Civil Servants, Social Norms, and Corruption:
What do we know? What do we do?

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What do we know? What do we do?

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About the Author

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Summary

This literature review explores what is known about social norms that drive corrupt practices among civil servants in endemically corrupt contexts and how to address those social norms. It presents findings relevant to practitioners and policymakers who are working on anti-corruption, public sector reform, and improving the provision of public goods and services in endemically corrupt environments.

In the scholarship, there is growing recognition of how social norms influence corrupt behaviors, though to date there has not been a comprehensive review of the research on the civil servants, social norms, corruption nexus. This report seeks to address this gap by answering two key questions:

1. **What do we know about the social norms that drive corrupt behaviors among civil servants in contexts of endemic corruption?**

2. **In these contexts, what do we know about how to change the social norms that drive corruption among civil servants?**

The review finds that there is robust evidence of how social norms can drive corrupt behaviors among civil servants and why anti-corruption strategies that do not incorporate social norms are likely to be ineffective. However, there are significant gaps in the evidence base regarding how to effectively address the social norms driving corruption among civil servants. As praxis using these strategies expands, it should be matched with robust monitoring and evaluation efforts to better understand what works and why. This report presents the state of the literature on the above two questions, identifies key lessons, and outlines a future research-to-practice agenda for these issues.

Acronyms

AL	Accountability Lab
CJL	Corruption, Justice and Legitimacy Program
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-affected States
GI-ACE	Global Integrity-Anti-Corruption Evidence Research Program
II	Integrity Icon
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PSR	Public Sector Reform
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
UN	United Nations
URA	Ugandan Revenue Authority
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

Across the globe, trillions of dollars are spent each year on public goods and services, yet public sector corruption limits the goods and services that actually reach the people (UN News 2021). Corruption among civil servants is one reason why roads and schools in the Niger Delta were never built (*The Guardian* 2020; *This Day* 2020) and why internally displaced persons camps in northeast Nigeria did not receive lifesaving relief materials (Alqali 2016). Not only does public sector corruption undermine the provision of public goods and services, but it may also drive frustrations against governments and be a source of violent conflict (Chayes 2018, 2014). So, what can be done about it?

Anti-corruption efforts targeting the civil service are not new, and we have learned a lot about them in the last few decades. Unfortunately, most of what we have learned is about the limitations of public sector reform — what does **not** work, with some insight into why not. One of the pieces missing in the analysis of civil service corruption and anti-corruption strategies is social norms (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2020; Phillips et al. 2019). This gap and the significance of social norms are echoed in the wider research on anti-corruption (Kubbe and Engelbert 2018; Jackson and Köbis 2018; Baez Camargo and Passas 2017; Heywood 2018; Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019).

Historically, many public sector anti-corruption efforts have focused on the formal structures and rules thought to enable or encourage corruption (e.g. Borges et al. 2017; Gans-Morse et al. 2017). This has meant, however, that the informal dynamics — especially the social norms — that were often more influential than the formal rules, were not addressed. So while the formal rules may have changed as the result of an anti-corruption program, the real rules — the ones influenced by social norms — did not (e.g. Jackson 2018; Batory 2012; Fjeldstad 2005, 2009; Ocheje 2018).[1] For example, an anti-corruption program may have changed the official hiring procedures (official norms) for civil servants in an effort to crack down on patronage hires, but changing those procedures does not mean a hiring manager faces any less pressure to hire a political supporter or member of their family (an indirect social norm), and they may still look for ways to do so. Addressing corruption often also requires addressing the social norms influencing behavior.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of understanding social norms and how they relate to corrupt behaviors among civil servants, but this is often left as an open question (Olken and Pande 2019) or reported as an evidence gap in studies commissioned by major anti-corruption donors such as the World Bank (Panth 2011), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Borges et al. 2017) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018). Even in a survey of psychological variables related to corruption in general (not just related to civil servants), research shows that social norms related to corruption are under-researched (Julian and Bonavia 2018). More broadly, addressing these gaps on the intersection of corruption and social norms is a key part of the USAID learning agenda (Coleman 2022) and fundamental to strategies such as the US Strategy on Countering Corruption (USG 2021).

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1   These sources are illustrative, but there are numerous additional examples of evidence that social norms are a factor that undermine the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts. See also: Ganie-Rochman and Achwan 2016; Funaki and Glencorse 2014; Chang and Lai 2002; and Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016.

As part of the Social Norms and Corruption project, we at CJL want to understand the state of research and praxis about how social norms influence corruption among civil servants. Specifically, we are interested in two questions:

- **What do we know about the social norms that drive corruption among civil servants in contexts of endemic corruption?**

- **What do we know about strategies to change these norms?**

This literature review seeks to answer these questions while considering the strength of the evidence and outlining a future research-to-practice agenda. It is targeted at researchers, practitioners, policymakers focused on anti-corruption, public sector reform, and those working to improve the provision of public goods and services. The review is divided into three key sections. The first examines why understanding social norms is important for anti-corruption strategies aimed at civil servants and what we already know about these norms. The second examines the current state of the evidence of social norm-based anti-corruption strategies targeting civil servants. The final section summarizes key lessons that can be drawn from the literature and outlines a future research-to-practice agenda on the intersection of civil servants, social norms and corruption. As more attention is paid to the importance of how social norms may influence corrupt behaviors, we hope that this literature review becomes a foundation that other researchers will build on, critique and improve going forward.

Definitions and Key Concepts

Bureaucracy, Civil Service and Civil Servants

In this literature review, we define **bureaucracy** as *the collection of public officials who are charged with carrying out government services and providing public goods.* For the sake of the literature review, bureaucracy and civil service are treated as synonymous. This definition is broader than many definitions of bureaucracy which focus on the idealized structure. For example, *Brittanica* defines bureaucracy as a "professional corps of officials organized in a pyramidal hierarchy and functioning under impersonal, uniform rules and procedures" (Rockman 2021). While *Brittanica*'s definition is representative of how scholars define bureaucracy (notably Weberian models of bureaucracy), in practice, we use a broader definition because we are interested in fragile and conflict-affected contexts[2] where many of these conditions detailed in Britannica's definition are not satisfied, even though they may be the intended structure. This allows us to consider a wider set of state bureaucracies that do not meet a formal threshold for a formal bureaucracy.

In this review, **civil servants** are officials — both appointed and hired — who are charged with making, implementing and monitoring the governance of public services (e.g. a Ministry of Education official). This does not include other public sector employees, such as teachers, firefighters and nurses, because their roles are fundamentally different from those charged with making, managing and monitoring these public goods and services. Throughout the literature review, 'civil servants' refers to both categories of officials (appointed and hired),

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2   Fragile and conflict-affected states refer to contexts where "society is fragmented, the social contract is fraught, state institutions are weak, power is contested, and/or the country is destabilized by violent conflict" (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019, 78; OECD 2020).

though points specific to each are noted throughout. Elected officials are not considered civil servants in the context of this literature review.

These definitions and understandings of bureaucracy are heavily influenced by Max Weber, one of the most prominent scholars to write about bureaucratic structures. Weber saw a bureaucracy as an inevitable evolution of a modernizing state (Rockman 2021) and key to being able to operate effectively. Weber's ideal bureaucracy was a professional civil service based on rational legal authority that was impartial in carrying out its duties (Weber 1968; Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016, 167). Ackerman and Palifka expand on this to argue that "the Weberian ideal is a professional civil service that is politically neutral, has security of tenure, is paid a decent salary, is recruited and promoted on merit, and does not have property or business interests that conflict with the fair performance of its duties" (2016, 165). It is worth noting that, in his writing on bureaucracy, Weber did not assume that bureaucratic structures and processes on paper would necessarily be the same in practice, but that an ideal bureaucracy was just that — an ideal of efficiency to aspire to. This is a point further discussed in the Formal Norms section on pages 11–14.

Formal Institutions

This literature review adopts Helmke and Levitsky's definition of **formal institutions**: "formal institutions are rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced through channels widely accepted as official" (2004, 728). This includes state legislation, constitutions and bureaucratic regulations.

Informal Institutions (Informal Rules of the Game)

This literature review adopts Helmke and Levitsky's definition that **informal institutions** are defined as "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels" (2004, 728). In the literature, these are often also referred to as the 'informal rules of the game' (e.g. Migdal 2002, 190). As a whole, these refer to a broad swath of informal dynamics, including social norms, that dictate how individuals behave in specific circumstances.

Social Norm

A **social norm** is a mutually held expectation of how one ought to behave in a specific situation (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019; Kubbe and Engelbert 2018; Köbis et al. 2018; Bicchieri 2016).[3] It has an injunctive component — what one believes other's think one ought to do — and a descriptive component — what one believes others do in the same scenario. Social norms are mutual expectations held by a group, often called a reference group. Norms are maintained within the group by social influence such as "approval, including positive sanctions, or disapproval, including negative sanctions; or by one's belief in the legitimacy of others' expectations; among enough members of the reference groups" (Mackie et al. 2015).

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3   For an introduction to social norms related to corruption, see <u>Understanding Social Norms: A Reference Guide for Policy and Practice</u> by Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church and Diana Chigas.

Social norms vary based on time and context, but there are some cross-cutting patterns that emerge from the literature. This is further explained on pages 15–17.

Defining Corruption beyond a Normative Lens

CJL defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted authority for private gain (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019). This definition is shared by other researchers and practitioners in the field (e.g. Transparency International 2022) though it differs slightly from how some define corruption as the abuse of **public** authority for private gain (e.g. Scott 1979).[4] CJL's broader definition allows for greater scope when considering what may constitute a corrupt behavior. There are some important notes about this definition:

- **Corruption is contextual and should be locally defined.** Corruption is both contextual in time and place. Identifying corruption should be based on the perspective of local stakeholders.

- **Corruption can be legal.** While something may be legal under the letter of the law, it may still be considered corruption by citizens. For example, in Nigeria, some officials are allowed certain perks of the office that are excessive to the point where many Nigerians view them as forms of legalized corruption (Page 2018). Under the law, these officials are legally allowed these privileges, but critics argue that these same officials are the ones who write the regulations allowing them to abuse public office for their own benefit. Examples of legal corruption can be found around the world (e.g. the United States – Chayes 2020)[5], but this is especially true in contexts of extractive political systems where the laws are written to ensure that political office holders accrue benefits (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006).

- **Corruption is not about 'right' and 'wrong'.** To say something is corrupt is not synonymous with labeling something morally 'right' or 'wrong'. The general assumption that corruption is greedy and, therefore, morally bad is overly simplistic and inaccurate. Corrupt behaviors have a logic and, in contexts where it is extremely difficult to access government services and where resources are scarce, corruption may arise as a 'workaround' or as a strategy to help one's family and friends survive. Corruption undermines the public good, but understanding the logic behind it is critical to addressing the root causes and identifying strategies to address it.[6]

Endemic Corruption

Endemic corruption refers to contexts where corruption is a key part of how the state functions at all levels to the extent that it is normal and rewarded, whereas integrity may be punished (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019, 8). In these contexts, corruption becomes the norm, not the exception. Endemic corruption is also called 'systemic' corruption. Endemic corruption occurs throughout the world but is a key characteristic of many fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS).

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4   For a discussion on definitions of corruption, see Wedel 2012 and Philip 2013.
5   See also Johnston's 'influence markets' (2005, 60-88).
6   For a discussion on this, see Chigas 2017.

Types of Corruption

Corruption refers to a broad range of abuses of entrusted authority for private gain, but these abuses are not all the same. While actions ranging from bribery to embezzlement to influence peddling may all be considered corrupt, they each have different logics, are carried out by different actors and, most relevant to this study, have different implications for anti-corruption strategies. In essence, corruption is a wide-ranging descriptor that by itself is not useful for understanding these varying dimensions. We need greater specificity about what we mean when we use the term 'corruption'; as Ang argues, we need to "unbundle corruption" (2020, 8).[7]

To date, there is little agreement about how to categorize corrupt acts beyond a grand (elite-level) vs petty (rank-and-file/average person) level. In relation to corruption within the civil service, Ang's (2020) four types of corruption offer a starting point for practitioners to think through the type of corrupt act, the actors involved and the implications for anti-corruption strategies (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Unbundling Corruption into Four Types

	Non-Elites	Elites
Involves Theft	**Petty theft:** "acts of stealing, misuse of public funds, or extortion among street-level bureaucrats"	**Grand Theft:** "embezzlement or misappropriation of large sums of public monies by political elites who control state finances"
Involves Exchanges	**Speed Money:** "petty bribes that businesses or citizens pay to bureaucrats to get around hurdles or speed things up"	**Access Money:** "high-stakes rewards extended by business actors to powerful officials, not just for speed, but to access exclusive, valuable privileges"

Source: Ang 2020, 8-10.

Differentiating between petty theft and access money begins to shed light on the nature of the corrupt behavior, its logic, underlying social norms, and the implications for anti-corruption strategies. However, these categories largely focus on financial exchanges and analysis of corrupt acts within civil services and need to include non-financial exchanges, such as nepotism, cronyism and sexual exploitation.

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7   Note: 'unbundling corruption' is different from Johnston's four "syndromes of corruption" (2005). Ang's framework categorizes types of corrupt acts specifically related to bureaucratic corruption whereas Johnston's syndromes of corruption describe different types of systems of corruption.

Fragile and Conflict-affected States

Fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) are "contexts where society is fragmented, the social contract is fraught, state institutions are weak, power is contested, and/or the country is destabilized by violent conflict" (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019, 78; OECD 2020). While there is a debate in the literature on the conceptual limitations and flawed assumptions of the concept of FCAS (e.g. Nay 2013), this paper uses FCAS because this is how contexts where corruption is endemic — i.e. the norm rather than the exception — are often categorized (e.g. OECD 2020). While FCAS refers to these contexts broadly, this does not imply that each is the same or that findings from one country's context are necessarily generalizable to another. In fact, throughout the paper we seek to emphasize the need for robust context analysis and a critical consideration of how generalizable research findings may be.

Methodology

Three methods were used to identify literature for this review: keyword searches, recommendations from researchers and practitioners, and a snowball approach. These three approaches were used to proactively address the limitations of any one method. In total, 310 articles were identified and 130 were deemed relevant to the literature review. More about the search methods is detailed below. All sources identified during the literature review, as well as additional supporting material, are cited throughout and listed in the bibliography.

1. **Keyword Searches:** Keyword searches of the December 2021 Stephenson bibliography (Stephenson 2021) and the digitized version housed on GI-ACE (Stephenson et al. 2021) were conducted. This drew on more than 8,557[8] resources related to corruption and anti-corruption (as of 21 April 2022). Keywords used for the Stephenson bibliography were: 'social norm(s)', 'civil servants' and 'norm'. Eighty articles were identified this way. Recognizing that a keyword search of a bibliography was limited to the terms appearing in the titles, a keyword search was conducted in the digitized bibliography which also searches the article abstracts. The online bibliography has assigned tags to the articles[9] so tags were searched, including: 'social norms', widespread bureaucratic corruption', 'bureaucratic corruption', 'bureaucratic norms', 'informal norms', organizational norms' and 'perceived norms'. This yielded an additional 46 sources. In total, 126 articles were identified from the Stephenson bibliography and GI-ACE digitized database.

   This approach is somewhat unconventional for academic literature reviews in that it did not primarily rely on a keyword search of academic search engines such as Google Scholar, Web of Science, JSTOR, because too many irrelevant articles were captured when using 'corruption', 'civil servants' and 'social norms' (and similar terms) as keywords. This is a challenge that previous CJL studies have also encountered. Instead, the study used the previously described three-pronged approach to focus its review while also seeking out additional information. This was a strategic choice based on available researcher time and budgetary constraints.

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8   8,557 resources were made available through the digital archive in November 2020 and, as of 21 April 2022, it includes 8,767 resources.
9   For more on this methodology, see Gawthorpe and Pozsgai-Alvarez 2020.

2. **Expert Recommendations:** Recognizing the limitations of keyword searches within the databases used, especially in identifying 'grey' literature, CJL sought out resource recommendations from researchers and practitioners working in the anti-corruption and public sector reform fields. This included conversations with experts, soliciting recommendations from email groups[10], and polling[11] those within CJL's network. This yielded 60 additional resources not identified during the keyword searches.

3. **Snowball Approach:** Throughout the research process, I identified additional articles by looking at foundational sources in the articles reviewed and those recommended by the experts engaged. A snowball approach yielded 123 additional sources not previously identified.

Articles identified in the search were first reviewed to determine if a) they focused on civil servants, b) they focused on corruption/anti-corruption, and c) if they were about contexts where corruption was endemic. This means that, except where noted, studies that did not meet each of these scope criteria were not included. For example, studies about social norms related to corruption among civil servants in Western Europe were outside the scope of this review. This is because CJL's belief is that the civil servant, social norms and corruption nexus is fundamentally different in contexts where corruption is systemic in contrast to contexts where it is not.[12] Similarly, resources that focused on public sector employees who did not meet our definition of civil servants (e.g. firefighters or public-school teachers) were also not included. As previously discussed, this is because we believe the roles of public sector employees are fundamentally different from those charged with making, implementing and monitoring the governance of public services (e.g. a Ministry of Education official).

Limitations

While this literature review has attempted to be thorough in its search of the literature, there are some limitations to its findings. Firstly, the resources reviewed were in English and digitally or physically available via Tufts University libraries. This excludes non-English studies along with those which have been printed in hard copy only.

Secondly, this literature review faces the challenge inherent in any literature review that relevant studies may have been missed during the resource search. This is in part a structural challenge given how fragmented research related to social norms and corruption is across fields and academic disciplines, especially in relation to 'grey' literature. The three-pronged search methodology sought to mitigate this risk to the extent possible.

Lastly, there is a body of work that focuses on organizational culture as it relates to corruption, largely in the private sector (e.g. Ashforth and Anand 2003). While some of this research may have implications for bureaucratic cultures, due to time constraints, this material was not included. This may be an area for future research.

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10   CJL put out a request for resource recommendations to four email networks in December 2021. These included requests to the Anti-Corruption Advocacy Network, CAIDP-RPCDI, Peregrine, and COP_SBC_DRG.

11   CJL conducted a series of polls in December 2021–January 2022 on its LinkedIn page to ask subscribers if they worked on civil servants, social norms and corruption. CJL then contacted the respondents to ask for recommendations of resources.

12   For a more detailed discussion of these dynamics, see Ventura 2021.

Part 1: Social Norms, Civil Servants, and Corrupt Behaviors: Findings, Gaps, and Lessons

Summary

Research has shown that anti-corruption strategies targeting civil servants have historically not yielded much success in FCAS partly because these strategies do not also consider the informal dynamics — specifically, the relevant social norms — that drive and perpetuate corrupt behaviors. This section reviews what these informal dynamics are, why they are important for anti-corruption efforts targeting civil servants, and how to understand the intersecting and competing social pressures that civil servants face.

> ### Key Points
>
> 1. Social norms driving or perpetuating corrupt behaviors among civil servants are consistently identified as one of the key factors undermining anti-corruption strategies targeting the public sector.
>
> 2. Civil servants often face a disconnect between formal bureaucratic norms and social norms resulting in different expectations of how to behave in a given circumstance.
>
> 3. Civil servants face multiple competing, overlapping, and contradictory lines of accountability.

1.1 Social Norms: A Missing Piece

Studies of anti-corruption efforts over the last decade have shown few success stories or lasting results (Heywood 2018; Marquette 2021). This is especially true of top-down technocratic approaches targeting the public sector and, as previously discussed, social norms are some of the causes (OECD 2018; Borges et al. 2017; Panth 2011; Scharbatke-Church et al. 2020; Phillips et al. 2019). This section explains how social norms have undermined anti-corruption efforts targeting civil servants and why they are important to consider for future strategies.

Historically, many public sector anti-corruption efforts focused on the formal structures and rules thought to enable or encourage corruption (e.g. Borges et al. 2017; Gans-Morse et al. 2017). These included changing managerial practices to improve oversight, increasing transparency in procurement, reducing bureaucratic discretion, and so on. These reforms were often based on a principal-agent theory of corruption described by the 'Klitgaard Equation': Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability (Persson et al. 2013; Borges et al.

2017), a theoretical model that has been heavily criticized.[13] Based on this theory, corruption could be addressed by reducing monopoly and the discretion allocated to civil servants, and by increasing accountability mechanisms.

In practice, many reforms based on this theory have not worked. In fact, Borges et al. (2017) argue that the only anti-corruption strategies targeting civil servants that have rigorous evidence of their effectiveness are audits and e-governance. They also comment on the oft-used strategy of raising wages. The argument around sufficient wages (also called the 'efficiency wage') is that a civil servant engages in corruption because they are underpaid (or not paid regularly). By this logic, raising their wages could mitigate the need to engage in corruption. Borges et al. (2017) assert that adequate civil service wages are a necessary but not sufficient condition to control corruption.

Fjeldstad (2005) provides an illustrative example of how social norms may limit the effectiveness of sufficient wages. In the 1990s, the Ugandan Revenue Authority (URA) was seen as a model for its ability to control corruption. Over time, however, evidenced by changing perceptions and arrests, corruption became a major issue. On paper, this did not quite make sense. The URA had undergone many of the best practice public sector reforms, such as higher wages and greater departmental autonomy to protect it from political interference, yet corruption became an issue. Here Fjeldstad offers an explanation:

> [T]he failure of reforms that stress monetary rewards and incentives have a more straightforward explanation. Because of the importance of family networks, increased pay rates may imply more extensive social obligations, and in some cases actually result in a net loss to the individual. This state of affairs can develop into a vicious circle with higher wages leading to more corruption because the tax officer has to make up for the loss caused by such obligations (2005, 10).

In practice, higher wages had the opposite effect in Uganda — they led to increased corruption due to increased familial obligations. This specific example is illustrative of the broader challenge social norms may have for the implantation of technocratic anti-corruption strategies and reforms — not addressing the underlying social norms means that key factors driving corrupt behaviors remain unchanged.

There are numerous examples across the literature of how informal dynamics, especially social norms, have undermined technocratic anti-corruption strategies targeting the public sector. This evidence stretches from the municipality level in Kosovo (Jackson 2018) to the justice sector in the Central African Republic (de Coster et al. 2017), national-level reforms in Nigeria (Ocheje 2018), and even to the implementation of official corruption punishments in Uganda (Scharbatke-Church et al. 2020).[14] The resounding theme is that social norms are critical for understanding whether anti-corruption strategies and reforms actually address the factors driving corruption among civil servants.

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13   This theoretical understanding of corruption is widely challenged in contemporary literature. See Chayes 2015; Johnston 2005; Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2017; Marquette 2021; Heywood 2018; Baez Camargo and Ledeneva 2017; Persson et al. 2013; and Rothstein 2018.

14   For additional examples, see Davis 2003; Fjeldstad 2009; Ganie-Rochman and Achwan 2016; Gore et al. 2013; Smith 2005; and Orlova and Boichev 2013.

1.2 What norms?

If research is increasingly saying that we need to consider the informal dynamics — especially the social norms — at play among civil servants, what are these norms? Three different yet overlapping types of norms emerge from the literature: formal, practical, and social norms (including gender norms). While the focus of this literature review is on social norms influencing corruption among civil servants, considering the interplay with practical norms, formal norms, and gender norms is critical to understanding corruption and the competing pressures civil servants face (Anders 2002, 6). To understand each type of norm, we need to understand its source.

This section explains each of these types of norms, the definitions used in this literature review, and provides examples of each. As indicated in the figure below, while each type of norm is different, they may at times overlap (exist simultaneously), reinforce (support), or counter (oppose) each other. These points of tension are key foci for those interested in anti-corruption work.

Figure 1: Norms at Play
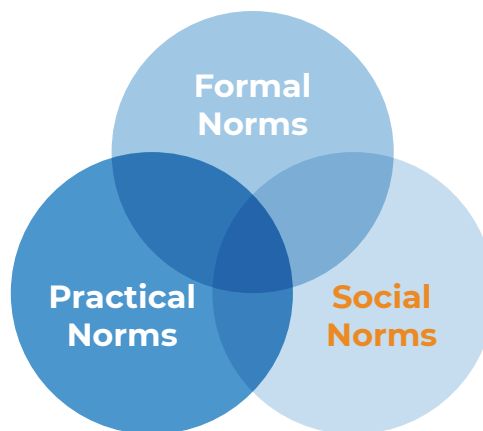
Formal Norms

Formal norms refer to how civil servants are expected to behave in carrying out their duties based on the official rules and regulations of the civil service. These are also commonly called 'bureaucratic' norms (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2021), 'professional' norms (OECD 2018), or the 'formal rules of the game' (Anders 2002, 2010), though these terms are often used differently across the literature. For example, professional norms carry a normative connotation of what it takes to be seen as professional, which may or may not be defined by the official rules and regulations (e.g. code of conduct).

Table 2: Types of Norms among Civil Servants

Norm Type	Source of Norm	Examples
Formal Dynamics		
Formal Norms: expectations of how a civil servant will behave based on the official rules and regulations of the civil service.	Official rules and regulations	Formal norms are derived from codes of conduct, procedural guides, and departmental regulations.
Informal Dynamics		
Practical Norms: expectations of how a civil servant will behave to accomplish their work.	Experience and on-the-job adaptations	Practical norms originate from shortcuts and improvisation.
Social Norms: mutually held expectations of how a civil servant will behave in each situation.	Socialization	*Guanxi* (China), *blat* (Russia), *kula* (Tanzania), and *uhljeb* (Croatia) (Ledeneva 2018).
Gender Norms: "Social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society" (Cislaghi and Heise 2020, 416).	Socialization	In the DRC, women face greater consequences for engaging in corruption (Barnard-Webster 2017; Scharbatke-Church et al. 2017).

Formal norms are derived from the official rules and regulations of the civil service along with codes of conduct (if they exist). Because of their explicit nature, these are often easy to identify for outsiders without in-depth knowledge of a context. Anders points out, however, that just because these are the formal rules, it does not mean that the rank-and-file civil servants have had any role in writing them (2002, 11). Instead, Anders argues that often the formal rules and regulations of the civil service are better understood as externally derived and imposed rules because they are often created by top-level civil servants or dictated by elected officials outside the civil service (2002, 11). In some cases, codes of conduct have been initiated and developed by the international community as part of the particular terms of an engagement. This raises concerns over their legitimacy as well as their effectiveness. An elected or high-ranking official of a civil service department may be charged with writing regulations for how a task should be done, but their understanding of that process may differ substantially from the person who has been doing that task for the past twenty years.

Formal norms vary based on context but, in much of the world, they are modeled on Weber's ideal bureaucracy. For Weber, a bureaucracy had two key elements: it was defined by a strict rule-bound mode of operation, and it was impartial in carrying out its duties (1968, 975). The Weberian style bureaucracy, which has been the model followed by many Western bureaucracies and imposed on former colonies across sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia, approaches perfection the more dehumanized it is. This sounds detached from society, but his argument was that a civil service would best serve society if it were completely impartial to the point

that it functioned as a dehumanized machine (Weber 1968, 975). This has been echoed by contemporary researchers who argue that a well-functioning civil service will be defined by formal norms of impartiality, accountability to superiors, and transparency (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015; Phillips et al. 2019). As previously noted, Ackerman and Palifka expand on this to argue that "the Weberian ideal is a professional civil service that is politically neutral, has security of tenure, is paid a decent salary, is recruited and promoted on merit, and does not have property or business interests that conflict with the fair performance of its duties" (2016, 165). Phillips et al. also argued that in order to achieve a government that is inclusive and truly accountable to the public, civil servants should also be responsive to citizen participation and feedback (2019, 31).

Weber's description of (and recommendations for) an ideal bureaucracy is not the only bureaucratic model, though it is the dominant one. Other bureaucratic models include colonial, communist, international organizations and New Public Management bureaucracies (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2019, 9). In the public administration field, there is ongoing research into new bureaucratic models, such as New Public Management which more closely resembles private sector models, incorporates performance incentives and more readily outsources public goods and services.[15] Alternative bureaucratic models, such as these, and their utility in controlling corruption may be an area for additional research. However, in their discussion of civil service reform, Rose-Ackerman and Palifka argue that "many of the most urgently needed anti-corruption reforms do not turn on the relative merits of the Weberian and New Public Management models," but should instead focus on the professionalization of a merit-based civil service that is well paid, well trained, and rewarded for competence" (2016, 174).

Even in contexts that appear to have similar bureaucratic models, each bureaucracy is distinct because of how it adapts and evolves over time (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2019, 9), though this is not always acknowledged in anti-corruption strategies. Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan describe this as a process of sedimentation over the course of history. In their view, a bureaucracy can be understood as a perpetual construction site:

> *So the house is very different to the way it was originally conceived and looks like an unfinished, apparently perpetual building site where construction, repair, abandonment and re-purposing proceed simultaneously, with the inhabitants not always agreeing on what to use the building for, the different parts of the site apparently having had completely different architects, some from the inhabitants of the site, some from the outside the site; and these different architects often disagree both with each other and with (some of) the inhabitants about what the buildings should be used for and how it should be used (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014, 6).*

Research on bureaucracies in Malawi adds some color to this picture. In the late 1990s, the World Bank undertook a series of programs aimed at addressing corruption in the Malawian civil service. Much of these were based on an 'enclave' approach, meaning they established new agencies that were intended to be "motors of reform" (Anders 2002, 12; Anders 2010). In practice, the enclave approach did not work, and those reforms "co-exist[ed] uneasily with

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15   For more on this, see Lapuente and Van de Walle, 2020.

structures dating back to the colonial period" resulting in "a pluralism of state agencies and legislation" (Anders 2002, 12; Anders 2010).

Malawi's experience is not unique but emblematic of the broader, albeit well-intentioned, 'good governance' agenda. The important point here is that discussions of bureaucracy often focus on ideal types but, in reality, bureaucracies are the sum of their evolution. Changes in bureaucratic structures or formal rules may happen overnight, but that does not mean the way the bureaucracy actually functions changes overnight (in part because of the social norms discussed in the following sections). Yet, bureaucratic changes may introduce abrupt policies of 'zero tolerance' of corruption. Not only does this risk setting unrealistic expectations (Johnston 2022), but it also ignores the evolution of many Western countries' own bureaucracies (Skowronek 1982) and assumes that the 'ideal' type is appropriate for that context. Despite the reality that Western bureaucracies are still grappling with corruption and its evolving nature, as Scott argued in the late 1970s, "most developing nations have not only taken over Western legal forms: they have adopted the most restrictive and demanding forms available" (1979, 319). As will be discussed on page 24, this creates a mismatch between formal norms and social norms.

Formal rules are an attractive target for anti-corruption programs because they are explicit, easily identifiable without contextual knowledge and enforced by the state. Unsurprisingly, they have defined much of the anti-corruption programming of the last few decades (Borges et al. 2017; OECD 2018; J-PAL 2019; Marquette 2021). In practice, however, changing the formal rules of the game does not ensure that the real rules of the game change. To understand why, we need to turn to understanding both practical norms and, more importantly, social norms prevalent among civils servants.

Practical Norms

Practical norms can be understood as the expectations of what a civil servant needs to do to accomplish the stated goal of their department, though there is some debate over this definition. These are also called 'prudential' norms (Bicchieri 2016; Jackson 2018). Practical norms are expectations of what is practical given the situation and are not necessarily driven by social expectations of how to behave. Biershenk and Olivier de Sardan (2021) argue that there are two types of practical norms. The first type explains why people behave differently in the same scenario (2021, 10). This may be demonstrated by ignoring certain rules and processes because those rules make it more difficult or impossible to perform the service. For example, certain regulations may be ignored because they are seen as paralyzing red tape. The second type encompasses how civil servants behave when there is either no official guidance or the official guidance is lacking (ibid). For example, a civil servant may be asked to procure a new dumpster for a community center but without an official process in place. In this case, the civil servant would not be deviating from the instituted rules but rather improvising to accomplish the given task.

The term 'practical norm' has also been used by Olivier de Sardan (2015) and Anders (2002) to describe more broadly the gap between the formal rules and how civil servants **actually** behave — or the unofficial rules. Much of Olivier de Sardan's work has sought to explain the

way bureaucracies **actually** function, beyond the stated processes (formal norms). In line with the goal to understand what is **actually** happening, Olivier de Sardan's definition of practical norms incorporates both rank-and-file innovations to accomplish tasks (which are called 'practical norms' above) as well as certain social norms that influence civil servants. He notes (as of 2015) that his definition of practical norms has not been taken up by the field. However, his definition is worth noting due to his substantial influence and contributions to ethnographic research on how bureaucracies across the Sahel operate.

If practical norms, as defined above, address gaps and hurdles in formal civil service norms, social norms are an additional norm type that also influences civil servants' behavior. Some research suggests that, in certain circumstances, social norms may be more influential than formal or practical norms (e.g. Yeboah-Assiamah et al. 2016; Baez Camargo and Passas 2017).

Social Norms

Social norms are the mutually held expectations of how an individual should behave in a given situation (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019; Köbis et al. 2017; Jackson and Köbis 2018; Bicchieri 2016).[16] Social norms apply within a specific group, often called 'reference' groups. This means that different reference groups may hold different social norms (Cislaghi and Heise 2020, 409). Many assert that social norms have descriptive and injunctive components. The descriptive norm is a belief about what others do whereas an injunctive norm is a belief about what others think one should do.[17] Norms are maintained by social influence such as "approval, including positive sanctions, or disapproval, including negative sanctions; or by one's belief in the legitimacy of others' expectations; among enough members of the reference groups" (Mackie et al. 2015). These vary based on time and context.

Additionally, there are 'direct' and 'indirect' social norms. Direct social norms are "mutual expectations held by a group about the right way to behave, which prescribe a specific behavior" (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019, 31). Indirect norms are mutual expectations that can lead to a variety of behaviors (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019, 31).

In relation to civil servants, social norms help to create the unofficial code of conduct of how civil servants are expected to behave in the course of their duties. These may or may not align with the formal norms. For example, 'Do not action anything that would be embarrassing to your boss'. These social norms are likely to vary substantially across civil service departments.

Social norms are contextual though there are some social logics (which could also be called in-direct social norms)[18] related to corruption that emerge across contexts. Based on research in the 1980s and 1990s in the Sahel, Olivier de Sardan argues that corruption is directly linked to five socially embedded logics: **negotiation, gift-giving, solidarity, predatory authority** and **redistributive accumulation** [emphasis added] (1998, 25). These are based on ethnographic field research across the Sahel but, as explained below, examples from other contexts provide some evidence of their broader generalizability:

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16   For a broader discussion on varying definitions of social norms in the literature, see Mackie et al. 2015.
17   There is some debate over whether social norms must have both descriptive and injunctive components. For more on why this framing is useful for contexts of endemic corruption, see Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019.
18   For a broader discussion of indirect social norms as they relate to corrupt behaviors, see Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019.

1. **Negotiation:** The logic of negotiation is that everything, including the rules themselves, is negotiable (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 36). This means that "there is no consensus on many of the rules of this 'game', which are selected, arranged, modified and reinvented along the way." (ibid). If the rules are constantly being negotiated, corruption is difficult to define, especially if the rules in question are the laws of the country that constitute how officeholders can and cannot use their public office.

2. **Gift-giving:** The social logic of gift-giving as thanks for service rendered is a practice that can be found around the globe. This social logic has also been called "economies of favor" by Ledeneva (1998, 2018). Examples include *blat* in Russia, *guanxi* in China, and *kola* in the Sahel, all of which may be used for many different goals, including gaining access to an opportunity or otherwise scarce goods (Makovicky and Henig, 2018, 35). In each context, the practice has its own logic, reason it developed and expectations of how it is practiced.

   For example, in the Soviet Union, *blat*, meaning "ways of getting things done through personal contacts, pulling strings and exchanging favours", arose to help overcome shortages or cumbersome bureaucratic processes (Ledeneva 2018, 40). However, these practices have continued and remain embedded in contemporary social practices despite the fact that Russia no longer experiences the same shortages it did during the Soviet Union era (Mackovicky and Henig 2018, 36; Ledeneva 2018, 40-2). Similarly, in China, *guanxi* originally emerged from a need to "get permission from so many gatekeepers, whether state officials or clerks, controlling all social paths and opportunities" (Yang 2018, 76).

   Describing this in the context of the Sahel, Olivier de Sardan writes that the practice of gift giving is called *kola*, but the 'kola nut' "is not a fixed or negotiated price of remuneration, nor is it a brokerage commission; it is above all a moral duty" (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 38). The reasons that something is seen as a gift or a bribe may vary. Giving or receiving a gift may be an accepted social norm. Refusing a gift in return for helping someone may create shame not only for the giver, but also for the recipient (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 46).

3. **Solidarity Networks:** Solidarity networks are social networks of relationships between family, friends, neighbors, peer groups, etc. (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 41). Each person is part of specific networks which come not only with solidarity but also with corresponding pressures. Phrased differently, these are the various reference groups an individual is part of and shares social norms with:

   > *The problem is that the solidarity exacted by the network is so rigorous that anyone who fails to respect his obligations to a member of one of the networks to which he belongs suffers reproach, and becomes the object of considerable and sustained pressure from all members of the network. Should he persist, he becomes the cause of scandal, and his reputation soon becomes detestable (ibid).*

4. **Predatory Authority:** Predatory authority is the perceived 'right' that people in power have to use the benefits of the public office for their own benefit and the benefit of those close to them (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 42). This has also been called 'prebendalism'

(Joseph 1987). However, the 'right' to act with predatory authority often depends on one's position in society. In the Sahel, Olivier de Sardan describes this by writing:

> *The current semantic difference in songhay-zarma between kom-yan (to despoil) and zey-yan (to rob) might be elucidating. A chief, prince or 'big man', a man of power, or of force, is kom-yan, he despoils, takes, serves himself, openly, impudently (isn't authoritative levying to be linked with power?). A poor man, without resources or power, for his part, can only have recourse to zey-yan, that is to theft, cheating and shameful sneaking around. (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 42).*

5. **Redistributive Accumulation:** Redistributive accumulation is the expectation that those in power will use that power to eat and feed family and friends. This is captured in idioms ranging from 'politics of the belly' (Bayart 1989), 'our turn to eat' (Wrong 2009), 'eating the national cake' (Ellis 2016) and so on.[19] This is one of the social logics that emerges across the literature and one with severe sanctions. To refuse to use public office for personal gain or the gain of one's family is seen as "a simultaneous show of ingratitude, egoism, pride, naiveté, and even stupidity" (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 43). This pressure is exacerbated in contexts where time horizons — both political and everyday — are short: implying that, because you do not know what will happen tomorrow, you must ensure you eat enough today and store some for later. This is especially true in FCAS when civil servants come and go as their patrons win and lose political office.

These social logics are part of Olivier de Sardan's argument explaining what he calls the "moral economy of corruption", meaning the value systems and cultural codes that justify corruption from the perspective of those who practice it, and how these practices become normalized in everyday practice (1999). These logics help to justify actions which, by our definition, are technically corrupt but not seen as necessarily socially deplorable. Understanding these logics is key to understanding how to address corruption among civil servants (This is discussed more fully in the following sections).

Cross-cutting Lens: Gendered Norms

Across the literature, there is evidence of how formal, practical, and social norms may be gendered (Scharbatke-Church/Chigas 2019; Hoffmann and Patel 2017; Hoffmann and Patel 2021) although this is often missing from analyses of social norms related to corrupt behaviors among civil servants and more broadly. In this literature review, we adopt Cislaghi and Heise's[20] definition of gender norms as a specific type of social norm:

> *Gender norms are social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society. They are embedded in formal and informal institutions, nested in the mind, and produced and reproduced through social interaction. They play a role in shaping women and men's (often unequal) access to resources and freedoms, thus affecting their voice, power and sense of self (2020, 416).*

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19   This is also part of a discussion of what is the legitimate use of political power. See Schatzberg 2001.

20   Cislaghi and Heise's (2020) definition of gender norms is based on empirical research in the public health sector and, while that is outside the scope of this literature review, it is included because of its strong empirical basis and direct relevance to social norms related to corruption.

There are several key parts to this definition, the first being that gender norms can be understood as a subset of social norms. Here, Cislaghi and Heise provide a useful table for the comparison of gender and social norms (2020, 412):

Table 3: Differences between gender norms as understood in the gender literature and social norms as understood in social psychology and behavioral economics.

Gender Norms	Social Norms
Gender norms are in the world, embedded in institutions and reproduced by people's actions.	Social norms are in the mind; people's beliefs are shaped by their experiences of other people's actions and manifestations of approval and disapproval.
Gender norms are produced and reproduced through people's actions and enforced by powerholders who benefit from people's compliance with them.	Social norms are equilibria that maintain themselves, not necessarily benefitting anyone.
Gender norms are often studied as shaping people's individual attitudes.	Social norms are often studied as diverging from people's individual attitudes.
People follow the gender norms of their culture, society or group, the boundaries of which are usually blurry.	People follow the social norms of their reference group, the boundaries of which are usually fairly defined.
Changing gender norms requires changing institutions and power dynamics. Often this will happen through conflict and renegotiation of the power equilibrium.	Changing social norms (at its simplest) requires changing people's misperceptions of what others do and approve of in their reference group.
Changing gender norms is a political project that leads to equality between women and men.	Changing social norms is a health-related project that leads to greater wellbeing for women and men.

Source: Cislaghi and Heise 2020, 412.

Secondly, gender norms are part of a larger gender system that also includes gender roles, gender socialization, and gendered power relations (Cislgahi and Heise 2020, 410). Gender norms are a type of social norm, but they may also become embedded and reinforced by formal institutions and formal norms. For example, gender norms about a man being the 'the boss' may also be reflected in formal rules that disadvantage women in hiring and promotion opportunities.

Understanding gender norms has important practical implications for understanding how to address corruption among civil servants. For example, based on research on anti-corruption programming in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bernard (2017) offers two key takeaways on the intersection of gender and anti-corruption.[21] Firstly, if an anti-corruption

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21   For a more extensive analysis of these dynamics in the DRC's justice sector, see Scharbatke-Church et al. 2017.

program threatens a gender group's privileged status, it may face opposition that undermines its effectiveness. Secondly, "if anti-corruption strategies don't account for the different ways in which gender groups engage in corruption, these strategies may not work" (Bernard 2017). A social norms analysis is incomplete without considering the gender norms at play, and may lead to unchecked assumptions underlying programmatic theories of change.

State-Society Disconnect: When Social Norms are more Important than Formal Norms

> *What makes such informal social networks relevant to our research is that they generate strong moral imperatives, including a sense of obligation to provide mutual assistance and reciprocity for favours given, which go above and beyond any consideration for the formal legal framework.*
>
> (Baez Camargo and Passas 2017, 13).

Across the literature, there are two disconnects that emerge repeatedly. Firstly, there is a disconnect between the mental model/notion of the state and strict division of public and private spheres. As Olivier de Sardan (1999), Yeboah-Assiamah et. al (2016) and others have argued, this distinction may be found in contemporary Western states[22], but is far less common in FCAS where public obligations often mesh with personal obligations, such as in the solidarity networks described above (and through kinship pressures described in the following section).

The second disconnect is the contradiction between Weberian bureaucratic norms, a specific type of formal norm, and those held by broader society. As previously discussed, an ideal Weberian bureaucracy is impartial, based on explicit formal rules and has a clear separation between public and private interests (Weber 1968; Rose-Ackerman and Palifka 2016, 165-204). In practice, however, the formal bureaucratic norms are not always aligned with the social norms. This disconnect is made most cogently (and prominently) by Olivier de Sardan (1999) and can be summed up as: society expects certain things — such as that family helps family (an indirect social norm) — that are incompatible with an impersonal Weberian bureaucracy that treats every citizen the same. Examples of this disconnect can be found around the globe from the Sahel (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2015; 2019), Russia (Ledeneva 2013), Kosovo (Jackson 2018), India (Pani 2018), China (Yang 2018), Cameroon (Schatzberg 2001)[23] and Ghana (Yeboah-Assiamah et al. 2016). For example, Yeboah-Assiamah et al. describe how societal values of collectivity, gifts and reciprocity clash with expectations of impartial civil servants in Ghana (2016). Yang gives a similar example of *guanxi*, referring to the ability to call on personal connections to get things done, access a scare commodity or gain access to an opportunity (2018, 75).

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22   As previously discussed, definitions of corruption that are based on a distinction between the public and private spheres were not made in many Western countries prior to the nineteenth century. See Scott 1979. For historical examples of the public-private disconnect in the United States, see Skowronek 1982. For examples of this disconnect in the United Kingdom, see Smith 2018.

23   Schatzberg (2001) holds that his argument extends across middle Africa encompassing Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, and Kenya.

These two disconnects have key implications for the legitimacy, meaning worthiness of support (Lamb 2014)[24], of civil servants and the law more broadly. Civil servants draw their administration and professional legitimacy from how they are expected to behave based on their Western-style bureaucracies, but they draw their social legitimacy, meaning their social worthiness of support, from whether or not they behave in line with the sociocultural logics of the broader public (Olivier de Sardan 1999, 48; Anders 2002). This creates a tension around whose expectations are more important at any given moment — the state or society. In contexts where the formal bureaucratic expectations of civil servants are disjointed from those of broader society, dilemmas may arise when the expectations call for different behaviors. In practice, evidence suggests that often societal expectations are more influential and may outweigh the cost-benefit calculations about following or disobeying the official rules (Baez Camargo and Passas 2017; Chang 2000; Gino et al. 2009).

1.3. Accountable to whom? Whose norms?

> *[Civil servants] reminded me of chameleons, apparently slow, inscrutable, their eyes always in motion, scanning independently from each other in all directions, changing their colours according to the environment in order to make them invisible to their enemies, yet never losing sight of their aims (Anders 2002, 1).*

In a Weberian bureaucracy, a civil servant is structurally accountable to their superior, yet in FCAS, this is far more complex. Blundo argues that even the smallest bureaucratic decision is influenced by multiple logics of accountability that can link even "the top of the state to a checkpoint in a distant bush" (2015, 154). Anders echoes this description, describing civil servants as chameleons, constantly navigating multiple lines of accountability. What are those lines of accountability, how do civil servants navigate them, and what are their connections to social norms and corrupt behaviors? Put in the language of social norms, these are questions about common types of reference groups and the expectations they share with civil servants. This section presents the state of the research on these questions.

Accountability & Pressure

Definitions of accountability vary, but generally focus on who someone is **answerable** to, who they are **responsive** to and who they can be **held accountable** to for their actions.[25] To understand social norms among civil servants, it is useful to think about the type of pressures that civil servants face, the lines of accountability that emerge from these pressures (and reference groups) and the norms that define those relationships (Jackson and Köbis 2018; Blundo 2015; Anders 2002). In relation to civil servants, there are two broad categories of pressures that emerge: those within the civil service (peer and hierarchy) and those in broader society (kinship and sociability/vicinal). These are explained in the following sections.

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24   In this literature review, Lamb's definition of legitimacy is used, but with the recognition that there is a robust debate on how to define and measure legitimacy, and from whose perspective. For more on this debate, see McCullough 2015; Beetham 2013; and Schatzberg 2001.

25   This is an adaptation of Chirwa, Nizink et al.'s definition of accountable governance (2012, 5-6)

Pressures within the Civil Service

Anders argues that social relations within bureaucracies have two key features that cut across the different lines of accountability: power asymmetries and the "maintenance of indebtedness" (2002, 16). Power asymmetries come from the *de jure* power derived from the bureaucratic structure and relative position in the hierarchy, as well as *de facto* power derived from how office holders accumulate and wield their power. Maintenance of indebtedness refers to a continual effort either to have debts owed to you or to be indebted to someone else. Drawing on evidence from Malawi in the 1990s, Anders argues that it was impossible to get a position in the civil service, let alone a promotion or even permission to attend a workshop, without a patron (ibid).

Part of this involves the exchange of favors. If one cannot be in a position to grant favors, the next best thing is to be indebted to someone because it means you have a relationship with someone in a position to grant favors (Anders 2002, 16). This description of internal power dynamics is also echoed in broader studies across sub-Saharan Africa (Bayart 1989; Chabal and Daloz 1999), Latin America (Helmke and Levitsky 2006), the Middle East (Jameel 2018) as well as in Eastern Europe (Ledeneva 2013) and South Asia (Michelutti 2018).

1. **Hierarchical (or Vertical) Pressures:** Hierarchical pressures (Anders 2002), also called 'vertical' pressures (Jackson and Köbis 2018), are pressures on a civil servant from their superiors and those higher in the civil service hierarchy. Out of vertical pressures come two different types of accountability relationships: bureaucratic accountability and patron-client accountability.

    A. **Bureaucratic Accountability:** Bureaucratic accountability is the internal, downward, and highly controlled accountability of civil servants to their superiors (Blundo 2015, 144). This is most often defined by formal norms but can also be intertwined with practical and social norms that may or may not align with formal norms.

    B. **Patron-Client Accountability:** This is a type of informal relationship in which "the client expects protection and aid from his patron, who in turn has a claim to loyalty, work or submission" (Blundo 2015, 144). These relationships may have a transactional nature or also be reinforced by social relationships. In practice, if the relationships are purely functional or transactional, they may be difficult to enforce as the sanctions are often limited to ending the relationship that binds them together (Blundo 2015, 152).

2. **Peer (or Horizontal) Accountability:** Peer or horizontal pressures come from colleagues or other civil service professionals working in the same area (Blundo 2015, 152). These may be expectations about how to collaborate on a task, or that one should delay certain processes in order to protect colleagues from punishment (Scharbatke-Church et al., 2020).

3. **Representational (or Democratic) Accountability:** Representational accountability, meaning the relationship between elected officials and their constituents (Blundo 2015, 144), is not a type of accountability civil servants face

directly, but one that may lead politicians to intervene in their work. For example, in a study of local level forest service agents in Niger, Blundo (2015) describes how a local mayor intervened in the forest service agents' protection of local forests in order to benefit specific constituents. Politicians justified intervening in the operations of the forestry service by saying they were simply doing what their constituents elected them to do. While civil servants disagreed with what the politicians were doing, they still saw it as necessary because, "after all, he is a politician. He is taking care of his electorate" (Blundo 2015, 148).

Pressures from Broader Society

Across contexts, civil servants are in relatively privileged positions compared to the broader population. In contexts where government goods and services are limited, exclusive or almost non-existent in the average person's daily life — all defining characteristics of FCAS — civil servants become important brokers in their social networks (Anders 2002, 18). In turn, civil servants become ongoing targets of those in their social networks who attempt to remind them of (or create new) social obligations to help them. In the literature, these broader social pressures fall into two general categories: kinship pressures and sociability/vicinal pressures. What fits in each is based on the perspective of the individuals involved.

Figure 2: Concentric Layers of Social Pressures

1. **Kinship:** Kinship pressures are those originating from social obligations to one's family and friends (Olivier de Sardan 1999; Anders 2002). Exactly who this includes is extremely contextual and fluid. For example, Anders gives the example of the local civil servant who sees his housekeeper as family and, therefore, has certain obligations to her even though she is not related to him (2002).

   The ability to respond to kinship pressures may also have implications for one's reputation. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, a person's social status is defined by the number of individuals they are able to support and the amount of wealth they are able to redistribute among both kin and clients (Anders 2002, 13; Bayart 1989; Joseph

1987). The success of the civil servant achieving that position or a higher one is seen as a collective success (Anders 2002, 13). Higher positions within the civil service, however, also lead to growing requests for help from family members, including those they may not know existed (Anders 2002, 13). Social control within kinship networks is usually strong and carried out with the implicit or explicit threat of ostracism, gossip or even accusations of witchcraft (Anders 2002, 13; de Coster et al. 2017).

2. **Sociability/Vicinal:** Sociability norms or 'vicinal pressures' are similar to but broader than kinship pressures and include other types of networks of close social belonging, such as ethnic groups, villages or schools. These may include groups like clubs and political parties as long as they are types of social networks in which one feels an obligation to help others rather than risk moral punishment (Blundo 2015, 148). This type of social pressure has substantial overlap with kinship pressures and can be identified only in context.

Much of the literature on social pressures focuses on kinship pressures, though several researchers point towards sociability/vicinal pressures as a key form of accountability contributing to local social contracts and forms of accountable governance. For example, based on his ethnographic field research with forestry agents in Niger, Blundo argues that:

> *When a forest agent is deeply involved in the local social life, the population will tend not to commit offenses out of respect for him, so as not to 'mess up' his work. People will be 'ashamed' of committing offenses under the eyes of a kinsman, for the State incarnated by a 'kinsman' deserves more respect (Blundo 2015, 149).*

In this situation social connections become a double-edged sword. At times, they may be lines of accountability to pressure a civil servant to act in an individual's private interests, but this social pressure may also be a positive factor influencing the civil servant to act in the public interest. Peter Evans' (1995) study on economic development in Brazil, India, and South Korea during the 1970s and 1980s makes an argument that parallels Blundo's. Evans argued that embedded autonomy — referring to bureaucracies that have sufficient autonomy to create and implement strategies that embody general collective interest while also being sufficiently embedded in social and institutional networks to obtain information — were critical in the development of the technology industries in Brazil, South Korea and India. Evans' argument is focused on how embedded autonomy gives bureaucrats access to needed information and sufficient room to create and implement policies. The core queries are whether civil servants have room to operate and whether they are sufficiently connected to social networks. However, in many countries, including Niger, civil servants are rotated every few years to prevent vicinal accountability. Strategies aimed at addressing vicinal accountability (including its challenges) emerge throughout the literature and are discussed in Part 2.

1.4 Overlapping, Competing, and Reinforcing Lines of Accountability

Some of the key tensions arising from these multiple lines of accountability are how they may overlap, compete or reinforce each other. Blundo argues that, even though civil servants are connected to multiple types of accountabilities, even the informal ones do not necessarily merely replace bureaucratic accountability, but are embedded within it (2015, 155). He cites the example of a patron higher up in the civil service asking a lower-level civil servant to ignore a request that came to his desk.

> *[By ignoring it,] the officer formally satisfies the logic of bureaucratic accountability with regard to one criterion, respect of hierarchical order, in contradiction to the second requirement of bureaucratic accountability, the implementation of the law. In doing so, he temporarily abdicates his decision making autonomy and his discretionary powers to his superiors" (Blundo 2015, 155).*

Anders points out that, while civil servants may be extremely adept in navigating multiple lines of accountability, they "suffer and profit at the same time from conflicting norms" (Anders 2002, 7). Civil servants often face 'catch-22 situations' since whatever they do may violate a rule (ibid). In the situation described by Blundo above, obeying the higher-level official resulted in breaking the regulations the civil servant was supposed to follow.

In addition to competing lines of accountability, there may also be lines of accountability that may be satisfied simultaneously. Anders gives the example of a public official who tries to help his housekeeper by providing vehicles for a funeral procession. The civil servant does not have a working personal vehicle, so he uses public vehicles. He is acting on his social obligation to his housekeeper, whom he considers to be like family (kinship pressures), but follows the official procedures to request the vehicles, even though their use for the funeral is against the civil service code (Anders 2002, 7). In this instance, he follows the bureaucratic process and meets his obligations to his housekeeper but violates the rule that the vehicles should not be used for personal purposes.

The key point here is that multiple lines of accountability, meaning multiple reference groups, exist simultaneously and have overlapping, competing, and at times complementary mutually held expectations of how a civil servant should behave in a given circumstance. Civil servants may be adept at navigating these multiple lines, but a key question is which one is most influential in a given moment, especially as it pertains to corruption.

Part 2: Social Norm Change Among Civil Servants: What Works and Why?

While anti-corruption strategies that integrate changes in social norms are an emerging practice, few of these strategies have been tailored to civil service environments. Based on articles reviewed for this study, the anti-corruption field has strong evidence to show how social norms may influence corrupt behavior among civil servants in specific contexts. Some evidence-based theories of change address social norms related to corruption, but there is not yet robust evidence of whether these strategies work in practice or of the factors that influence their outcome. There are ongoing efforts to collect evidence of the effectiveness of strategies to change the social norms that drive corrupt behaviors among civil servants but, to date, these have produced inconclusive results or are still in progress.[26] More broadly, there are guides on strategies that target social norms related to corrupt behaviors — strategies which have obvious potential for those targeting civil servants (e.g. Jackson and Köbis 2018; Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019) – but these have not yet been adapted to address the peculiarities of corruption among civil servants.

This section analyzes the state and rigor of the evidence that does exist on how to address social norms that drive corrupt behaviors specifically among civil servants, lessons that can be drawn from it, and, lastly, what still needs to be learned. Aside from a few noted exceptions, the scope of this review includes only studies specifically focused on anti-corruption strategies that target social norms amongst civil servants in contexts where corruption is endemic.

Key Points

1. Lab-based experiments have helped build social norm-based theories of change of how to address corruption among civil servants, but these need to be contextualized, based on input from actual civil servants, and then tested in reality.

2. A robust social norms analysis is possible and may point to feasible program designs.

3. While limited, there is some evidence to show how anti-corruption strategies that integrate social norms change may address corrupt behaviors among civil servants.

4. Strategies to address social norms should be linked to a systems analysis, piloted, and have realistic goals.

5. Strategies integrating social norms are not 'silver bullets'; there are limits to what social norms programming can achieve.

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26   The GI-ACE initiative has paired research with piloting and testing different social norm strategies but, at the time of the review, many of these studies were ongoing.

The evidence that this section draws on consists primarily of laboratory-based experiments, some field-based experiments, historical analysis, and contemporary case studies. Overall, there is limited rigorous evidence of strategies to address the social norms driving corrupt behaviors among civil servants. Figure 3 below shows a menu of general social norm anti-corruption strategies and how they align to specific social pressures. Not all strategies have been tested or have evidence of their effectiveness available in the public domain. The boxes in orange are those where there is some evidence of their effectiveness specifically in relation to corruption among civil servants. These areas are discussed in the following sections. It is also worth noting that the table is heuristic and, in practice, there may be overlaps between the social norm environments and sources of social pressure. For example, civil servants may be subject to societal and kinship pressures as well as hierarchical and peer pressures. Considering the type of social norm environment and source of social pressure, however, may be useful for identifying relevant strategies. This is also discussed further in the following sections.

Before diving into our findings from the research, the first section analyzes the depth and rigor of the available evidence. The next section focuses on what we know about designing a social norms-based strategy to address corrupt behaviors among civil servants. This is followed by an analysis of the evidence of 'what works' and why, the lessons learned from strategies with mixed results, and a discussion of the potential limits of social norms-based strategies targeting corruption among civil servants.

A Theoretical Foundation: Advances and Limitations of the Laboratory

A substantial amount of social norms theory related to corruption and theories of change comes from laboratory-based experiments (e.g. Bicchieri and Rovelli 1995; Abbink et al. 2012; Ian and Hong 2017; Senci et al. 2019; Trongmateerut and Sweeny 2013; Barr and Serra 2010). This has led to findings such as the strength of social norms *vis-à-vis* a cost-benefit analysis, how social norms are more influential than individual attitudes, and evidence for the effectiveness of 'nudging' strategies. These have helped develop theories and models for the field, yet the test subjects and abstracted conditions create limitations on how generalizable some of these findings are to civil servants in FCAS.

The first and foremost question is whether the test subjects are representative of civil servants. These studies are most often conducted in a laboratory setting with university students (e.g. Barr and Serra 2010; Ian and Hong 2017; Senci et al. 2019; Trongmateerut and Sweeny 2013). These studies often acknowledge these limits and attempt to address them with research designs that simulate conditions facing civil servants in practice. However, these students are not necessarily representative of civil servants in FCAS. For example, the average Oxford student is not likely to have the same experience or pressures as a civil servant in Uganda.

Secondly, the laboratory dynamics, while often well-designed, are not always synonymous with reality — especially as they relate to survival dynamics in FCAS. As noted in the previous sections, one of the reasons anti-corruption programs among civil servants have had limited success is that the intersecting formal, practical, and especially social norms influence their behavior. While many of the experiments attempt to simulate these dynamics in laboratory experiments, there are clear limitations on how realistic they may be when the test subject knows

Social Norm

Norm Environment	Society						Civil Service			
Source of Social Pressure	Societal/Vicinal				Kinship		Hierarchical		Peer	
Strategy	Strengthen alternative norms	Coordination signals	Foster images of integrity that trump images of reciprocity	Collectively establish pro-integrity norms	Create space for horizontal negotiation on norms	Instigate collective action	Change the top-down norm	Disrupt networks	Introduce organizational culture change	address pluralistic ignorance
Method	Dialogue	Lighthouse; small torches	Civic education; values training	*Imihigo*	Dialogue platforms	Trendsetters	Windows of opportunity / Leadership change	Staff rotation	Support for managers through autonomy and resources	Public awareness campaigns; integrity champions; social nudges

Source: Adapted from Jackson and Köbis 2018; and Köbis et al. 2019.

Note that, while this table shows the items as individual boxes, in practice they often overlap.

that, no matter the outcome of the behavioral game, they will walk away with a stipend for their time and be able to return to their regular life. One illustrative example of these dynamics is the contrast between the study of diplomats in New York by Fisman and Miguel (2007) and the multiple laboratory experiments using university students by Barr and Serra (2010).

Barr and Serra attempted to test whether the social norms in a specific country context influence how individuals respond to similar situations related to corruption in other contexts. The study was based on multiple laboratory experiments conducted on undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Oxford. The experiment assigned the student the role of either a private citizen or a civil servant. The private citizen had to decide whether and how much to offer the public servant as a bribe for an official service, whereas the individual playing the civil servant had to decide whether and how much to accept as a bribe (Barr and Serra 2010, 864). The impact of being caught and facing legal consequences was simulated with a mandatory cost deducted from the amount received from the bribe. The authors found that they could predict whether the undergraduate student assigned the role of private citizen would pay/accept the bribe based on the individual's home country, but that these predictions were not as accurate for graduate students. They speculated that those graduate students were likely to have spent more time in the United Kingdom (and out of their home country) indicating that their values may have changed following the change in context. This article is commonly cited as evidence of how someone's socialization towards corruption may change over time and is one of the most cited articles on social norms and corruption.

Barr and Serra's findings contrast with earlier findings on the relationship between cultural norms and legal enforcement by Fisman and Miguel (2007) from a study on United Nations (UN) parking tickets in New York. Prior to 2002, diplomatic immunity protected UN officials from being charged for parking offences. Fisman and Miguel argued that, therefore, the only constraint against responding to parking tickets was a cultural norm. In 2002, there was a sharp drop in unpaid violations following a change that gave law enforcement the authority to confiscate the diplomatic license plates of violators. Fisman and Miguel argue that this provides evidence that both cultural norms and legal enforcement are important determinants of corruption, something that had tangible impact in contrast to the simulated conditions of Barr and Serra's study.

In summary, laboratory-based experiments have contributed important findings about the relevance and strength of social norms related to corrupt behaviors, but these need to be studied in context to test their relevance to civil servants in FCAS.

2.1 Action-oriented Social Norms Analysis

How does one determine whether social norms are an important factor in driving corrupt behaviors among civil servants and then design a program based on that analysis? While there have been numerous studies with examples of social norms that drive corruption among civil servants (as described in the previous sections), these do not always lend themselves easily to program design or to identifying viable programmatic theories of change. While not common, there are strong examples of social norms analysis among civil servants that have been used to

create evidence-based programmatic theories of change. Hoffmann and Patel (2017) provide a noteworthy example.[27]

Hoffmann, Patel, and a team of researchers in Nigeria (2017) conducted a survey of more than 4,000 Nigerian households to understand how social norms influence corrupt behaviors in law enforcement and the public health sector. Their survey used vignettes to identify the social norms at play as well as the underlying injunctive and descriptive components and how these may differ from the respondent's attitudes. In contrast to many existing studies, Hoffmann and Patel also sought to understand the interaction between these social norms and gender norms. Their rich analysis of how specific social norms influence corrupt acts also demonstrates how a strong analysis can begin to point to a practical strategy.

Their analysis showed a divergence between injunctive and descriptive norms. Many respondents, for instance, had an 'inflated' view (also known as 'pluralistic ignorance') of the acceptability of bribery in traffic stops. Based on this finding, Hoffmann and Patel provide a series of recommendations to challenge the common belief that specific corrupt behaviors are acceptable (2017, 24-32). This led to tangible programmatic recommendations, such as media programs and engaging trendsetters, that are familiar to many working on social norms. This was followed by a household survey of how religious norms interact with social norms in relation to corrupt behaviors in Nigeria (Hoffmann and Patel 2021) and on social norms in relation to vote-selling (Hoffmann and Patel 2022).

There is a key takeaway from Hoffmann and Patel's work: robust social norms analysis is able to identify entry points for anti-corruption programming, as well as provide evidence to inform contextually relevant theories of change. Their work highlights ways that robust analysis is able to identify theories of change that are unlikely to work as well as those based on assumptions that do not hold true. Their study was a large-N household survey, but there are also examples of this type of analysis done on a more micro-level (e.g. Phillips et al. 2019; Scharbatke-Church et al. 2020). Additionally, there are many analysis tools from broader work on social norms and corruption that could be adapted to focus on civil servants (e.g. Jackson and Köbis 2018; Baez Camargo et al. 2022).

2.2 Strategies with Evidence of Success

This section evaluates the available evidence of anti-corruption strategies based on social norms and targeting civil servants. Overall, strategies targeting social norms that drive corrupt behavior among civil servants appear to be an emerging field of research and practice with rigorous evidence only available for select strategies. This section details the available evidence of how social norms have been leveraged as part of a strategy to address corruption in Rwanda (e.g. *imihigo*), the evidence related to 'nudges', and the multiple arguments about what motivates whistleblowers.[28]

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27   Hoffmann and Patel's research is part of ongoing work by the Social Norms and Accountable Governance program at Chatham House: https://www. chathamhouse.org/about-us/our-departments/africa-programme/social-norms-and-accountable-governance-snag.

28   A notable set of studies that is not included here is work from the Basel Institute on Governance on addressing social norms driving gift-giving in healthcare facilities in Tanzania. This research was outside the scope of the literature review because, while the healthcare workers targeted in the research were public sector employees, they were not civil servants as defined by this literature review. See Baez Camargo et al 2022 for more information.

The limited evidence available suggests that strategies focused on social norms may be an effective component of a multi-faceted strategy to address corruption among civil servants (including more traditional anti-corruption approaches focused on public service reform) and that these will need long-term sustained support. Overall, as practice on social norms-based strategies to address corruption among civil servants expands, these efforts should be matched with robust monitoring and evaluation efforts to strengthen our understanding of what works and why.

Aligning State-Society Norms: Leveraging Social Practices for Anti-Corruption Efforts

Much of this literature review has focused on how social norms may drive or perpetuate corruption among civil servants, but social norms may also be used to challenge corruption. Based on a case comparison of countries where corruption remains systemic (Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Tanzania, and Uganda) with countries where some degree of control of corruption has been achieved (Georgia and Rwanda), Baez Camargo and Passas present some of the only cross-country findings on how social norms have been leveraged in anti-corruption campaigns (2017).

Baez Camargo and Passes (2017) argue that Georgia and Rwanda offer two cross-cutting lessons on gaining some degree of control of corruption. Rwanda offers lessons on integrating social norms within that approach. Both Georgia and Rwanda have undergone significant public sector reform that emphasized two common elements: a) strict monitoring and enforcement of the new rules; and b) better access to improved quality of public services (the second being paramount). Rwanda's approach differed in that it also integrated social norms in two ways: a) formalizing informal dynamics (e.g. *imihigo*); and 2) supporting activities that foster attitudes and beliefs countering corruption (e.g. *ingando* and *itorero*) (2017, 15).

The first component of Rwanda's approach leveraged *imihigo*, a cultural practice where leaders publicly commit to achieving certain things (similar to performance outputs) and the pride associated with doing so, as a mechanism to reward leaders who provided public goods and services (instead of embezzling state funds). The flip side is that it also leveraged the shame for the individual and their family as punishment if they did not meet their performance commitments (whether because of corruption or something else). This is based on a historical cultural process that was reinvented and leveraged to support the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) public sector reforms (Baez Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 19). The process originated in the historical Rwandan Kingdom, where individuals would appear publicly before local leaders, often chiefs or clan heads, to state their commitment to achieving certain goals. Later, this would be followed by ceremonies to evaluate whether the individual achieved the goal or not — bringing the individual either praise or public shame (ibid). After Kagame came to power, *imihigo* was reinvented and now "forms the backbone of a central performance monitoring scheme that covers all public institutions and officials in Rwanda" (ibid). *Imihgo* contracts are now signed directly with President Kagame, often at public events or in front of the Rwandan Parliament.

In addition to the socially embedded performance contracts, the Rwandan reform efforts also utilized multiple types of civic education targeting both the public as well as civil servants to reinforce the notion of a Rwandan citizen — *umunyarwanda* — who values integrity and rejects corruption (Baez-Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 24). This was done through *ingando* and *itorero*. *Ingando* were camps where citizens went to learn about the history of Rwanda and the work of the government. *Itorero* was a program targeting select individuals from the elite and was seen as a more advanced version of *ingando* aimed at indoctrinating individuals to defend state policies (ibid). *Irore,* graduates of *itorero*, "are expected to become 'opinion leaders' and 'fighters for change' facilitating 'change away from bad [mentalities]'"(ibid) and to move away from acceptance of corruption and towards integrity.

While Rwanda's homegrown solutions have been identified as important parts of their anti-corruption approach, there is also research that argues these approaches have had negative consequences as well. For example, Purdekova (2011) argues that while *imihigo* and other homegrown solutions were framed as accountability initiatives, in practice they did not actually create accountability to communities but were tools of state control over lower-level officials. Similarly, Hasselskog (2016) argues that a practice like *imihigo* increased governing efficiency, but did not provide for local relevance or empowerment and at its core was a governing tool.

It is worth noting that Rwanda's was a top-down initiative following the Rwandan Genocide (which some argue equates to a 'big bang' moment) and was accompanied by massive formal public sector reforms. These reforms included a decentralization of services and civil service decision-making power, significant downsizing (some would argue purging) of the public sector staff,[29] a standardization of hiring practices based on merit and, above all else, strict enforcement of a zero-tolerance for corruption (Baez Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 18). Many of these practices implemented in Rwanda were seen as internationally recognized 'best practices' of public sector reform encouraged by the World Bank (Baez Camargo and Passas 2017, 14).

These 'big bang' events in which a complete change of the system may be possible are often reliant on the actions of the ruling elite. In each case, new leaders came to power independent of the informal ties, obligations and networks associated with previous regimes and with overwhelmingly popular mandates (ibid). As will be discussed in the section on political settlements (pages 42–43), a key aspect of this success may be due to the Rwandan political elite's belief in a well-functioning bureaucracy as key to the country's stability and future economic growth instead of as an opportunity for personal enrichment.

Nudges

Nudges are "any aspects of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives" (Sunstein 2008, 6). In other words, nudge interventions attempt to encourage people to make certain choices by encouraging them to make those choices, not by changing the options available (Natural Human Behavior 2020). Targeting social norms and their constitutive components is one form of nudge strategy.

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29   Kagame is reported to have purged between 60 to 70 percent of the RPF cadres during Kicukiro II. See Baez Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 7-9.

For example, nudge strategies may attempt to influence how an individual behaves by changing their perception of how common a practice may be (effectively changing their perception of the descriptive norm). Much of what we know about social nudges is either theoretical or comes from laboratory-based experiments (e.g. Köbis et al. 2015) and focuses on nudging strategies aimed at the public, and not necessarily civil servants.[30] Additionally, as previously mentioned, these laboratory-based experiments try to simulate real world conditions using everyday citizens (more commonly university students), not civil servants. During this literature review, we did not find a nudge strategy specifically focused on civil servants. However, given the logical applicability of nudge strategies to civil servants, a study by Kobis et al. (2019) on anti-bribery nudges is included below. This study was selected because, to our knowledge, at the time of this publication, it was one of the only lab-in-field experiments conducted using an anti-bribery nudging laboratory in a real-life environment.

Kobis et al.'s (2019) study uses a laboratory-based bribery game conducted in Manguzi, South Africa, to test the impact of posters presenting social nudges attempting to reduce bribery. The posters had messages that said fewer and fewer people in the community were paying bribes. Participants (including a control group) participated in a bribery game designed to minimize response bias to determine if the posters influenced whether or not they would choose to engage in the bribe, whether they thought they ought to (injunctive norm) and what they thought other participants were doing (descriptive norm). The results indicate that the posters changed the perception of the prevalence of bribery — from the perception that it was common to the perception that it was decreasing (i.e. descriptive norm) — and that participants were less likely to engage in bribery afterwards.

Köbis et al. argued that this was the first lab-in-field experiment to test the effectiveness of social nudge strategies to reduce bribery and called for more long-term studies on their effectiveness (2019, 2). The study findings are striking though there is room for methodological critique: a bribery game is artificial and, while survival constraints (e.g. civil servant soliciting bribes to make up for unpaid salaries) may be attempted in the game, they will not necessarily be as convincing as in reality.[31] It is also worth noting that the research team had to add a variable to control for a segment of participants who had colluded beforehand on how they would answer the questions in order to maximize what they would be paid for their participation. Despite these limitations, the results from this study are useful when thinking about shifting social norms related to bribery, especially in contexts where there is pluralistic ignorance (e.g. see Hoffmann and Patel 2017), though what these social messages are should be treated with caution (Cheeseman and Peiffer 2021). Caveats about anti-corruption messaging aimed at normative assumptions are discussed on pages 39–41.

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30   There is debate within the broader (i.e. not focused on civil servants) literature on the effectiveness of nudges. See Hummel, Dennis and Alexander Maedche. (2019). "How effective is nudging? A quantitative review on the effect sizes and limits of empirical nudging studies." *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics, Volume 80, 47-58; DellaVigna, Stefano and Elizabeth Linos. 2022. "RCTs to Scale: Comprehensive Evidence from two Nudge Units." Econometrica, 90(1): 81-116; and Sunstein, Cass R. 2017. "Nudges that Fail," Behavioural Public Policy. 1(1), 4-25.*

31   This critique echoes Sunstein's (2017) argument that counter nudges by those with an economic or other interest may be more influential than the nudges during the intervention.

Exit, Voice, and Sabotage: Whistleblowers and Guerilla Bureaucrats[32]

Many of the previous sections have looked at top-down or externally led strategies, but what about bottom-up or middle-out strategies? This section evaluates two that emerged in the literature: why whistleblowers buck expectations and the guerilla bureaucrats who fight back against unprincipled principals. Here the evidence is inconclusive with some studies pointing to the importance of ethical leadership (i.e. morals) or individual attitudes,[33] and others pointing to the importance of social norms.

In a study of whistleblowers in Indonesia, Nurhidayat and Kusumasari (2019) argue that a whistleblower's attitude is the primary factor affecting their whistleblowing intention or act, even in the context of social norms that are counter to this attitude. In their argument, it is the individual's personal beliefs that give the individual the courage to act counter to the existing social norm. Their argument is based on in-depth interviews with whistleblowers and key informants in Indonesia. However, these findings call into question earlier research from Trongmateerut and Sweeny (2013), which provides evidence of how the key motivating factors — especially social norms vs attitudes — may vary based on context.

In a comparative study of Thailand and the United States (US), Trongmateerut and Sweeny argue that, while subjective norms (which they define as the individual's interpretation of the opinions of important others regarding the behavior in question) have direct and indirect effects on whistleblowers, they are stronger in Thailand than in the US (2013, 438). They argue that this is in part due to Thai culture being more collectivist whereas American culture is much more individualistic. Their study is based on a two-part laboratory experiment with university students in each country. The experiment organically developed the social norms among the students and then tested their strength in a whistleblowing game. As with other laboratory-based studies using university students, while the findings are striking, we do not know if they are generalizable to civil servants.

In a study on whistleblowers in the Philippines, Hechanova and Manois (2020) argue that ethical leaders have significant influence on whether an individual will blow the whistle. However, the authors note that the study measured intent, not actual behavior, and recommend measuring behavior in future research. This article can be understood as an extension of the positive influence of principled principals, though it is also open to the same critique of what to do in contexts where principals are not necessarily principled.

Here, Schuster et al. (2021) offer a unique perspective on guerilla bureaucrats who choose to fight back instead of merely raising red flags. Based on a survey of 1,700 Brazilian public servants during the Temer Presidency[34] (2016-2018), Schuster et al. (2021) sought to understand why some Brazilian bureaucrats attempted to undermine policies that violated the public interest. They argue that bureaucrats with greater public service motivation, meaning those driven by their desire to serve the public, are more likely to engage in 'voice, sabotage

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32   This sub-section title is inspired by Schuster et al. 2021, "Exit, Voice, and Sabotage: Public Service Motivation and Guerilla Bureaucracy in Times of Unprincipled Political Principals".

33   While morals and attitudes are social dynamics, as previously discussed, they are distinct from social norms. For a discussion of this, see Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019.

34   President Michel Temer became president in 2016 when then-President Dilma Rousseff was impeached in what some argued was an orchestrated coup to oust Rousseff. Temer was later arrested while in office on allegations of corruption. See BBC 2019.

and exit' when asked to implement policies they perceive to be against the public interest (Schuster et al. 2021, 15).

'Voice', means raising verbal objections to policies; 'sabotage', means attempting to undermine these policies; and 'exit' means resigning from their position and exiting the civil service. Examples of sabotage include disobeying or not implementing policies and encouraging colleagues to do the same (Schuster et al. 2021, 15). Schuster et al. argue that whether or not a guerilla bureaucrat engages in sabotage is in part influenced by how closely supervised they are or how easily they may be fired (Schuster et al. 2021, 16). They find, however, that while guerilla bureaucrats may be willing to oppose unprincipled principals for a time, in the long run they are likely to leave the civil service meaning that unprincipled principals face one fewer guerilla bureaucrat.

Overall, evidence suggests that whistleblowers are motivated by multiple factors, including personal attitudes, and that the strength of these factors vary based on context. Similarly, civil servants with greater public service motivation may be more likely to go against unprincipled principals, but this is also influenced by the structure of the bureaucracy; in the end, these guerilla servants are likely to exit, giving greater reign to the unprincipled principals.

2.3 Strategies with Mixed Results

Across the literature, researchers also offer insights into why some strategies to change social norms that drive corrupt behavior among civil servants have mixed results. One of the cross-cutting points is that these strategies do not work in the conditions in which they are implemented. Common missing elements include a lack of understanding of how the corrupt behavior fits into the larger system of corruption (or acknowledgement of other drivers of corruption), not testing the effectiveness of the norm strategy among the target population, inappropriate timing, and false assumptions about the sustainability of the results.

Principled Principals, Codes of Conduct, & Ethics Training

There is a segment of anti-corruption literature that focuses on encouraging or instilling integrity within the civil service. These strategies include creating and enforcing codes of conduct or conducting ethics training, but evidence suggests that each of these strategies requires sustained top-down leadership over an extended period to be successful. This section reviews complementary and contrasting studies from Brazil, Poland, and Nigeria in these efforts.[35]

Corruption among civil servants in Brazil has been a historic issue with high-level officials often shielded from accountability (Iyer 2013). Although there was an official code of conduct, there was no organization to enforce it and it existed largely only on paper. In 1999, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso created a Public Ethics Commission (PEC) with a mandate to enforce the code. The PEC made a strategic decision to focus on top-level officials in the civil service with the hope that norm change at the top would translate to norm and behavior change

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35   At the time of writing, there was also ongoing work on ethics training with civil servants in Bangladesh and Nepal. Preliminary results from Meyer-Sahling, Schuster, and Mikkelsen (2022) indicated that ethics trainings may shift ethical attitudes over time and can have an impact. Full results are forthcoming.

at lower levels. The PEC received strong backing from the President and, based on interviewee responses, is seen to have changed the social norms among the upper echelons of the civil service from 1999–2004 (Iyer 2013). However, the effectiveness of the PEC decreased dramatically after President Cardoso left office. It lost its political backing and struggled to enforce the code of conduct. Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen (2020) reinforce the findings of Iyer.

Based on a 2011 survey of civil servants in Poland, Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen found that, by themselves, codes of ethics (formal norm setting) and disciplinary codes (punitive measures) are ineffective but, when combined and enforced, they may reduce the perception of kickbacks among civil servants (2020). However, the authors note that their survey is based on perceptions, not observations of actual behavior, and recognize that the perception of respondents may not be an accurate measurement of behavior. Additionally, Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen note that their study specifically focused on kickbacks among civil servants in Poland and may not be generalizable to other corrupt behaviors (e.g. embezzlement or prebendal practices) and there is a question of whether their findings are also generalizable to FCAS where corruption is the norm, not the exception.

Whereas the previous studies focused on how to use formal codes of conduct to create integrity, evidence from Nigeria suggests the same end goal may be accomplished with means often seen as counter to this effort — personalization and political interference. Roll (2014) looked at seven public departments in Nigeria, two of which had exemplary service, to understand the factors that helped to create them. He argues that personalization and political interference actually help to create pockets of effective governance in the wider context of a weak state. Roll argues that the two agencies succeeded largely because they were able to leverage their personal relationships and networks in pursuit of their mandates. In essence, these reformers were not necessarily following official processes or traditional codes of integrity, but they were able to build effective agencies and achieve the desired end goal. Roll's argument is a top-down approach to civil service reform that is premised on principled principals who have strong political backing and a degree of political savvy. Given how contextual these factors are and how reliant they are on top-level political will, these cases have limited relevance to contexts where these preconditions do not exist.

In sum, evidence suggests that encouraging norms of integrity among civil servants is often contingent on the existence of a principled principal who is willing to give strong political support and room to operate in order to enforce them.

E-Governance: A Shield from Social Norms?

While many of the previously discussed reforms have mixed evidence of their effectiveness, e-governance public sector reforms are one area that have shown more promise (Borges et al. 2017, 15). E-governance public sector reforms use information technology to provide and automate specific government services, for example, online systems in which individuals pay fees for a license or permit directly into a government account instead of to a civil servant. These e-governance systems essentially create the opportunity for citizens to directly access certain services or resources without having to go through a civil servant. From a corruption standpoint, the premise is that these processes reduce opportunities for corrupt behavior by removing the choices available to civil servants. E-governance systems are not norm-

based anti-corruption strategies per se but, theoretically, they limit a civil servant's ability to influence the process and, therefore, may mitigate the impact of social norms. While these systems are set up to increase direct access to government services as well as create transparency, they are not immune from co-optation.

In a study on civil service corruption in Indonesia during the late 2000s, Ganie-Rochman and Achwan detailed how an e-tender system for procurement bids was not a panacea for procurement corruption — it simply caused it to adapt (2016, 171). Despite the introduction of the e-tender system, civil servants and actors outside the bureaucracy still colluded to inflate the price of goods and services needed by local government (Ganie-Rochman and Achwan 2016, 171). In contrast, the Rwandan Government has effectively used the online platform *irembo* for citizens to pay directly for government services thereby eliminating exchanges of money between officials and citizens (Baez Camargo and Gatwa 2018, 18). As already discussed, however, Rwanda has a strong enforcement of their policy of zero-tolerance for corruption among civil servants suggesting that the effectiveness of e-governance platforms may also be influenced by the broader reform environment.

With the exception of the above studies, research on e-governance has not been widely captured in the literature review methodology as these studies are not often linked to social norms. This may be an area for future research.

Local Social Contracts

One of the motivations for focusing on corruption among civil servants is because it affects the delivery of public goods and services, and the governance of people's daily lives. The literature primarily focuses on how to strengthen formal structures and align social norms to support impartial service delivery, but there is also a segment of literature that suggests rethinking what a well-functioning state 'should look like' and instead look at 'what is working' and scaling that (De Herdt and Olivier de Sardan 2015, 9). Blundo (2015, 156) argues that, if improved governance is the goal, local social contracts may lead to more accountable governance, though officially they could be considered a form of corruption and are likely to marginalize 'out-group' individuals.

This discussion of local social contracts, or agreements on how to secure and regulate goods and services within a given community, is part of a broader school of research on "governance without governments" (e.g. Menkhaus 2006, 75) or "governance from below". The premise is to look for governance arrangements, whatever their form, instead of looking for Western-style governance dynamics. This means recognizing the governance practices in their vernacular, or ones that are locally defined and led practices that have always existed but have not been noted by international experts and researchers (Ibreck and de Waal 2021, 4). As highlighted by Blundo, however, these practices have no guarantee of equal access; instead, they often have a strong 'in-group' preference which would be problematic for diverse societies.[36] Evidence from Hoffmann and Patel (2017) demonstrates this.

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36   Some have described this as an 'our turn to eat' mentality (e.g. Wrong 2009).

Hoffmann and Patel (2017) argue that societies in which corruption is systemic are often characterized by local social contracts but lack a national one. They argue that local social contracts are more common in Nigeria (and have a strong 'in-group' preference) because people believe this is the only way to access public goods and services. In this context, using one's public position to find family and friends jobs or development programs is expected and accepted by one's group. It is seen as part of an implicit social contract, though condemned by those outside that group. In an extremely diverse, yet deeply divided society like Nigeria, local social contracts may be a solution, but they are also likely to be the source of conflict. In essence, local social contracts may be a double-edged sword: they may make government officials more accountable to the community, but they may also be exclusive, drive ethnically defined patron-client relationships and fuel grievances against the government among communities that feel excluded.

Local social contracts in contexts of hybrid regimes or 'ungovernance' is an area of research with mixed findings and more questions than answers. However, there are two key takeaway questions: a) what should a well-functioning state look like (and who decides what that is)? and b) if the goal is more accountable governance, could the answer lie in forms of governance that blur the public-private distinction (potentially risking being labeled as corrupt and exacerbating grievances)?

Public Recognition Strategies: 'Naming and Faming'

Could public recognition of civil servants who are acting with integrity help to shift norms and expectations driving corrupt behaviors? Accountability Lab (2018) argues that this approach flips traditional accountability approaches by seeking to 'name and fame' 'good-doers', instead of focusing on 'naming and shaming' wrongdoers. This type of strategy may be attractive because it takes a proactive instead of a reactive approach and attempts to establish behaving with integrity as a social norm. These types of public recognition campaigns may also avoid the negative pitfalls of 'pay no bill' awareness campaigns (discussed on pages 39–41). However, are these public recognition strategies effective in shifting norms? Despite their popularity, we did not find any studies that met the scope conditions for our literature review. We did, however, find two studies that focused on broader public sector officials as well as elected officials in positions similar to civil servants. Given their likely relevance to civil servants and the popularity of this strategy in programming and policy discussions, the findings from these two studies are analyzed in the following paragraphs.

To understand the effectiveness of the 'naming and faming' approach, in 2019 Accountability Lab (AL) conducted a contribution tracing study of its Integrity Icon (II) program in Liberia (2016-2017). The II program sought "to spark conversations around accountability and integrity by encouraging communities to identify civil servants who uphold these values." AL then worked with the selected IIs to support their individual efforts to "push for greater integrity within the agencies and organizations" (AL 2019, 2). The study specifically sought to identify whether the II campaign "further enabled Icons to implement new/improved rules, practices, or processes for good governance in their workplace" (ibid). The study focused on public sector employees, not specifically civil servants[37] as we have defined them in this

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[37] In this review, civil servants are officials — both appointed and hired — who are charged with making, implementing, and monitoring the governance of public services (e.g. Ministry of Education official). For more discussion of this definition, see pages 3–4.

literature review, but it is included because it is illustrative of II programs specifically targeted at civil servants and it is one of the few studies of this approach publicly available.

The study argues that it found evidence that the 'naming and faming' approach had raised the profile of the three studied II participants, in some circumstances leading to new opportunities and awards for the individuals.[38] In addition, the three individuals continued to do their jobs with integrity and sought ways to improve governance. AL notes, however, that due to limited resources, the study was able to interview only two individuals connected to each of the three Integrity Icons, which limited the robustness of the findings. From the published evidence, it is difficult to discern whether good governance efforts would have been pursued without the II program. As AL suggests, additional research is needed to better understand the impact of 'naming and faming', especially as it relates to civil servants who may not already be acting with integrity. Findings from Uganda, however, raise doubts about whether 'naming and faming' would influence those who are not already choosing to behave with integrity.

Buntaine et al. (2022a) sought to understand whether or not positively recognizing elected community leaders for their management of public programs improved the administration of public projects and fostered expectations for good governance. The study was a randomized experiment combined with an embedded ethnography, something that proved invaluable for understanding the results of the randomized experiment. This study did not focus on civil servants, but officials elected to community development boards at the village level in Uganda. However, this study is included because the findings have direct implications for civil servants in similar contexts.

Buntaine et al. (2022a; 2022b) found no evidence that offering public recognition changed leaders' behaviors or attitudes to corruption or how well the programs were managed. Similarly, they found that telling communities about leaders who received awards for effective management of public programs did not change public attitudes to governance. In other words, their findings suggest that the potential to be recognized for being an effective public works manager, or even being recognized as an effective manager, "did not change underlying norms that support corruption or their behavioral expressions" (Buntaine et al. 2022a, 25). The ethnographic evidence suggested that the main challenges to changing the social norms and behaviors were "a lack of tangible incentives, poor understanding of the type of recognition that was available, and feelings of resignation and an inability to affect project outcomes" (2022a, 17). Given that the project was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, symbolic, social benefits like public recognition may have been less important compared to tangible benefits. Overall, in their view, positive recognition may be at best a strategy supporting other strategies, especially those that address entrenched social norms related to corruption.

While specifically focused on locally elected officials, these findings have implications for civil servants. The public recognition strategies were based on the belief that public recognition for effectively managing public programs is a strong incentive for elected leaders who have to appeal for votes in the next election. The leaders themselves thought they would benefit from this recognition. If these strategies did not have an impact on elected officials who in theory

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38 For example, Rebecca Scotland, one of the Integrity Icons, was invited to speak at the US Embassy's Women's Day celebration in Monrovia and offered a space for youth-focused workshops that she had proposed.

need to appeal to their constituents, it seems reasonable to surmise that the same strategies are unlikely to have an impact on civil servants who do not need to appeal to a voting constituency. However, additional research is needed to understand whether these findings also apply to civil servants working in similar contexts.

Overall, the effectiveness of public recognition strategies is mixed. AL's study (2019) suggests that 'naming and faming' may bolster civil servants who are already behaving with integrity, but there is insufficient evidence of whether it has an impact on broader social norms that may be driving corruption. Buntaine et al. (2022a) find that public recognition is not sufficient to shift underlying social norms driving corruption within the provision of public goods or services. While the evidence is inconclusive, these studies provide a foundation for future work. Buntaine et al.'s (ibid) robust research design also helps us understand not just the impact of the intervention, but also why it did not work. In that sense, it is still incredibly useful and something practitioners should consider when designing their intervention. If the program does not work, will they have enough information to be able to understand why?

2.4 Strategies that did not Work but Teach Us Something

Public Service Reform 'Best Practices' can be 'Worst Practices'

One approach to address corruption and improve public service delivery has been to increase managerial discretion over hiring, firing, and pay. However, few studies have rigorously collected evidence comparing the impact of public service practices across contexts (Meyer-Sahling et al. 2018; Schuster et al. 2020, 843). Schuster et al. sought to fill this gap by specifically testing whether 'New Zealand' public service reforms, which provide for greater managerial discretion, are effective across both OECD and non-OECD contexts in improving public service delivery. Based on a study of 6,500 public servants across Chile, Ghana, Kosovo, and Uganda, Schuster et al. (2020) find that public service reform 'best practices' may actually be 'worst practices' in contexts where corruption is endemic.

Using Chile as an example of a country with strong rule of law and anti-corruption social norms, Schuster et al. compared the responses of civil servants from Ghana, Kosovo and Uganda in scenarios in which mangers are given greater discretion over hiring, firing and pay. Respondents in Ghana, Kosovo and Uganda soundly stated that this type of increased managerial discretion would lead to greater corruption and "unprincipled principals" (Schuster et al. 2020, 843). While New Zealand reforms have been heralded as 'best practices' in some contexts, Schuster et al.'s research demonstrates how the opposite may be true in FCAS.

Public Awareness Campaigns

Public awareness campaigns aimed at either discouraging corruption (e.g. 'Pay No Bill') or addressing pluralistic ignorance are common anti-corruption strategies (e.g. Hoffmann and Patel 2017). However, as Cheeseman and Peiffer (2021) argue, anti-corruption messaging may have a negative impact or, as findings from Gomez-Garzia and Soto-Motor (2017) suggest, no impact at all.

Cheeseman and Peiffer (2021) conducted what they claim was the first test of anti-corruption messaging on ordinary people's behavior. Their study is based on a household-level field experiment of a bribery game conducted with a representative sample drawn from Lagos, Nigeria. Note that this is not a study directly focused on civil servants, but on the public's interaction with civil servants as it pertains to bribery. Cheeseman and Peiffer tested how an individual's willingness to pay a bribe was affected by one of five different types of anti-corruption messages: a) that corruption was widespread and therefore was critical to address; b) an anti-corruption message endorsed by religious leaders; c) one that highlighted government success in fighting corruption; d) one that emphasized the impact of corruption on local communities and the need for local responses; and lastly, e) how corruption is a theft of taxes and fees.. They found that none of the anti-corruption messages decreased an individual's willingness to pay a bribe, but that among respondents who were especially 'pessimistic' about corruption, the anti-corruption messaging made them more likely to pay a bribe because it reinforced their negative opinion about corruption.

Cheeseman and Peiffer's results are a useful check on whether anti-corruption messaging has a positive impact, but the findings need to be understood in context. Anti-corruption messaging may address pluralistic ignorance about how common bribery is, but to shift this behavior one needs to understand if pluralistic ignorance is a driver of the behavior, or a perpetuating factor. In the context of this study, pluralistic ignorance is treated as a driving factor and strategies that either reify or call to address pluralistic ignorance are tested. Additional research on how the perceptions of the prevalence of corruption fit into the reasons people engage in corrupt acts related to the civil service would help shed additional light.

While there are caveats about how the findings of this study should be used, it does provide rigorous evidence for a key point: not all anti-corruption messaging is helpful in trying to address corruption. This is useful evidence that calls for practitioners and policymakers to think more critically about how public awareness campaigns affect social norms (especially injunctive and descriptive components) and if underlying assumptions about the impact are accurate. Above all else, it is a reminder that well-intentioned programs may risk doing harm if they are not built around an understanding of the context.[39] Part of contextually grounding a project includes initial testing of the approach, a lesson demonstrated by research conducted on civil servants in Mexico.

Gomez-Garzia and Soto-Motor (2017) sought to test a messaging campaign (including a social norm component) specifically targeted at civil servants in Mexico. Their goal was to increase civil servant reporting of received gifts. Prior to the Christmas season, they sent five different messages to a randomized sample of 157,586 civil servants drawn from the official directory. After the messages, 76 civil servants reported gifts. In the previous year, only 22 reported gifts and, on average over a five-year period, 50 public servants reported gifts per year.

One of the messages sought to appeal to the descriptive norm related to gifts. It informed the recipient that, on average, every year 1,000 gifts are reported and turned over to the Ministry of Public Service and it invited the recipient to do the same as their peers. It was an attempt to motivate action by framing a descriptive norm. The study did not find that the social

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39 For a discussion on the importance of Do No Harm as it pertains to anti-corruption work, see Johnston 2010.

norm-based message had a significant effect. Their results showed that the reminder about the law and the message about the potential sanction were most effective.

This study had a promising design — in part because it is a low-cost option — but there are several design issues that limit its findings. First, the researchers did not test their messages with civil servants before they were sent so they do not know how the messages were understood. This is critically important if the goal is to shift the descriptive norm. Without knowing how the social norm message was understood by the target civil servants, the lack of an effect could be due to its wording.

Second, and more critically, there are issues of scale. The study drew on an impressive 175,636 email addresses (some known to be duplicates) but said that 1,000 gifts were reported every year. Given that 1,000 is a relatively low number compared to 175,636 civil servants, this seems to reinforce a negative descriptive norm, that civil servants do not report. Secondly, their results show that 26 more civil servants reported gifts than the annual average of 50. In a civil service of more than 175,000 civil servants, this is not a large number and may be due to chance.

In conclusion, these findings suggest three important points. Firstly, public messaging campaigns are not always a net positive. As Cheeseman and Peiffer argue, messaging campaigns may further disillusion the public and risk worsening corrupt behaviors (2021). Secondly, practitioners and researchers need to understand where public messaging about social norms fits within a larger ecosystem of factors driving and perpetuating the corrupt behavior. They must acknowledge the limits of what a public messaging campaign may achieve. Lasty, any intervention or study should engage civil servants to test the design before it is implemented.

2.5 Limits of Social Norms-based Strategies?

There is a general lack of rigorous evidence of 'what works' for transforming social norms influencing corrupt behaviors among civil servants, but theory and existing evidence point to the potential limits of social norms-based strategies. Two key types of limitations emerge from the literature: a) social norms are only one factor driving the corrupt practices and not necessarily the strongest factor; and b) the barriers that certain political settlements create for social norms change.

Social Norms as One Factor among Many

Two of the arguments that emerge most strongly from the literature are that corrupt acts — and the social norms related to them — are often based on the need to overcome bureaucratic hurdles or to gain access to otherwise inaccessible goods or services (e.g. Ledeneva 2018; Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2021; Hoffmann and Patel 2017; Baez Camargo and Passas 2017). Jackson described this as basic strategies of survival and 'getting on' in life (2018, 229; see also Migdal 1988, 27). Survivalist strategies and strategies for 'getting on' or 'getting things done' help shape social norms influencing civil servants. This is one reason that kinship pressures are so acute in FCAS. A corrupt act may be a necessary act that, while immediately driven by a social norm, may also be backed by fundamental need.

The literature suggests that opportunities to address social norms related to corrupt behaviors are most apparent when the social norm is not driven by a survival need. For example, there is a clear difference between civil servants soliciting bribes because it is expected and civil servants soliciting bribes when it is both expected and needed to supplement low or unpaid salaries. While social norms may be factors driving or perpetuating corrupt acts, until survival conditions are met, social norms-based strategies may face major limitations. Instead of seeing anti-corruption strategies based on social norms as a 'silver bullet', we instead need to understand them as one dimension of both analysis and strategy and as an element that may not always have a role (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2019).

Political Settlements & the Agency of Civil Servants

This literature review focuses on FCAS where corruption is endemic, and a vast number of the anti-corruption studies reviewed focus on curtailing forms of petty corruption, such as bribery. An unsettled debate in the literature is whether anti-corruption strategies are able to address what is often called 'grand corruption' (Scott 1979; Olivier de Sardan 1999). Put another way, what can be done when corruption is not simply systemic, but it **is** the system of governance (e.g. de Waal 2015; Johnston 2005)? This is not a challenge unique to social norm-based strategies, but also applies to broader public service reforms aimed at addressing corruption.

Yanguas (2015; 2017) argues that the success of public service reform in contexts of systemic corruption is shaped by three key dynamics. Firstly, there is the relationship between policy actors and elite actors. Are policy and elite actors collaborative, collusive or contentious? Secondly, there is the stability or instability of the country's political settlement, which Yanguas defines as the "informal distribution of power and elite interactions that underpins institutional configurations" (2017, 2). A key part of this is how long a politician may expect to hold power, whether they face competition from another political party or within their own. In a well-functioning democracy, this is defined by elections and term limits. However, in anocracies or authoritarian states, official political timelines may exist, but they are not guaranteed and in constant negotiation. A politician who was elected but who does not believe they will be elected again (because they may lose the support of their political godfather) has a shorter political horizon. This tension is exacerbated when the official rules of how to acquire political positions (e.g. elections) are bent or broken to fit elite interests (e.g. election rigging, voter intimidation, etc.).

The final factor, Yanguas argues, is the country's ruling ideology regarding the public sector (2017, 8). Do the ruling elite see the public sector as a service provider to the public, or as a sector that can be used to benefit elite interests? Yanguas's argument is based on a comparative study of three African countries with different elite settlements: Ghana (competitive), Uganda (weakly dominant) and Rwanda (dominant). Yanguas argues that the Rwandan Patriotic Front saw a well-functioning public sector as key to achieving their political objectives and instilled a top-down culture of an impersonal technocratic bureaucracy. A key enabler was that the political elite in Rwanda had long-term political horizons, in part because they did not fear political competition. In contrast, in Ghana and Uganda, elite actors had short-term visions that leveraged the public sector when it would benefit their ability to stay in power. This echoes the previously discussed (see pages 30–31) findings of comparative work on public

sector reform by the Basel Institute on Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Tanzania, and Uganda (where corruption remains systemic) and Georgia and Rwanda (where some degree of control of corruption has been achieved).[40] Baez Camargo and her colleagues found that in Rwanda and Georgia, public sector reforms received strong backing from the political elite who saw a well-functioning civil service as vital to the future development of each state (Baez Camargo et al. 2020). Rwanda also integrated social norms into their anti-corruption approach by formalizing informal dynamics (e.g. *imihigo*) and created civic education programs (e.g. *ingando* and *itorero*) aimed at instilling social norms that supported integrity in all citizens, including civil servants (Baez Camargo and Passas 2017; Baez Camargo and Gatwa 2018). It is worth noting that the successes in Georgia and Rwanda both happened following major sociopolitical change —the Rose Revolution (Georgia) and the Rwandan Genocide — that may have made a 'big bang' approach possible.

These arguments build heavily on the expansive literature dealing with informal governance and neopatrimonialism[41] (e.g. Eisenstadt 1973; Clapham 1985; Bayart 1989; Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Helmke and Levitsky 2004). They echo the findings on the importance of the elite's perspective of the purpose of the civil service, who the civil service is intended to serve, and the implications for which reforms are possible when there is no political will to implement them. As Yanguas (2017) and Baez Camargo and Passas (2017) have argued, what is critical for successful reform agendas is how the elite see the purpose of the civil service and, specifically, whether they see it as in the interests of the elite to have a well-functioning civil service for public benefit.

In contexts where these conditions may not be present or may exist only momentarily, there may be limits to strategies that target corruption only among the civil service or social norms in general, without first targeting the broader political settlement. There is available research on reshaping political settlements in order to address corruption (e.g. Khan et al. 2019; Roy 2017) but these are beyond the scope of this literature review and may be an area for future research.

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40   For more on this, see The Basel Institute's Public Governance Program: https://baselgovernance.org/public-governance.

41   Neopatrimonialism is defined by Clapham as a system of governance in which "officials hold positions in bureaucratic organizations with powers that are formally defined, but exercise those powers . . . as a form of private property" (1985, 48). In essence, formal governance structures may exist, but these are overshadowed by the informal personalized dynamics of how power is wielded. In the context of Africa, this is heavily influenced by the legacy of extractive and economic political institutions of colonial rule (Andreski 1969; Mamdani 1996; Mbembe 1992; Young 2012) that some have argued have created lasting vicious cycles contributing to state fragility (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). However, the concept of neopatrimonialism has grown quite broad so that some describe it as essentially describing everything and nothing, offering little analytical value (Mkandawire 2015, 564; Erdmann and Engel 2007), and discounting the evidence of how institutions do at times influence and constrain rulers (Cheeseman et al. 2018).

2.6 What can we learn from these strategies?

Across the studies reviewed and the evidence considered, there are a few key lessons and themes relevant for practitioners.

Key lessons

- **Context matters.** Both the context of the civil service and the broader political settlement in a country are important. Dynamics vary from one country to the next and have major implications for which anti-corruption approaches work in one context but not in another. While there may be similarities — such as the generalized social logics of negotiation, gift-giving, solidarity, predatory authority, and redistributive accumulation found across civil services in FCAS — specific social norms at play and how they do or do not influence a corrupt behavior will depend on the context. These social logics can tell us broadly what to look for, and lines of accountability can help to focus our analysis on where to look, but the interrelated factors for one context will differ from the next. Therefore, robust analysis is needed to ensure contextually relevant program design.

- **Social norm-based strategies are not 'silver bullets'.** As shown by Hoffmann and Patel (2017), while social norms may be a factor driving corruption, there are also environmental factors that may be more influential. While social norms have often been left out of anti-corruption approaches targeting civil servants and, while evidence shows better understanding these social norms could improve the effectiveness of anti-corruption approaches, they are unlikely to offer the complete solution.

- **Understand how the intervention fits into the broader system.** Anti-corruption success is notoriously difficult but understanding how an intervention fits into the broader system may help illuminate which type and level of change the program may be able to achieve. This is also key to understanding unintended negative consequences.

- **Interventions should be based on input from civil servants.** To understand the social norms at play, as well as the potential opportunities and challenges in shifting them, practitioners should seek the input of civil servants in their analysis as well as their program design.

- **Strategies that do not work may still teach us something, but we need data.** As shown by Buntaine et al. (2022), interventions matched with robust research may help to understand why an intervention may not have achieved the desired results. Their study was more rigorous than the monitoring and evaluation efforts attached to most programs, but the takeaway point is: if the intervention does not work, will there be sufficient data to explain why?

Part 3: A Research-to-Practice Agenda — What we don't know but need to know.

Overall, there is strong evidence of how social norms drive corruption among civil servants, why it is critical to take these social norms into account in anti-corruption programming, and the beginnings of evidence-based programmatic theories of change. However, there are also key research and programmatic gaps in the field that, if answered, may help to improve the effectiveness of anti-corruption programming and begin to move the needle at least slightly in contexts where corruption is systemic. This section outlines a research-to-practice agenda based on the gaps identified in this report.

What we need to know:

- **How do social norms related to specific corrupt behaviors fit into the larger political environment?** One of the gaps in the analysis of how social norms drive corruption among civil servants is identifying how the corrupt behavior fits into the broader political context. This is a question of scope. How do we understand the specific social norm that is driving the Congolese desk officer at the rural road safety office to solicit bribes for vehicle inspections in the broader Congolese political context? This is not simply an academic exercise of connecting levels of analysis — the evidence cited in this literature review indicates that understanding the answer to this question has implications for identifying direct and indirect ways to predict whether the desk officer will continue soliciting bribes.

- **How can we address the social norms driving corruption among civil servants?** This is a call to expand the evidence base and expand it based on praxis. We know social norms are important, but we need evidence to better understand what works to change them, what does not and why. While lab-based research designs have helped develop theories and models for how the anti-corruption field can understand and address social norms, the test subjects and abstracted conditions in these experiments are not necessarily representative of the experience of civil servants in contexts of endemic corruption. It is necessary to study these dynamics as they play out in these contexts. Strengthening this evidence base requires researcher-practitioner collaborations as exemplified by the Global Integrity Anti-Corruption Evidence (GI-ACE) consortium[42], and the collaboration between the Basel Institute on Governance, the UK Behavioural Insights Team, the University of Dar es Salam, and the University of Utrecht in their mixed-methods evaluation of anti-corruption programming targeting social norms.[43] Rigorous evaluation of innovative and experimental programs would begin to address this evidence gap.

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42   See more about GI-ACE at https://ace.globalintegrity.org/.

43   For more on this, see Baez Camargo, Claudia, Violette Gadenne, Veronica Mkoji, Dilhan Perera, Ruth Persian, Richard Sambaiga, and Tobias H. Stark. 2022. "Using behavioural insights to reduce gift-giving in a Tanzanian public hospital: Findings from a mixed-methods evaluation." Basel Institute on Governance. https://baselgovernance.org/publications/TZ-giftgiving.

- **How can social norms be integrated as a workstream within multi-dimensional anti-corruption programs?** This is a call to expand the toolbox of strategies. While evidence suggests that formal public service reform strategies do not succeed if they do not also address the social norms at play, there is still a gravitational pull in policy recommendations towards the traditional Public Sector Reform (PSR) strategies. We need to seek out ways to incorporate social norm approaches into more traditional PSR programs. As described above, doing this requires collecting evidence, having space to fail, and learning from those efforts.

- **What are the limits of social norms-based strategies targeting civil servants?** One of the questions lurking in the background of social norms research on corruption is whether social norm approaches are able to address all types of corrupt behaviors ranging from petty to grand corruption. Several researchers note caveats or likely limits of anti-corruption strategies targeting social norms (e.g. Hoffmann and Patel 2022), but this is an area where additional research is needed. Are there conditions that make a specific corrupt behavior 'ripe' for an anti-corruption strategy targeting social norms?[44] This question is especially pertinent for contexts with high levels of poverty and deprivation where social norms are one of many factors influencing corruption. Additionally, this is a major question for corrupt behaviors that fall into grand corruption, such as kleptocratic embezzlement. What change is feasible if certain conditions are necessary for a corrupt behavior to be 'ripe' for a social norm-based strategy? How does this become integrated into a broader multi-dimensional, anti-corruption strategy?

- **How do social norm-based strategies 'add up' over time?** One of the challenges of systemic corruption is that it is dynamic, adapting to changing conditions. In these environments, how do we understand how social norm-based strategies 'add up' over time, or create a cumulative impact? Social norm-based strategies that may appear to have success in the short term may be seen as ineffective in the long term because the broader system has changed, and the corrupt practice may have evolved to adapt. Answering the question about how they add up requires being able to understand the impact of social norm-based strategies on the system behind the corrupt behavior and how the behavior changes over time.

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44   'Ripeness' is a concept often used in conflict resolution to mean that a conflict is 'ripe' for negotiation when the parties in the conflict see a negotiated settlement as preferable to continued fighting. See Zartman 2001. The application of this to anti-corruption work is inspired by comments from Claudia Baez Camargo about the Basel Institute's social norms work in Tanzania.

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