A Review of State-Citizen Relationships
Supplement to the Working Paper on Relational State Capacity

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Abstract

This supplement to the working paper on relational state capacity[1] (Honig, Krishnamurthy, and Sharma 2024) offers a narrative review of state-citizen relationships in the cross-disciplinary literature on public administration. The review provides evidentiary support for RSC's proposition that relationships are a core component of state capacity and public service outcomes. We systematically record the multiple dimensions (where they happen, for what duration, between whom, etc) of state-agent and citizen exchanges available in the cases, and understand the context and outcomes of these interactions. The empirical cases studied in this literature review reveal that many public service interventions, such as participatory processes or training in empathy for bureaucrats, have implications for the relationship between, and the perceptions held state-agent and citizens about each other. Additionally, we find that there is immense potential to improve welfare outcomes by cultivating relationships through quotidian interactions between frontline workers and citizens; that relationships are relevant features of public services across most domains and sectors; that managerial conditions can improve or diminish the relational capacities and skills of bureaucrats; and that associational life and civic associations are important channels through which citizens develop relationships with state actors . We close the supplement with a set of hypotheses on RSC, and preliminary ideas on operationalizing RSC for observation and further research.

1. Introduction

This review is a supplement to our Working Paper on Relational State Capacity and an output of our broader effort to build a research program centering the role of the relationships between citizens and state actors in the realization of welfare outcomes. The dominant framing of State Capacity, as the technical and institutional capacity of governments to achieve outcomes, assumes a one-way flow in which outcomes are delivered to and for citizens by the State. This framing ignores the many ways in which outcomes emerge collectively through actions taken by state actors and citizens. We are interested in understanding what exactly conditions the quality of actions taken by citizens and state actors. We call this Relational State Capacity (RSC) - a latent capacity held by the whole of society. RSC is a component of state capacity which helps explain why vaccines are taken, why voluntary information is provided, and why voluntary trash segregation occurs. RSC is built through the ongoing interactions, exchanges and therefore relationships built between state actors and citizens at the individual level and aggregated into stocks and flows of RSC that improve collective understanding and achievement of outcomes.

The process of theorizing, modeling, and operationalizing RSC begins for us with a review of the literature on state-society relations. We start with this literature because we believe RSC is not 'new' but has rather been considered in more implicit ways in the existing literature. Based on our own work on state capacity and state-society relations and in conversation with other academics, we know that relationships are already a central component of diverse ideas such as participation, co-production, co-governance, deliberation, among others that aim to bring the state and society to think, work, and produce outcomes together, even when the

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focus of prior work has been on inputs, processes and outcomes and not explicitly on relationships. To us, this prior literature therefore enables a kind of secondary fieldwork; a place to reveal the presence and importance of relationships.

We conducted this review with the following goals. First, to locate and identify the often "hidden" role of relationships in the literature on state-society relations. Second, to identify the domains, country contexts, actors involved and the form of the relationship (its frequency, formal or informal nature, the time and place at which it is formed and so on). And third, to identify factors that influence the quality of the relationship from the literature.

In line with these goals, we present five major findings from our analysis of the literature. First, we find that the quality of citizen-state relationships is a factor not just important in sectors with frequent interactions between government personnel and the people, or where individuals and particular state agents form long-term relationships (e.g. social work or healthcare delivery). Studying and strengthening citizen-state relationships also appears to be important where state agents and citizens interact more infrequently, that is, spot transactions such as vaccine delivery or policing where the expectations and orientations of both citizens and state agents are shaped by prior interactions with 'other' bureaucrats/citizens.

Second, while often the pathways towards improved state-citizen relationships have been on structured and often state-led processes such as participation, coproduction, forums of deliberation and so on, we find that quotidian everyday interactions between citizens and state actors have important implications for performance and the achievement of welfare outcomes.

Third, we find significant evidence to support our initial hypothesis that relationships have always been important, albeit an implicit aspect in the study of state-citizen relations. Instead, important parallel concepts such as trust, both particularistic and institutional, individual traits and behaviors, or processes such as participation or coproduction have been used to understand the quality of relationships between citizens and state actors.

Next, the literature is a rich source of ideas on how relationships can be produced, sustained and improved or worsened. Here we can broadly identify two, state-side and citizen-side, types of interventions. Our fourth finding on practices on the state-side shows that employees often go above and beyond their duties and work relationally with citizens where managerial practices or organizational norms induce or foster motivation, enhance autonomy, and employees receive adequate support from superiors or the right financial and non-financial incentives. Our fifth finding focuses on the citizen side of the same set of ideas, highlighting the importance of civic groups and citizen associations in fostering norms and leadership qualities conducive to relational work with the state.

Finally, we present a comprehensive list of factors that enable the emergence of or improve or diminish the quality of relationships between citizens and state actors based on the analyses. This list allows us to identify causal pathways for enhancing the quality of relationships and build hypotheses for testing in empirical settings as presented in our framework paper on RSC.

This review paper contributes to the literature on state-society relations by making salient the existence and importance of relationships, identifying factors that lead to the emergence, sustenance, growth and decline or the quality of the relationship, and finally, by proposing a set of ideas for operationalizing relationships for future research. In the discussion section, we outline how relational contracts, recognition and identity, and reciprocity offer us powerful tools for the assessment of relationships in empirical settings. We close the paper with an agenda for future research emerging from this.

2. **Methods**

This paper reviews a broad range of the literature on state-society relations across disciplines including sociology, political science, public administration, development studies, anthropology, and economics, to understand the myriad ways by which the relationship between citizens and state actors is produced, maintained, strengthened or diminished.

The purpose of this literature review is to scope the literature on state-society relations at large to find evidence for RSC by observing how key areas of scholarship, such as participation, political trust, co-production, networked governance, claim-making, social contracts, incentives, etc. study state agent-citizen relations and their outcomes. We adopt the approach used to conduct narrative reviews coupled with purposive sampling to identify exemplary cases across key research areas that would help us gain an understanding of the form, nature, emergence, and outcomes of state-citizen relationships. Being the first effort in this direction, the review has prioritized an interpretative reading of literature to demonstrate the centrality of the quality of relationships between citizens and state actors in achieving outcomes across disciplines. In the absence of existing evidence towards RSC, the interpretive approach of the narrative review helps us make an "evidence-informed" case for this concept by "[selecting] evidence judiciously and purposively with an eye to what is relevant for key policy questions" (Greenhalgh, Thorne, and Malterud 2018).

This narrative review illustrates how RSC has notionally existed in state-society interactions and could be observed in myriad cases across a wide range of research areas and diverse types of studies. Given that much of state-society literature in areas like participation or claim-making observes to any extent a citizen-bureaucrat interaction, and any systematic search towards this literature would have resulted in thousands of cases worth investigating, it became necessary to rely on purposive sampling, online searches, expert recommendations, nested citations, and ultimately reviewers' discretions to identify a range of representative cases across areas of research.

In this direction, we first developed a comprehensive list of sub-fields in the literature on state-society relations. Drawing on our own experience of working on questions of state-society relations and in consultation with academics and practitioners, we developed a list of 16 sub-fields (Table 1) that, in different ways, focus on strengthening the quality of relationships between citizens and state actors.

Trust	Participation
Co-Production, Co-governance and Co-Design	Bureaucratic Norms and Public Service Motivation
Claim-making	Ethics of Care
Networked Governance	Learning
Community Monitoring and Citizen Accountability	Deliberative and Participatory Democracy
Incentives	Social Ties and Social Distance
Relational Contracts	Moral Economy of Bureaucrats
Recognition	Civic Associations

Table 1: Sub-fields from the literature on state-society relations

Then, across these sub-fields, the authors identified 61 highly cited journal publications, reports and case studies which offered both novel theoretical insight and showcased exemplar case studies.

In the first phase of the review, our research team independently read through the initial collection of 61 papers, analyzing them through a review matrix to understand the nature, emergence, and outcomes of state agent-citizen relationships. Next, the team conducted independent rapid reviews of highly cited literature within each of the 16 sub-fields, some overlapping with the initial collection. The rapid reviews started with selected key studies and expanded the scope through guided searches on electronic databases and Google Scholar. We used keywords that paired the core concept, such as trust, or participation, with other search terms like state-society relationships, bureaucratic encounters, or citizen interactions, that were associated with and could be helpful in discovering instances of state agent-citizen relationships. Like others (Finlay 2021), we also snowballed from our initial list of key studies to discover relevant cases through the works cited in seminal and other conceptually relevant publications. The inclusion criteria were discretionary, relying on the researcher's judgment of the ability of any study to address or present empirical evidence for the research question: how state-society relations could influence welfare outcomes or shape the welfare delivery process. The rapid mini-reviews resulted in the inclusion of over a hundred more studies, totaling to a collection of 207 works read overall.

In the next step, we narrowed our inclusion criteria to a select few studies where there was an empirical description or documentation, qualitative or quantitative, of a state agent-citizen relationship. These cases either explicitly discussed the interactions between citizens and state agents or were observed by the authors to capture some kind of state agent-citizen relationship, such as a regular acquaintance, or a relationship of trust. We were left with 32 cases describing such relationships.

Framework for analysis

We coded these 32 studies in an Excel spreadsheet against our framework (Table 2) to help us understand what state-citizen relations look like and the conditions that help relationships flourish. We inductively coded the cases against carefully identified criteria to map the context, form and drivers of relationships. To decide the criteria, we studied the cases to identify the different observable contexts within which state agent-citizen interactions were taking place, thus characterizing interactions and how authors were studying them.

Our criteria were based on information that was readily available/observable for each case, organized into four broad categories: a) the context in which the relationship is being studied in the paper; b) the actors involved in the relationship; c) the nature of the relationship itself; and d) the inputs, mediators and outcomes of the relationship. Each of the categories has sub-categories and specific dimensions across which the studies were analyzed as depicted in Table 2 below.

CATEGORY	DIMENSIONS	DESCRIPTION
Context in which the relationship is studied		
Geographical scope of observation	National	We recorded whether the study observed state-citizen relations at an organizational, community, regional, or national scale.
	Community/Regional	
	Organizational	

Place of Interaction	Government Office	The place where a citizen-state interaction happens can shape the experience of the relationship and therefore the outcomes or effectiveness of the interaction (Renedo and Marston 2015). Therefore, we map where the interactions between the state agent and citizen were physically taking place. This could be spaces such as a government office where the state administers from, domestic spaces such as citizens' homes, public spaces such as neighborhoods or schools, or at participatory fora set up to enable citizen-state agent interactions such as city council meetings, *gram sabhas*, etc.
	Citizen Residence	
	Public Space	
	Structured participatory Forum	
Sector or domain of governance	Sector/Service	We mapped sectors/domains of governance to understand whether some domains are likely to experience a higher frequency of, or more routine interaction between citizens and state agents and compared to others.
Actors involved		
State-side actors	Policy Level with Senior Administrators, Politicians	We identified the administrative level of the bureaucrat that engaged with the citizen across the different cases of state agent-citizen interactions. Cases observed the state of the relationship between senior administrators, policymakers, or politicians with citizens, interactions between mid-level administrators and citizens, and the interactions and relationships between street level bureaucrats and citizens.
	Higher Administrative Level	
	Frontline with Street Level Bureaucrats	
Intermediaries		We identified whether intermediaries such as NGOs were involved in the state-citizen relationship. This field was marked as "No" when the non-governmental actor interacted with citizens as a state representative (such as agencies contracted by the state to engage in frontline work with citizens, such as a community development center).
Citizens	Civic Association	We identified whether interactions across the cases were observed between citizens as individuals and the state agent, or between an association or a group of citizens as a collective and the state agent.
	Individual Citizens	
Nature of the interaction and relationship		
Type of Interaction	Quotidian	State agents and citizens engaged in two kinds of interactions - quotidian unstructured meetings, or meeting as a part of a structured and planned process or at special events.
	Events / Structured	
Number and frequency of interactions	Frequent/Repeated	We observed the frequency of interactions between state agents and citizens in each case. Interactions between the same actors were either repeated and frequent, taking place over any span of time, or they were one-off encounters between two people.
	One-off	
Intervention		We categorized the studies by whether an intervention, such as a recent policy change, an experiment, or a program by a development agency was taking place and being studied.
Inputs, mediators and outcomes of the relationship		
Outcomes		Various outcomes of building better state-citizen relations were observed across cases, such as higher trust, higher

	participation, increased utilization of government services, transformed norms of interaction between citizens and state officials, improved learning and health outcomes, ability to meet the welfare objectives of a program, etc.
Factors influencing the quality of the relationship	Managerial practices such as the incentives and autonomy offered to state agents, bureaucratic and organizational norms, and the nature and context of bureaucrat-citizen interactions influence the quality of the relationship produced.

Table 2: Analytical Framework

3. Findings

In this section, we discuss our key findings from the review and demonstrate that successful state agent-citizen relationships play a key role in achieving social outcomes and enabling governance.

Quotidian relations are an important component and 'asset' in achieving performance or welfare outcomes.

One of the clearest descriptions of the importance of everyday state-citizen relationships can be found in Judith Tendler and Sarah Freedheim's (1994) work in Ceara, Brazil. Tendler and Freedheim study the implementation of an innovative preventative health program devised by the state of Ceara's new reformist government in 1987. The program involved hiring women from local communities as health agents for preventative health services for children such as "providing assistance and advice with respect to oral rehydration therapy, vaccination, pre-natal care, breastfeeding, and growth monitoring as well as collecting data for health monitoring" (Tendler and Freedheim 1994). But over time, the health agents were found doing much more due to their deep commitment to the role and their "self-enlarging" job, including performing minor curative care, helping with community cleanliness, organizing awareness campaigns, etc.

Investigating the reasons behind this, the authors find that the program produced an environment that gave the new health workers prestige and status in their job: the selection process was a highly meritocratic public exercise, the program instituted processes that granted workers autonomy, inspired them to voluntarily expand the scope of their work by assigning an increased sense of public importance to their role in the community. These health agents recurrently made home visits to families in the neighborhood, and through their work developed relations of trust with citizens by being present with people through "mundane" experiences like "cooking, cleaning or childcare" (Tendler and Freedheim 1994, 1783). Tendler and Freedheim (1994) describe these quotidian interactions as being crucial to gaining citizens' trust, which helped produce "relations of mutual trust between workers and their clients - and, more broadly, between governments and the social networks in the larger society outside them."

As described by Tendler and Freedheim (1994), quotidian encounters and mundane interactions have been observed across cases that closely look at state-citizen relationships to be an important asset for state agents' work with communities and their capacity to achieve collective social outcomes, such as better health outcomes, educational outcomes (Mangla 2022), community development (Jupp 2008), and welfare services (Zacka 2017). These cases demonstrate in various ways that quotidian relationships catalyze public outcomes.

Jupp (2008) studies how a community regeneration program for two council estates in Stoke-on-Trent, England was adopted and led by people in the neighborhood instead of being

appropriated and implemented top-down by city council officials. She observed that "micro-level interactions" between community residents "such as having cups of tea together, jointly planting an allotment or pushing an elderly person in a wheelchair" in domestic spaces that "were low-key and [actions] often invisible" nonetheless brought about "powerful changes, such as adults gaining confidence and skills, and young people gaining influence over what happened in the neighbourhoods." These mundane activities within the community as a part of a regeneration project "had tangible impacts on the estates, for example reporting of 'anti-social behavior' to the police decreased on Westfields as the work of the group with young people expanded" through which aged residents were familiarized with local youth and stopped feeling threatened by them.

Zacka similarly discusses how protracted interactions with citizens exist across the board for street-level bureaucrats, even if they are more common for bureaucrats such as counselors and teachers and more limited for others such as retention agents. These interactions turn into relationships, and in that process Zacka observes how, "[t]he client acquires individuating features and comes to life as a full-fledged person. It is as if the counselor had taken off her bureaucratic spectacles and had finally acknowledged the man behind the 'case'". The counselor is also changed by this process, adopting the characteristics of a sympathetic listener, confidante, advocate and even care-giver. Multiple cases in our review demonstrate the impact of quotidian encounters between citizens and frontline workers (Mangla 2022; Lowe et al. 2022; Lavee 2021; NESTA 2019; Kruks-Wisner 2018).

These cases also highlight the importance of *where* interactions between citizens and state agents happen. In Stoke-on-Trent, Jupp (2008) observed that

> "the most productive exchanges…between local people and officials at community facilitation events were either before or after the official 'meetings', when there was often food and drink available." Similarly, generative interactions took place when groups across council estates "encouraged other residents to 'drop in for a cup of tea and a chat'... People might arrive with their children or babies, with their shopping, or come by to drop something off and then end up staying to talk. In both houses there were often people standing around near the door who had intended to stay 'just for a couple of minutes' and then got caught up in discussing local events, or issues or people….[while] such interactions may seem banal or trivial, such everyday sociability clearly formed an important basis for connecting with other residents. Over time this might lead to generating new forms of collective action, for example conversations about the school holidays might lead to a new initiative for young people, or looking at a newspaper article about proposed redevelopment plans might lead to setting up a meeting with the local MP."
>
> (Jupp 2008)

Across multiple cases, we found evidence of strong state agent-citizen relationships when interactions took place in domestic, everyday spaces characterized by comfort, familiarity, and belonging for citizens. Examples of such spaces are citizens' homes and neighborhoods (Tendler and Freedheim 1994; Jupp 2008; NESTA 2019) or public schools (which could be said to saddle the boundary between an everyday citizen space and a formal office of state workers) (Mangla 2022; NESTA 2019; Collins 2021).

These mundane and intimate interactions catalyzed a critical transformation in state-society relationships. Quotidian encounters presented opportunities for state and citizen actors to step out of their roles as state agents delivering services or citizens subject to receiving them and instead interact as peers and equal collaborators working to effect social change. These circumstances allowed two separate goals of delivering and claiming government services to often emerge as one common and collective goal of creating a difference and improving community welfare. Remarkably, one community worker told Jupp (2008) that through the

course of the community-led neighborhood regeneration project, “she felt more ‘at home’ on Riverlands than she did in her own neighborhood, and indeed she continued to be involved in the neighborhood after her (short-term) contract had expired.”

While domestic and public spaces offered opportunities for mundane interactions that quietly transformed the quality of state-citizen relations, we also observed the role of structured and formal interactions that took place in two other types of spaces, that is either in fora especially organized for citizen participation or in formal government offices. Examples of the former are the institutionalized village meeting or *gram sabhas* in India (Sanyal and Rao 2018), city council halls (Sullivan 2021), periodic public meetings set up for development programs, such as in the Kecamatan Development Project (Barron, Diprose, and Woolcock 2011), formally organized periodic interactions with citizens like the community monitoring meetings with health staff (Christensen et al. 2023), or formal meetings, such as neighborhood meetings organized by local authorities in Stoke-on-Trent to rouse citizen participation.

While these interactions were planned, structured, and not quotidian in nature, they often forged trust and strengthened norms of communication and learning in the relationship between citizens and state actors. However, in some cases, these formal structured interactions also left citizens feeling alienated from their administration due to their top-down/one-sided nature (Jupp 2008; Renedo and Marston 2015). The latter type of space, where the state administers from, include the offices of government workers or points of citizen services (Renedo and Marston 2015; Zacka 2017; Heath 2022). Different organizational practices, norms, and moral cultures within these formal spaces espoused different qualities of state agent-citizen interactions which led to the development of different degrees of state agent-citizen relationships, as discussed in later sections.

Relationships are important for achieving outcomes across most domains, geographies, and levels of administration

While the strongest evidence for the crucial role played by relationships between state actors and citizens for achieving outcomes is observed at the frontline, a closer look at the literature reveals that *relationships are important across most domains, geographies, and levels of administration.* Taken as a whole, the review shows that relationships are not just important in sectors with frequent interactions between government personnel and the people, or where individuals and particular state agents form long-term relationships (e.g. social work or healthcare delivery) (Tendler and Freedheim 1994; Christensen et al. 2023; Collins 2021; Angell et al. 2021; Nasi and Choi 2023; Lavee 2021; Croke et al. 2024; Mangla 2022; Renedo and Marston 2015). They also appear to be important in sectors where state agents and citizens have infrequent or one-time interactions (e.g. regulatory services or housing) (Lameke et al. 2023; Matta et al. 2017; Lowe et al. 2022; Heath 2022; Zacka 2017; Kruks-Wisner 2018). Moreover, relationships are not only a salient aspect of administration across service domains, but they also matter at every level and point of administration.

Our cases show that relationships and relational thinking are important for frontline administration (where they are most evident and most frequently observed), middle management, and even policymakers and senior administration. While face-to-face interactions between citizens and frontline workers lead to the most obvious state agent-citizen relationships, many cases find that the managerial layer of administration also interacts relationally with citizens, directly or indirectly during service delivery. These interactions can contribute to the formation of strong and positive perceptions that citizens hold about their governments that can improve the quality of their encounters with state representatives (Heath 2022; Mangla 2022).

We also examined the geographical spread of the literature. Overall, we find no differences in the quality and impact of relationships formed across different contexts, whether in developing

or developed states. Our cases are almost equally divided across these two distinct geographies and show that successful relationships can be built under certain institutional and individual conditions that could be replicated across the globe. Some such conditions are the managerial practices of bureaucratic organizations, such as the incentives and autonomy offered to state officials, the moral dispositions of individual bureaucrats, the administrative burden of initiating interaction with state officials, the quality and design of citizen participation offered by a state agency, the quality of citizen leaders in communities, etc. These conditions are discussed in detail through the rest of this section.

Further, the units of observation chosen by researchers studying state-society relations also range from organizations to communities to entire states. Many of the papers reviewed describe state agent-citizen interactions taking place in one organization at one location, such as a hospital, a development agency, or a state's Department of Human Services (Brogan 2022; Leuthart and Prinsen 2022; Renedo and Marston 2015; Zacka 2017; Heath 2022; Cheng and Sandfort 2023). An organizational focus highlights how practices such as citizen involvement practices, communication, moral organizational cultures, training, and worker autonomy, shape state-society relationships.

Many cases cover a wider unit of observation, looking at state agent-citizen interactions across a village, district, state, or nation. This was particularly noticed in cases where state officials from different organizational units across a region or country deliver services as a part of civic programs or state-led interventions such as community monitoring programs or participatory development projects (Christensen et al. 2023; Barron, Diprose, and Woolcock 2011; Sullivan 2021). Studying state-society relations in larger geographical pockets such as across districts, states, villages, or cities enabled researchers to assess determinants such as the broader cultural norms influencing interactions, or the influence of heterogeneity in the citizen population on state-citizen relations. For example, how colonial history and development strategies adopted by the state lead to the cultivation of different types of relations with communities (Mangla 2022), how corruption in particular states shapes perverse outcomes of state agent-citizen relationships (Lameke et al. 2023), how local elites and common residents within a region had different qualities of interactions with the state (Ali 2020), or how similar communities across states with different resources (amount of time at hand) could have different interactions with the same level of bureaucrat (Sullivan 2021).

In sum, relationships between state actors and citizens are observed across sectors of the economy, levels of the bureaucracy, geographies, and units of observation from the individual organization to nation-states. While the most frequent and generative relationships are documented at the frontlines of the state in sectors such as health, relationships are pervasive and central to the achievement of outcome. They have however not always been the focus of scholarly analysis, a point to which we turn next.

Citizen-state agent relationships have always been a key interest in state-society and public administration literature. However, the relationship itself has rarely been the unit of analysis. Instead, the traits and qualities of people, features of interactions between a state agent and citizen, the processes that lead to relationship formation, and the outcomes of healthy state-society relations have been a key focus of assessment.

This review approaches the state-citizen relationship through its adjacent concepts and features, such as trust between actors, the moral dispositions of actors, organizational practices that shape interactions between actors, the feelings of care between actors, their patterns of meeting, or the intimacy of their relationship. Across cases, these individual and organizational features appear critical to the formation of relationships, as discussed throughout the findings. In the absence of a focus on assessing the quality of the relationship itself, we interpret the quality of the relationship through these concepts and measures.

Literature on the existence, relevance, and emergence of trust provides a useful analytical lens for assessing the quality of relationships. Margaret Levi (Levi and Stoker 2000; Levi 2022) has argued that the most fertile ground for judgments of trust to emerge is when citizens come into humanizing contact with the state. While "all citizens enter into a relationship with their national government in that they are bound by its laws… the ordinary relationships that citizens have with political authorities are most likely to be local in focus" (Levi and Stoker 2000).

Levi (2022) suggests that the trust that citizens build in particular organizations (e.g. the local school system) influences (and can be measured through) their behaviors in response to those specific organizations - e.g. such as compliance or non-compliance, protest or support. However, there is also scope for broader updating, in both directions; trust based on relations with a given (or a small number) of organizations can also be generalized to the state as a whole. So, too, can generalized trust in the national government be in some circumstances more important than local affairs; for inoculation and compliance with public health measures, others have also noted the importance of having overall trust in the government (Ali and Altaf 2021; Levi 2022; Besley and Dray 2022). In another instance, recently, Blair et al (2022) showed that in Uganda "compliance with [nationally issued COVID-19] restrictions is strongly positively correlated with trust in government, but only weakly correlated with trust in local authorities or other citizens." Some cases also provide evidence for positive or negative perceptions that citizens hold of the state at large, measured by their trust in and opinions of the central government and their politicians (Martinez-Bravo and Stegmann 2022; Besley and Dray 2022; Blair et al. 2022).

A closely related literature which has explored the complex relationships between trust and behavior, and what happens when citizens and state agents interact in novel ways, is on the role of different accountability relationships in welfare outcomes.

For example, Christensen et al (2023) introduces two main community monitoring interventions for clinics under an administrative unit of Sierra Leone. One is through citizen-health worker meetings where mutual commitments to utilize and administer health services were made; the second introduces competition between clinics through non-financial incentives such as performance-based awards. Both interventions increase the interface between citizens and health workers, generate trust in and better satisfaction with health workers as well as more trust in western medicine. Notably, the authors found that in the long-run, increased confidence in health workers also led to more reporting of ailments and symptoms during future disease outbreaks such as Ebola, where the reporting of cases where the experimental interventions were made was 60% more than at the control sites.

This shows that improving the trust between citizens and state through relationships of accountability such as community monitoring, can produce better utilization of state health services and improve health outcomes. This is also an example of what Honig (2024) calls "short route" citizen-led accountability, which are direct opportunities for citizens to oversee, evaluate, and give their feedback on service delivery, often involving initiatives that enable communities to monitor the actions of bureaucrats. Accountability practices like community deliberation and community monitoring, etc. seem to enhance performance via the relationships they build.

The *actions and orientations of individual citizens and state agents* are also studied as inputs into successful state agent-citizen relationships. Bureaucratic norms and the moral dispositions of bureaucrats are such features that shape how state agents form relationships with citizens. For example, a vast literature has examined pro-social motivation among bureaucrats (Besley and Ghatak 2005; Grant 2008). Pro-social motivation can be defined as 'the desire to expend effort to benefit other people' (Grant, 2008, p. 48) and a disposition towards empathy, helpfulness, and concern for others . Pro-social motivation is distinct from the related concept of public service motivation (Perry and Wise 1990) in that it is more

directed at a specific group rather than society at large and is considered short and mid-term oriented (Ritz et al., 2023). Relatedly, Zacka (2017) argues that bureaucracies should focus on cultivating and sustaining moral pluralism among individual bureaucrats. The psychological and organizational pressures of their jobs compel bureaucrats to settle into three possible moral dispositions: indifference, enforcement, or caregiving. It appears that a mix of these dispositions, but perhaps most importantly, caregiving is sometimes critical to the formation of effective relationships (Zacka 2017; Stensöta 2015).

Scholars have explored the impact of moral dispositions on state-citizen relations at other sites as well. Gutmann and Thompson (1996) write that public deliberation occurs through the structure of a moral argument. During deliberative disagreements over policy decisions, such as abortion rights, citizens can "accommodate the moral convictions of their opponents to the greatest extent possible, without compromising their own moral convictions." While moral values play a potent role in public deliberation and influence how "citizens treat one another [and what policies are adopted]" (Gutmann and Thompson 1996), moral values also influence how public officials treat citizens. The work of street-level bureaucrats is flush with making discretionary judgements about on-ground public service delivery and distribution of state resources. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) find that even these decisions are based in and explained through/guided by moral norms instead of legalistic rules, with street-level workers seeing themselves as "independent moral actors in opposition to the system." The provision of emotional support and personal resources of time and favours from frontline bureaucrats has also been recorded as influential in strengthening state agent-citizen relations (Lavee 2020; Tendler and Freedheim 1994).

Other occasions where state agents and citizens interact, having the chance to build relationships with each other, are during *processes designed by the state for citizen participation and co-production*. A vast literature on participation and co-production has in fact revealed that these exercises are more successful when participation is a deliberative, two-way exercise, where citizens and state officials interact as peers and form mutually beneficial relationships characterized by qualities such as listening, learning, and ease of interaction. The effects of deliberative and participatory exercises are observed across cases to influence state agent and citizen interactions.

Deliberative participation, which strives to prioritize discussion as opposed to a one-way flow of information from the state with controlled/limited citizen input, has been preferred by citizens as a mode of engaging with the state (Nasi and Choi 2023; Collins 2021; Jupp 2008; Renedo and Marston 2015). The success of deliberative and participatory practices in democracy also rests on institutional designs conducive to public participation (Heller and Rao 2015; Baiocchi 2015; Ansell and Torfing 2021).

For instance, the co-production of health by patients/carers and healthcare professionals transforms hospitals and healthcare institutions into participatory spaces. Renedo and Marsten (2015), studying patient involvement activities at UK hospitals, traced how these "invited" spaces of participation (Cornwall 2002) were used, manipulated, and navigated by patients. They observed that:

> "Participatory space was relationally constituted from social and material transactions involving participants doing things 'for' – rather than with – professionals. Within these social interactions there was a tendency towards one-way flows of information (involvees' and patient community opinions solicited by professionals), of physical movement (involvees sent to professionals' institutions rather than professionals going to involvees' home turf) and of temporal resources (involvees' time committed to professionals' requirements). The temporality of each participatory formation (timing, sequencing, and frequency of activities) was controlled by involvers to fit their work schedules. Professionals brought involvees into their institutions,

> provided involvement opportunities, solicited their opinions, and referred them to other professionals tasked with 'patient involvement'. Involvees were 'traded' between professionals' keen to recruit participants to fulfil commissioners' public involvement requirements."

In such a landscape, the burden of becoming involved and producing influence fell on the participants, with the professionals dismissing participation as procedure. In these spaces, the patient-involvees narrated their experiences as feeling like "guests and fighters." Renedo and Marsten (2015) argue that this "was inevitable when bounded participatory locations were chosen by health professionals and statutory officials and situated in places 'owned' by them – institutional settings with restricted access, away from involvees' homes and neighborhoods, (e.g. town hall meeting rooms, hospital boardrooms). Involvees lacked control over physical access to these spaces; for instance, they had to undergo checks and training to become 'official' (patient) representatives and required material artefacts such as invitations or institutional electronic cards to enter meeting rooms."

Such participatory experiences, of feeling opposite to the professionals that the patient-involvees were to collaborate with, of becoming one-sided recipients of information, of having to prove one's legitimacy as a participant, and of being relegated to procedural checkpoints, inhibited the emergence of horizontal and truly co-productive relationships between the patient and healthcare professionals. Therefore, this and other cases find that relationships and its component features such as deliberation, listening, mutual recognition, and trust are better cultivated when administrative burdens of participation, such as accessing state spaces and approaching state officials, are mitigated for citizens (Renedo and Marston 2015; Ali and Altaf 2021; Mangla 2022; Zacka 2017).

Public sector managerial practices and institutional conditions can shape bureaucratic norms, moral dispositions, incentives, and worker commitments, which in turn influence the ways in which state agents interact with citizens.

Honig (2024) suggests a distinction between management practices that are "empowerment-oriented" or "compliance-oriented"; an orientation towards compliance-oriented management is likely to lead to legalistic, rule-oriented norms. In contrast, empowerment-oriented practices allow autonomy, cultivate competence, and create connection to peers and purpose, facilitating the formation of relations of trust with citizens. This finding is supported by research on government schools in Delhi, India, where Aiyar et al (2021) find that compliance-oriented or legalistic norms strain performance and demotivate teachers who feel they have little agency, whereas special programs that developed deliberative norms of support amongst peers increased motivation and improved performance.

We see examples of the benefits of this distinct, empowerment-oriented organizational culture for the emergence of relationships across multiple cases.

One notable example of this is the Human Learning Systems (HLS) framework in public administration, ideated as a stark departure from the New Public Management model of governance (which typically manages workers for their inputs, outputs, and compliance) (Lowe 2021). Proposed by the Centre for Public Impact, HLS is "based on the belief that the purpose of public service is to support human freedom and flourishing" (Lowe 2021). It identifies that public outcomes are results of unique life systems for each individual citizen, thus making the production of public outcomes a complex and highly tailored task. Therefore, learning about humans is the main management and service strategy in HLS. State agents have autonomy and discretionary powers to prioritize learning about and supporting individual citizens in unique ways to achieve distinct outcomes that improve public outcomes at individual levels.

This approach emphasizes the value of developing personalized relationships with citizen-clients.

For instance, caseworkers in Scotland's Gateshead council were provided with autonomy, similar to Brazil's health workers, to visit citizens and learn about their most pressing personal needs. This included helping people carpet their living room, taking them out for coffee as a way to get them out of their house, or buying someone a new school uniform to encourage better school attendance upon realizing that worn out clothes were the reason for absence from school (Smith 2022). Such actions emerged from person-to-person connection between the caseworker and a client, characterized by uninhibited listening and understanding, termed by Lowe et al (2022) as a learning relationship. Other governance innovation programs also emphasize on the value of learning, demonstrated by Nesta's 100-Day Challenges across the UK where members of the community are trained as frontline staff to work with their community and understand local problems by bonding over shared lived experiences.

Alongside enabling discretion and autonomy for workers, managerial practices of public organizations can cultivate positive norms for and moral dispositions in their workers. In *Making Bureaucracy Work*, Akshay Mangla (2022) offers us deep insight into the role that bureaucratic norms play in shaping individual actions and building relationships between bureaucrats and the public that lead to the effective delivery of services. Mangla (2022) argues that norms, or the informal rules of conduct that instruct agents on how to act within a social context, can be either legalistic or deliberative. Legalistic norms, or norms that urge "fidelity to rules and procedures" can help insulate program implementation from political interference and aid in the broad coverage of programs. But they are less effective at ensuring quality provisioning of services at the field because they weaken efforts of routine citizen monitoring and interaction with the bureaucracy.

On the other hand, deliberative norms, or those that promote flexibility and problem-solving within the bureaucracy "stimulate societal feedback by shaping the ordinary interactions between frontline officials and citizens." Mangla (2022) shows how deliberative norms impact a range of activities, including planning, monitoring of programs alongside citizens groups, and the quotidian interactions between frontline officials and communities. Such norms enhance the quality of parent-teacher interactions and produce innovations to include children from marginalized groups into school. Norms of a similar nature, which encourage deliberation, collaboration, and mutual respect, are therefore important institutional factors in supporting state agents to build relationships with citizens.

Management practices can facilitate or retard the formation of these norms, and ultimately bureaucrats' behaviors and orientation towards citizens in ways that facilitate or retard the formation of RSC.

When teams or agencies within a bureaucracy are able to build and sustain empowering norms, scholars have found the formation of "pockets of effectiveness"; high-performing units or teams situated within bureaucratic systems with poor overall performance (McDonnell 2020; Hickey 2019). Citizens can be helpful in an accountability sense here, too; Levy (2024) finds that socially embedded bureaucracies (SEB), which involve governance arrangements that support "problem-focused relationships of co-operation" between bureaucrats and stakeholders outside of government, can foster norms of deliberation within the state and may help change overly rigid hierarchical bureaucratic cultures.

Peers can also serve as a channel for shaping the organization and disseminating norms; Brehm and Gates (1997) found that subordinates, rather than supervisors, can more effectively spread norms of professionalism within their peer networks. They proposed that improving compliance for street-level bureaucrats, particularly police officers, does not require increased supervision or control, but rather requires increasing the frequency of interaction

and promoting friendships between officers to facilitate the spreading of professional norms and altering network wide attitudes towards work. Wilson (1989) also wrote in support of providing bureaucrats enough autonomy to permit "distinctive, self-supporting cultures" to develop, adding that managers should seek to facilitate this by building beneficial norms considering the traditions, reward systems, and emotional commitments that contribute to norms in a team.

The literature on participation has many useful lessons for how states can build spaces that help ease and equalize state agent and citizen interactions (Renedo and Marsten 2015, Collins 2021). Discussing participatory development and democratic projects, Mansuri and Rao (2012) argue that civil society and political failure can also be repaired by modifying norms and changing the nature of social interactions to cause "a shift in the social equilibrium." An example of how interventions can transform social structures and cultivate conditions that facilitate deliberative norms which produce healthier state agent-citizen relationships is presented by Barron, Diprose, and Woolcock (2011) in their book *Contesting Development – Participatory Projects and Local Conflict Dynamics in Indonesia*. The book follows the Kecamatan Development Program (KDP) in Indonesia in the 1990's, a sub-district level project that set up a competitive bidding mechanism for direct resource allocation to different development projects within the sub-district's villages. In this system, groups of villagers would present funding proposals for projects within their village at a meeting facilitated by KDP staff, with other village residents and government officials as participants. However, the decisions for which project should be funded in the given cycle would be judged through deliberation and discussion between the villagers with local officials participating as peers, and not as state agents. This democratic intervention "[introduced] new rules and norms about how decisions should be made, thus influencing local power balances and structures," and inverting power relations between state officials and villagers. Through qualitative fieldwork, the authors observed the development of "mature and peaceful" "norms of solving problems between villagers" which were "transferred to negotiations in other village meetings" Further, "KDP appears to be effectively reengineering the relationship between citizens and the state at the local level."

Apart from process-based and spatial changes that organisations can make to mitigate administrative burdens on citizens for accessing services, state officials can also promote managerial practices, norms, and moral dispositions that ease citizen experiences in state spaces. This produces healthier relational conditions within government organisations that can improve the quality of state agent-citizen interactions and thus strengthen relationships. For instance, Zacka (2017), working at the NCDI, an American center that helped low-income citizens access government welfare, noticed the benefits of the center's director's "approach to [her] role, one that stressed the importance of being warm to clients and of offering personalized service," going as far as ensuring that "everything in the office—from the soft yellow and orange colors that she selected for the walls to the family pictures that adorned her desk—felt welcoming and intimate." For her, this was important as these citizens, or clients as she referred to them, "were pushed around all day long, sent from one office to another, and given the impression that no one cared for them." This demanded "a place where people feel they can come to get help when they need it, and where someone will actually listen to them." Thus, having adapted so well to the community and becoming an accessible, welcoming, as well as pleasant space, the NCDI "waiting room was [generally] crowded with clients who had decided to "drop in" at the last minute. Isabel's lenient and easygoing attitude had, if not exactly encouraged this, then at least made it possible" (Zacka 2017). In other settings, scholars have observed certain bureaucratic organizations that adopt established internal moral orders to guide the actions of their agents (DiIulio and DiIulio 1994; Mashaw 1983).

Citizens take many actions as individuals and as organized groups to work with the state for producing better social welfare or demanding better services for themselves.

From the perspective of citizens, the work of achieving welfare outcomes involves discrete or repeated encounters with state agents and taking collective actions that build relationships between the citizen and the state. For instance, types of quotidian actions that "citizens undertake in relation to the state [such as] attending a meeting, filing an application, visiting an official, contacting a local broker" to demand better state services and receive their entitlements are a critical mode of citizen claim-making, "a set of practices through which citizens forge relationships with the state" (Kruks-Wisner 2017; 2018). Claim-making, or citizen-initiated contact, is also increased when citizens have more social ties (Zhang and Zhu 2022) or "socio-spatial exposure" which provides "exposure to information and narratives about the state, as well as to potential linkages to public officials and agencies. This increases both the likelihood and diversity of claim-making by expanding the horizon of possibility – both for what the state might provide and for the actions citizens might undertake" (Kruks-Wisner 2018).

Citizens adopt various communicative strategies to present their claims and demands to state representatives, and these strategies can impact the response they receive, the quality of and satisfaction from the interaction, and the outcome produced. One case documented three distinct strategies used at city council hearings by different mobile home park (MHP) residents when they were about to be evicted (Sullivan 2021). Citizens at one park acted as "supplicants", airing out their grievances and sharing personal trials to public officials in an open, public, deliberative space where citizens were meant to "be heard." Some citizens across parks acted as "watchdogs", treating the "public sphere as a space to hold representatives accountable and…guarding against potential fraud and incompetence on the part of city officials." In both these cases, they used the public platform as it was meant to be used but failed to make specific claims on the state to avail appropriate resources to meet their needs. In both cases, public agents responded with empathy and reassured the citizens that they were indeed doing their job and fulfilling their responsibilities as public officials.

However, at a specific mobile home park where residents were given a longer duration of time to attend city council meetings before their eviction date, citizens acted as "self-advocates." They used the extra time they had (that residents of other MHPs did not) to conduct research on similar evictions and articulate their needs that reflected the actual costs of being evicted and finding new housing. While even these residents were ultimately evicted, they were still able to demand and avail the support they needed from the state. These citizens did not see themselves as passive recipients in need of state "hand-outs" but rather as "self-educated consumers of government aid." Clara, such a resident, said that "This is why I come to all these city council meetings because I want to stay on top of this. Making sure I am doing all I need to do. Being the kind of resident that I need to be, law-abiding, paying all my taxes, and being somebody that the city would want" (Sullivan 2021). This case demonstrates that citizens exercise agency and invest effort in cultivating working relationships with state representatives and care about the interactions they have and the results they're able to produce through their actions. Thus, we learn that social and institutional conditions like having time and opportunity to approach public officials and having peer ties and social networks that can provide adequate exposure, help individuals better undertake these actions.

Several cases also demonstrated that efforts to cultivate state-society relationships were stronger when citizens were involved as groups instead of individuals. In these cases, citizen claim-making from the state was supported by a civic association or teams of community leaders/volunteers (Matta et al. 2017; Matta and Morgan 2011; Arkedis et al. 2023) (e.g. Matta et al 2009, Matta and Morgan 2011, Arkedis et al 2023).

Civic associations, an institutionalized form of citizen interest groups, are termed “schools of democracy” because they cultivate strong leaders like above who help mobilize people and define and build support for organizational/community goals. The skills imbibed in civic leaders include those that help forge relationships, such as “relational, motivational, strategic, and executive skills required to engage participants, delegate responsibilities, conduct meetings, manage decision making, and enact accountability (Ganz 2009)” (Andrews et al. 2010). Good leadership skills are of key importance, because civic association leaders depend on “moral suasion rather economic or political coercion” to facilitate membership and citizen participation since membership is voluntary (Andrews et al 2010, 1192). Associations also depend on “their members’ contributions of money, time, effort, and skill to common purpose” and their success is decided by their ability to self-organize, self-lead, and “make their voices heard in the public arena” (ibid, 1192). “Through the exercise of collective voice, civic associations introduce important concerns into public discourse and policy, engaged members develop trust and learn valuable civic skills, and skilled organizational leaders become community leaders beyond the organization itself” (ibid, 1198). Civic associations thus create civic infrastructure and also espouse, incubate, and institutionalize social movements.

Field experiments show that civic associations with good leaders are capable of “creating a relational organizational context [which] makes targets more likely to sign petitions, recruit others, and attend meetings,” and have a “powerful impact on activism” by creating an “informal social structure or civic space” that can produce “policy impacts disproportionate to their size” (Han 2016). In fact, studies find that the presence of local organizations in U.S. cities has had observable political and policy impact, such as better representation and rights for unhoused people (Andrews et al 2010, 1199).

Organizations with a relational approach to building civic participation prioritize the personal recognition of and an identification with a citizen’s needs and goals. For instance, experiments found that a higher degree of personalization in a civic organizations’ emails, such as resonating with a specific citizen’s goals or their acknowledging their current stance on an issue, led to higher engagement and response (Han 2016). The same study found that prompting people to reflect on their engagement with the organization and inviting their thoughts also increased the chances of continued citizen engagement (Han 2016). This showed that “when civic organizations create the conditions that make it more likely social relationships will emerge, they are more likely to engage those subjects in acts of civic and political activism” (Han 2016).

Development organizations, recognizing the capacity of collective leadership to mobilize citizens in society, borrow the strategy of training community leaders who can spur citizen action and produce results by working closely with the state. For instance, Nesta, a social innovation agency in the UK, organizes 100-Day Challenges where local citizens, local organizations, and local frontline state workers representing different sectors of society such as health or education are drawn into teams and trained together by the organization as frontline leaders to work as a team with local communities and solve social problems such as diabetes, elder care, or youth mental health (NESTA, 2019).

While civic associations organize around bringing voice to public problems in politically relevant forums and spearheading public demands through their leadership structures, they also imbibe a democratic spirit in their member-base. Working in and with associations, people get a space to cultivate and exercise their own “civic agency,” thereby transforming citizens “from feeling like objects to subjects in the project of democracy” (Han 2024). Membership to groups and organizations, big or small, also afford people the experience of developing relationships with other people, and in turn the “sense of being connected to something larger than themselves” (Han 2024). These various transformative experiences provided by civic infrastructure can build a politically active citizenry and ambitious community leaders that are

inclined and prepared to work with state agents, take public action, and contribute to improving democratic life (Han 2016; Han 2024).

A synthesis of the determinants of good relationships

Through this extensive narrative review of state-citizen relationships, we find that many individual as well as institutional factors condition the ways in which state agents and citizens approach each other, such as the spaces in which interactions happen, the trust that is present in the other party, the moral values of state agents, the participatory infrastructure available in society and organized by the state, which state agent is involved in the relationship etc. We also identify factors that help characterize the relationship between some state agents and citizens, such as whether the relationship emerges from frequent interactions or is contained in a one-off bureaucratic encounter or whether the interaction is formal and structured or informal and quotidian. Some of the factors we identify as influencing state agent-citizen relations are commonly measured concepts in public administration, though they have rarely been studied as impacting the state agent-citizen relationship and instead are studied as inputs or outputs of processes of governance or administration. We present a comprehensive list of such factors in Table 3.

Table 3: Core concepts and variables that shape state-citizen relations

Concept	Link to RSC
Intrinsic motivation	Research from public administration finds that intrinsic motivation or 'esprit de corps' is a defining characteristic of bureaucratic work in developmental states and crucial for overall productivity (Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks 2017). It "suggests that public-minded bureaucratic agents want to deliver services and do not have to be made accountable via explicit, formalized monitoring and incentive schemes" (ibid). This is noticed in cases where we see high RSC, such as self-motivated health workers who saw themselves as a part of the community and approached citizens not as clients, but as peers to whom they were providing support through mundane interactions (Tendler and Freedheim 1994). Studies also show that where norms produce motivation (Aiyar 2021, Honig 2024), bureaucrats feel higher agency and produce better outcomes. Motivation in such cases encourages bureaucrats to go 'beyond' formal mandates and work relationally with people to achieve best results. We therefore expect a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and RSC.
Norms	Norms can shape relationships, can embed social values that promote new ways of relating between citizens, state agents, or between citizen and state agents. Certain types of bureaucratic norms (deliberative as compared to legalistic) also cause a closer working relationship between government workers and citizens (Mangla 2022), thus producing deliberative learning relationships that in turn help improve service delivery and produce better societal outcomes. The link between norms and RSC have been studied through deep qualitative case studies and ethnographic research. Bureaucratic norms are developed in niches over a long period of time (Mangla 2022, McDonnell 2020), and can have a causal relationship with the emergence of RSC (Mangla 2022) when they promote behaviors such as active listening, deliberation, citizen-centricity and so on among bureaucrats.

Social Ties / Social Networks	Social ties and networks provide citizens with new ways of approaching the state, particularly in contexts with weak formal institutions of governance. Securing government services by citizens is made easier when they use networks/ties (which would take relational work to cultivate), as opposed to going through a purely bureaucratic/formal route. Social ties help citizens initiate more contact with the state, wherein the existence of and exposure to peer networks help provide the information and encouragement needed to reach out to state officials, thus leading to more opportunities for encounters with the state, in turn enabling the emergence of RSC. Lameke et al (2023) shows that weak ties help citizens enter relational contracts with public officers. That is weak ties can cause the emergence of RSC, wherein citizens use social ties with public officers to work with/negotiate with public agents, instead of using formal institutional frameworks (however, this was shown by Lameke et al in the context of enabling corruption).
Moral values/ Moral Dispositions	The values and dispositions that guide people's (whether citizen or bureaucrat) actions into 'doing the right thing' – whether or not endorsed by the legalistic rules of a particular State. Moral dispositions can also elicit caregiving. The literature shows that a certain type of moral disposition is correlated with higher RSC (namely, the Caregiver type in Zacka's *The State Meets The Street*). On the other hand, other types of moral dispositions (Indifferent and Enforcer types) are negatively correlated with RSC.
Organizational Design	Organizations where incentives at the top are aligned with incentives at the bottom (Heller and Rao 2015) are found to be better conducive to co-production, a process which enables relationship building. Positive organizational design features that can lead to the formation of RSC can occur in the number of forms, including greater autonomy, support from superiors, or financial and non-financial incentives. For example, Rasul and Rogger (2017) find that management practices related to autonomy are positively correlated to project completion by bureaucrats, and hence performance enhancing. Similarly, Honig finds a positive relationship between supporting management practices and motivation on the job. Literature on pockets of bureaucratic effectiveness (Hickey 2019; McDonnell 2020), which are high-performing units within larger organizations/bureaucracies, also find autonomy to be an important characteristic feature of such units or groups. On the other hand, scholars of bureaucracy argue that "designing successful incentive schemes and management practices is challenging because of the multidimensional nature of many public service tasks" (Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks 2017). In many cases, financial incentives can deter intrinsic motivation (ibid) (which is correlated with better RSC), or can cause social problems such as producing corruption or performance problems such as poor multitasking leading to the neglect of non-rewarded duties of the job, . We expect that organizational design factors that lead to more autonomy and are supportive of employees in the public sector are also likely to lead to higher amounts of RSC. On the other hand, we are uncertain about the impact of both financial and non-financial incentives on RSC. We expect that non-financial rewards that highlight the community/people-centric behaviour of bureaucrats are likely to produce more RSC.

Trust	Higher levels of individual and generalized trust are both positively correlated with RSC. Research has shown that citizens are more likely to comply with mandates such as vaccination when they place greater (generalized) trust in their governments. However, trust may or may not be built through quotidian interactions and through the process of humanizing the person on the other side of the interaction. Trust therefore is positively correlated with RSC, but several other factors such as the location, frequency, and type of interaction among others are required for RSC to emerge in scenarios with high levels of existing trust.
Monitoring	Monitoring is either performed by the state on its own agents or by citizens on state-agents. Both cases derive from the principal-agent model of viewing the work of state-agents. However, monitoring of state-agents by communities of citizens can also enable dialogue and encourage demands/claim-making from citizens unto public officials, therefore creating spaces in which relationships could be built. For example, community Monitoring has been shown to produce better health outcomes as a result of increase in trust, which indicates the formation of RSC, by increasing the interface between citizens and public service providers. At the same time, a vast body of research also shows that monitoring can crowd-out intrinsic motivation, which is positively correlated with RSC. For example, “Rasul and Rogger (2015, 2016) show that increased monitoring lowers output by bureaucrats. This lack of success in active management by supervisors is due to poor targeting of incentives and multitasking problems” (Pepinsky, Pierskalla, and Sacks 2017). We expect that monitoring, either by the state or by citizens is in general going to be negatively correlated with the emergence of RSC, except in rare cases in which monitoring is able to generate space for dialogue.
Participation	Participation again induces protracted interactions between citizens and government officials - which leads to the formation of relationships. If participatory practices are sustained, it must mean that some sort of relationship is emerging from the frequent dialogue between citizen and state official. However, as we learn from the literature, this depends on the nature of participation - the space in which participation occurs, the openness of all actors to the participation process, the extent of informal interactions built into the process and comfort that citizens feel in the space of participation. We expect participation to have opposing effects on RSC depending on how it is implemented.
Peer Relations	Strong peer relations within groups of citizens or groups of bureaucrats help diffuse and sustain norms and also inspire motivation. The literature reviewed shows that peer group effects among police officers can spread positive attitudes towards work (Brehm and Gates 1997) and improve community cooperation among residents of a neighborhood (Jupp 2008). The types of norms that spread through peer group effects among bureaucrats can however also lead to a more legalistic approach to citizen-interaction. Therefore, peer group effects have a mixed relationship with RSC, depending on the type of dominant norms being diffused.
Interactions: time, frequency and temporal dimensions	Relationships rarely take root in episodic encounters (Kruks-Wisner 2018), rather, protracted interactions and regular encounters are more likely to produce a sense of relatedness / produce a sense of the collective. This has been shown by Sullivan (2021), who said that time was a differentiating factor in how different communities of residents were able to organize and present themselves as a collective to local administrators at city council meetings. With time, the other communities were also able to adopt better strategies of organizing, thus showing that time was an essential resource and factor in working together. Jupp (2008) also shows how repeated and timeless

	encounters enabled better in-group relations to form, which motivated citizens to work together and demand the help of the state to improve the conditions of their neighborhood. We therefore expect that more time and a higher frequency of interactions are positively correlated with RSC.
Interactions: spatial dimensions	Much of the state-initiated participatory and relationship building exercises are undertaken in spaces 'opened up' (Fox, Hossain, and Robinson 2023; Sullivan 2021) or 'invited' (Miraftab 2004; Cornwall 2002; Renedo and Marston 2015) by the state. This has multiple effects. First, it shifts the burden of approach to the citizen, who must physically enter these 'other' 'state' spaces to work with the state and be seen/heard. The citizen must also strategize so that they can understand and manipulate these new spaces and be noticed within them. Second, these are also spaces that are not where citizens feel comfortable - they are outside their home. If a space where participation happens is a departure from the comfort and everyday living of the citizen, then it is less likely for quotidian interactions that contribute to everyday state citizen relations to occur. We expect therefore that RSC is more likely to form when state-citizen interactions happen in spaces where citizens feel comfortable, outside of specially structured fora where citizens are 'called into' the state.

These measurable variables serve as helpful proxies to understand the strength and quality of state agent-citizen relationships. We now propose some hypotheses on the way high-quality state agent-citizen relationships yield favorable social outcomes. We conceptualize this as relational state capacity (RSC) and offer a model for RSC in the main paper. What remains for future research is the development of a measure of the quality of the relationship as a self-contained unit of analysis, for which we offer our ideas in the main paper and the section on operationalization with which we close this supplement.

Hypotheses & Empirical Approach

In this section we present hypotheses, then offer our current thinking on how to operationalize and assess RSC's various stages and components.

Hypotheses

The model for RSC, and fieldwork of the state-society literature suggests some expectations regarding interactions, intermediation, the formation of social imaginaries, and relational state capacity.

1) **Higher Relational State Capacity increases the state's performance and welfare outcomes, all else equal.**

Producing human flourishing – in contrast to the state delivering welfare benefits or performing a routine exercise of monitoring bureaucrats – at least sometimes requires a relational approach to governance. The potential to enhance collective outcomes exists when the relationship between citizens and state actors is stronger.

Hypothesis 1: Where Relational State Capacity is higher (e.g. higher clarity and credibility; interpersonal trust; psychological safety; mutual respect) welfare will be higher, ceteris paribus.

2) **The causal influence of RSC on welfare outcomes will vary across policy domains and task environments.**

Our read of the literature suggests that (contra our initial expectations) RSC is not only important in sectors with frequent interactions between government personnel and the people, or where individuals and particular state agents form long-term relationships (e.g. social work or healthcare delivery). RSC also appears to be important where state agents and citizens interact more infrequently (forums of participation across domains) (Barron, Diprose, and Woolcock 2011; Kruks-Wisner 2018). RSC may be important even in 'spot' transactions such as vaccine delivery and policing where the expectations and orientations of both citizens and state agents are shaped by prior interactions with 'other' bureaucrats/citizens (Ali and Altaf 2021; Blair et al. 2022).

However, we expect that the returns to higher RSC will vary across these domains and in relation to the task environment. Easily observed transactional tasks will see lower returns to RSC. Complex tasks that benefit from bureaucratic autonomy; repeat citizen engagement and action; or are difficult for government leadership to codify, observe and assess will see greater returns to RSC.

Hypothesis 2: Relational State Capacity will have an increasingly positive association with concerted attempts to improve welfare where:

- the task environment consists primarily of complex tasks, ceteris paribus. (Hypothesis 2a)
- in any task environment, citizens engage with the state in repeated games with the same state agent or state agency, ceteris paribus (Hypothesis 2b).

3) **Individual motivations, organizational design, norms, and moral dispositions which facilitate feelings of empowerment and the exercise of judgment by both citizens and state agents are core to the emergence of RSC.**

For RSC to thrive, we believe that engagement from both the state and citizen side matters. When citizens are empowered by their associational life to become leaders, commit to outcomes, become more effective at engagement, it is likely they will become active participants in the state-society collective in the pursuit of common goals (Han 2016). Given the asymmetry between citizens and the State, civil society has a key role in fostering collecting action and capacities that can counterweight the power of the State and ensure more collaborative work. So too must bureaucrats have the ability (and autonomy) to exercise judgment, to feel they have agency (Aiyar et al. 2021; Honig 2024; Rasul, Rogger, and Williams 2017; Zacka 2017).

Where citizens and state agents have higher agency interactions of mutual recognition are more likely to occur. This is likely to lead to higher updating of expectations within and beyond the dyad of the initial interaction.

There is a great deal of parallel between these two 'sides' of the relational contract, yielding somewhat parallel hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3a: RSC will develop more fully in environments where bureaucrats are able to exercise discretion and judgments, all else equal.

Hypothesis 3b: RSC will develop more fully in environments where citizens are empowered with leadership and organizing skills, all else equal.

4) **RSC acts as a latent capacity that can be drawn upon in responding to new challenges.**

RSC is a collective capacity to be deployed for problem-solving, in contrast to a more conventional view of the administrative state 'delivering' solutions to citizens. In a world with high RSC, novel challenges - climate change, pandemics, AI risk, etc. - are better collectively understood, redefined, and addressed.

Hypothesis 4: When a great many polities are faced with novel challenges (e.g. COVID pandemic; AI risks; etc.) those polities with higher Relational State Capacity will perform better, ceteris paribus.

This is not a complete list of the implications of our model by any means, but a window to what future research on RSC can test. In the final section of this supplement, we present some ideas on operationalizing the model for RSC presented in the main paper.

Operationalizing RSC

What kind of approach will allow us to site and sight relational state capacity, to better understand and explain what it is, how it works, and the ways in which it matters for the attainment of collective ends? How do we grasp and convey the dynamics of its formation, its expression, its effects? And at a more granular level, how exactly do we operationalize and assess each of the components and steps involved in the causal chain from dyadic relationships to better collective outcomes?

The assessment challenges are substantial; as noted above, *all* assessment of state capacity suffers from the challenges which its latent nature give rise to. Some latencies are easier to detect the use of than others, however; tax administration software improvements could plausibly be thought of as capacity improvements reasonably proxied by measurably improved efficiencies in tax collection. Hospital maintenance improvements might measurably decrease the average equipment time out of service.

Relational state capacity is not tractable to these relatively straightforward assessment approaches; the embedded and contextual nature of the capacity means there will be no universal, generalizable metrics. That is not to say there is no common structure to be built, however; and below we go attempt to outline what we think that commonality is, by way of encouraging its use.

Interactions

The assessment of RSC begins with the interactions occurring between citizens and state actors. This foundational component of RSC can be assessed as follows:

a. *Whom the interaction is occurring between*: a citizen and a health worker, a citizen and a tax agent, a citizen and another citizen, a health worker and a police officer and so on.

b. *What the interaction is for*: Once the domain of interaction (health, public safety, housing and so on) has been established, a more granular examination of the objective of the interaction and the tasks involved can illustrate the extent to which the interaction creates an opportunity for exchange. For example, does the interaction simply involve submitting a pre-filled form, or does it involve making a plea to an officer of the state

regarding a parking ticket, or does it require multiple complex tasks to enhance awareness and change behaviors regarding childhood nutrition? The literature suggests that episodic encounters are likely less effective at producing RSC, which is more likely to emerge from regular quotidian interactions (Kruks-Wisner 2018). Being given more time to engage with the state also helps citizens produce more meaningful encounters (Sullivan 2021).

c. *What the nature of the interaction is*: a) is it a on-off or repeat interaction; b) in what form the interaction occurs (a quotidian interaction versus a structured interaction organized by the state to enhance citizen participation; online vs. in-person; etc.); c) where the interaction occurs, within a state organization versus within the homes of citizens. The literature review suggests that the frequency, structure and location of the interaction are all important for how collaborative the process of engagement is, and therefore in our view, the extent to which each participant will be able to bring their full self to the interaction.

   For example, the literature on participation/participatory governance suggests that formal forums of participation induce protracted interactions between citizens and government officials which lead to the formation of relationships. Participatory institutions like the village council in India or *gram sabha* (Sanyal and Rao 2018), city councils (Sullivan 2021), or participatory interventions like Kecamatan Development Project in Indonesia (Barron, Diprose, and Woolcock 2011) enable conversations between citizens and state-agents, allowing them to develop shared understandings and form learning relationships. Similarly, citizens may engage with the state through acts of claim-making, which include standing in line waiting for services, lodging complaints about broken public facilities, etc. (Kruks-Wisner 2018). Higher claim-making can signal a citizen's increased sense of belonging to and entitlement from the state, and regular claim-making also frequently puts the citizen in touch with the state, allowing opportunities of encounter wherein RSC can emerge.

   Some researchers have also observed how the feeling of comfort in a space and situation can contribute to citizens' ease of engagements with the state and their ability to form relationships with individual public officials. Jupp (2008) notices that community mobilization was achieved better through participatory activities that were community-led, organized in spaces where citizens felt more comfortable. Comfort or lack thereof has also been reported as a factor shaping the ease and dignity of interactions by participants in Renedo and Marsten's (2015) qualitative research with patient-involvees at UK hospitals.

<u>Exchanges</u>

We have identified three potential ways to further unpack and operationalize exchange, mutual recognition and understanding, drawing on complex systems theory, recognition theory, and work on Social Perspective Taking (SPT), each explained in turn below:

First, the extent to which the interaction allows for each individual to bring their relevant full selves to the exchange. Here we draw on the concept of open and closed systems from complex systems theory, in which a transactional or closed exchange occurs within tightly drawn, unchanging parameters as compared to an open system or exchange that makes space for participants to bring any aspect of themselves to the exchange. This seems to be a core tenet of the Human Learning Systems approach, which proposes that public workers form "learning relationships" with citizens, "in which everyone develops an understanding of the elements of that person's unique life, which currently creates a particular outcome" (Lowe et al. 2022).

Second, recognition theory suggests that when one recognizes another person, they normatively ascribe them the status of a person that is free and equal to them and thus must be treated as humans are to treat one another. Psychologically, people also depend on recognition to form identities of their selves, because it is not enough that a person has an identity, but their identity "fundamentally depends on the feedback of other subjects (and of society as a whole)" (Iser 2019).

Third, we can assess the extent of Social Perspective Taking, the ability to understand another person's thoughts, feelings, and motivations (Gehlbach, Brinkworth, and Wang 2012). In simpler words, SPT allows one to step into the shoes of the other to really understand them and their point of view, even in the case of differing values.

All three theories suggest that the quality of exchange might be assessed using measures of mutual-respect[2] (did you feel respected in the exchange?), listening (did you feel heard in the interaction/was the other party paying attention to what you were saying?), identity and esteem (was your particular cultural, social, economic and political location given due respect and attention?), confidence (did you feel confident in your ability to participate in the exchange?), reciprocity (did the other party reciprocate your positive communication/action?), and measures of social distance.[3]

Dyadic Relationships

We draw on the theory of relational contracts to propose an operationalization of the quality of a dyadic relationship in terms of credibility and clarity. Credibility refers to the extent to which each party believes the other will in fact do what they've committed to do. This credibility can be derived from a variety of factors, such as institutional trust in the capacity of the other party (that they have the means to fulfill their promises), or through calculative trust, that things will go badly in a given setting should promises not be fulfilled by either party. And clarity is the extent to which each party in a relational contract understands what each other is meant to do in order to fulfill their commitments in their common enterprise (Gibbons and Henderson 2012).

The relational contracting literature has a rich empirical history from which specific measures for credibility and clarity may be drawn. For credibility, direct questions about the capacity and intent to deliver on their promises can be asked, in addition to standardized questions on trust. Clarity is harder to measure because it requires an understanding of both present and future actions that are unspecified in the relational contract, or an understanding of what the other party is likely to do in an unforeseen future. One potential way to assess clarity is through a contextually relevant, scenario-based question with a list of options for actions that can be taken by both actors. If the answers match (e.g. C1's view of what B1 is responsible for match B1's views of their responsibilities; the same is also true of C1's responsibilities), the clarity in the relational contract is high.

[2] Respect is a moral principle that forms a part of the expectations two people have in a relationship, and is assumed to be important for forming trust, practicing listening, engaging in back-and-forth discussions, learning, and working together. In school environments, mutual respect between students and teachers has been found to improve educational outcomes (Thompson 2018). Thus, mutual respect can help improve the quality of a relationship and enable better collaboration, thus building RSC.

[3] Defined by Biella et al (2023) as "the agent's perceived relative interpersonal connectedness and sense of emotional proximity toward another social agent which occurs regardless or in the absence of previous knowledge of the target agent." If a citizen perceives a larger social distance between themselves and a public official (and vice versa), they may be less motivated to form a reciprocal relationship between them.

Spillovers and updating

We have discussed the importance of spillovers and updating for the formation and maintenance of strong Relational State Capacity. It appears from the literature that "within-dyad" (C_1 & B_1's expectations of one another from their interaction) formation of RSC to be strengthened first and foremost by relationships that evince equal understanding and recognition. This seems to be a core tenet of the Human Learning Systems approach, which proposes that public workers form "learning relationships" with citizens, "in which everyone develops an understanding of the elements of that person's unique life, which currently creates a particular outcome" (Lowe et al. 2022).

There are also 'ways that the interaction shapes the expectations and understandings of C_1 and B_1 beyond each other, of course; e.g. the way C_1's expectations of the broader NHS are altered by the interaction with nurse B_1. We theorize that C_1 and B_1 are likely to update more regarding things that are more conceptually proximate, e.g. health worker B_1 might update regarding other citizens in the community (or all local citizens of the same ethnicity/class/gender/etc.) more rapidly than all citizens in the county based on their interactions with C_1. So too citizen C_1 will update expectations more rapidly about health workers in other clinics, or from nurses to doctors, more rapidly than from health workers to teachers or revenue collectors.

What can be formed can also be undermined, of course. We largely expect that updating 'down' occurs much the same way as updating 'up' expectations. That said, we can imagine there are factors - e.g. success in reciprocal recognition or perspective-taking and the strength of dyadic ties with a member of the other group - which might slow down how quickly 'across-unit' updating down occurs. If a given citizen C_1 has strong links with a health worker B_1, they may be less apt to think poorly of all health workers in response to news accounts of malfeasance by a different health worker B_2. Similarly, if citizen C_1 can understand and empathize with the motivations, thoughts, and feelings behind the actions of health worker B_1 through successful perspective-taking of B_1, they may be more inclined to engage with and trust the intentions of their peer, health worker B_2.

In each of the cases outlined above, it would be important to assess both the direction of spillover and the extent of updating. The direction of spillover can be assessed e.g. using methods of social network analysis, identifying nodes at which information about positive or negative dyadic interactions is exchanged, or by observing/surveying changes in beliefs propagate through a community. Updating can be assessed by measuring the same variables we outlined for exchanges and relational contracts, but over time.

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