



## **Navigating the State: Citizenship practice and the pursuit of services in Rural India**

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This paper examines patterns of *state-targeted* citizen claim-making in rural India, asking who makes claims on the state for public services, why, and how? These questions are critical to an understanding of state capacity and of citizenship practice, made all the more important in a global climate of public sector retrenchment and non-state service provision. Drawing on the experiences of rural citizens in the state of Rajasthan, the data underscore both the continued centrality of the state to rural citizens' lives, and the complex strategies of action citizens employ when seeking the state. Three broad patterns emerge. First, the data reveal a strikingly high incidence of claim-making; a great deal of claim-making activity, moreover, occurs in places (poor and remote) and among groups (the poor and lower castes) where we might least expect to see it. Second, the claim-making channels pursued are diverse, ranging from direct (face-to-face) contact with local village officials, bureaucrats, and state and national level politicians, as well as mediated contact through a range of non-state actors and institutions. Third, these approaches to the state are not mutually exclusive, but are combined into diverse claim-making repertoires of varied content and breadth. Within these repertoires of action, direct and mediated strategies appear to complement one another.

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## INTRODUCTION

Around the world citizens rely on the state to provide essential public goods and services: clean drinking water, healthcare, education, roads to get to the health clinic, the school, or the market, and – for many of the poorest – food rations, cash transfers, and other forms of social protection. In many places, however, it is a constant struggle to secure access to even the most basic services. Wells dry up and water pumps break, health clinics are located at prohibitive distances, teachers are absent, roads crumble into disrepair, and applications for welfare services are ignored, lost, or are the subject of bribe requests.

Citizens vary in their responses to these conditions. Some, simply put, *do not* engage the state. Having given up hope of public service delivery, they “exit.”<sup>1</sup> For some this means quiescence, quiet in the face of deprivation.<sup>2</sup> For some it entails an outright rejection of, and resistance to, the state.<sup>3</sup> For most it also entails seeking services elsewhere, opting for private alternatives or self-provisioning. Non-state service providers, including religious, sectarian, and customary institutions, non-governmental organizations, civic associations, and kin networks, play a critical role in service provision in settings as diverse as the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Africa.<sup>4</sup> While there are many instances of effective public-private collaboration,<sup>5</sup> there are also concerns that non-state service provision may “hollow out” the state’s capacity to provide, lower citizens’ expectations of the state, and thus undermine the social (and fiscal) ‘contract’ between citizens and their governments.<sup>6</sup> In an era of economic liberalization and public sector retrenchment, some scholars warn of an “eclipse of the state” or, at the least, an erosion of state autonomy and the demise of the state’s developmental mandate.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding the conditions under which citizens continue to *engage*, rather than exit, the state is therefore of critical consequence for state capacity (the ability to deliver services) as well as for citizenship practice (understood, in part, in terms of whether and how citizens pursue such services from the state). This paper examines patterns of *state-targeted* citizen claim-making: that is, the strategies of action citizens employ when seeking publicly mandated goods, services, and entitlements that are produced and distributed by state institutions. The paper draws upon a larger book project<sup>8</sup> that poses three central questions, investigated in the context of rural Rajasthan, India: who makes claims on the state, why, and how? In asking *who* makes claims, I seek insight into local and quotidian patterns of participation, moving beyond the electoral arena to ask who engages the state around often mundane (but no less critical) issues of service

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<sup>1</sup> Hirschman (1970)

<sup>2</sup> Some scholars describe a “culture” of poverty and of non-participation (Cf. Lewis 1966, Banfield 1967, Wilson 2009). Others see patterns of inaction as reflective of power structures that determine whether and how people *can* participate (Cf. Bachrach & Baratz 1962, Gaventa 1980).

<sup>3</sup> This resistance may take “everyday,” often covert or hidden, forms such as foot-dragging, non-compliance, theft, sabotage, and so on (Cf. Scott 1985), or might be manifest in full-fledged uprisings (Cf. Wolf (1969).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Cammett & MacLean (2011, 2014); Tsai (2007), Brick (2008), Dunning (2009)

<sup>5</sup> Evans (1996), Ostrom (1996), Tendler (1997)

<sup>6</sup> Fowler (1991), Commins (2000), Moore (1998), Ribot & Oyono 2005

<sup>7</sup> Evans (1997), Rudra (2003), Seekings (2008), Bardhan (1999)

<sup>8</sup> Kruks-Wisner, *Claiming the state: citizen-state relations and the pursuit of public services in rural India*

delivery. In asking *why* some citizens make claims on the state while others do not, I explore micro-level determinants of activism, broadly defined: what conditions foster or inhibit citizen action? By asking *how* claims are made, I examine patterns of local representation and citizenship practice. Who speaks for, or through, whom? How do ordinary citizens encounter, see, and understand the state in their daily lives?

Rural India is perhaps not a place where we would *a priori* expect high levels of citizen claim-making. Democratic theory tells us to expect democratic regimes (and, by extension, citizen participation) in richer, more developed places. Studies from around the world have found that – across a range of political activities – wealthier and more educated people participate with greater vigor.<sup>9</sup> Hierarchical social structures, as well as ethnically divided ones, are also widely considered an impediment to democratic representation and participation.<sup>10</sup> We might therefore expect to see low levels of participation, including claim-making, in India – a poor, low-literacy country divided along caste, religious, ethnic, and other lines. This view is particularly resonant in a setting such as Rajasthan – a largely rural state that until 1949 was comprised by semi-autonomous princely states with strong feudal traditions.

I find, however, that citizens actively seek and engage the state in large numbers. This, I argue, reflects the centrality of the state in rural lives and livelihood, as well as the increasing local presence of the state made visible through a proliferation of public services and decentralization policies that have created new spaces for local citizen-state engagement. I also find, however, that citizens engage the state in diverse and often circuitous ways involving both state and non-state actors. This, I argue, reflects an institutional diversification at the local level, reflected in the emergence of new and varied channels of access to the state. While the focus of the paper remains squarely on citizen action to secure public (state) services, non-state actors play a critical role in ensuring public provision, often as intermediaries that carve out channels and facilitate access to the state. Other modes of claim-making, however, are direct, involving face-to-face engagement of state actors by citizens. This paper investigates this mix of claim-making practice, both mediated and direct, and reflects on its consequences for citizen-state relations.

## CLAIMING SERVICES, PRACTICING CITIZENSHIP

There is a vast body of work that seeks to illuminate the determinants of public service delivery, exploring the conditions under which states most effectively meet the needs of their citizens. This paper centers on a different, but related, set of questions, asking whether and how citizens *demand* services from the state – questions that are often overlooked or taken for granted in studies of service delivery, even as increasing numbers of “demand-driven” initiatives emerge.<sup>11</sup> We in fact know relatively little about what enables, motivates, or inhibits citizens’ demands, or about what the state’s service delivery apparatus looks like through the eyes of common citizens. This paper thus complements existing work on public service provision by shifting the focus to citizens’ claim-making activity.

<sup>9</sup> Bennett & Bennett, 1986; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Verba et al., 1995; Collier and Handlin (2009); Dunning (2009).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Dahl (1961); and Alesina & La Ferrara (2000).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, The World Bank (2004).

I start with the basic premise that public resources are rarely truly “public.”<sup>12</sup> Rather, so-called public goods and services are frequently allocated in a highly discretionary manner, often along ethnic, class, or partisan lines, and so are the subjects of political contestation. Access to services in this sense is best understood as a matter of who can “extract them from the political system.”<sup>13</sup> It is, in other words, a matter of who makes claims on the state.<sup>14</sup> Understanding whether and how citizens make claims is therefore critical to our understanding of distributive politics. However, access to a service does not in itself constitute, nor does it necessarily require, claim-making. A wide range of “supply-side” factors, ranging from public capacity to technocratic and political decision-making at the national, state, and local levels, inform the allocation of public goods and services. Rather, claim-making can be best understood as an *necessary but insufficient* condition for access to services.

And yet claim-making is more than a potential means to material resources. It is also a manifestation of political voice and, as such, a subject of inquiry in itself that casts important light on citizen-state relations and, in particular, on evolving notions of citizenship. Indeed, the very idea of citizenship can be understood, as Tilly (1999) asserts, as a “set of mutually enforceable *claims* relating categories of persons to agents of government.”<sup>15</sup> Claims become codified as “citizenship rights” through historical processes of struggle between people and states. In the course of this struggle, as Tilly notes, most claims fail; and yet claim-making remains critical as a process of negotiation between citizens and states. In making claims on the state – even when those claims fail – citizens are contesting and defining the bundle of rights to which they are due by virtue of their membership in a given political society.

Citizenship, following T.H. Marshall’s foundational typology, implies different kinds of rights: civil rights (that allow for personal freedom); political rights (to participate in the exercise of power); and *social rights* to economic welfare and security that enable a “life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society.”<sup>16</sup> It is this third set of social rights – and the means through which citizens claim them – that are the primary concern of this paper. Citizens experience the state through the provision of public goods and services, as well as through their absence: indeed, efforts to secure services constitute one of the primary arenas in which citizens

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<sup>12</sup> The goods and services in question are not necessarily “public” in the classic sense of being non-rival and non-excludable, but rather are “publicly-provided” goods of both a collective nature (delivering “high-spillover” benefits, such as a public water tank or access road) and of a selective nature (delivering “low-spillover” benefits, such as cash or jobs, to much narrower groups or individuals). Cf. Besley, Pande, & Rao, (2004).

<sup>13</sup> Banerjee (2004), p. 13

<sup>14</sup> The state, of course, is not a unitary or cohesive entity. I therefore employ an intentionally loose notion of the state as an amalgam of actors, institutions, and practices through which governmental power is exercised and public resources distributed. I am concerned in particular with the “developmental state,” which I define, borrowing from Corbridge et al. (2005, p.7), as “those agencies of the state and governmental practices that are charged with improving or protecting the incomes, capabilities and legal rights of poorer people.”

<sup>15</sup> Tilly (1999), p. 253; emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup> Marshall [1950] in Manza and Sauder, eds., (2009), p. 149. Social rights, for Marshall, are both cultural (the right to “social heritage”) and socioeconomic (the right to a modicum level of economic and human wellbeing, secured by the state through “the educational system and social services”).

encounter (or fail to encounter) the state.<sup>17</sup> Claim-making, in this sense, can be understood as the continual contestation of the meaning and terms of citizenship.

The centrality of public service delivery to the notion of citizenship is sharply illustrated by those who in fact *lack* the status of citizen. Jayal (2013), for example, studies the “aspirational citizenship” of several thousand Hindu migrants from Pakistan who remain “stateless,” living in camps in western Rajasthan while awaiting Indian citizenship.<sup>18</sup> Notably, despite having been Hindu minorities in Pakistan, very few cite issues of identity – religious or national – as a primary motivation for their pursuit of Indian citizenship. Rather, almost all define citizenship in terms of access to “*suvidha*” (facilities), referring to the public services and resources that they expect the state to provide: schools, electricity, water, livelihood support, and so on. Many also cite a desire for official documentation, necessary to access a wide range of poverty alleviation and social protection programs. Citizenship, thus, is seen in “instrumental” terms: “a formal qualification for access to certain material opportunities.”<sup>19</sup> As one camp resident explained, “Citizenship is everything. Even to apply for a water or electricity connection, you need citizenship.”<sup>20</sup> These “stateless” residents claim citizenship in order to be able to make claims on the state.

The subjects of this paper, in contrast, are legal citizens of India. They are, on paper, guaranteed a wide range of social rights, enshrined in the “Directive Principles of State Policy,” of the Indian Constitution, including *inter alia* the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39), and the rights to work, social security, and a “decent” standard of living (Articles 41-43). In contrast to the civil and political “Fundamental Rights” enumerated in the Constitution, these Directives are non-binding. They have, however, been invoked over the course of the last two decades in judicial opinions leading to wide-reaching policies that seek to promote social and economic rights, including livelihood, housing, healthcare and – most recently – the rights to work, to education, and to food.<sup>21</sup> And yet, great divide exists between the (increasingly progressive) rhetoric of the Indian state at the national and legislative levels and the (often regressive) implementation of social policy at the local levels. The struggle to extract *suvidha* thus continues, in many ways, to shape citizens’ relationship to the state.

Indian citizens are hardly alone in this regard: public mandates outstrip public distribution in settings worldwide. Poor citizens of Brazil and South Africa, for example, similarly struggle to access the state and its resources, despite extensive social rights and well-functioning electoral institutions.<sup>22</sup> This inability to access publicly mandated goods and services leads, as Houtzager and Acharya (2010) have argued, to “diminished forms of citizenship.”<sup>23</sup> Citizens’ efforts to bridge the gap between *de jure* entitlements and *de facto* implementation is thus an essential

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<sup>18</sup> Jayal (2013), p. 83

<sup>18</sup> Jayal (2013), p. 83

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 99

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 95

<sup>21</sup> Jayal (2013), p. 166

<sup>22</sup> Holston (2007), Benit-Gbaffou & Oldfield (2011), Heller (2000; 2009)

<sup>23</sup> Houtzager & Acharya’s (2010), p. 1

element of *active citizenship*, understood in terms of action to secure access to publicly mandated services and, in so doing, to hold officials to account.<sup>24</sup>

### Everyday claims

Claim-making activities are often quite mundane: attending a meeting, filing an application, visiting an official, contacting a fixer, or engaging in a wide range of other very local modes of interest articulation. For the most part, stories of claim-making are not ones of dramatic mobilization. Rather, they are a quotidian set of activities that take place beyond the periodic drama of elections and the romance of social movements.<sup>25</sup> And yet these everyday practices, while not the gripping stuff of elections or barricades, are no less consequential as sites of citizen-state interaction. As Holston (2007) asserts, “The quality of such mundane interaction may in fact be more significant to people’s sense of themselves in society than the occasional heroic experiences of citizenship like soldiering and demonstrating or the emblematic ones like voting and jury duty.”<sup>26</sup> Claim-making is one of the most ordinary but also critical acts a citizen undertakes in his or her relationship with the state.

Many among the poor find their relationship to the state defined in terms of marginality and, often, illegality.<sup>27</sup> As Holston notes of the experiences of Brazil’s urban poor, many practice “insurgent” citizenship, inserting themselves (often illegally) into public spaces (for example, though occupying land).<sup>28</sup> Chatterjee (2004), reflecting on the urban Indian context, highlights a similar set of dynamics wherein the poor live outside or on the borders of legality, squatting on land, dodging fares, siphoning off public water or electricity.<sup>29</sup> Living on the margins, these residents are not truly “citizens” in the sense of members of civil society that enjoy equal rights and protection under the law. True citizenship in this sense, Chatterjee argues, is a status reserved for the elite. In this context, large classes of citizens worldwide are regularly excluded, struggling to access even the most basic of public services.

And yet, despite – or perhaps because of – their marginal status, many citizens *actively engage*, rather than exit, the state. Holston, for example, describes how “insurgent” and even illegal practices may lead to claims on the state; land occupations in Brazil, for example, led over time to demands for property rights and for public services.<sup>30</sup> Chatterjee, for his part, describes a politics of active engagement of the state, albeit through “paralegal” brokerage and “bending and

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<sup>24</sup> I build here on Houtzager & Acharya’s (2010) notion of active citizenship, which they define as “present when individuals negotiate the terms of their access to mandated public goods and services in ways that are publicly sanctioned and protected” (p. 3). My own notion of active citizenship is, however, broader as I do not restrict the analysis to “sanctioned” practices; rather, as we shall see, citizens may pursue goods and services in diverse ways, both formal and informal, direct and mediated, and so not always sanctioned.

<sup>25</sup> I thank Ashutosh Varshney for suggesting this phrase.

<sup>26</sup> Holston (2007), p. 15

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Houtzager & Acharya (2011) on Latin America; Benit-Gbaffou & Oldfield (2011) on South Africa.

<sup>28</sup> Holston (2007)

<sup>29</sup> Chatterjee (2004)

<sup>30</sup> Holston (2007). This process, however, Holston notes, is not the linear and sequential one that Marshall describes where civil and political rights, in time, spur social and economic rights. Rather, citizens simultaneously contest and claim their civil, political, and social rights (p. 317).

stretching of rules” by local leaders and politicians who mediate access to the state.<sup>31</sup> Similar dynamics are found across South African cities, where residents engage their local governments through means that are simultaneously “formal and informal, legal and illegal, confrontational, and cooperative.”<sup>32</sup> The state, even where constrained, corrupt, or capricious, “remains at the core of representations and expectations, especially of lower income residents.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Citizen, state, and services in India**

As both the world’s largest democracy and home to some of the world’s deepest poverty, India is a critical setting in which to examine citizen’s claim-making strategies. More than forty percent of the population continues to live below the poverty line of US\$1.25/day, and there are more poor people in India than in all of sub-Saharan Africa combined.<sup>34</sup> Nearly forty percent of the population is malnourished, fifty percent lack access to basic sanitation, and over one-quarter of school-aged children are not enrolled in school.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, however, India is the site of some of the world’s most extensive initiatives to enhance social welfare. As Akhil Gupta (2012) notes, “The Indian state probably outdoes any other poor nation-state in the number of its benevolent interventions.”<sup>36</sup> Efforts to combat poverty and famine were central concerns at the time of Independence and were enshrined early on in the “welfarist orientation” of the Indian Constitution.<sup>37</sup> Since then, the size and scope of India’s social welfare sector has increased, particularly over the last twenty years. Despite (or perhaps because of) economic liberalization in the 1990s, social expenditures have grown<sup>38</sup> and public programs have proliferated.<sup>39</sup> These trends have been particularly pronounced over the course of the last decade, which saw the expansion of centrally-sponsored programs such as the National Rural Health Mission, the “Education for All” Campaign (*Sara Shiksha Abhiyan*), and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, to name a few.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Chatterjee, op cit, p. 73.

<sup>32</sup> Benit-Gbaffou and Oldefield (2011), p. 445

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 145. In a study of South African cities, Benit-Gbaffou and Oldefield note continued claims on the state in the form of urban protests, “rather than a disregard, ignorance or avoidance of the state.”

<sup>34</sup> OPHI (2010); World Bank (2008)

<sup>35</sup> World Bank (2004, 2011); OPHI (2010)

<sup>36</sup> Gupta (2012, p. 23). He writes: “One could hardly accuse the state of inaction toward the poor; it would be difficult to imagine a more extensive set of development interventions in the fields of nutrition, health, education, housing, employment, sanitation, and so forth than those found in India.”

<sup>37</sup> As Jayal (1999) notes, however, that the rights enshrined in the Constitution’s chapter on Fundamental Rights are primarily negative rights of liberty. The positive right to welfare takes on a secondary status, listed in the non-enforceable chapter on Directive Principles of State Policy.

<sup>38</sup> The 2011 budget included a 17 percent increase in social spending (including a 24 percent increase in education spending and a 20 percent increase in spending on health). Total funds earmarked for social spending amounted to a full 36 percent of the total budget. Source: Ministry of Finance, Union Budget 2011-12, Government of India, <<http://indiabudget.nic.in/>>.

<sup>39</sup> Shagal (2012) reviews the Planning Commission’s Five Year Plans, finding a proliferation of central government development schemes (which allocate funds to the state and other local implementing agencies) during the period 1992-2001, accompanied by an expansion of spending on these schemes as a percentage of total plan expenditure. For an overview of social welfare programs and expenditures in India, see World Bank (2011).

<sup>40</sup> Most of these programs were established and expanded during the two, successive terms (2004-2008; 2008-2014) of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA). How these programs, and social spending more generally, will fare following the 2014 election of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) remains an open question.

Unprecedented amounts of public goods, services, and money are being funneled into India's social sector.<sup>41</sup> These resources, however, are rarely allocated in a programmatic fashion but are, more often than not, subject to the control of local officials. It is on this basis that India is often referred to as a "patronage-democracy," in which the state influences the lives of its citizens through the discretionary, rather than rule-bound, allocation of public services, infrastructure, poverty reduction programs, and public sector employment – often in return for political support.<sup>42</sup> The Indian "state is everywhere," directly influencing the "life chances" of its citizens<sup>43</sup>; and yet access to the state and its resources remains elusive for many. The size of the bureaucracy, the proliferation of public programs, the byzantine procedures through which they are administered, not to mention the frequent bending of rules, create an institutional environment in which public entitlements and lines of accountability are very often unclear. In this setting, idealized notions of a rationalized bureaucracy give way to a situation of "arbitrary care," "in which the entire process is shot through with contingency and barely controlled chaos."<sup>44</sup>

In this context, it is not surprising to find the emergence of non-state service providers who offer an alternative. Private services exist in the form of private schools, doctors, wells, and so on. However, the reach of these private services – while growing in some sectors<sup>45</sup> – continue to be dwarfed by the scale of India's public sector, particularly in remote rural areas and among poor clientele where private service provision is often less lucrative.<sup>46</sup> More affluent residents may 'vote with their feet' (or with their wallets). We can imagine, for example, a wealthy, gated community that provides its own infrastructure, in which residents purchase bottled water, run their own generators for electricity, attend private hospitals, and send their children to private schools.<sup>47</sup> In such places, the substitution of private for public services entails a form of (at least partial) "exit" from the state.<sup>48</sup> This does not, however, reflect the reality for the majority of India's poor, for whom true "exit" is rarely a viable option. Rather, as Ahuja and Chhibber (2012) have observed: "the rhetoric of the Indian state has promised much to Indian citizens, including jobs, housing, health care, the eradication of poverty, food subsidies, and sanitation

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<sup>41</sup> Corbridge et al (2005); Gupta (2013)

<sup>42</sup> Chandra (2004). For a review of the literature on clientelism in India, see Ziegfeld (2009).

<sup>43</sup> Satyam Patel, a Congress party leader, quoted in Kohli [1990], *Democracy and Discontent*, cited in Chandra (op cit), p. 115).

<sup>44</sup> Gupta (2012), p.14

<sup>45</sup> Education and health care are two sectors in which private service providers are proliferating; the quality of such services, however, are highly variable and poorly regulated. See, for example, Bardhan (2012).

<sup>46</sup> These "last mile" challenges highlight the difficulty of ensuring reliable and affordable access to those who, given their low incomes or remote locations, are not viewed as sources of profit by private providers. Cf. World Bank (2004), Davis (2005).

<sup>47</sup> This is not difficult to imagine in the Indian context. Such gated communities exist in many of India's cities where public infrastructure is rapidly deteriorating. Even in such places, however, the wealthy cannot entirely substitute the full range of public services and so must, at some level, engage with public agencies. See for example: "India's Selective Rage Over Corruption," *New York Times* (August 17, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Hirschman (1970) famously describes these dynamics in his discussion of school choice, where affluent residents opt out of public schools, "voting with their feet," by sending their children to private alternatives and, in so doing, become less invested in pushing local governments to improve the quality of public schools.



facilities. But even as the state has fallen short on these commitments, over a period of 60 years, it has become implanted in the public imagination as the arbiter of the common good.”<sup>49</sup> The state remains central to the lives of most people, both as the primary service provider and as the target upon which to lay claims.

It is in this context – of high need coupled with available but discretionarily and arbitrarily allocated public resources – that citizen claim-making takes on its greatest importance. In a more standardized setting where public service delivery follows programmatic lines, citizen action is both less necessary and less effective in influencing the distribution of resources. At the other extreme, high levels of state-targeted claim-making are unlikely in “failed” or “predatory” states that deliver very little to (and extract a lot from) their citizens.<sup>50</sup> India, however, fits neither of these scenarios. It is certainly not a rule-bound place; evidence of graft – both petty and large-scale – abound, and public protests against corruption have erupted across the country.<sup>51</sup> But neither can India be accurately described as a failed state; critical public services do reach and benefit millions, including many of the poorest and most marginalized.<sup>52</sup> In India, then, citizen claim-making is critical: it is a necessary – although seldom sufficient – condition for access to a wide range of essential goods and services.

India is paradigmatic, but by no means alone, in these conditions. The gap between public entitlement and public distribution is widely documented in other developing democracies, from Brazil, to Mexico, to South Africa, and many others<sup>53</sup> where, despite robust electoral institutions, large classes of people are routinely denied access to publicly mandated public goods and services. In such settings, there is, as Houtzager and Acharya have stated, a profound “gap between the status and the reality of citizenship.”<sup>54</sup>

## THE STUDY: SCOPE AND METHODS

When and how, under these conditions, do citizens engage the state? How, specifically, do rural Indian citizens, living on the periphery of the world’s largest democracy, navigate the state to lay claims on essential public resources? To investigate these questions, I turn to the state of Rajasthan in northwest India, home to 68 million people. As a poor and ethnically diverse state with a history of feudalism and social division, Rajasthan – and, in particular, rural Rajasthan – is among the environments where we might *least* expect to see high levels of citizen claim-making.<sup>55</sup> It therefore presents us with a critical case in which to examine both whether and how citizens engage the state.

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<sup>49</sup> Ahuja and Chhibber (2012), p. 400

<sup>50</sup> Evans (1989)

<sup>51</sup> For a review of corruption in India, see Vaishnav and Sukhtankar (2014).

<sup>52</sup> Corbridge et al. (2005); Gupta (2012)

<sup>53</sup> Holston (2007); Houtzager & Acharya (2011); O’Donnell (1993); Collier and Handlin (2009); Bénit-Gbaffou & Oldfield (2011); Harriss (2005); Jha et al. (2007)

<sup>54</sup> Houtzager and Acharya (2011), p. 4

<sup>55</sup> Formerly 22 independent princely states grouped together within the province of Rajputana, Rajasthan only emerged as a single administrative territory in 1949, two years after Indian Independence. Prior to this, each princely state, while officially under British rule, retained partial independence. The princely states were themselves further

Rajasthan today remains poor. Along with its neighbors in north India, it is often labeled a backward or “BIMARU” (“sick”) state.<sup>56</sup> These states are categorized as “low human development” on an index of indicators including income, educational attainment, and health outcomes adjusted for inequality within the state. Rajasthan’s human development ranking puts it in the bottom quarter of Indian states, scoring well below the national average for per capita state domestic product, per capita income, and mean years of schooling, and exceeding the national average for infant and maternal mortality rates.<sup>57</sup> Globally, Rajasthan ranks in human development alongside countries like Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, and Benin.

And yet, Rajasthan is not India’s poorest state. In fact, in recent years Rajasthan has enjoyed relative growth and improved human development standing. Social spending has increased in education, health, and other services, outpacing other BIMARU states although still lagging far behind the forerunners in India.<sup>58</sup> In administrative terms the government of Rajasthan has proved itself capable of implementing a wide array of programs; for example, its record in administering the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (a national program that provides employment on government worksites rural household that request it) is one of the best in the country.<sup>59</sup> This is due in large part to the presence of an active social movement sector that has pushed for and monitored the administration of this and other social programs.

Rajasthan’s *relative* progress and administrative capacity make it an ideal site for study of citizen claim-making. The expansion of state services means, in crude terms, that there is a bigger pie to divide. There are *resources to be had*. But rising social spending and the proliferation of public services in Rajasthan by no means guarantees access. Instead, citizens must actively seek resources from the state. As a result, more and new actors have emerged at the local level, attempting to facilitate a link between citizens and the agents of the state that hold the purse strings. The question therefore emerges – crystalized in the Rajasthani case – as to why some citizens are more active in this process than others.

The study builds on 18 months of fieldwork carried out in 2009-2011. I worked in four, purposively selected districts of Rajasthan – Udaipur, Kota, Ajmer, and Jodhpur – representing the primary linguistic, cultural, and geographical regions of the state, which vary in their levels of development and caste and tribal compositions (Table 1).

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subdivided into smaller fiefdoms (*jagirs*) ruled by local feudal lords (*jagirdars*) who, while nominally bound to the king through kinship and the payment of annual tributes, exercised almost absolute power in local affairs with the ability to collect taxes and maintain their own standing armies.

<sup>56</sup> BIMARU, which also means “sick” in Hindi, is an acronym derived from the names of four states in the Hindi-speaking belt of north India that have traditionally lagged behind in human and economic development: Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

<sup>57</sup> See UNDP (2011), “Inequality Adjusted Human Development Index for India’s States,” New Delhi: UNDP India; Government of India, Ministry of Finance, “Economic Survey 2011-12,” *Union Budget & Economic Survey*; Government of Rajasthan, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, “Indicators: India and Rajasthan.”

<sup>58</sup> This development has in fact spurred calls for Rajasthan to be dropped from the BIMARU classification. See Singh (2008).

<sup>59</sup> Khera & Dreze, 2010

Table 1. Selected Districts<sup>60</sup>

District	Pop	P.C. Income/year	Raj HDI (1-32)	% SC	% ST	Colonial Rule
Udaipur	2,633,312	\$ 358.50	20	6.01	47.86	Princely State
Ajmer	2,181,670	\$ 369.66	10	17.71	2.41	Direct Rule
Jodhpur	2,886,505	\$ 335.82	9	15.81	2.76	Princely State
Kota	1,568,525	\$ 425.28	2	19.16	9.69	Princely State

This single state research design allows for nuanced and contextualized comparison of localities while holding constant macro-level features that would otherwise obfuscate important local sources of variation.<sup>61</sup> The districts were selected to allow for the control of a number of variables, such as per capita income, human development status, caste and tribal composition, and colonial history. This approach allowed me in on micro-level factors, at the level of the village and its residents, that shape whether and how citizens engage the state.

Fieldwork consisted of iterative stages of qualitative and quantitative data collection, including over 400 interviews with village residents and a survey<sup>62</sup> administered among 2210 randomly selected individuals from households across 105 villages nested within 40 local councils (Gram Panchayats).<sup>63</sup> Following initial analysis of the survey data, I selected a sub-sample of six villages in which to ground the data in specific local contexts. The villages were selected from two districts, Udaipur and Kota, representing the low and high ends of the human development index, which differ in terms of per capita income, literacy rates, caste composition, the presence of NGOs, distance from the district seat, and other salient features. In these six villages, I worked with a small team of students to carry out more than 160 open-ended interviews with key informants as well as another 240 semi-structured interviews with a random sample of village residents.

### Data: who makes claims and how?

A study of claim-making reported by ordinary citizens offers a unique view of rural citizen-state relations in India. I use the survey data to explore several dimensions of claim-making. First, I examine its *incidence*: quite simply whether or not a person reports having made a claim on a public official or agency related to public goods, services, or benefits.<sup>64</sup> Of equal concern is not

<sup>60</sup> All figures are from the Government of Rajasthan, Directorate of Economics and Statistics.

<sup>61</sup> Snyder (2001); Trounstein (2009)

<sup>62</sup> Survey sampling protocol and descriptive statistics are provided in the Appendix.

<sup>63</sup> Within each district, I ranked administrative blocks by literacy rate as a proxy for the block's level of development, randomly selecting one above and one below the mean. Within each block, I randomly selected five GPs a total of 40 GPs across the four districts. Within each GP, I chose up to three villages, always including the village that serves as the GP's administrative headquarter and randomly selecting up to two other villages. In all, 105 villages were selected. Within each village, I drew a random sample of an average of twenty households stratified by caste category.

<sup>64</sup> The data on claim-making incidence are drawn from a series of survey questions that, for each potential channel of claim-making, asked "have you in your own experience contacted 'X' for assistance with 'Y'," where Y was a series of different kinds of issues including access to public goods and services. The claim-making channels were included in the survey on the basis of a first round of inductive qualitative work.

just whether but how a person engages the state. To this end, I explore the claim-making *practices* employed, including a range of direct and mediated strategies, enumerated in Table 2 (below). These practices are then disaggregated by class (measured in terms of landownership), caste, and gender (Table 3). I refer to the diversity of practices an individual employs as the claim-making *repertoire*, measured in terms of its breadth (Table 4).

### Claim-making incidence

The vast majority – 76 percent – report that they have personally engaged in efforts to demand services from their local officials (Table 2). Claim-making activity, moreover, remains high in villages and among people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>65</sup> Indicators of village development, such as average landownership and literacy rates, do not significantly predict the likelihood of claim-making in a locality.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, richer individuals do not appear to out-claim the poor, and nor do the poor out-claim the rich.<sup>67</sup> I also find that there is no consistent pattern between one's position in the caste hierarchy and claim-making; members of the (low status) Scheduled Castes and Tribes are no more or less likely to engage in claim-making than those with the highest caste status (the General Castes). These patterns persist in controlled, multivariate models.<sup>68</sup> Caste, despite its continued salience as a social marker, does not appear to play a significant role in determining who makes claims on the state.

Women, however, are dramatically less likely than men to engage in claim-making. In Rajasthan, as in much of north India, gender hierarchies are firmly entrenched, and many women (both Hindu and Women) continue to live under the highly restrictive *purdha* (veil) system, in which their engagement in the public sphere is highly restricted. It follows that, under these conditions, we would expect women's claim-making behavior to be curtailed. This is indeed the case: women are almost 30 percent less likely than men to engage in claim-making.<sup>69</sup> And yet,

<sup>65</sup> The results presented here and below are from multivariate analysis of the survey data, described in Appendix III. Results are presented in the Appendix, Tables A.3 - A.7.

<sup>66</sup> Village-level correlates of claim-making are presented in Table A.3, including village literacy rates, average levels of land and asset- ownership in the village, population size, density, and proximity to an urban center. With the exception of asset-ownership (which is negatively correlated with the incidence of claim-making ( $p = 0.036$ ), none of the village characteristics are significantly associated with claim-making.

<sup>67</sup> Figure A.1, Appendix. Individual-level socioeconomic correlates of claim-making are presented in Table A.4, including quintiles of landownership, an index of asset land-ownership, and the squared-term of the assets index. The land-poor (in the bottom 3 quintiles) are not significantly different in their claim-making propensities than the land-rich (in the fifth). However, those in the fourth quintile (that is, those with substantial – but not the most – amounts of land), are significantly more likely to make claims than those with the most land ( $p = 0.037$ ). The assets index is positively associated with the incidence of claim-making ( $p = 0.011$ ), but its squared term is negatively associated with claim-making ( $p = 0.012$ ), suggesting a non-linear relationship. Together, these suggest that those in the middle (not the richest and not the poorest) are the most likely to make claims.

<sup>68</sup> Figure A.2, Appendix. Caste-based correlates are presented in table A.5. No caste dummy significantly predicts claim-making.

<sup>69</sup> Figure A.3, Appendix. The correlates of gender and claim-making are presented in table A.6. Being female is significantly and *negatively* associated with the incidence of claim-making ( $p = 0.000$ ). Qualitative interviews, however, reveal that women, while less active in making both direct and mediated claims on the state, develop other problem-solving strategies that are not adequately captured in the survey data. In large part, these involve making complaints to or demands on male relatives, who in turn make state-targeted claims, direct or mediated. This is, in effect, an additional step of mediation for women, and not one that was considered in the survey questionnaire. *The data therefore may under-report women's problem-solving activities.*

while being a woman clearly inhibits claim-making, these gender barriers are not insurmountable: 60 percent of women *do* report engaging officials around issues of claim-making. Moreover, there is considerable variation in claim-making incidence among women. Notably, women at the very bottom of the caste hierarchy (the SC and ST, who are typically less constrained by *purdah* practices, and are more likely to work outside the home) are more likely to engage in claim-making than women from the higher castes.<sup>70</sup>

Table 2. Claim-making incidence and practice

Obs. = 2210	Mean	Std. Dev.			
<b>INCIDENCE</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>0.43</b>			
<b>Direct practice ("voice")</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.48</b>			
Gram Panchayat	0.62	0.48			
Parties	0.22	0.41			
Bureaucrats	0.21	0.41			
<b>Mediated practice ("brokerage")</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>Conditional on presence</b>		
			Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Caste Association	0.23	0.42	1463	0.35	0.48
NH Association	0.22	0.41	696	0.69	0.46
Village Association	0.15	0.36	539	0.63	0.48
Inter-caste body	0.14	0.34	620	0.49	0.50
NGO	0.03	0.16	141	0.42	0.50
Social movement	0.09	0.28	250	0.76	0.43
Individual Fixers	0.17	0.37	703	0.52	0.50

### Claim-making practice

Among those who do voice their demands for services, there is variation in the practices pursued. I classify practices by whether the action taken is *direct* (involving contact with a public official or representative) or *mediated* (involving a non-state third party that facilitates access to an official). While the lines between direct and mediated practice can be blurry, the primary distinction lies in the nature of the interaction. Direct contact with an elected representative or appointed official involves face-to-face interaction between a citizen and an agent of the state; in these instances, citizens participate directly in the public sphere. Mediated contact centers around non-state actors and institutions with linkages to officials and public agencies; claim-making through these channels entails a form of *brokerage* – the citizen's engagement of the state is, in this sense, circuitous.

<sup>70</sup> Figure A.4. Multivariate results for the interaction of caste and gender are presented in Table A.7. Compared to GC women, SC women are significantly more likely to pursue direct channels of claim-making ( $p = 0.093$ ); ST women are significantly more likely to pursue mediated channels ( $p = 0.041$ ).

Almost two-thirds of the sample reports some kind of direct, face-to-face contact with a public official or elected representative.<sup>71</sup> The bulk of activity takes place at the very local level of the **Gram Panchayat (GP)** – an elected local council – that, by constitutional design, is the lowest tier of elected government and administration.<sup>72</sup> A full 62 percent reports contacting GP officials when seeking access to services (Table 2). This is, moreover, true for all kinds of people: men and women from different class and caste backgrounds (Table 3). There is no significant difference across class groups (measured in terms of landholdings) in rates of contacting the panchayat. Practices do appear to diverge by caste, where members of the General (upper) Castes are, on average, the most likely to contact the GP. Despite this, the GP continues to be the most utilized claim-making channel for all caste groups. Women, as one might expect, lag significantly behind men; however the GP remains the most common point of contact between women and the state (contacted by 44 percent of female respondents).

Substantially smaller numbers (21 percent) report contacting **bureaucrats**, most of whom operate from offices and agencies located at the district or block level. Men, the upper castes, and those with the most land are the most likely to contact bureaucrats. Women are the least likely, at just ten percent compared to 29 percent of men. Differences across quintiles of landownership are not significant. Members of General Castes, however, are significantly more likely than all other caste groups to contact bureaucrats. Even for this elite group, however, rates do not rise above 29 percent.

Similarly small numbers (22 percent) report contacting **political parties** or politicians such as the state-level Member of Legislative Assembly or national-level Members of Parliament, or their local offices and staff. Notably, there are no significant class or caste differences in rates of contacting parties – a fact that likely reflects parties’ efforts to reach out to mixed class and caste constituencies in a competitive electoral environment.<sup>73</sup> Women, again, lag significantly behind men and, at nine percent, are the least likely of any group to contact parties.

Over one-half of the sample reports engaging some kind of **non-state intermediary** in their efforts to access services from the state. These mediated channels, listed in Table 2, range from local associations, to NGOs and social movement organizations, to individual fixers.<sup>74</sup> No single kind of mediator is employed by more than a quarter of the sample. This is, however, complicated by the fact that not all mediated actors and institutions operate in all places. Rates of mediated claim-making therefore need to be adjusted to reflect these differences in local environment (Table 2, column 2). We see that – *where present* – mediators play a large role in facilitating claim-making, but these mediating actors and institutions are unevenly distributed and so not available to all.

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<sup>71</sup> Other studies across Indian states (for example, Bussell 2011; Singh et. al., forthcoming) have similarly found a large role for direct citizen contacting of officials.

<sup>72</sup> The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Indian Constitution, instituted in 1993, formally recognized three tiers of elected rural local government at the village (Gram Panchayat), block (Panchayat Samiti), and district (Zila Parishad) levels. Together, these bodies are referred to as the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Dunning (2013), Krishna (2003)

<sup>74</sup> Note that these non-state actors may also be non-state service providers in their own right; in order to be included in the data on claim-making however, citizens must contact these actors when seeking access to *state* services.

Table 3. Claim-making practice by class, caste, gender<sup>75</sup>

	Contact GP		Contact Bureaucrat		Contact Party		Contact Assoc	
	mean	p-value (reg)	mean	p-value (reg)	mean	p-value (reg)	mean	p-value (reg)
Land Q 1	0.58	0.378	0.16	0.383	0.18	0.158	0.23	0.764
Land Q 2	0.63	0.293	0.16	0.162	0.21	0.191	0.33	<b>0.015</b>
Land Q 3	0.62	0.631	0.22	0.626	0.21	0.207	0.31	0.251
Land Q 4	0.70	0.187	0.23	0.229	0.27	0.821	0.40	<b>0.007</b>
Land Q 5	0.63	-	0.28	-	0.26	-	0.30	-
SC	0.64	<b>0.014</b>	0.17	<b>0.001</b>	0.21	0.967	0.30	0.805
ST	0.60	<b>0.007</b>	0.14	<b>0.013</b>	0.20	0.192	0.26	0.577
OBC	0.61	0.304	0.21	<b>0.097</b>	0.21	0.599	0.32	0.730
GC	0.65	-	0.29	-	0.26	-	0.29	-
Women	0.44	<b>0.000</b>	0.10	<b>0.000</b>	0.09	<b>0.007</b>	0.20	<b>0.002</b>
Men	0.75	-	0.29	-	0.31	-	0.37	-

	Contact Caste Assoc		Contact NGO		Contact Movement		Contact Fixer	
	mean	p-value (reg)	mean	p-value (reg)	mean	p-value (reg)	mean	p-value (reg)
Land Q 1	0.19	<b>0.024</b>	0.04	<b>0.073</b>	0.05	0.279	0.14	0.363
Land Q 2	0.26	0.263	0.04	0.713	0.08	<b>0.030</b>	0.21	<b>0.031</b>
Land Q 3	0.24	<b>0.044</b>	0.02	0.405	0.10	<b>0.009</b>	0.16	0.673
Land Q 4	0.26	0.261	0.02	0.554	0.14	<b>0.004</b>	0.20	0.189
Land Q 5	0.25	-	0.01	-	0.09	-	0.16	-
SC	0.24	0.751	0.00	<b>0.004</b>	0.08	0.971	0.15	0.321
ST	0.20	0.489	0.05	<b>0.037</b>	0.06	0.971	0.19	0.642
OBC	0.23	0.123	0.03	0.105	0.09	0.660	0.16	0.207
GC	0.26	-	0.03	-	0.11	-	0.19	-
Women	0.17	<b>0.000</b>	0.02	0.590	0.07	<b>0.059</b>	0.10	<b>0.001</b>
Men	0.28	-	0.03	-	0.10	-	0.22	-

Local *caste associations* are traditional bodies with no formal jurisdiction. Most are single-caste entitles (also referred to as *jati* or caste panchayats) that informally govern the internal affairs of a particular caste community, and are called on to weigh in on cases of child marriage, divorce, or land disputes. Conceptually, villagers draw a sharp line between these customary caste bodies and the elected Gram Panchayat. In practice, however, customary institutions exert considerable influence over the GP and, as such, can be important platforms for claim-making. Caste

<sup>75</sup> Table 3 reports the mean incidence for each claim-making practice by quintiles of landownership, caste category, and gender. For each indicator, p-values are reported from controlled multivariate regressions estimating the effects of that indicator on a given claim-making practice. Each indicator is compared to the shaded row in its category: land quintiles 1-4 are compared to the 5th; SC, ST, and OBC are compared to GC; and women are compared to men. A p-value  $\leq 0.10$  indicates a significant effect on claim-making relative to the comparison group (highlighted in bold). “Association” includes both neighborhood and village-level bodies. “Caste Association” includes both single and mixed caste bodies.

associations are active in most villages (80 percent of the sample). Despite their prevalence, just under a quarter of the sample (23 percent) report turning to caste leaders for assistance in accessing public officials and resources. Adjusting for their distribution across villages, this rises to 35 percent.

Other *inter-caste councils* (sometimes referred to as traditional or *gaon* panchayats) draw together leaders from different caste communities. These traditional bodies are less prevalent, reported in just 20 percent of the sample villages. Just 14 percent of the sample reports turning to these inter-caste bodies for assistance contacting officials. This, however, mostly reflects the scarcity of such bodies. Where present, almost 50 percent of villagers report turning to these bodies as platforms for mediated claim-making.

Table 3 notes the rates at which different groups of people turn to any kind of caste institution, single or multi-caste. There are no significant differences by caste, although there does appear to be a degree of class bias; those with the least land are significantly less likely to contact any kind of caste body, compared to those with the most land. Women, once again, are the least likely to make claims through these channels; in many places, in fact, women are prohibited from attending *jati* or *gaon* panchayat meetings.

While caste bodies are ascriptive in nature, other associations are voluntary. These include *neighborhood and village associations*. Relatively small numbers report turning to these local bodies (22 and 15 percent, respectively). Where present, though, local associations play an important role in assisting citizens to make claims on the state, rising to 69 percent for neighborhood and 63 percent for village associations. Not all citizens, though, access local associations (neighborhood or village) in the same ways. While there are few significant differences by caste, upper-middle income groups (those in the fourth quintile) and lower-income groups (those in the second quintile) both contact associations with the greater frequency than the land-rich (in the fifth quintile). Women, not surprisingly, are the least likely to turn to local associations.

A very small portion of respondents (three percent) report turning to a *non-governmental organization*. NGOs, however, are thinly spread; just 6 percent of the sample reports the presence of an active NGO. In villages where they are present, 42 percent of respondents report using them to seek access to public services from the state. Lower-income groups (those in the first and second quintiles) are more likely to contact NGOs than those with the most land – a fact that likely reflects NGO targeting of the poor. Notably, there is *no significant difference* in NGO-based claim-making among men and women; this is, in fact, the only claim-making channels for which the gender gap disappears.<sup>76</sup>

Only nine percent report turning to *social movement* in their efforts to make claims on the state – a number which rises, however, to 76 percent adjusting for the reported presence of a social movement organization in the vicinity. Social movements, where present, are thus powerful platforms for state-targeted claim-making. Lower and middle-income groups (land quintiles 2-4)

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<sup>76</sup> This could reflect NGOs efforts to target women. Contacting NGOs is also most common among the Scheduled Tribes (but not among the Scheduled Castes). This may also reflect the fact that many NGOs in Rajasthan have developed a pro-tribal agenda and specifically target ST communities in their work.



are more likely than either the very rich or the very poor to contact social movement organizations.<sup>77</sup> Women, again, are less likely than men to engage in this practice.

Finally, claim-making may occur through the intermediation of diverse set of individual brokers or “*fixers*,” defined in the survey as “influential or knowledgeable people who are well connected and know how to get things done both inside and outside the village, who can help others with their problems, assisting them in accessing government schemes and benefits.” A relatively small number (17 percent) reports seeking assistance through such individuals. These fixers are not, however, evenly distributed across all localities. When asked to report whether fixers were active in their village, about one-third responded affirmatively. Controlling for this, rates of brokerage through fixers rise to over 50 percent in those localities where they are active. There is little significant difference by caste or class in the rates at which individuals turn to fixers; women, though, are again less likely to seek out a fixer than men.

### Claim-making repertoire

One kind of claim-making practice does not preclude another, and practices are frequently combined.<sup>78</sup> The majority (54 percent) engages in more than one channel (Table 4).

Table 4. Claim-making repertoire by class, caste, gender<sup>79</sup>

	Claim-making repertoire		
	mean	effect (coeff)	p-value (reg)
Land Q 1	1.70	-0.060	0.610
Land Q 2	2.03	0.154	0.250
Land Q 3	2.01	0.019	0.852
Land Q 4	2.40	0.226	0.109
Land Q 5	2.14	-	-
SC	1.92	-0.389	<b>0.045</b>
ST	1.83	-0.471	<b>0.066</b>
OBC	1.99	-0.308	<b>0.093</b>
GC	2.24	-	-
Women	1.24	-1.118	<b>0.000</b>
Men	2.54	-	-
Full sample	2.00	-	-

<sup>77</sup> This is, at least in part, consistent with studies elsewhere in India that have found a class bias in levels of associational participation. Harriss (2005), for example, finds in Delhi evidence of a “middle-class” activism, where the middle classes are the most likely to be associationally active.

<sup>78</sup> The distribution of the claim-making repertoire is presented in Figure A.5, Appendix.

<sup>79</sup> Table 4 represents the mean repertoire (number of claim-making practices) for each group. The coefficients are the estimated effects of each indicator (quintile of landownership, caste category, and gender) on the breadth of the claim-making repertoire, derived through OLS multivariate regression (described in the Appendix III; full results are presented in Tables A.3 – A.8). Each indicator is compared to the shaded row in its category: land quintiles 1-4 are compared to the 5th; SC, ST, and OBC are compared to GC; and women are compared to men. A p-value  $\leq 0.10$  indicates a significant effect on claim-making repertoire relative to the comparison group (highlighted in bold).

Most people, in other words, simultaneously pursue more than one point of contact with the state. Table 4 unpacks the breadth of the claim-making repertoire by land-ownership, caste category, and gender. There is, in find, no significant difference in the breadth of repertoire attributable to an individual's level of landownership.<sup>80</sup> However, the breadth of the repertoire does diverge by caste; the SC, ST, and OBC all pursue a significantly narrower range of practices than the GC.<sup>81</sup> This reflects an upper-caste bias across a number of claim-making practices, notably contacting the Gram Panchayat and bureaucrats.

Women, as one might expect, pursue a narrower range of practices than men. And yet, strikingly, among women, lower caste (SC and ST )women – those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy – have broader claim-making repertoires compared upper caste GC women.<sup>82</sup> These findings run counter to the expectation that lower caste women, typically considered the most marginalized of groups, will be the least engaged in local government.

Importantly, while much of the activity that we observe is *direct*, a closer look at the claim-making repertoire reveals that direct and mediated practices are often combined.<sup>83</sup> Of those who report contacting the Gram Panchayat, for example, more than two-thirds also engage in mediated practices. In contrast, only 20 percent of those who engage the GP report doing so as a single practice, uncombined with any other approach. In fact, 67 percent also engage some kind of a non-state intermediary. Similarly, of those who report contacting politicians, almost three-quarters also turn to mediated channels, while just four percent turn only to a politician. The relatively high rates at which individuals turn to brokers and other mediators, then, does not appear to indicate an exodus away from direct engagement of officials; rather, mediation accompanies direct practice.

## A BOTTOM-UP VIEW OF THE STATE

The data underscore both the centrality of the state to rural citizens' lives, and the complex strategies of action citizens employ when seeking the state. Three broad patterns emerge. First, the data reveal remarkably high incidence of claim-making. Despite common portrayals of a distant, inaccessible state and an unengaged rural citizenry, most people – more than 75 percent – do in fact make claims on the state for services. Moreover, a great deal of claim-making activity occurs in places (poor and remote) and among groups (the poor and lower castes) where we might least expect to see it.

Second, turning to the question of how claims are made the data reveal diverse channels ranging from direct (face-to-face) contact with local village officials, bureaucrats, and state and national level politicians, as well as mediated contact through a range of non-state actors and institutions including neighborhood, village, and caste associations, NGOs, social movements, and an array of individual “fixers.” Most claim-making activity is direct – most often through the Gram

<sup>80</sup> The same is true for asset-ownership represented in an index of individual and household wealth (Table A.4).

<sup>81</sup> Table A.5.

<sup>82</sup> SC women are more likely to engage in direct practices than the GC ( $p = 0.093$ ), while ST women are 28 percent more likely to undertake mediated practices ( $p = 0.041$ ).

<sup>83</sup> Table A.8.

Panchayat, which is the most common site for citizen-state engagement men and women of all socioeconomic backgrounds. More than half, however, report pursuing mediated channels

Third, these approaches to the state are not mutually exclusive, but are combined into claim-making repertoires of varied content and breadth. Citizens, moreover, frequently combine both direct and mediated approaches to the state. Contact with non-state actors, the data suggest, does not indicate an exodus from the state but rather mediates access to the state. Non-state mediation, moreover, accompanies direct claim-making practices.

The survey data, gathered at a single point in time, are static. And yet when read against historical accounts of citizen action, and alongside villagers' own qualitative accounts of what has changed, they begin to paint a picture of dramatic transformation from feudalistic colonial governance to active citizenship. This, I will argue, reflects both an institutional expansion and deepening of the state (which is both more active, visible, and rooted at the local level), as well as an institutional diversification (encompassing a wide range of non-state actors that shape access to the state). Taken together, the data suggest a ground shift in both the rates at which and channels through which citizens engage the state.

### **Active citizens, active state**

Perhaps the most striking finding to emerge from the survey data are the very high rates at which rural Rajasthani citizens report making claims on the state for services. The Indian state is regularly portrayed as being beyond the reach of the *aam aadmi* (common man): it is a "sovereign entity set apart from society."<sup>84</sup> Citizens, for their part, are often described in terms that echo Barrington Moore's famous commentary on the "docility" of Indian peasants.<sup>85</sup> Narain (1978), for example, described the Indian electorate as "inarticulate, parochial, and passive."<sup>86</sup> More recently, drawing on data from the 1990s, Krishna (2011) described a land of "despondent democrats" who "expect that their voices will simply go unheard by officials, including those responsible for service delivery" and who, as a result, are unlikely to "take the trouble to express their demands directly."<sup>87</sup> Given this portrayal, we might expect that most ordinary citizens will not be very active claim-makers. In fact, when I first started fieldwork the director of a large rural development NGO in Rajasthan told me that I was asking the wrong question. The question, she said, is not how do citizens make claims on the state, but why *don't* they. In her estimation, rural India is best described by citizen *inaction*.

As we have seen, however, dramatic numbers do in fact report seeking the services of the state. These data reveal, first, that levels of need are high and, second, that citizens look to the state to address those needs: citizens depend on – and make claims on – the state for a wide range of essential services. This is true across the board, for people from different socioeconomic and caste backgrounds.

<sup>84</sup> Fuller & Harriss (2001), p. 23. Also see Yadav (1990); Krishna (2011).

<sup>85</sup> Moore (1966). Also see Elder (1966); Stokes (1978); Birtchnell, T. (2009); Young et al. (2005)

<sup>86</sup> Narain [1978, p. 121] cited in Singer (2007), p. 121

<sup>87</sup> Krishna (2011), p. 102.

## The institutional surface area of the state

How are we to understand such high rates of claim-making in places and among people where historical experience tells us we might not expect it? What has changed in rural Rajasthan that might contribute to these new and unexpected patterns of citizen-state relations? First, I argue, the state is increasingly central to, and visible in, the lives and livelihoods of rural citizens. Second and related, citizens' claim-making proclivities reflect a change in citizens' aspirations and expectations of the state, visible in a greater sense of public entitlement (and of grievance when the state fails to deliver).

The Indian state, in other words, has greater a "institutional surface area"<sup>88</sup> at the local level; it is more visible, and there are more points of contact between citizens and the state. This visibility is partially the product of a proliferation of public services and programs that, while unevenly distributed, are nonetheless visible at the local level and, as such, generate new interests and expectations of the state. The state's visibility is, moreover, the product of over two decades of decentralization, beginning in the 1990s, which has inserted the state in new ways into village life through the creation of local governance bodies (of which the Gram Panchayat is the most local tier). The result is a dramatic transformation from Rajasthan's feudal and colonial past to a setting marked by high levels of citizen-state engagement.

### "Dripping with yellow paint": the proliferation and promise of services

The state has increased both its presence and its visibility at the village level through the proliferation of public services and programs which, as discussed above, have expanded over the course of the last twenty years in spite of – or perhaps because of – economic liberalization. As Jayal (2013) points out, "The paradox is that social citizenship... has gained momentum in a policy environment that emphasizes state withdrawal from public provisioning."<sup>89</sup> Two decades of neoliberal reforms have, in fact, coincided with an expansion of social rights legislation and, as a result, an expansion of publicly-mandated social programs and expenditures.

This is visible in physical terms through new construction of community buildings, paved roads, the installation of new water sources, and so on. As an elderly resident of a Kota village stated, noting changes in the levels of service delivery over time:

Look around today and you see *sarkar* [the state]. It's there in that road, in that school over there. The face of the village has changed. *Sarkar* brings *vikas* [development].<sup>90</sup>

Indeed, I was struck in the course of my fieldwork by the frequency with which I observed construction or the installation of new public works. (I was equally struck, however, by the frequency with which these projects appeared to be stalled or incomplete; they were, nonetheless, visible to the common citizen and so spoke of a promise or possibility of services, even if that promise was unfulfilled.) Other services are individualized in nature and so are less

<sup>88</sup> Heller (2013), p. 9. Heller refers to the institutional surface area of the state as the spaces where citizens engage the state. He argues that, "given that local government is often absent or just extraordinarily weak in much of the developing world, there are in fact very few points of contact with the state for ordinary citizens."

<sup>89</sup> Jayal (2013), p. 164

<sup>90</sup> Author interview, Sangod block, Kota district, February 2011.

visible. And yet awareness of these services is also inescapable at the local level: the walls of government buildings and other public spaces are frequently painted (on top of a signature, government-issued yellow paint) with lists of beneficiaries for various schemes, from old-age pensions, to school scholarships, to employment on government work sites. As a staff member of a local NGO in Udaipur wryly noted: “there is a whiff of paint in the air; the buildings are dripping with promises!”

Claim-making in this context is driven by growing awareness of public services. Seeing goods and services all around them (noting, for example that a neighbor has received a particular subsidy, or that a road has been paved elsewhere in the village, or that another nearby village has received a new borewell), people are increasingly likely to engage in claim-making out of the expectation (or the hope) that they too might benefit. As the pool of public resources expands, knowledge of public resources also grows, as does a sense of entitlement. As one man in Udaipur explained:

You would have to be blind not to see! There are so many schemes. Over there [in another neighborhood] they have CC [paved] roads, and the panchayat brought water connections to every house. Where is our road? Where is our water?<sup>91</sup>

A person’s interests vis a vis the state are not simply given, but change along with the public portfolio. This is particularly true in an environment where the pool of public resources is expanding, increasing the incentives for claim-making. A new public housing program, for example, may generate demands for housing, just as the introduction of a public employment program may increase demands on the state for jobs. Importantly, an individual’s interests do not develop in isolation, but are defined through a comparative lens in reference to the services that others receive. A person’s sense of whether and how he or she “needs” the state is therefore not static, and is likely to expand as levels of public service delivery grow.

Increased public expenditures and the proliferation of public programs do not, of course, guarantee access to services. In fact, claim-making is often driven by a *lack* of access, made all the more necessary where the state fails to deliver. The high levels of citizen-state engagement that we observe are therefore consistent with uneven (but not non-existent) service delivery

### **Institutionalization of the Gram Panchayat**

The bulk of claim-making activity, as we have seen, takes place at the very local level of the Gram Panchayat. These local elected bodies are the product of the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution, instituted in 1993, which formally recognized three tiers of elected rural local government at the village (Gram Panchayat), block (Panchayat Samiti), and district (Zila Parishad) levels. The GP encompasses a cluster of an average of five villages (depending on village size), and elections are held every five years for a council president (sarpanch) and ward councilors (ward panch). Fifty percent of seats in the GP are reserved for women, and seats are also reserved for lower castes, including the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in proportion to their population. The GP bears at least partial responsibility for the provision of a wide range of village public goods and services, and plays a role in beneficiary selection for state and central government programs.

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<sup>91</sup> Author interview, Bargaon block, Udaipur district, December 15, 2010.

Given their constitutional mandate, it is perhaps unsurprising to see high levels of claim-making through the Gram Panchayat. And yet the GP is often dismissed as little more than a paper tiger, captured by the local elite and higher-ups. Critics have long pointed out the potential for local corruption and elite capture. Bhimrao Ambedkar, author of the Indian constitution and a lower caste activist, famously described Indian villages as “dens of iniquity,” asking: “What is the village but a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness, and communalism?”<sup>92</sup> Decades later Anirudh Krishna (2011) echoes these concerns, writing:

....official panchayats [GPs] are hampered by their institutional design. They are equipped to provide downward communication on behalf of the government, but they are not very effective for transmitting villagers’ demands and grievances upward to public officials.... Furthermore, because panchayats are not well grounded in the norms and mores of village social life, and control from below is virtually non-existent for these bodies, corruption is a frequent problem.<sup>93</sup>

Krishna’s study draws on data gathered in Rajasthan in 1997-1998, roughly five years after the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment. He found, at that time, a markedly small role for Gram Panchayat within villagers’ problem solving repertoire. Just eleven percent of his sample, for example, said that panchayat leaders would help a person seeking employment to access concerned state agencies; 18 percent report that the panchayat would help to replace a non-performing teaching. “Only a small minority of villagers,” Krishna concludes, “consults with the panchayats when seeking access to the state.”<sup>94</sup>

More than a decade later, Krishna’s (and Ambedkar’s) rather bleak depiction of the Gram Panchayat still rings partially true. And yet, as we have seen, the survey data presented here (gathered between 2009-2011) reveal that large numbers of citizens – including the poor, the lower castes, and women – do in fact turn to the panchayat when making claims on the state.<sup>95</sup> There is, then, perhaps reason to believe that panchayats are putting down local roots; twenty-plus years into their life span, they are more deeply institutionalized at the village-level today.

Of course, high levels of citizen engagement with the Gram Panchayat might simply tell us more about the inaccessibility of other claim-making channels. Scholars of Indian politics have long noted, for example, that political parties have weak roots in rural India and, while well equipped to mobilize voters, they are not effective bottom-up channels for citizen demands.<sup>96</sup> This reflects, in part, the size of politicians’ constituencies, as well as a distinct urban bias as party offices and headquarters are typically located in towns and cities and so are removed from daily village

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<sup>92</sup> Cited in Guha (2008), p. 119

<sup>93</sup> Krishna (2011), p. 101.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 109-110

<sup>95</sup> I am deeply grateful to Krishna for his insights on and fruitful discussion of these temporal differences.

<sup>96</sup> Kohli (1990); Krishna (2002, 2011); Weiner (1989). Also see, however, Bussell (2011) who argues that the low rates of citizen engagement with parties masks the fact that politicians do, in fact, spend considerable amounts of time dedicated to constituency services related to public service delivery. The size of their constituencies, and limitations on their time and resources, mean that – despite considerable effort on the part of politicians – a relatively small number of people benefit from their services.

life.<sup>97</sup> Civic associations, for their part, are few and far between. This is in keeping with national trends in which participation in voluntary organizations is limited and, where present, often the purview of the relatively affluent.<sup>98</sup>

It is possible, then, that citizens turn to the Gram Panchayat in large numbers because of a lack of reliable alternative channels of access to the state. And yet the central role of the panchayat may also reflect the slow, cumulative effects of affirmative action policies, under which seats are reserved for women the lower castes and tribes. While the material effects of these reservations are hotly contested,<sup>99</sup> the fact remains that a large number of new actors have entered local politics as a result of these policies. In just the first round of elections in 1994, close to a million women nationwide were elected as panchayat members, as were large numbers of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Since then, the numbers of women and members of the lower castes with electoral and administrative experience have grown with each election. After five rounds of these local elections, almost every village has by now had a council president from the lower castes as well as a female one. This marks a profound change in the face of local government. In a symbolic but important act, lower caste members sit side-by-side people from different caste backgrounds on the same *jajham* or carpet (used to designate a space of public authority). In the words of one Scheduled Caste ward panch:

Now we are here in the panchayat, sitting next to them [upper caste Brahmins]. We sit on the jajham, they serve us tea. They know that if they need something they will have to come to us, they will have to greet us and say namaskar.<sup>100</sup>

Gender norms, though perhaps stickier than those related to caste, may also be changing. A tribal woman in Udaipur, for example, described her experiences after being elected to the panchayat:

Before I never ventured out. My life was here only, and to the fields and back again. After my election, I went every which way, to Gogunda [the block seat], to Udaipur. It was my business to go. The NGO-*walle* and party people, they even organized buses to take us to Jaipur so we could learn the business of the panchayat<sup>101</sup>

These changes are slow, uneven, and difficult to document. The process, moreover, is highly contentious; reserved seats are often “captured” by members of the local elite who select and run their own female or lower caste candidates. Reservations are, nonetheless, changing the face of local politics, bringing new people into the public sphere.

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<sup>97</sup> These relatively low rates of claim-making through political parties does not deny the possibility of an additional role, often behind the scenes, by politicians, many of whom are closely tied to and exercise influence over the panchayats. The fact remains, however, most people do not directly contact political parties when seeking access to public goods and services.

<sup>98</sup> Chhibber (1999); Harriss (2005)

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2004); Dunning, T., & Nilekani, J. (2013).

<sup>100</sup> Author interview, Bargaon, Udaipur, December 17, 2010. Namaskar is a formal greeting and sign of respect.

<sup>101</sup> Author observation of NGO training sessions of elected panchayat women, with translation by NGO staff, Gogunda block, Udaipur district, April 14, 2009.

Claim-making occurs in this context. The state, through the provision of services generates new interests among its citizens. Observations of public infrastructure and services benefiting other people in other places may spark a sense of grievance and, by extension, of entitlement – generating new expectations of the state. At the same time, through decentralization and affirmative action policies, it creates new formal spaces for citizen-state engagement.

### **Institutional diversity and the claim-making repertoire**

However, as we have seen, the Gram Panchayat does not stand alone. Two-thirds of those who report turning to the GP also report turning to a mediated channel. The GP, thus, cannot be taken in isolation, but rather is part of a complex local environment in which citizens combine both direct and mediated approaches to the state. Mediated approaches to the state complement and, in fact, may even be spurred by direct citizen action. Citizens of all stripes are likely to contact the Gram Panchayat, which is the most local and accessible formal arena of the state. And yet, in and of itself, this direct contact is rarely enough. Rather, citizens must seek additional points of contact through which to make claims on the state.

The breadth of the claim-making repertoire, I suggest, is a product of the discretionary, and therefore unpredictable, manner in which goods are allocated. In a rule-bound setting, a citizen might simply need to know about a program and the procedure through which to apply: for example, which office to visit, the hours the office is open, what forms to complete, and so on. In a setting marked by high levels of official discretion, however, this kind of procedural information will take a person only so far. There is little reason to expect that simply voicing a claim through the “correct” channels will produce the desired results. Rather, claim-making takes on a more complex and necessarily more inventive nature. As one resident (describing efforts to secure a paved road to the village) put it:

We asked and asked. This is how work gets done – by raising the issue to anyone with an ear....We had to continuously raise the issue by asking officials, both here in the village and outside, any official or *neta* (politician) who came, the *sanstha* [NGO] people. If you say it just once the *sahibs* just tell you whatever you want to hear and nothing will happen. You need to be like a stick in their sides.<sup>102</sup>

Claim-making, in this sense, is probabilistic. Citizens are, in effect, ‘covering their bets’, pursuing multiple strategies in the hopes that eventually at least some of their effort will pay off. They act not because they necessarily expect a response every time they approach a given official or intermediary, but because they are maximizing the odds that someone, somewhere will hear them and respond. Seen in these terms, high levels of claim-making and diverse claim-making repertoires are a perfectly rational response to an environment in which resources abound but where access remains uneven and uncertain. Citizens must navigate this murky environment in their efforts to extract services from the state. An uneven service delivery record, then, does not necessarily deter claim-making. Rather, it diversifies it, as citizens seek out multiple channels of access to the state and its resources.

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<sup>102</sup> Author interview, Bargaon block, Udaipur district, January 14, 2011.



## CONCLUSION

Rural citizens in one of the poorest states in India actively pursue services from the state in high numbers, including large numbers of those who are often considered the most marginalized in local politics: the poor, the lower castes, and women. Rajasthan is, in other words, a land of active citizens. This, I have argued, marks a dramatic transformation from Rajasthan's colonial and feudal past. It marks, moreover, a deeper institutionalization of the Indian state at the local level, visible through a proliferation of public services and through the consolidation of new democratic spaces in the form of the Gram Panchayat. This process, however, is highly uneven, leaving many of India's rural poor struggling to access even basic services from the state. It is this process of struggle in an uncertain environment that produces a diverse claim-making repertoire, as citizens endeavor to access the state through any means possible. In this environment, non-state actors and institutions emerge as critical players, carving out new channels of access to the state.

### Room to maneuver?

Rural Indian politics is typically described as "clientelistic" in nature, where access to the state and its resources is mediated through powerful patrons and, in particular, political parties.<sup>103</sup> High levels of claim-making – motivated by a desire for public resources – are, in many ways, consistent with this view of politics. Claim-making is driven by interests in material benefits (as opposed to programmatic concerns or ideology). Moreover, the allocation of public goods entails discretionary and individualized decision-making by officials. In this environment, claim-making entails much more than formal petitions through the "correct" channels but more often than not requires the search for alternative channels of access to the state. In this sense, claim-making is perfectly consistent with widely accepted definitions of clientelism that center on the material interests of citizens and discretionary action of officials.

The practices of rural Rajasthani citizens challenge us, however, to take a broader view of the actors, institutions, and motivations that underlie patterns of clientelism. This, in part, reflects a conceptual shift from the emphasis on political parties that prevails in scholarly accounts of access to the state to a more amorphous view of state access that accommodates the diverse channels that citizens actually pursue. Seen through the eyes of citizens seeking access to public resources, the local claim-making environment might then seem more pluralistic, more open, and less static than a reading of the literature might suggest. Most citizens do not depend on single "patrons" in their efforts to secure resources, nor do they solely rely on politicians or political parties. Rather, they pursue diverse claim-making repertoires that include both direct and mediated strategies. There is, in other words, a degree of room to maneuver at the local level.

The Gram Panchayat, we have seen, stands head and shoulders above all other channels as the primary and most frequent point of contact between citizens and the state. This is not a pie in the sky endorsement of the panchayat; local corruption is rife and capacity weak. But there is,

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<sup>103</sup> Definitions of clientelism vary, but it is widely accepted as behaviors centered around the discretionary and individualized allocation of goods, services, and other public resources in return for political support, typically in the form of votes. See, for example, Chandra (2004); Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007); Ziegfeld (forthcoming).

perhaps, reason to follow the lead of the myriad citizens who nonetheless turn to their panchayats, by placing hope in (and investing in) these local bodies. Much is yet to be done to build effective and accountable institutions for local governance, but the framework, and potential, exists. It is not enough, however, to seek to empower the Gram Panchayat alone; rather its potential (and limits) can only become clear when considered as part of a diverse local institutional environment.

Indeed, no channel of access to the state can be understood without also examining its interaction with other village-level institutions, formal and informal, state and non-state. Access to the state is a matter not just of claim-making, but of the *breadth* of channels through which claims are made; the broader the repertoire, the greater the points of state contact, and the greater the chances that a person's voice will be heard. It is therefore essential to recognize institutional diversity at the local level, and to understand when and how complementarity emerges among local institutions.

### **Glass half empty, glass half full**

What does this multiplicity of claim-making channels and intermediary institutions suggest about the nature of democratic practice? On the one hand, we see an dynamic local environment in which individuals carve out a wide array of strategies of action. A darker interpretation of the data, however, might find a democratic deficit, where citizens are forced to pursue a wide array of channels because of the impenetrability of the state and the lack of clear lines of accountability. In this view, the prevalence of intermediaries might be seen as evidence of “dependence and precisely the lack of that political equality that is quite fundamental to the democratic ideal.”<sup>104</sup>

And yet, at a most basic level, we are presented with the fact that rural residents – including many of the poor and lower castes – actively demand public services in one of India's poorest states. Citizens in this region have not given up on the state; rather, the high incidence of claim-making suggests high public expectations – even if those expectations are often disappointed. This, in and of itself, is remarkable given common portrayals of a distant, exclusionary state and a passive, disengaged rural citizenry. The very high rates at which citizens report contacting both officials and intermediaries might thus be taken as evidence of “remarkable access” to the state by some of India's poorest<sup>105</sup> and, as such, as a democratic success.

The experiences of rural Rajasthanis suggest that both of these views may simultaneously contain some truth. Claim-making is, more often than not, driven by a failure of public service delivery; where the state simply delivers what it is supposed to deliver, citizens have little need to make claims on the state. Claim-making, then, is not simply a matter of citizens' demand, but is also an expression of citizens' *grievances*. These grievances, however, are indicative of aspirations and expectations. Claim-making requires both a sense of entitlement and a sense of political efficacy; people must be aware of the existence of public goods and services, feel that they are entitled to them, and feel that it is worth their while to voice demands. As such, claim-

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<sup>104</sup> Harriss (2009)

<sup>105</sup> Jha et al., (2007)

making is part of a cycle of dynamics that produce and reinforce the conditions for citizen engagement of the state. Active claim-makers expect more from the state and are more likely to expect that their voices will be heard.

### **Citizens, states, and non-state actors**

The patterns of claim-making documented in this paper carry important implications for our understanding of citizen-state relations in India, and beyond. Public service delivery is widely recognized as a source of state legitimacy, and an indicator of state capacity and good governance.<sup>106</sup> Demanding services is, for many citizens, a primary political act, and one of the most common ways in which citizens interact with and experience the everyday workings of the state. Citizens' efforts to extract essential goods and services from the state thus constitute an essential element of citizenship practice, through which citizens seek the services of the state and, in so doing, assert their rights vis à vis agents of the state.

Understanding whether and how citizens make claims on the state is of particular consequence in a global era of public sector retrenchment in which large classes of citizens are regularly denied access to essential services. In this environment, non-state service providers have come to play an important roles in the fulfillment of basic human needs. This shift towards non-state provision, as Cammett and MacLean (2011) have argued, carries implications for state capacity, for social equity, and for notions of citizenship. While the effects of non-state provision are mixed, it is clear that non-state provision "alters the ability of the states to construct and maintain effective public welfare functions."<sup>107</sup> Similarly, non-state provision affects "understandings of the rights and obligations of membership in the national political community as well as affective attachments to the polity."<sup>108</sup> Whether the presence of non-state providers effectively undermines or 'hollows out' the state, or whether they in fact boost public capacity and citizen access, is contingent upon the kinds of public-private relationships that emerge, whether collaborative or contentious, substitutive or complementary.

The study of claim-making in Rajasthan contributes to our understanding of these issues by highlighting the strategies of action among some of the poorest citizens of the world's largest democracy. Most strikingly, we find that most continue to *actively engage*, rather than exit, the state. -This is the case among a large majority of Rajasthani survey respondents who report that they have personally engaged in efforts to demand services from their local officials. The high incidence of claim-making underscores the centrality of the state to rural lives and livelihoods, as well as the increasing visibility of the state at the local level. Non-state actors do play a critical role in this process, providing mediated channels of access to the state and supplementing citizens' direct efforts to engage public officials. The state, however, remains the primary service provider in this region, and citizens turn to it in large numbers.

This, however, is a tenuous process, revealing large, unanswered questions about state capacity and the conditions that foster, rather than inhibit, citizen-state engagement. Claim-making, as noted, is most necessary precisely when the state fails to deliver on its promises, when citizens

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<sup>106</sup> Levi (1988); Soifer (2008); Putnam (1993); Tandler (1997)

<sup>107</sup> Cammett & Maclean (2011), p. 15

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 16

must attempt to forge the gap between (expansive) public mandates and (uneven) public distribution. A first set of issues concerns local state capacity to absorb and respond to high levels of citizen demands. Might claims by citizens on local governments overwhelm local administrative capacity and resources, leading to deterioration, rather than improvement, in services?

Second, if over time citizens' demands are unmet, what impact might this have on citizens' expectations of the state and sense of political efficacy? Might unmet demands lead to increased claim-making, perhaps through greater mobilization of protest or other contentious acts? Or, to the contrary, might unmet demands contribute to a withdrawal from politics, as people turn inward to their support networks to devise coping strategies or turn to the private sector for alternatives to public services? Or, at another extreme, might citizens begin to resist and reject the state? Almost one-third of India's districts, for example, are affected by Maoist-inspired Naxalite insurgencies. In these areas, which are among the poorest and least well served in India, it is not uncommon for rebel movements to engage in local service delivery, for example by establishing medical camps.<sup>109</sup> Those engaged in these uprisings question the very legitimacy of the Indian state (and, by extension, their own status as "citizens" within it). Examining the conditions under which citizens continue to engage, rather than reject, the state is thus a critical challenge, necessary for a deeper understanding of state capacity and of the notion and practice of citizenship.

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. Roy's (2010) description of Naxalite run medical camps.

## ***Appendix I – Methodology and Sample***

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### ***Citizen survey: sampling protocol***

Districts were purposively selected with attention to their levels of development, caste and tribal composition, geography, and colonial history. They included: Kota, Ajmer, Udaipur, and Jodhpur, each representing a different region of the state. Within districts, all administrative blocks were ranked by literacy rates. I then randomly selected two blocks in each district, one above and one below the mean. These include: (within Kota) Sangod and Itawa; (within Ajmer) Peesangan and Masuda; (within Udaipur) Gogunda and Bargaon; (within Jodhpur) Mandor and Shergarh. Within each block, I randomly selected five Gram Panchayats and, within those, up to three villages per panchayat. I always selected the panchayat's headquarter village and, depending on the number of villages in the panchayat, randomly selected up to two other villages. Some GPs contain only one or two large villages, and in these cases all villages were selected. Villages with fewer than fifty households were dropped from the sample, due to resource constraints.

Within each village, I drew a random sample of an average of twenty households stratified by caste category in order to ensure representative inclusion of different castes. There is no detailed census data on caste at the village level, so I employed rapid participatory mapping techniques to capture the distribution of castes within a village. Since caste communities tend to be spatially segregated in a village, I used neighborhood (“*mohalla*”) boundaries as a proxy for caste. Working with village key informants, I mapped the neighborhoods and listed them by population and caste composition. In each village, the maps and population data were confirmed with at least three local sources, and were checked against census data (which, while lacking detailed caste data, provides an estimate of the percentage of SC and ST in a village). On the basis on these maps and village caste population estimates, I drew a sample that was roughly representative of the village's caste and tribal composition. (To be fully representative, a full village census would have been required – something was beyond the scope of my study).

The caste/tribal sample was drawn to correspond with the underlying number of SC, ST, OBC, or GC households in the village. The sample size for each caste/tribal category was drawn (in intervals of five – each of which was assigned to a different survey enumerator) according to the following parameters:

- Estimated % of village population = 0-10%: sample size = 0
- Estimated % of village population = 10.1-36.7%: sample size = 5
- Estimated % of village population = 36.8-63.4%: sample size = 10
- Estimated % of village population = 63.5-89.9%: sample size = 15
- Estimated % of village population = 90-100%: sample size = 20

Once the caste/tribal sample sizes were determined, respondents were each assigned to different sectors or neighborhoods within the village (based on the participatory maps) where residents from their assigned community were concentrated. Within those neighborhoods, households were randomly selected using a systematic sampling approach. Beginning at a central neighborhood landmark, the surveyors were assigned transects by rolling dice to generate a

random number and then reading off the corresponding degrees on a compass. Surveyors were also assigned random start numbers by rolling dice, ensuring that houses both close to and far from the center had the same chance of being included in the sample. Surveyors were then given an interval number  $K = n/N$ , where  $n$  = the required number of interviews and  $N$  = the estimated number of households in the neighborhood. The surveyor interviewed every  $K^{\text{th}}$  house along his randomly assigned transect, turning right and left at every other corner, in order to ensure the inclusion of houses on and off the main roads.

Every effort was made to ensure that one-half of the sample would be female. Respondents were instructed to attempt to interview an adult female in every-other selected household. Where a woman was not present, they were encouraged to return at a different point in the day. However, because women were more likely than men to refuse interviews, the final sample was skewed and includes slightly over 40% women. This introduces a gender bias in the data that – given local gender norms and dynamics – could not be overcome. I am cognizant of this in my analysis and interpretation of the data. The sample size for women, though, remains large enough to make statistical inferences.

#### *Sample size*

- Districts: 4
- Blocks: 8
- Gram Panchayats: 40
- Villages: 105
- Individual respondents: 2210
  - Of which women: 917 (41.5%)
  - Of which men: 1293 (58.5%)
  - Of which General Caste: 463 (21%)
  - Of which Other Backward Caste: 917 (41.5%)
  - Of which Scheduled Caste: 410 (18.6%)
  - Of which Scheduled Tribe: 418 (19%)

*Map of Rajasthan (showing selected districts)*



***Appendix II – Descriptive Statistics***

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**Table A.1. Individual descriptive statistics (sample means, n = 2210)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Female	0.41	0.49	0	1
Male	0.59	0.49	0	1
Age (years)	41	13.88	18	98
Scheduled Caste	0.19	0.39	0	1
Scheduled Tribe	0.19	0.39	0	1
Other Backward Class	0.41	0.49	0	1
General Caste	0.21	0.41	0	1
Land (bhigas)	13.22	24.31	0	450
Wealth (index)	5.42	2.78	0	13
Education (years)	4.31	4.82	0	32
Newspaper (frequency)	0.84	1.19	0	3
TV/radio (frequency)	0.94	1.24	0	3
Village official	0.15	0.36	0	1
Congress member	0.20	0.40	0	1
BJP member	0.15	0.36	0	1



**Table A.2. Village and panchayat descriptive statistics (n = 105 villages; 40 GPs)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Population	1664	1263	212	6265
Dispersion	1.87	1.43	0.41	9.38
Distance to town (km)	32.71	20.63	6	101
% Literate	0.44	0.12	0.18	0.73
Mean land ownership	13.14	11.21	1.17	70.92
Mean assets ownership	3.82	1.16	1.40	6.25
% Scheduled Tribe	0.19	0.28	0.00	0.99
% Scheduled Caste	0.15	0.12	0.00	0.67
Caste fractionalization	0.59	0.24	0.01	0.90
Vill. pop./ GP pop.	0.35	0.24	0.05	1.00
GP headquarter village	0.42	0.49	0	1
Sarpanch village	0.35	0.48	0	1
No. villages in GP	4.22	1.73	1	8
GP population	4749	1442	2782	8945
Woman Sarpanch	0.23	0.42	0	1
ST Sarpanch	0.09	0.28	0	1
SC Sarpanch	0.09	0.29	0	1
OBC Sarpanch	0.34	0.47	0	1

### Appendix III – The Correlates of Claim-Making

The following tables (A.3 - A.7) present the results from multivariate analysis of the survey data. *Unless otherwise noted*, the model employed is:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta(\text{individual}) + \gamma(\text{household}) + \lambda(\text{village}) + \theta(\text{GP}) + \delta(\text{district fixed effects}) + \varepsilon$$

Y is the claim-making outcome of interest (incidence, practices, or repertoire). The unit of observation is the individual, with one observation per household. For dichotomous outcomes, such as the incidence of claim-making overall or of a given practice, I employ maximum likelihood estimation using probit models (reporting marginal effects, dF/dx). For non-dichotomous outcomes, such as the index of practices representing the claim-making repertoire, I use OLS (reporting the coefficients).

$\beta$  represents a set of individual-level characteristics, including: **socioeconomic status** (quintile of landownership, wealth-ownership (as an index of assets and durable households goods), and wealth-squared); **identity** (gender, age, age-squared, caste-category (ST, SC, and OBC – compared to GC) and caste-gender interaction effects (ST, SC, and OBC women – compared to GC women); **occupation** (farms own land, agricultural laborer on other's land, non-farm laborer – NREGA employment is assessed in a separate model); **level of education** (primary, secondary, or higher – compared to those with none); **media exposure** (frequency of newspaper readership, frequency of TV or radio usage); **local political connections** (whether shares caste or gender with the GP president (e.g. SC in SC-reserved village), and whether holds or held local panchayat office); **patronage ties** (Congress or BJP membership; membership in *any* party is assessed separately); **use of private services** (in education, health, or for drinking water); level of **“social” activity** with neighbors (as an index of frequency); and an index of **socio-spatial exposure**, capturing whether socializes across neighborhood lines, whether works in a mixed-caste setting, whether self or household member migrates beyond village for more than 30 days per year cross-neighborhood social engagement.

$\gamma$  represents controls for household size, and the number of children & elderly.

$\lambda$  represents village controls, including population size, population density (pop/area), whether interview was conducted in a hamlet (versus the main village); distance to an urban center, village literacy rate, average landownership, average asset-ownership; caste fractionalization ( $1 - \sum (\text{caste}_i)^2$ , where  $i$  is the number of each caste in the village); whether or not a majority in the village supports Congress or BJP; the reported frequency of politician visits to the village; and the number of informal governance institutions (neighborhood or village associations, caste or inter-caste associations, or NGOs) in a village (a separate model includes each institution).

$\theta$  represents controls for features of the Gram Panchayat and the village in relation to the GP, including GP population, whether the village is the GP administrative headquarter, whether the village is home to the GP president (*sarpanch*), whether the village caste composition matches the GP caste composition, and whether the seat of president is reserved for members of the SC, ST, or OBC caste community or women.

All models include district fixed effects ( $\delta$ ). (Additional models, not shown, include block, GP, and village fixed effects.) In all models, standard errors are clustered at the village level.

**Table A.3. Village characteristics and claim-making**

<b>Village land</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	-0.003	0.002	0.153
DIRECT	-0.002	0.003	0.426
MEDIATED	-0.004	0.002	0.040
REPERTOIRE	-0.003	0.008	0.738
<b>Village assets</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	-0.040	0.019	0.036
DIRECT	-0.064	0.024	0.007
MEDIATED	0.045	0.023	0.057
REPERTOIRE	-0.053	0.079	0.501
<b>Village literacy</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.139	0.175	0.432
DIRECT	0.235	0.222	0.292
MEDIATED	-0.105	0.229	0.645
REPERTOIRE	0.332	0.822	0.687
<b>Village population</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.000	0.000	0.525
DIRECT	0.000	0.000	0.297
MEDIATED	0.000	0.000	0.772
REPERTOIRE	0.000	0.000	0.329
<b>Population Density</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	-0.004	0.012	0.724
DIRECT	-0.018	0.015	0.239
MEDIATED	-0.010	0.012	0.436
REPERTOIRE	-0.014	0.044	0.742
<b>Distance to urban center</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	-0.001	0.001	0.431
DIRECT	0.000	0.001	0.683
MEDIATED	0.001	0.001	0.415
REPERTOIRE	0.000	0.003	0.895

**Table A.4. Individual wealth (land and asset-ownership) and claim-making**

<b>Landownership (in quintiles, compared to most land)</b>			
<b>Quintile 1</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.008	0.037	0.826
DIRECT	0.048	0.044	0.289
MEDIATED	-0.047	0.048	0.322
REPERTOIRE	-0.033	0.141	0.814
<b>Quintile 2</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.027	0.035	0.452
DIRECT	0.057	0.045	0.226
MEDIATED	0.082	0.044	0.066
REPERTOIRE	0.203	0.143	0.159
<b>Quintile 3</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.020	0.030	0.522
DIRECT	0.019	0.040	0.63
MEDIATED	0.035	0.039	0.373
REPERTOIRE	0.084	0.112	0.455
<b>Quintile 4</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.064	0.030	0.05
DIRECT	0.053	0.043	0.238
MEDIATED	0.064	0.040	0.121
REPERTOIRE	0.279	0.149	0.065
<b>Asset-ownership</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.039	0.015	0.011
DIRECT	0.046	0.020	0.023
MEDIATED	0.026	0.024	0.273
REPERTOIRE	0.072	0.077	0.35
<b>Assets^2</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	-0.005	0.002	0.012
DIRECT	-0.005	0.002	0.028
MEDIATED	-0.003	0.003	0.298
REPERTOIRE	-0.006	0.009	0.538

**Table A.5. Caste category and claim-making**

<b>Caste category (compared to GC)</b>			
<b>Scheduled Tribe</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.171	0.257	0.506
DIRECT	-0.127	0.085	0.121
MEDIATED	0.035	0.105	0.741
REPERTOIRE	-0.154	0.302	0.612
<b>Scheduled Caste</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	-0.099	0.218	0.649
DIRECT	-0.097	0.061	0.1
MEDIATED	0.014	0.077	0.855
REPERTOIRE	-0.115	0.229	0.618
<b>OBC</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	-0.190	0.201	0.346
DIRECT	-0.039	0.060	0.511
MEDIATED	-0.037	0.074	0.613
REPERTOIRE	-0.181	0.219	0.409

**Table A.6. Gender and claim-making (women compared to men)**

<b>Women</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>StdErr</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	-0.280	0.066	0.000
DIRECT	-0.301	0.064	0.000
MEDIATED	-0.241	0.076	0.002
REPERTOIRE	-1.361	0.213	0.000

**Table A.7. Caste\*Gender effects (compared to GC women)**

<b>SC women</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.046	0.059	0.473
DIRECT	0.119	0.063	0.093
MEDIATED	0.031	0.085	0.719
REPERTOIRE	0.503	0.225	0.027
<b>ST women</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.062	0.046	0.231
DIRECT	0.090	0.064	0.196
MEDIATED	0.152	0.069	0.041
REPERTOIRE	0.656	0.254	0.011
<b>OBC women</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Std. Err.</b>	<b>p-value</b>
INCIDENCE	0.020	0.051	0.704
DIRECT	-0.023	0.066	0.723
MEDIATED	0.000	0.075	0.996
REPERTOIRE	0.181	0.190	0.341

**Table A.8. Combined claim-making practices**

<b>Claim-making practice</b>	<b>Obs</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Multiple practice	2210	0.54	0.50
Direct and mediated	2210	0.43	0.50
Direct only	2210	0.22	0.41
Mediated only	2210	0.10	0.31
<b>Of those who contact the GP</b>			
GP only (single channel)	1375	0.20	0.40
plus mediated channels	1375	0.67	0.47
plus brokered channels	1375	0.53	0.50
plus contact bureaucrat	1375	0.31	0.46
plus contact politician	1375	0.32	0.47
plus contact NH assoc	1375	0.29	0.45
plus contact village assoc	1375	0.21	0.41
plus contact civ. soc. org	1375	0.13	0.34
plus contact caste leader	1375	0.30	0.46
plus contact inter-caste leader	1375	0.19	0.39
plus contact fixer	1375	0.22	0.41
<b>Of those who contact politicians</b>			
Politician only (single channel)	480	0.04	0.20
plus mediated channels	480	0.74	0.44
plus brokered channels	480	0.60	0.49
plus contact GP	480	0.91	0.29
plus contact bureaucrat	480	0.47	0.50
plus contact NH assoc	480	0.29	0.45
plus contact village assoc	480	0.24	0.43
plus contact civ. soc. org	480	0.17	0.38
plus contact caste leader	480	0.35	0.48
plus contact inter-caste leader	480	0.25	0.44
plus contact fixer	480	0.28	0.45

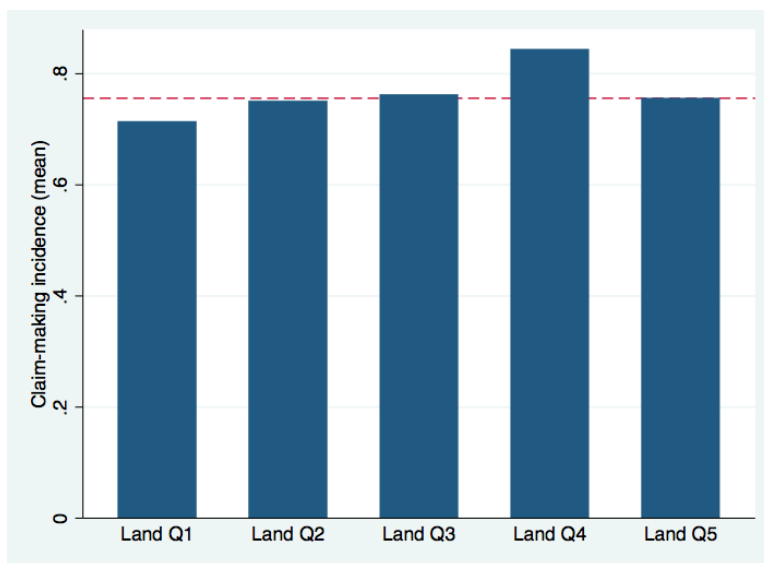


Figure A.1. Claim-making incidence by quintiles of landownership

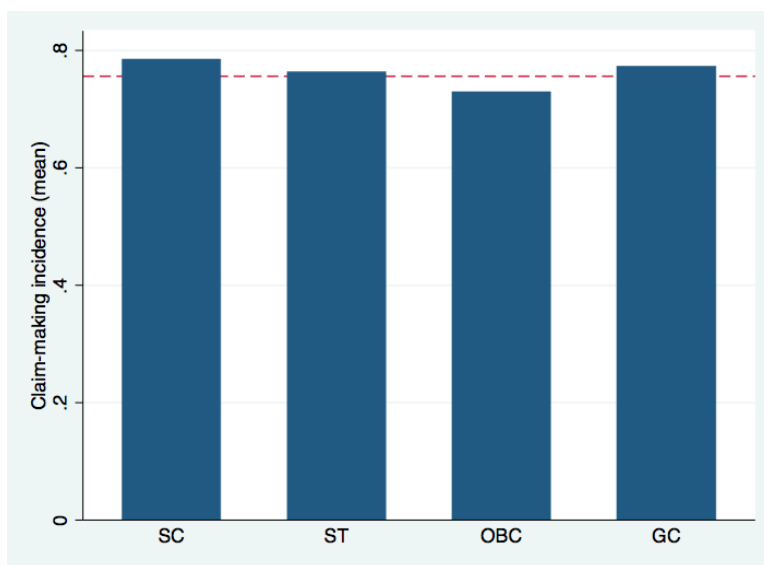


Figure A.2. Claim-making incidence by caste category



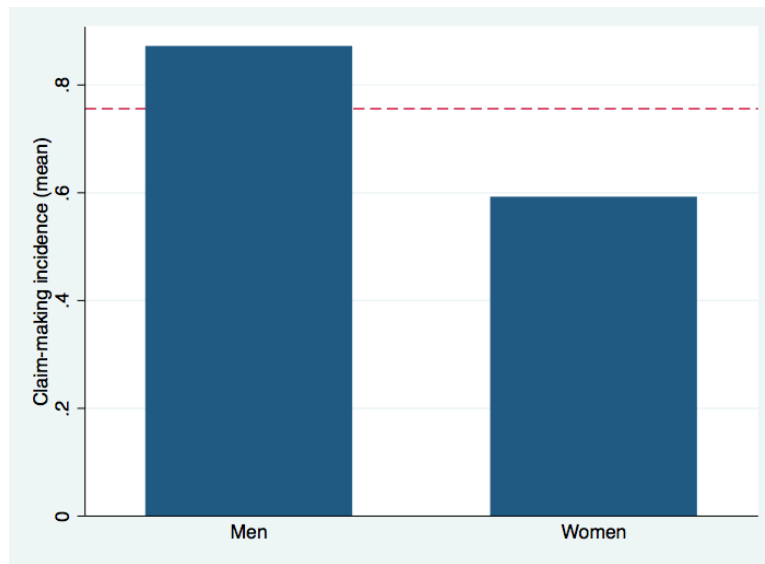


Figure A.3. Claim-making incidence by gender

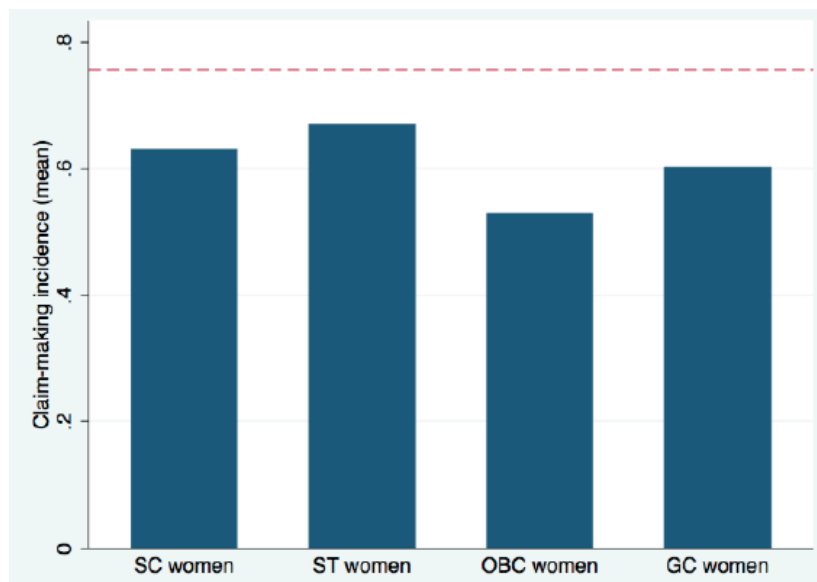


Figure A.4. Claim-making incidence by caste and gender

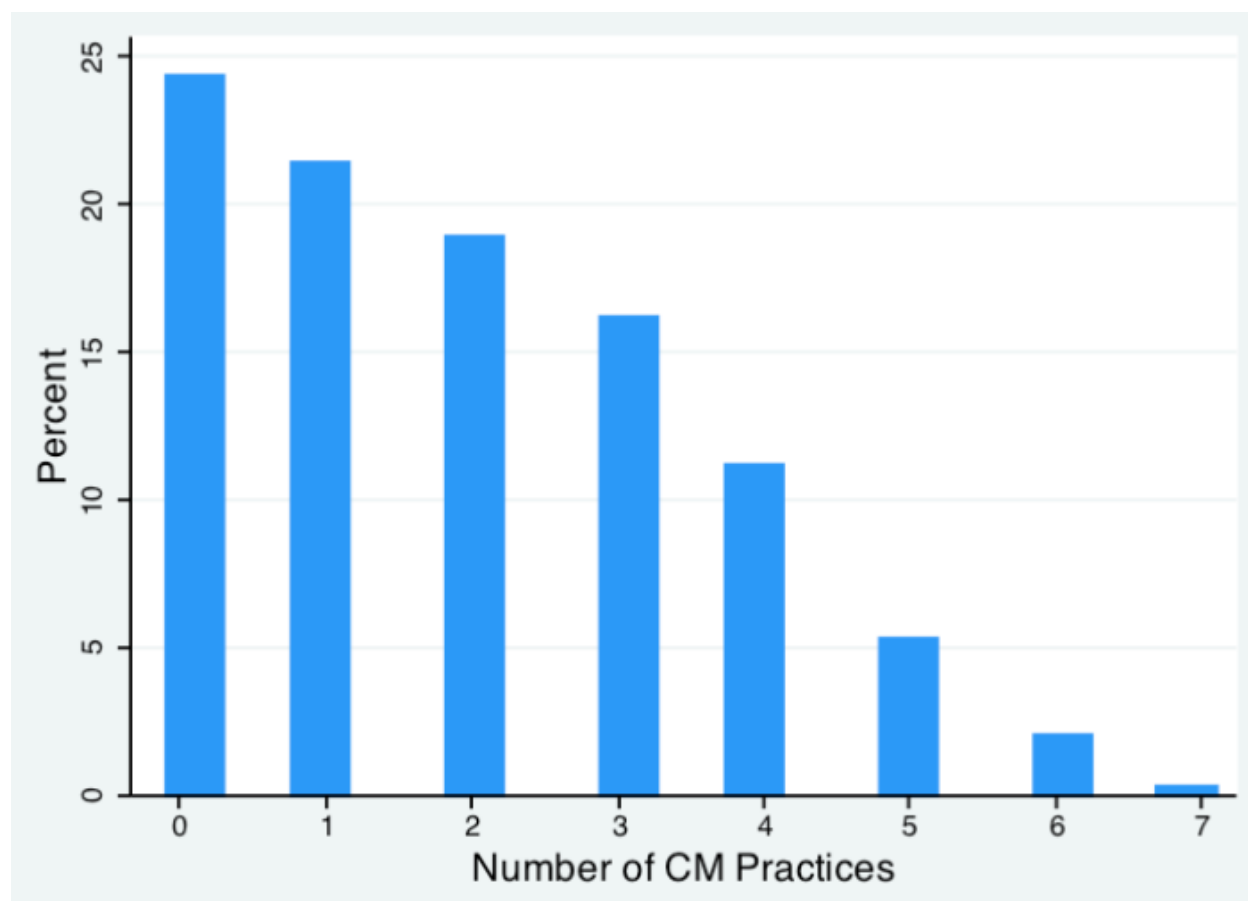


Figure A.5. The breadth of the claim-making repertoire

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