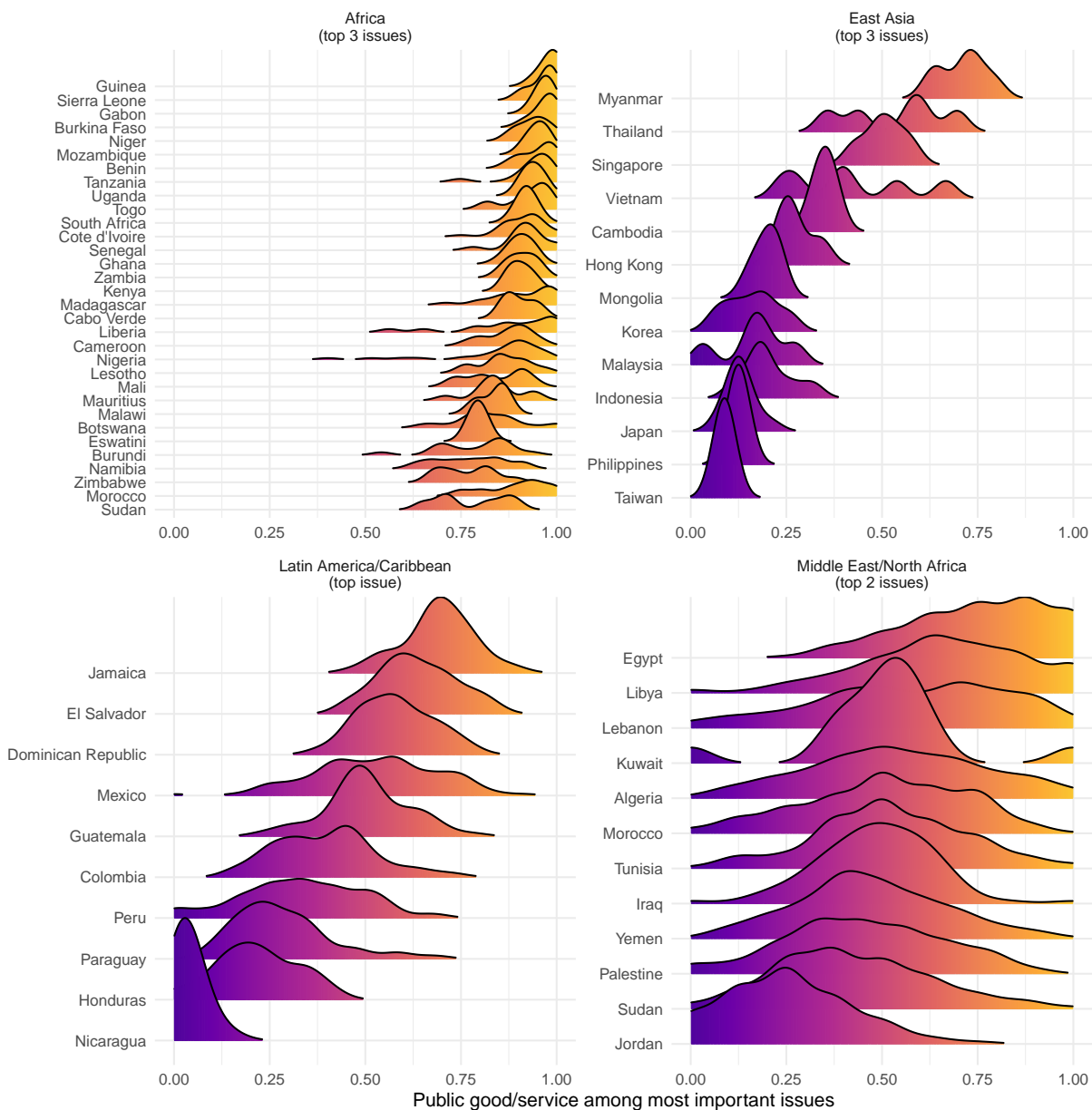


Figure 1: The salience of public goods and services as respondents' top issue. For each country, the density plot depicts variation in the proportion of citizens citing public goods/services across administrative units (i.e., municipalities or regions). Note that Afrobarometer and East Asia Barometer elicit three issues, Arab Barometer elicits two issues, and LAPOP/Americas Barometer elicits one issue in select countries.

responsiveness. Specifically, we do not discuss issues of representation in depth; for example, the evolving work on the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation (Wängnerud, 2009). Similarly, we do not review some aspects of distributive politics—for example, whether politicians allocate goods to their core constituents or swing voters, as well as the logic of their engagement with clientelistic practices. Indeed, the electoral returns to politicians from different distributive strategies is thoroughly covered in two recent reviews (Golden and Min, 2013; Hicken and Nathan, 2020). Finally, government performance can increase if higher quality citizens choose to run for office in the first place. We do not, however, discuss the growing literature on candidate selection since it was reviewed recently by Gulzar (2021).

In the following sections, we highlight key arguments and findings about each of the three dyads of actors before concluding with our suggestions for further research.

1 Dyad #1: Politicians and Citizens

When do politicians pursue policies or allocate resources in the interest of their constituents? How do citizens remedy gaps in state service provision through interactions with politicians? We review recent work on electoral accountability and constituency service, both in democracies and (where applicable) in autocracies.

1.1 Electoral Accountability

In developing countries, observation of curtailed public goods provision alongside corruption or malfeasance by politicians motivates many studies of electoral accountability. While the responsiveness of policies to the preferences of the electorate is analytically distinct from whether citizens can select or sanction politicians (Ashworth, 2012), accountability pressures are thought to promote more responsive policymaking (Ofosu, 2019). The focus on electoral accountability raises an important question: assuming that elections are relatively free and fair, under what conditions can voters use periodic elections to induce politicians to advance their (voters’) interests?

According to seminal accountability models, elections provide voters the opportunity to *select* better politicians or *sanction* politician malfeasance (Fearon, 1999). The literature generally as-

sumes that for (positive) selection or sanctioning of politicians, (a) voters must observe some credible signal of politician performance and (b) update their beliefs rationally (following Bayes' rule) on the basis of this information, and (c) that viable challengers exist, allowing voters to credibly threaten to withdraw their support when incumbents perform below voters' reelection threshold.

Using a principal-agent framework, much of the recent literature on electoral accountability focuses on the problem of imperfect (or asymmetric) information, given the clear theoretical prediction on incumbents' and voters' behavior. When voters lack information on politicians' quality (i.e., their competence and effort) and candidates are unable to credibly commit to enhance citizens' welfare, voters may rationally rely on heuristics, such as candidates' ethnic markers, to inform their choice (Posner, 2005). And while citizens have a general sense of the level and quality of the public services they receive, it is far from straightforward for them to use this knowledge to make inferences about the quality of their incumbent. First, citizens have a hard time mapping between politicians' actions and outcomes given uncertainty over 'the state of the world'. Second, citizens generally need benchmarked information – i.e., how their district is performing *compared to equivalent districts* – in order to assess whether the public services they receive are adequate (Keefer and Khemani, 2005).

A key goal of studies of the information-accountability nexus is therefore to test whether citizens use newly acquired incumbent performance information to inform their vote choice. Since the extent to which the electorate is informed could be a function of factors that also affect politicians' behavior, a growing body of work has focused on identifying exogenous variation in the information environment (e.g., Larreguy, Marshall, and Snyder, 2020), as well as on the effects of exogenously informing voters about politician performance (i.e., corruption, inputs, truancy, or policy outcomes) in advance of elections on vote choice (e.g., Dunning et al., 2019).

A seminal paper by Ferraz and Finan (2008) leverages the randomized timing of federal audits of Brazilian municipal governments. They find that, relative to municipalities audited after the election, incumbent re-election prospects of mayors audited before the elections decrease in the level of corruption detected. Focusing on service delivery outcomes rather than malfeasance, Goyal

(2019), by contrast, does not find that Indian citizens used information on rural roads improvements to inform their vote. This null finding may suggest that these voters do not seek information, or because the information about improved roads in one's vicinity was not benchmarked against road quality in other jurisdictions.

To increase researcher control over parameters of interests such as information source and content, a number of recent field experiments endeavor to study the effects of information revelation before elections on vote choice. Here the evidence is more mixed. On one hand, voter turnout and vote choice responded to corruption information in Mexico (Chong et al., 2015) and to information on politicians' inputs in India (Banerjee et al., 2020). On the other hand, a pre-registered meta-analysis from seven coordinated field experiments in Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, India, Mexico, and Uganda, recover little evidence that "good news" or "bad news" about incumbents' (relative) performance substantially affected turnout or votes (Dunning et al., 2019). A further meta-analysis of natural and field experiments similarly finds no effect of corruption revelation on incumbent vote share (Incerti, 2020).

Several explanations have been put forth to organize mixed findings on information and voter selection of politicians. Some explanations question citizens' ability to update based on political information, others question the idea that voters are information seekers, and there are also those who focus instead on identifying the type of messages and messengers that are most likely to affect voter behavior. Perhaps more practically, voters are not equally uninformed across settings. As such, it may be "easier" for information to affect voters' beliefs when the electorate is less informed.

As mentioned, it may be that a key barrier to voter use of information to select politicians is limited voter rationality. Here, survey experiments may be most informative. In general, survey experiments on information and accountability typically provide respondents (analogous to voters) with information about a politician's actions or their outcomes. Respondents then evaluate the politician. In these experiments, voters tend to update substantially in the direction of the evidence, consistent with rational processing of the information (Incerti, 2020; Bhandari, Larreguy,

and Marshall, 2021). To the extent that survey experiments capture voter *beliefs* (as opposed to actions), findings are consistent with rational voter responses to information.

Several studies seek to identify the type of incumbent information that is most relevant (salient) to voters (Bhandari, Larreguy, and Marshall, 2021; Adida et al., 2020). A related line of inquiry focuses instead on the importance of the information source or dissemination mode as opposed to its political content. For example, there is growing evidence that electoral debates broaden knowledge about politicians (Bidwell, Casey, and Glennerster, 2020; Brierley, Kramon, and Ofosu, 2020; Bowles and Larreguy, 2020), especially opposition leaders (Platas and Raffler, 2021). Similarly, there is growing evidence – from Mexico (Larreguy, Marshall, and Snyder, 2020), Brazil (Varjao, 2019), Sierra Leone (Casey, 2015), Mozambique (Aker, Collier, and Vicente, 2017) and elsewhere – that a robust (local) media markets can support electoral accountability and facilitate voter sanctioning. Indeed, Ferraz and Finan (2008) found the largest effects where the local media presence was largest. The effectiveness of the media in supporting accountability processes may be due not only to its wide reach, but also to the fact that the media may support voter coordination (Larreguy, Marshall, and Snyder Jr., 2020).

Other studies examine the *timing* of the information dissemination efforts. Grossman, Michelitch, and Prato (2021), for example, argue that politician performance information can maximize impact if it is shared early, regularly and predictably throughout the electoral cycle. They find that early dissemination of politically salient information affected the slate of candidates on the ballot by changing the likelihood that potential challengers enter the race, incumbents' choice of running for reelection, and party leaders' nomination strategy.

That the information dissemination content, method, and timing can all be consequential highlights the importance of voters' information environment. While in most studies voters are simply assumed to be uninformed, a prior question is – *why*? If information provision would benefit a politician, why is this information not provided in equilibrium? Certainly there are technological and resource constraints on politicians' ability to disseminate a message, for example limited media reach. Politicians may also manipulate the message or its dissemination for political ad-

vantage, i.e., through the direct control of media sources (Peisakhin and Rozenas, 2018), the manipulation of media licensing (Boas and Hidalgo, 2011), or by spreading disinformation via social media (Badrinathan, 2021). Understanding what information voters see (absent exogenous information provision) represents an important next step in the study of information and accountability.

Greater transparency can improve accountability not only by improving voters' ability to reward and sanction, but also by affecting incumbent behavior while in office. In theory, if politicians' actions are not visible to voters, politicians have weaker incentives to act in the interest of voters. Three recent studies – Bobonis, Fuertes, and Schwabe (2016) in Puerto Rico, Grossman and Michelitch (2018) in Uganda and Avis, Ferraz, and Finan (2018) in Brazil – find that increasing voter information in a matter that is visible to politicians can reduce the moral hazard of politicians, consistent with theories of accountability. We note that comparatively less attention has been devoted to whether information provision to voters reduces shirking by *politicians*, and view this as an important avenue for future work.

Imperfect information is not the only barrier to electoral accountability; for example, clientelism may distort performance-based voting (Hicken and Nathan, 2020). Indeed, the close focus on voter information (and increasingly – misinformation) may lead us to miss other manifestations of accountability or its absence. First, there may exist barriers to the attribution of specific outcomes to politicians, in part because politicians may actively undermine transparency efforts by increasing vote buying (Cruz, Keefer, and Labonne, 2021), or because voters put undue weight on highly visible service outcomes, such as infrastructure projects (Harding, 2015). Second, politicians' responsiveness to the public is likely (also) a function of the institutional environment, including campaign finance laws (Ruiz, 2020) and the independence of electoral institutions that safeguard against electoral manipulation (Rueda and Ruiz, 2020; Rozenas, 2016).

In sum, there is growing evidence that voters can and do rationally use political performance information to inform voting decisions, but only under certain conditions. Voters are more likely to do so when the information is reliable, timely, and salient, and when the method of dissemination allows for voter coordination. Given these observations, more research is needed to understand

why candidates, parties, civil society or the media do not provide information to voters when it is advantageous to do so, or how these actors amplify or counter information. Relatedly, more research is needed to better understand incumbents' response—for example, increasing vote buying or exerting greater effort—to greater transparency of their performance. Additionally, distinguishing voter *beliefs* about politicians' quality from *vote choice* is likely a useful (future) avenue for reconciling mixed existing findings on information and accountability.

1.2 Constituency Service

A growing literature considers more quotidian interactions between politicians and citizens as a tool that citizens use to induce government responsiveness. While constituency service has long been studied in the US context (Fenno, 1978), these interactions between politicians and citizens may hold particular importance in low-capacity states with thinner services or less professionalized bureaucracies.

Recent work has used ethnography (Paller, 2019) and a novel politician-shadowing research design (Bussell, 2020) to demonstrate that constituency service occupies a large portion of “what politicians do” and what citizens ask for. Studies of government responsiveness in autocracies further suggest that constituency services is especially valuable when politicians' policymaking role is constrained or when weak (or non-existent) electoral institutions limit electoral accountability (Distelhorst and Hou, 2017; York, 2020).

Notwithstanding the importance that politicians ascribe to constituency services, two key features of these services limit their ability to deliver public services to the population. First, it is generally infeasible to scale service provision on the basis of contact between individual citizens and politicians (and party brokers) alone. In most settings, there are many of constituents for each politician. Second, evidence from multiple cases suggests that not all citizens are equally likely to request – or receive – constituency services. Even if constituency service were more scalable, this form of selection would likely yield unequal distributional outcomes.

Indeed, research of this type of interaction between politicians and voters suggests disadvantages to over-reliance on constituency services to achieve responsive governance. As mentioned,

politicians are commonly (but not uniformly) differentially responsive to different (types of) constituents. These inequalities are often studied through audits or audit experiments. In line with evidence from the USA (e.g., Butler and Broockman, 2011), McClendon (2016) find that legislators in South Africa respond to same-race constituents at higher rates, a measure of responsiveness. Driscoll et al. (2018) similarly find class and racial biased response among (most, but not all) parliamentary candidates in Brazil.

Variation in politicians' response may reflect their personal tastes or prejudices (McClendon, 2016; McAndrews et al., 2020; Costa, 2017). In some contexts differential responsiveness arises instead from the electoral incentives of politicians. Driscoll et al. (2018) find that Brazilian candidates for the national legislature, concerned about alienating likely voters, discriminated against lower-class constituents after but not before the elections. Gaikwad and Nellis (2020) find that urban politicians discriminate against internal (domestic) migrants in India. Pointing to migrants' lower propensity to vote in destination-area elections, they suggest a form of electorally-motivated statistical discrimination as a mechanism. Yet, such discrimination based on the prospect of turnout does not arise in all contexts, even when it is directly communicated to politicians (Bussell, 2019). Understanding *why* and *when* we observe disparate responses by politicians—a promising avenue of future theoretical and empirical research—is important for understanding inequalities in government responsiveness

Politicians provide constituency services to those who approach them. Yet, in many contexts there are large inequalities in political access. Understanding which citizens choose to seek constituency services, can help illuminate critical questions about the distributional implications of constituency service. Kruks-Wisner (2018) advances a theory of claim-making based on citizens' aspirations and capabilities. She further demonstrates that citizen aspirations and capabilities to request service are shaped by past experience with the state. Closely related, Grossman, Michelich, and Santamaria (2017) and Auerbach and Kruks-Wisner (2020) explain citizens' requests (or complaint making) as a function of their sense of (external) efficacy. Other studies focus on social or relational – as opposed to individual – characteristics of citizens. Bussell (2019) suggests

citizens seek constituency service when they cannot access existing patronage networks. Ferrali et al. (2020) show the important role of one's social ties in learning about how to access politicians for constituency services.

Finally, we point to the growing availability of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve citizens' ability to scale constituency services. Most notably, the use of widespread complaint systems (e.g., 311 lines, or FixMyStreet app) reduces citizens' costs of filing a complaint or making a request. With the exception of Slough (2021*c,b*)—that conceptualizes complaint systems as a form of bureaucratic oversight—the existing literature treats such systems as interactions between citizens and politicians. Analyzing data from 311 lines (or the equivalent) allows for the study of variation in politician responsiveness to the complaints that emerge. Two recent studies, Christensen and Ejdeyr (2020) and Dipoppa and Grossman (2020) find that responsiveness—measured as the speed with which complaints are remedied—increases in the lead-up to elections in New York City and San Francisco and in the UK, respectively. Dipoppa and Grossman (2020) further show an increase in citizen complaint-making in the lead-up to elections that coincides with this increase in responsiveness.

Similar ICT complaint systems are increasingly available in some low- and middle-income countries. There is some evidence that such platforms could empower the voices of the most marginalized (according to demographic classifications) and, in theory, reducing inequality in political access (Grossman, Humphreys, and Sacramone-Lutz, 2014). However, marginalized citizens participated less than non-marginalized citizens, when the same (Ugandan) platform was brought to scale. This in part because of the challenge of reaching (and mobilizing) marginalized populations in the absence of personalized appeals (Grossman, Humphreys, and Sacramone-Lutz, 2020). More research is sorely needed to explore who uses these services, and how usage can be encouraged, especially among more marginalized populations.

As ICT complaint systems continue to emerge in low-and middle-income settings, one important question is how politicians respond to the complaints they receive. Several recent studies – Grossman, Platas, and Rodden (2018), Buntaine, Hunnicutt, and Komakech (2021), and Golden

and Sonnet (2021) – find limited, and often null, politician responsiveness to citizens’ messages. This may be because some citizen requests are not sufficiently actionable for politicians (Grossman, Platas, and Rodden, 2018) or because of politicians’ unwillingness or inability to reply. Understanding both which citizens communicate using new ICTs and under what conditions (or to whom) politicians respond are necessary if we seek to disentangle the distributional implications of complaint systems at a micro level and explore the conditions under which they may improve service delivery.

In sum, providing constituency services is an important part of politicians’ job duties and citizens’ expectations of politicians. However, there is growing evidence that constituency services are provided in ways that can deepen societal inequalities due to patterns of selection into seeking citizen service or differential treatment of citizens by politicians. Understanding the conditions under which new information technologies lower barriers to accessing constituency services may offer lessons for reducing inequalities in political access. However, we still lack the theory and evidence of when such complaint, inquiry, and reporting systems yield sustained improvements in service delivery more broadly. A further important direction for work on the extension of complaint systems should focus on *when* governments choose to adopt these systems and characterizing variation in both citizen usage of and politician response to citizen complaints.

2 Dyad #2: Politicians and Bureaucrats

In considering how citizen preferences for public goods or services map onto outputs, it is important to consider the role of bureaucrats in producing these public goods and services to understand politicians’ ability to be responsive to the citizen preferences. A large literature in economics, political science, and public administration considers the relationships between politicians and bureaucrats. We first review evidence on politicians’ ability to select bureaucrats and incentivize bureaucrats to exert greater effort. We consider here the distinction between patronage and civil service systems. We then consider “smaller” personnel policies or reforms intended, again, to elicit bureaucratic effort or improve bureaucratic selection. Then, as in the case of the citizen-politician

dyad, we consider more day-to-day interactions between politicians and bureaucrats, emphasizing political oversight of bureaucrats.

2.1 Personnel Systems: Civil Service vs. Patronage

Classic studies of the relationships between bureaucrats and politicians focus on politicians' power to hire and fire bureaucrats. The ability to recruit high-skilled workers into public service, and elicit effort from civil servants, are key challenges that all governments face.

When politicians face few constraints in hiring bureaucrats, they may choose to offer public jobs as a reward for support or loyalty. If these supporters' preferences are closer to those of the politician, the congruence of preferences between the politician and bureaucrat may limit ideological conflict in policymaking (Spenkuch, Teso, and Xu, 2021). Moreover, if a politician can freely dismiss bureaucrats, prevent their promotion or assign them to undesirable locations, bureaucrats may have greater incentives to exert effort. In addition, patronage may give bureaucrats access to material and non-material resources, and may reduce politicians' motoring costs due to higher level of mutual trust (Toral, 2021*a*).

Yet, providing politicians with free range to hire, promote, demote, relocate and fire bureaucrats comes with costs. First, conditioning jobs on political support instead of expertise arguably reduces bureaucratic quality to handle the demands of "complicated" programs or services (Colonelli, Prem, and Teso, 2020), and can depress bureaucratic effort (Xu, 2018). Second, political appointees have on average, shorter time horizons, which may further limit (endogenous) acquisition of bureaucratic expertise (Gailmard and Patty, 2007). Further, higher frequency (or a larger share) of government turnover can yield temporary reductions in service delivery (Toral, 2021*b*).

Existing literature typically classifies bureaucratic personnel systems as (merit-based) civil service or patronage-based. Civil service systems include: (1) a set of constraints on who may be hired as a bureaucrat (i.e., through the use of merit exams) and (2) limits on the removal of bureaucrats. Much literature focuses on when politicians adopt civil service systems, relinquishing some degree of control over the hiring or firing of bureaucrats (Geddes, 1994).

However, in practice, most bureaucracies exist somewhere between the two extremes. Even

in countries with strong and enforced civil service protections, there generally exist political appointees in high-level posts. In some civil service systems, politicians may adopt hiring practices—for example, using contractors to fill public administration vacancies—explicitly to circumvent the insulating protections of the civil service (Pierskalla and Sacks, 2020). As such, in contrast to the theoretical construct of civil services vs. patronage systems, most countries fall somewhere on a continuum between the two extremes.

Given our review’s focus, a relevant question is: how do attributes of the personnel system affect the delivery of public goods and services in developing countries? The evidence is, again, mixed. Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer (2015) find that compared to permanent hires, contract teachers increase students’ learning and test scores in Kenya. This, however, can reflect short-term gains. In contrast, consistent with other characterizations of Brazilian municipal governments as patronage-laden (Colonnelli, Prem, and Teso, 2020), Aktari, Moreira, and Trucco (2020) provide evidence that, when Brazilian mayors lose power, municipal schools experience higher turnover of teachers and headmasters, with an apparent reduction of test scores.

The structure of bureaucratic hiring may also influence how politicians choose to allocate budgets to public goods and services. Using historical evidence from civil service reform in US states Ujhelyi (2014) finds that state governments appropriated more funds to local governments, ostensibly to bypass reformed state bureaucracies. Civil service reforms may also discipline political budget cycles by constraining politicians’ ability to expand public payrolls in preparation for elections. Bostashvili and Ujhelyi (2019) suggest that pre-election cycles of spending on infrastructure were eliminated subsequent to the adoption of civil-service systems in US states. To the best of our knowledge, these dynamics have not been explored in the context of developing countries.

2.2 Personnel Policies beyond Civil Service

Can reforms to personnel policies beyond civil service systems shape the composition and public service outputs of the bureaucracy? Here the literature explores public sector remuneration schemes and various non-remunerative incentives that may affect bureaucratic quality via selection or effort.

Politicians can influence personnel policy by setting public sector wages and other (e.g., retirement) benefits in regular budgetary appropriations. Following Finan, Olken, and Pande (2017), three empirical patterns related to public sector wage premium—the difference in average pay in the public minus the private sector—are of note. First, there exists substantial cross-national variation in public-sector wage premium. Second, public sector wage premium is decreasing in per capita GDP: it is greatest in low-income countries. Third, within countries, public sector wage premium is decreasing in education. We note that the logic for these political decisions remains under theorized. In addition, it is hard to measure how public payrolls affect selection into the bureaucracy using macro-level data.

Dal Bó, Finan, and Rossi (2013) thus conduct an experiment randomizing the wages of Mexican community development agents. In line with theory, they find that higher wages increased the size and quality of the candidate pool. Similarly, highlighting career opportunities within the civil service increased the quality of recruits in a community health program in rural Zambia (Ashraf et al., 2020). A key concern of appealing to the extrinsic motivations of potential civil service candidates is that it would come at the expense of public service (intrinsic) motivation. Here, the evidence is somewhat mixed. While both Dal Bó, Finan, and Rossi (2013) and Ashraf et al. (2020) do not find evidence of a trade-off between applicants' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, Hanna and Wang (2017) find that screening public servants on ability, may select individuals who are less pro-social in incentivized experiments in India.

In addition to interventions aimed at bureaucratic recruitment, changing bureaucrats' incentives may induce them to work harder. One policy option in this context is *pay-for-performance* (P4P). Appealing again to extrinsic motivations, these compensation schemes typically reward inputs (for example, presence and conduct of public-sector nurses and teachers). In addition to eroding intrinsic motivation, a key concern is that P4P will reduce effort by encouraging bureaucrats to invest only in visible actions on which they are rewarded (Benabou and Tirole, 2003). Existing evidence – from Rwanda (Leaver et al., 2021), China (Loyalka et al., 2019), and Uganda (Gilligan et al., 2021) – seems to suggest that these concerns are not borne-out, and that P4P is a promising

policy tool at least in the education sector.

High-powered incentive schemes are not always a feasible option when pay scales are subject to strict civil service regulations with little room for performance pay. Khan, Khwaja, and Olken (2019) investigate therefore an alternative incentive: whether performance based postings to preferred jurisdictions can increase bureaucratic effort. They design a tournament mechanism among tax collectors in Pakistan. Tax collectors submit their preferred assignments and assignments are made on the basis of performance rank. Implementation of this scheme increased effort dramatically: tax collectors assigned to the tournament mechanism collected an additional 30-41% of control group tax revenues. Future work may look at additional innovations that do not necessarily entail financial incentives, such as training (Banerjee et al., 2021), increasing bureaucrats' managerial autonomy (Rasul and Rogger, 2008) or using behavioral interventions – such as emphasizing the organizational mission (Khan, 2020) – to increase civil servants' motivation.

To sum up, where a bureaucracy lies on the continuum between civil service system and a patronage system is consequential for the delivery of public services and private benefits. However, wholesale reforms of bureaucracies are politically challenging (see Huber and Ting (2021) who theorize about politicians' incentives to implement civil service reforms). Instead, “smaller” personnel policies may offer a partial solution for building bureaucratic quality or increasing bureaucratic outputs. Compensation schemes, including both regular public sector wages and the creation of higher-powered incentives, represent one clear instrument through which politicians can alter bureaucratic selection and effort with potentially large consequences within countries. There is indeed growing evidence that personnel policies within existing civil service systems can affect the recruitment, effort, and outputs of bureaucrats in ways that improve service delivery outcomes. Thus, studying how politicians decide on these schemes represents one important avenue for better incorporating politicians into the study of personnel policy and its consequences. To this end, the experimental studies we review generally involved collaboration with a government partner. However, we know much less about when and why politicians pursue these types of personnel interventions or innovations outside the context of collaborative projects with researchers.

2.3 Bureaucratic Oversight by Politicians

Politicians can induce bureaucrats to increase effort or to pursue the politicians' goals through monitoring (and the associated threat of sanctions).³ The “bite” of oversight is likely a function of bureaucratic insulation, and we may expect the effect of oversight to be largest where bureaucratic insulation is more limited, often in low- and middle-income countries.

Programs and policies that increase the rate at which politicians monitor bureaucratic service providers suggest that monitoring may reduce corruption, increase effort and ultimately promote better public service delivery. In a seminal study Olken (2007) shows that top-down monitoring of bureaucrats reduced corruption in the execution of public works projects, in part because revelation of corrupt behavior would have carried social sanctioning. This and similar empirical findings are consistent with the idea that monitoring can bring bureaucratic behavior closer to the politician's ideal. These findings raise three important questions. First, what are the limits to politicians' oversight effectiveness? Second, under what conditions does political oversight yield better service provision as opposed to other outcomes (i.e., ‘kickbacks’ to politicians, rent extraction, and negative selection into the bureaucracy)? And third, if monitoring is effective, why is it sometimes under-provided?

It is generally assumed that monitoring is constrained by (1) the time and monetary costs of monitoring bureaucrats and (2) politicians' relative levels of expertise – bureaucrats are generally more knowledgeable than politicians. Recent experimental evidence aims to manipulate these parameters directly. For example, both Callen et al. (2020) and Dal Bó et al. (2021) show that mobile apps that reduced the costs of monitoring were successful in significantly reducing bureaucratic shirking of public health providers in Pakistan and of agriculture extension officers in Paraguay, respectively. Raffler (2020) examines instead a program meant to remedy disparities in politician and bureaucratic expertise by training Ugandan local councilors to monitor bureaucrats. She finds that such training increases monitoring effort and user satisfaction with service delivery, but only

³In addition to oversight by politicians, we note an emerging literature on the effects of oversight by horizontal accountability institutions like courts or audit bodies (Wang, 2021; Lichand and Fernandes, 2019).

in constituencies controlled by the opposition party. The distinction between government- and opposition-controlled areas in Raffler (2020) points to the potential importance of politicians' objectives in influencing: (1) when they choose to monitor bureaucrats and (2) the outcomes of this monitoring.

Indeed, if monitoring impacts bureaucrats' behavior, what explains variation in politicians' monitoring efforts? Gulzar and Pasquale (2017) argue, and find evidence in India, that politicians monitor bureaucrats to improve service delivery when they can claim credit for doing so. According to Raffler (2020), politicians are likely to monitor bureaucrats' performance as service providers only to the extent that they sufficiently value improvements in service delivery in their constituencies (which itself is a function of the competitiveness of their district). Raffler contends that in ruling party stronghold areas, at least in the context of a dominant party regime, politicians fear that uncovering corruption will backfire and thus refrain from monitoring.

Collectively, these works suggest that political oversight of bureaucrats can change bureaucrats' behavior. Yet, the principal's monitoring of an agent responsible for producing public goods can, in theory, improve or worsen service delivery outcomes. Grossman and Hanlon (2014), for example show that when agent's opportunity costs are sufficiently large, increasing monitoring efforts can worsen the delivery of public goods by inducing high-skilled individual to select out of public service. Pointing to a different mechanism, Brierly (2020) shows that politicians may use oversight authority to direct bureaucrats to extract rents.

Establishing a stronger evidence base on politician preferences for public goods provision represents an important next step to understanding which forms of monitoring are most likely. To the extent that service provision is a goal *because* it is desired by citizens, research considering how public service delivery enters politicians' objective can provide greater clarity about the relationship between bureaucratic oversight and public goods and service outcomes.

In sum, while recent literature has expanded our understanding of the effects of oversight, more work is needed to understand politicians' incentives and choices to adopt monitoring institutions. Recent theoretical and empirical work rejects the idea that politicians always favor a more effective

civil service. For example, Gottlieb (2021) argues that investments politicians make in the capacity of the bureaucracy is endogenous to incumbents' electoral considerations. Other work considers politicians' distributive considerations when designing oversight institutions (Slough, 2021*b*). Finally, more work is needed on the (strategic) response of bureaucrats to oversight. While much work assumes that additional monitoring drives higher effort, it may also cause (some) bureaucrats to transfer, or even exit the public sector. We view these questions as important considerations moving forward.

3 Dyad #3: Bureaucrats and Citizens

In many settings, citizens' most common interaction with the state occurs through routine interactions between citizens and front-line service providers. A growing literature focuses on bureaucratic responses to citizen requests for service and understanding when bureaucrats internalize citizen welfare to improve service provision.

3.1 When do Bureaucrats Internalize Citizen Welfare?

An active recent literature asks: under what conditions do front-line bureaucrats exert the effort necessary to deliver services to citizens? Consider two answers advanced in the recent literature. First, top-down oversight by politicians or bottom-up monitoring by citizens may induce bureaucrats – seeking promotion or retention – to internalize (at least some) citizens' preferences for service provision. Second, bureaucrats may have a preference for serving some citizens over others, independent of oversight or citizen pressures. In this section we discuss recent work related to this second option.

Much of the literature on bureaucratic bias, favoritism, or discrimination starts from assumptions about which citizens bureaucrats might wish to prioritize. For example, bureaucrats may mirror societal biases toward some (usually dominant) groups over others, or they may exhibit in-group favoritism; i.e., taste-based discrimination. A related literature, which focuses in particular on the consequence of bureaucrats' social environment, is the emerging literature on bureaucratic embeddedness.

Bureaucratic embeddedness refers to the social relationships that influence civil servants' preferences and behavior (Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks, 2017: 258). The theoretical expectations is that, on average, bureaucrats are more likely to provide better services to those with whom they share identity markers. Along these lines, Xu (2021) shows that Indian districts with Indian as opposed to British district officers experienced fewer deaths during the flu pandemic of 1918, by providing more relief to citizens, ostensibly a measure of bureaucratic effort. Embeddedness has been defined not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity or race, but also in terms of home-region. For example, Bhavnani and Lee (2017) find that Indian Administrative Service (IAS) bureaucrats from the state they serve increase access to high school education.

Whether and why civil servants that are embedded in the communities they serve produce better policy outcomes is still a matter of debate (Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks, 2017). One possibility is that bureaucrats better serve co-ethnic/co-regional citizens due to taste-based discrimination (Butler and Broockman, 2011). Alternatively, it may be that in-group members are better equipped to socially sanction embedded bureaucrats who fail to sufficiently consider the welfare of the group they serve (Habyarimana et al., 2007; Tsai, 2007). Finally, it is possible that bureaucrats have lower information gathering costs, superior local knowledge or better technologies (including cultural sensitivities) with which to serve in-group members (Evans, 1995).

On the other hand, the embeddedness of bureaucrats could potentially have negative effects on service provision. In particular, the local ties of embedded civil servants may make them an easier target for elites seeking to 'capture' the bureaucracy. Xu, Bertrand, and Burgess (2020) test for possible negative effects of location-based embeddedness in India. Using unique data on bureaucrats' performance assessment, they find that embedded IAS bureaucrats perform worse than comparable officers who are allocated to non-home states. In particular, embedded bureaucrats were found to be more corrupt, less pro-poor, and less able to withstand illegitimate political pressure.

More theoretical and empirical work is needed to better understand the conditions under which embeddedness can be productively harnessed to improve service provision via reallocation of bureaucratic across jurisdictions. Further, more work is needed to measure the influence of embed-

dedness as opposed to mechanisms driving bureaucratic preferences over citizens. For example, in a rare middle-income context audit experiment, Slough (2021c) finds evidence of bureaucratic discrimination by citizen socioeconomic class, but not by shared region – the proxy for embeddedness.

If bureaucratic embeddedness is consequential for government performance and public goods provision, more attention is necessary to understand how governments allocate civil servants across space. If bureaucrats are assigned to familiar environments, they could use their informational advantage to better adapt to local conditions. The same informational advantage, however, might also be exploited for private gain. How politicians balance these trade-offs and why the assignment of bureaucrats across space affects bureaucratic performance differently in different contexts remains understudied.

In sum, while increasing attention has been devoted to bureaucratic embeddedness, we posit a need to examine a wider range of mechanisms that may drive disparities in bureaucrats' treatment of citizens, including but not limited to embeddedness. Developing alternative theories of bureaucratic preferences over constituents can help to design policies that reduce the inequalities generated by bureaucratic discrimination. Such work on bureaucratic preferences may also help to clarify when embeddedness promotes or deters service provision.

3.2 Citizen Oversight of Frontline Bureaucrats

In light of the growing recognition of the difficulty citizens face in holding politicians to account (discussed above), a natural question arises: can citizens pressure service providers directly to improve service provision? In a so-called “short-route” to accountability, better service provision is achieved through various forms of collective action, individual appeals, or other forms of social pressure of bureaucrats (Kosack and Fung, 2014). In recent years, a growing number of programs have sought to increase individual or collective capacity to exert (bottom-up) pressure on frontline service providers to improve services, to mixed results. Below we review these studies and point to several problems with the underlying theoretical assumptions of these attempts.

Björkman and Svensson (2009) study a community-based monitoring of frontline healthcare providers in rural Uganda. The intervention provided community members report cards on health service outputs and facilitated community-health facility meetings aimed at strengthening collective monitoring of service providers. The authors find higher health care utilization and reductions in child mortality in treatment communities (villages). However, more recent RCT replicating Björkman and Svensson (2009) in three countries in sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia report mixed results (Arkedis et al., 2019; Christensen et al., 2021; Raffler, Posner, and Parkerson, 2020).

One way to reconcile the conflicting result is through more careful theory. Across the replication experiments, utilization (due to improved perceptions of the health-care providers) – as opposed to collective action – seems most likely to drive any observed effects. However, it is still possible that the prospect of collective action drives the behavior of health providers, even if collective action does not materialize. Variation in findings may be driven mechanically by differences in health outcomes at baseline (Raffler, Posner, and Parkerson, 2020), or due to the structure of the service provision market.

Consider for example related interventions, which focus only on information provision absent the community monitoring (collective action) components. On one hand, Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai (2014) find no evidence that informing parents in Kenya about their children’s (relative) reading and numeracy skills changed citizen behavior, school services, or school outputs. On the other hand, Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja (2017) find that a campaign that disseminated report cards on public and private schools in Pakistan to parents increased test scores and enrollment. However, they too find no evidence that the improvements in educational outcomes came through additional parental effort. Instead, improvements in service provision came about from public schools reducing teachers’ break time, in fear of parents’ exiting the public school system. While parents became better informed, information campaigns – even when resulting in improved service delivery outcomes – did not facilitate individual or collective action.⁴ In short, the threat of exit, rather

⁴We also note possible negative effects of said information campaigns, including making schools more selective in admission requirements, teaching to the test, and strategically excluding weaker students from taking standardized tests (Cilliers, Mbiti, and Zeitlin, 2021).

than voice, seems to have been consequential.

There is danger, in our view, in equating interventions that aim to exogenously increase citizen oversight of frontline bureaucrats with endogenous variants of community oversight. It stands to reason that if individual or collective oversight can increase the effort of frontline service providers, individuals and communities would have already adopted this strategy. Indeed, works like Tsai (2007) show a role for various forms of social organizations such as churches and self-help groups in improving service provision. Equilibrium levels of service provision—however good or bad—may respond to endogenously adopted citizen oversight practices. Exogenous shocks to citizen oversight may not be informative about the role of endogenous practices.

Recall, community monitoring is a public good (with diffuse benefits and concentrated costs) which is potentially subject to classic collective action problems (Banerjee et al., 2010). In addition, there is a growing recognition of the power and status asymmetry that make citizens reluctant to confront frontline service providers, partly due to low efficacy (Lieberman and Zhou, 2021) and in part due to fear of retribution (Kaawa-Mafigiri and Walakira, 2017). To this end, we caution that exogenous increases in levels of community monitoring may subside when when encouragement from central governments or development agencies is removed (Mansuri and Rao, 2012) (though see Björkman Nyqvist, De Walque, and Svensson (2017)).

Moving forward, we encourage researchers to measure directly the barriers that communities may face to increase oversight of frontline service providers shy of external encouragement. We suggest further consideration of the measurable implications of citizen oversight. In principle, bureaucratic effort and thus service provision may be sustained by the mere *prospect* of citizen oversight in the instance of poor service provision. Slough (2021c) focuses on this type of forward-looking behavior by frontline service providers as a driver of unequal treatment of citizens. If this is the case, it is hard to make assertions about the efficacy/non-efficacy of citizen oversight of service providers, especially if we do not observe instances of collective action or complaint directly (as in Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja (2017)). As such, better measurement of perceived oversight (in the eyes of bureaucrats) or oversight potential (by citizens) may be important for characterizing this

“short route” to accountability. Beyond innovation in measurement, describing these dynamics generally requires clear exposition of an equilibrium and its empirical implications.

4 The Path Forward

There is much to be learned from studies of the three dyads that we presented above. However, we contend that consideration of interactions between all three actors in a single framework presents an important frontier in the study of government responsiveness and accountability in developing settings and beyond. As in the empirical literature we survey, the theoretical literature has generally emphasized dyadic interactions. Theoretical models that incorporate politicians, bureaucrats, and citizens (voters) are relatively rare, though this represents an active current research agenda.

For example, Fox and Jordan (2011), Yazaki (2018), and Li, Sasso, and Turner (2019) introduce models of electoral accountability that incorporate bureaucrats. Recent theories of service provision has considered citizen attempts to access government services. Ting (2021) introduces a novel framework to investigate the dynamics of service provision – specifically, the extent of policy benefits, investment administrative capacity, and program durability – that incorporates politicians as policymakers (principals), bureaucrats as service providers (agents), and citizens as service seekers. Slough (2021*b*) considers both the adoption and implications of bureaucratic oversight institutions. Her model incorporates information on citizen complaints as an input affecting whether politicians can address moral hazard problems of bureaucrats. She finds that reliance on citizen complaints as “fire alarms” can have divergent impacts on the state’s ability to implement a service in a population that varies in its propensity to complain.

We argue that more widespread consideration of interactions between citizens, politicians, and bureaucrats in the empirical literature holds the potential to: (1) illuminate new mechanisms underlying (un)responsive governance; (2) reconcile some conflicting findings; and (3) inform the design of policy interventions aimed to increase responsiveness.

Key to these potential contributions is a more explicit acknowledgement of the equilibrium implications of these three-actor interactions. By focusing on the behavior of a single actor or,

at most, a dyad of two actors, much of the evidence that we review offers “partial equilibrium” findings. In essence, dyadic analysis does not consider how the omitted actor may respond, and how that response be reflected in the observed data. The arguably more complete three-actor models on both political accountability and service provision generally producing more ambiguous predictions and subtler implications for many of the core outcomes of interest than the existing two-actor models that inspire much of the empirical literature we present. By omitting consideration of other actors’ behavior, theory suggests that we risk mischaracterizing the mechanisms at work and misinterpreting (commonly mixed) empirical findings. These issues could even lead to ill-advised policy prescriptions or interventions. We outline several recent approaches to this challenge, highlighting the benefits considering all three actors.

New mechanisms: Martin and Raffler (2021) propose a new explanation for the widespread observation of limited voter updating on politician performance information provided by recent empirical studies of electoral accountability. They suggest that politicians’ reliance on bureaucrats to “get things done” renders public goods outputs noisier signals that limit voters’ ability to update on a politician’s type given performance information. They test their framework using a factorial survey experiment in Uganda that varies both the signal of performance (good or bad roads), the bureaucrat’s level of power, and information about the attribution of responsibility to politicians or bureaucrats. The authors find that respondents’ attribution of responsibility to the politician for roads (and correspondingly hypothetical voting behavior) is attenuated when citizens are told that bureaucrats are responsible for implementation. While the theory considers only voters as strategic actors, these findings suggest that citizens, politicians, and bureaucrats are able to consider the dynamics of this three-actor accountability relationship. This study interjects a new mechanism—voters’ joint attribution of responsibility between politicians and bureaucrats—into a large accountability literature generally focused more narrowly on voter-politician relations.

Reconciling conflicting findings: Building upon our understanding of the role of bureaucrats in accountability relations between voters and politicians, Slough (2021a) argues that when politicians and bureaucrats co-produce public goods, bureaucratic quality conditions the efficiency of

politicians' public goods investments and thus their ability to signal their type to voters. Unlike Martin and Raffler (2021), Slough argues that strategic politicians anticipate voters' ability to infer politician type from the public goods signal and allocate funds to public goods (as opposed to rents) accordingly. This model yields four distinct equilibria that present at different levels of bureaucratic quality and have different observable implications. For example, a conventional account that suggests that "good" and "bad" politicians take different actions with respect to funding public goods—the focus of much of the electoral accountability literature—emerge only at moderately low levels of bureaucratic quality. Reanalyzing work on accountability and corruption in Brazil, Slough derives multiple tests of the model's predictions. She recovers evidence that is consistent with the idea that distinct equilibria will be present at different levels of municipal bureaucratic quality. This evidence is inconsistent with standard accounts that do not consider the bureaucracy or those assume voters to be uninformed. The study's finding of multiple equilibria helps to reconcile mixed evidence on the effects of information and accountability.

New policy implications: Slough (2021c) revisits studies of bureaucratic discrimination in the provision of public services. Here, citizen complaints about poor service provision increase oversight of bureaucrats by their principals (i.e., a politician). Anticipating the possibility of oversight by a political principal, bureaucrats provide better service *ex-ante* to citizens that are most likely to complain. She tests this mechanism—relative to existing alternatives—using an audit experiment of local bureaucrats administering Colombia's two largest social service programs. She finds that bureaucrats are more likely to provide information to middle- rather than lower-class citizens and residents over internal migrants. However, this bias is only present on tasks for which politician oversight is most likely and for the more politicized of the two programs. The key insight is the *potential* for oversight by the politician in response to citizen complaints drives at least some bureaucratic biases. The paper suggests that empowering (more) citizens to complain at lower cost can both improve service provision and reduce inequalities stemming from bureaucratic discrimination. This implication is distinct from existing suggestions to alter bureaucratic selection or to increase oversight to reduce such discrimination.

Reorienting the study of responsiveness toward these three-actor interactions opens new opportunities and challenges for empirical research design. It may guide researchers to collect additional data in the field, through interviews, surveys, or participant observation of additional classes of actors. These observations may help to clarify the structure of interactions between bureaucrats, politicians, and citizens, enriching our understanding of the strategic underpinnings of responsiveness. Empirically, these more complex interactions along with the questions we pose for each dyad may present new challenges for the causal identification-driven research designs employed in most of the studies that we reference. Here, we see potential for complementarities between descriptive and causal inference to characterize theorized interactions, though clear characterization of each exercise. We also advocate closer connections between applied theory and empirical research.

In this article, we reviewed the current body of work on government responsiveness in low- and middle-income countries, focusing in particular on theory and evidence that can help explain variation in the provision of public services across space and groups. Following much of the existing literature, we organized our review around three distinct dyadic relationships involving politicians, bureaucrats, and citizens. We have then presented a rationale for considering interactions between all three actors in a single framework to better characterize the foundations of government responsiveness. This emphasis on three-actor interactions calls for a tighter link between theory and empirics. In particular, differentiating equilibrium from partial equilibrium implications is useful for both theory and policy. It arguably better characterizes the nature of these interactions, but it is also important for designing and assessing new (or modified) interventions intended to improve the delivery of public goods and services in accordance with citizen preferences.

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