

Political Quotas in India

Perceptions of Constituent Political Representation

ABSTRACT

India has had political quotas for Scheduled Castes (SCs) since 1950. Using the 2004 National Election Study, this paper finds that neither SCs nor non-SCs feel that their vote is more/less efficacious living in SC constituencies. Yet, some evidence is found in this study that SCs are approached for their vote more often in SC constituencies. Overall, this suggests that quotas are neither associated with a strong positive reaction among SC voters nor a strong negative reaction among non-SC voters.

KEYWORDS: India, quotas, reservations, Dalits, Scheduled Castes

INTRODUCTION

The Scheduled Castes (SCs), former “Untouchables,” have traditionally been marginalized in Indian society and underrepresented in positions of power.¹ Yet, one of the most powerful politicians in India is a woman from an SC community, Mayawati,² the chief minister of the largest state in India, Uttar Pradesh (UP). She is a *chamar*, a sub-caste treated as untouchable because individuals belonging to this caste traditionally dealt with the processing and manufacturing of leather. In January 2011, I was interviewing villagers in the western part of UP about their perceptions of political representation in their area. When I asked a group of *chamar* women in one village whether they supported Mayawati, they all answered affirmatively: “She is one of us, she is the daughter of a *chamar*” (*Hamari hai, chamar ki beti hai*). This made them feel represented.

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1. These are the former “Untouchable” castes. Today, individuals belonging to these caste groups are often referred to as Dalits.

2. Her full name is Kumari Mayawati Das, but she usually goes by just one name.

Asian Survey, Vol. 52, Number 2, pp. 373–394. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2012 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press’s Rights and Permissions website, <http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintInfo.asp>. DOI: AS.2012.52.2.373.

A completely different image emerged from an interview with an SC activist in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh in October 2010. He was from a political constituency that was “reserved” for the SC community. This meant that throughout his life his political representatives had belonged to his own caste group. “What does this mean?” I asked. “Do you think your group has better access to the politician than other groups?” He looked angry and answered: “It makes no difference. The representatives follow the party line and are only concerned about themselves and their families. All that reservations have done is to pacify the caste people [e.g., SCs] and to get the upper caste people angry that they can’t run for election.” These divergent opinions show that it cannot be taken for granted that SCs feel more represented by having someone from their own community in power.

More than 100 countries use different types of political quotas to ensure that underrepresented groups get seats in legislative assemblies.³ Supporters often argue that quotas not only increase the numeric representation of a group but also make those belonging to the group *feel* more represented by including its members in the ruling elite. Opponents of quotas tend to argue that they reduce the quality of elected politicians and lead to alienation of the rest of the electorate. India has had political quotas (known as “reserved constituencies”) for SCs and Scheduled Tribes (STs) since 1950, and the location of these reserved constituencies was fixed from 1974–2008.⁴ This paper addresses the question of whether Indian voters feel more included or less included in the democratic process when they live in a constituency reserved for SCs.

Using the Indian National Election Study (NES) from the 2004 general elections collected by the research organization Lokniti, I explore responses to two questions that can shed light on the issue of perceived inclusion in the democratic process.⁵ One question asks whether voters feel that their vote has

3. An overview of quotas for minorities can be found in M. Krook and D. O’Brien, “The Politics of Group Representation: Quotas for Women and Minorities Worldwide,” *Comparative Politics* 42:3 (2010), pp. 253–72. An updated overview of quotas for women can be found at <<http://www.quotaproject.org>>.

4. There are also quotas for SCs, STs, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), and women in elected village councils in India. Furthermore, there are extensive quotas for public sector jobs and for admissions to educational institutions. The term “reservations” is used for all these types of quotas, and the debates about them are often interlinked. In this paper, I focus exclusively on the political quotas for SCs in the state legislative assemblies and the national Parliament.

5. I am very grateful to Lokniti for providing access to the NES 2004 data during the Summer Workshop on Research Methodology, at Shimla, in 2009, from which this paper culminated.

an effect on how things are run in the country. The other asks if respondents were contacted by a party worker, candidate, or canvasser before the election. The first question can be seen as a measure of respondents' perception of their ability to influence the actions of the state, while the second captures the feeling of being important to the state. By looking at these questions, we cannot hope to conclude whether voters feel that their political ideology, or their political interests, is represented by the elected politicians. What we can learn something about, however, is the extent to which citizens feel politically represented in terms of being included in the democratic process.

The analysis in this paper shows that class, sex, and education level are key predictors of whether constituents feel their vote matters. At the same time, neither non-SCs nor SCs feel that their vote is more or less efficacious when living in reserved constituencies. These findings are robust to several model specifications, as well as when restricting the survey sample to constituencies that were more comparable at the time the quotas were implemented in 1974. There is some evidence that the proportion of SCs approached for their vote is higher in SC constituencies than in general constituencies, although this finding is not robust. Thus, quotas are not correlated with whether Indian voters feel that their vote was efficacious, but the use of quotas might be associated with more contact between the state and the citizens who are meant to benefit from them.

CONCEPTS AND LITERATURE

Quotas are a form of social planning aimed at guaranteeing the descriptive representation of specific groups in society rather than facilitating equality of opportunity in the electoral process. They can be implemented as *aspirant quotas* (a minimum number of the group is required among pre-candidates in parties), *candidate quotas* (a minimum number must be fielded as candidates), and *reserved seats* (an elected political position can only be held by an individual belonging to a certain group). All these types of quotas can be voluntary, or may be mandated by the Constitution or electoral laws. The most common target groups (e.g., intended beneficiaries) for quotas are women, ethnic minorities such as indigenous groups and racial minorities, and lower caste groups. Regardless of the type of quota system, these systems, by definition, increase the descriptive representation of a given group. But do they make voters feel more included in the democratic process?

According to the Constituent Assembly debates in India from 1947 to 1950, SCs were given quotas because of their economic, social, and educational deprivation. Although India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, opposed any type of quotas in principle, he argued in favor of reserved seats for SCs as a direct method of "helping backward groups in the country."⁶ In line with this early discussion of quotas in India, the focus of academic work has been on the link between representation and developmental outcomes. Several excellent studies of women's quotas in political institutions at the local level such as *panchayats* (elected village councils) show evidence that women politicians tend to invest more in public goods in which women express an interest. These findings support the idea that there might be a link between political representation and public goods provision to the represented group.⁷

Studies of state-level quotas in India have mainly focused on effects of political outcomes for which data are available, such as the effect on voter turnout.⁸ A few studies have also attempted to discern the developmental effects of quotas for SCs at the state and national level, although there is a major limitation in the lack of data at the political constituency level.⁹ There is a remarkable silence, however, about how quotas have affected the feeling of being included or excluded from the democratic process.

POLITICAL QUOTAS IN INDIA

India is a constitutional democracy with a parliamentary system of government, with currently more than 700 million eligible voters in the country. The 552 elected members of the Lok Sabha (literally, People's House, the lower house of Parliament) and the more than 4,000 members of the state

6. CAD, *Constituent Assembly Debates: Official Report*, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Reprinted by Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1999), p. 331.

7. A few examples that should be mentioned are Esther Duflo and Petia Topalova, "Unappreciated Service: Performance, Perceptions, and Women Leaders in India," unpublished manuscript, Department of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2004); Raghavendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo, "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India," *Econometrica* 72:5 (September 2004), pp. 1409–43; Pranab Bardhan, Dilip Mookherjee, and Monica L. Parra Torrado, "Impact of Political Reservations in West Bengal Local Governments on Anti-Poverty Targeting," *Journal of Globalization and Development* 1:1 (2010).

8. A good example of this is Alistair McMillan, *Standing at the Margins: Representation and Electoral Reservation in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

9. The main exception is Rohini Pande, "Can Mandated Political Representation Increase Policy Influence for Disadvantaged Minorities? Theory and Evidence from India," *American Economic Review* 93:4 (2003), pp. 1132–51.

assemblies are elected from single-member electoral districts (referred to as “political constituencies”) using a plurality voting system.

Discussions about political quotas date back to British rule, which ended with Independence in 1947. As the representative system in India expanded, several minority groups demanded political safeguards. Already in the Indian Council Act of 1909 (the Morley-Minto Reforms), the Muslim community, as well as a few interest groups, were granted reserved seats with separate electorates (only Muslims would vote for Muslim candidates). As Indian representation in political institutions within the British Colonial government increased, Muslims and other groups pushed for more reserved seats as well as more local autonomy.

After Muslims and other religious groups had been guaranteed political representation, demands were also made by the “depressed classes” (the term used for SCs before 1935), which had traditionally been marginalized. The British administration was receptive to the demands of their leader, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, and granted the community reserved seats with separate electorates in the Government of India Act of 1919 and in the Communal Award of 1932. The national leader, Mahatma Gandhi, was strongly opposed to fragmenting the votes of Hindus, and went on a hunger strike to protest against this policy. After hard negotiations, Ambedkar and Gandhi agreed to granting reserved seats with common rolls to the depressed classes. This meant that in reserved constituencies only individuals belonging to the depressed classes could run for office, while the entire electorate could vote irrespective of caste.

Following the agreement between Gandhi and Ambedkar, the British included provisions for reserved constituencies for the depressed classes in the Government of India Act of 1935 and created a list (called a “schedule”) of sub-castes considered “depressed” and thereby eligible to run for office in these constituencies. From then on, these groups have been referred to as the SCs. All the draft constitutions of India had also included provisions for reserved seats for religious groups, but the violence at Partition of British India into India and Pakistan made any form of political demand based on religious identity an unacceptable topic, thereby ending the discussion about quotas for religious groups. The seats for SCs, however, had become a political necessity because of the agreement between Gandhi and Ambedkar. At the time of Independence, the Indian Constituent Assembly granted SCs and STs reserved seats in the lower houses of the state and national

legislatures in proportion to their population in each state. For example, with SCs constituting 6% of the population in Maharashtra in 1971, three of the political seats were reserved for SCs in that state in the next delimitation of political constituencies in 1974.

For 10 years, from 1951 to 1961, reserved constituencies were multi-member districts, with one general seat and one seat reserved for an SC or ST politician. This created both confusion and dissatisfaction, and the practice was ended with the Two-Member Constituencies (Abolition) Act of 1961, in which it was decided that India should only have single-member constituencies. The reason for this choice was a feeling that the multi-member constituencies were getting unwieldy because of their size and that SC politicians only became tag-on politicians to influential general candidates.¹⁰ Since then, the reserved constituencies have been single-member districts in which the candidates running for office must be SC or ST, but the entire electorate in the constituency is allowed to vote.

Selecting the Reserved Seats

The Delimitation Commission, formed by the Election Commission of India, is given the task of redrawing all political boundaries as well as selecting which seats are to be reserved. This was originally meant to happen after every decennial census, so that the size of political constituencies could be adjusted to the population growth. The idea was also that the imbalance created by reserving certain seats for a minority group (SCs are almost always a minority in reserved seats) would be evened out by rotating the location of the reserved seats. The population in all political constituencies was supposed to be the same across the country. But it was growing much faster in some states than in others, and thus a decennial delimitation would slowly increase the political representation in places with higher growth rates. The government, therefore, chose to freeze the boundaries of the political constituencies, and, with it, the geographic location of the reserved seats. The result was that political constituencies remained the same from 1974 to 2008. Table 1 summarizes the number of parliamentary constituencies that were reserved for SCs in the 15 largest Indian states according to the delimitation in the 1970s.¹¹

10. See, particularly, the speech by Mr. A. K. Sen, minister of Law, in the Lok Sabha Debates (proceedings), New Delhi, February 16, 1961, pp. 344–46.

11. The extent of these constituencies is described in the Indian Delimitation report of 1976, available at <http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/delimitation_pub_rpt.aspx>.

TABLE I. Parliamentary Constituencies Reserved for SCs in 15 Indian States, 1974–2008

<i>State</i>	<i>Parliamentary Constituencies</i>	<i>% SCs in the Population</i>	<i>Constituencies Reserved for SCs</i>
Andhra Pradesh	42	13.3	6
Bihar	54	14.1	8
Gujarat	26	7.7	2
Haryana	10	18.9	2
Himachal Pradesh	4	22.2	1
Karnataka	28	13.1	4
Kerala	20	8.3	2
Madhya Pradesh	40	13.1	5
Maharashtra	48	6.0	3
Orissa	21	15.1	3
Punjab	13	24.7	3
Rajasthan	25	15.8	4
Tamil Nadu	39	17.7	7
Uttar Pradesh	85	21.2	18
West Bengal	42	19.9	8

SOURCE: By author, data collected in the record room of the Election Commission of India.

So how were the locations of reserved seats selected? According to the Delimitation Act of 1972, which formed the basis for delimitation in the 1970s, there were two selection criteria: “Constituencies in which seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes shall be distributed in different parts of the State and located, as far as practicable, in those areas where the proportion of their population to the total is comparatively large.”¹² The result of this selection process was that the proportion of SCs living in reserved parliamentary constituencies from 1976 to 2008 ranged from 4% to 37%, while there were also general (regular or non-reserved) constituencies where SCs constituted up to 36% of the population.

Quotas and Representation

The debate about people *feeling* represented is important in the Indian context. The *chamar* villagers I talked to in UP felt represented by Mayawati because she belongs to their caste group. This had nothing to do with feeling

12. Published in the *Gazette of India* (New Delhi), December 30, 1972.

that Mayawati would work to further their interests, nor that she represented an ideological perspective that they adhered to. Quite to the contrary, the villagers seemed convinced that the government would not make any material changes in their lives. The feeling of representation was therefore not about ideological or substantive representation, but about having a voice and being included in the democratic process.

The SC activist I talked to in Himachal Pradesh did not seem to feel more represented by the democratic system even though he had lived in a reserved constituency his whole life. He even suggested that non-SCs in reserved constituencies were angry because they could not run for election. Again, this feeling he described was not related to material benefits but to *who* the representative is.

These kinds of arguments have been made for a long time. When the 1961 Two-Member Abolition Bill was under discussion, Member of Parliament (MP) Mahavir Tyagi argued: “As soon as you reserve a constituency for Scheduled Castes, 80 per cent of the population of that constituency will feel frustrated because their sons cannot offer themselves as candidates from their home constituency.”¹³ Based on these examples, we should expect that non-SCs in reserved constituencies should feel *less* included in the political system than non-SCs in general constituencies, and that SCs would feel *more* included in the political system in reserved constituencies than in general constituencies.

An opposite perspective was put forward in the 1980s by Kanshi Ram, a prominent SC politician and founder of the SC-dominated Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP, Majority People’s Party). Ram argued that SC representatives who managed to win elections in India were *chamchas* (stooges or sycophants) who do not properly represent SC interests.¹⁴ His argument, reflecting Ambedkar’s perspective before him, was that because the selection of constituencies ensures that the majority of the electorate is non-SC even in reserved constituencies, SC politicians will always cater to the interest of this majority in order to win elections. This perspective suggests that there should be no difference in the feeling of inclusion and representation across general and SC constituencies because SC politicians are constrained by the electoral system and therefore do not work for particular SC community

13. Lok Sabha Debates, p. 359.

14. Kanshi Ram, *The Chamcha Age—An Era of the Stooges*, <<http://www.archive.org/details/TheChamchaAge>>.

interests. In the following sections, I use survey data to explore the variation in the perception of political representation in general and in reserved constituencies.

DATA

The data used for the analysis in this paper are from the NES 2004. For the study, some 27,189 respondents from all over India were asked their political opinions on a range of topics. The respondents were sampled using a multi-stage stratified random sampling method, where the Indian states were the units of sampling. Within each state, a set of assembly constituencies was randomly selected (with their probability of selection being weighted by their population size). Similarly, polling stations were sampled within each of the selected constituencies. Finally, individuals were sampled by systematic random sampling from the lists of voters from each selected station.¹⁵

The original NES questionnaire does not report whether a constituency is reserved for SC/ST candidates, but the codes given for parliamentary and assembly constituencies can be used to merge the NES data set with data from the Election Commission of India, which includes this information.¹⁶ For this article, I merged the NES 2004 with variables indicating whether the political constituencies were general or reserved for SCs or STs, as well as other political variables such as turnout and party winning the election. This enabled me to code every individual in the NES data set as living in a Parliamentary Constituency (PC) that is general or reserved for SCs/STs, as well as in a State Assembly Constituency (AC) that is general or reserved for SCs/STs.

Because the focus of this paper is on people living in constituencies reserved for SCs, and in order to compare them to people living in general constituencies, I excluded people who lived in either a PC or an AC that was reserved for STs. The choice was based on the knowledge that the political dynamics in places reserved for STs are quite different from the dynamics in SC and general seats. Excluding those people should make it easier to distinguish

15. More information about the data collection process can be found on the Lokniti website, at <<http://www.lokniti.org>>.

16. Data from the Election Commission are available in PDF format online, at <<http://eci.nic.in>>, and in soft copy, at <<http://www.francesca.no/data>>.

patterns related to SC quotas. Excluding people in ST constituencies reduced the sample size to 17,884 individuals. The remaining people in the survey sample lived in a place that fell into one of the following four categories:

1. A general PC and a general AC,
2. A general PC and an AC reserved for SCs,
3. A PC reserved for SCs and a general AC, and
4. A PC reserved for SCs and an AC reserved for SCs

Because the NES was conducted after a parliamentary election and contained questions specifically related to that election, it is likely that responses referred to the performance of the MP who was up for election rather than for politicians in the state assemblies. For this reason, I chose to focus the analysis on the SC quotas at the PC level. The analysis below therefore compares people living in a reserved PC (groups 3 and 4) versus those who live in a general PC (groups 1 and 2).¹⁷

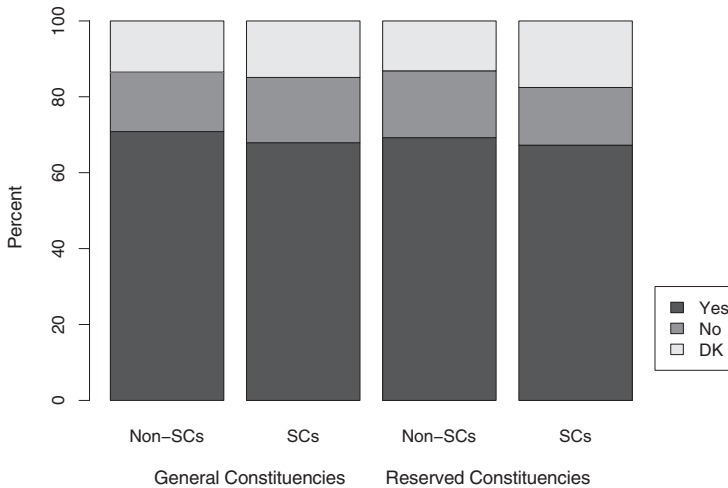
EMPIRICAL ANALYSES

Do SCs in reserved constituencies feel more represented by the political system than SCs in non-reserved constituencies? Do non-SCs feel politically alienated or disenfranchised in SC constituencies? Two questions in the NES questionnaire allow us to approach an answer to these questions. One survey question asks whether people feel their vote has an effect. This tells us whether people feel that they have a voice in the democratic process; the answer therefore serves as an indicator of how represented they feel by the political system.

Another question asks whether people were contacted by a politician or party worker before the election. Because many voters in India are in touch with the political system mainly at the time of elections, this question tells us about the extent of contact between citizens and state, or at least the perceived level of contact. This is an important aspect of feeling represented by the state. The correlation between the responses to these two questions is quite low, 0.12, suggesting that the questions capture different aspects of the

17. I have also controlled the findings by running all the analyses with people who lived in both a reserved PC and a reserved AC (group 4) versus those who live in both a general PC and a general AC (group 1). The results were not substantively different in any of the analyses.

FIGURE 1. Distribution of Responses to the Question “Do You Think Your Vote Has an Effect on How Things Are Run in This Country?”



SOURCE: Data are from the NES 2004.

perception of political representation. I explore the responses to each of these two questions separately in the following two sections.¹⁸

“Do You Think Your Vote Has an Effect on How Things Are Run in This Country?”

Some 12,549 respondents answered affirmatively to the question about whether they thought their vote had an effect on how things are run in India, 2,875 responded negatively, and 2,460 said that they did not know. This means that 70.2% of the sample felt their vote had an effect. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of responses for SCs and non-SCs in general constituencies and in SC constituencies. It is clear that there is little variation in the responses across the different groups. The distribution of “don’t know” responses is also similar across the groups.

In Table 2, we see the proportion of people who responded affirmatively to the question and the sample size for each group. Among SC individuals living in general constituencies, about 68% of the sample said they felt their vote had an effect. Similarly, this number was 67% for SCs living in reserved

18. There is a third relevant question about how pleased the voter is with the performance of the politician, which I chose not to use in this paper. That is because it relates to the feeling of being represented by an individual politician as opposed to feeling represented by the political system, and it is the latter which is our focus.

TABLE 2. Proportion of Respondents Who Say Their Vote Has an Effect (Sample Size in Parentheses)

	<i>General Seat</i>	<i>SC Seat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
SC individuals	0.68 (2,041)	0.67 (678)	0.75
Non-SC individuals	0.71 (12,858)	0.69 (2,307)	0.11

SOURCE: Ibid. to Figure 1.

constituencies. The third column in the table reports the p-value from non-parametric t-tests comparing the differences in these response rates.¹⁹ The high p-value for SC respondents suggests that the difference in the answers between SCs living in general and reserved constituencies is statistically indistinguishable from 0. In other words, there is no difference in how SCs living in general constituencies and reserved constituencies feel about the efficacy of their vote. The same is the case for non-SCs living in general and reserved constituencies, of whom 71% and 69%, respectively, answered that they believe their vote has an effect on how things are run in the country.

The numbers presented in Figure 1 and Table 2 show that there is neither a positive nor a negative correlation between SC quotas and how people feel about the efficacy of their vote. This suggests that the quotas at the PC level have no effect on how well people feel the political system represents them. But we cannot conclude this without further investigation. The numbers reported are conditional means, conditioning on only two variables, and are therefore potentially biased. We have no reason to believe that people living in reserved constituencies are comparable to people living in general constituencies. Although the sample for the survey is random, and therefore representative of the Indian population, the location of quotas was not randomly assigned in 1976. Rather, quotas were assigned to constituencies with a high proportion of SCs according to the 1971 census of India. This means that there were structural differences between general and reserved constituencies that might bias these results.

Indian census data from 1971 for the 15 largest Indian states reveal that the proportion of SCs in reserved parliamentary constituencies was 22% on

19. The p-values reported in the text are from a permutation test (`perm.test` in R), but the results are not substantively different using an ordinary Welch t-test.

average, while the average proportion in general assembly constituencies was 14%.²⁰ Constituencies with a higher proportion of SCs had a lower level of literacy, suggesting a generally lower level of development.²¹ The general level of development in the constituencies is therefore a major potential confounder to how people respond to the survey questions. I tried to limit this bias in two different ways: by statistically controlling for individual characteristics such as education level, sex, and class, and by restricting the sample to people who came from constituencies with a similar proportion of SCs at the time that seats were selected to be reserved.

The first attempt to reduce the bias in the results involves conditioning people's answers on their individual characteristics. Table 3 includes the results from logistic regression analyses with people's responses to whether they felt their vote had an effect as the outcome variable. The main regressors of interest are the variables for the SC quota (coded 1 for people in a reserved PC and 0 otherwise), and the interaction term between the SC quota and the caste variable (coded 1 for a person who is SC and 0 otherwise). In Model 1, presented in Table 3, I regressed the perception of the vote on type of constituency while controlling for individual-level characteristics. The control variables included in the models presented in Table 3 were class, sex, education level, age, and whether or not the person lived in a parliamentary constituency controlled by the SC-dominated party BSP from 1999 to 2004.²² In Model 2, I also included state level fixed effects, dummy variables for each of the states in the data set, in order to account for regional variation in political perceptions. In both of these models, I included the whole sample of 17,610 voters.

For each of the models presented in Table 3, I report standard errors clustered at the parliamentary constituency level. The calculations of normal

20. Rikhil Bhavnani and Francesca Jensenius, "Constructing Socio-economic Profiles for India's Old Constituencies" (research article in progress).

21. Francesca Refsum Jensenius, "Development from Representation? A Study of Quotas for Lower Caste Groups in India," working paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Seattle, September 2011.

22. The class variable is an ordinal variable running from 1 (low class) to 5 (high class), created from a range of the questions in the questionnaire related to assets and income. This measure was developed by the Lokniti Team, and I am grateful that they let me use it. The sex variable is coded 1 for woman and 0 for man. The education variable is an ordinal level measure where 1 means illiterate and 5 suggests college level education or higher. The age variable is continuous. The indicator for BSP constituency is coded 1 for a parliamentary constituency represented by a BSP politician 1999–2004, and 0 otherwise.

TABLE 3. Logistic Regression Models of Perceptions of the Efficacy of the Vote

<i>State</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Intercept	-0.07 (0.22)	-0.29 (1.33)	-0.27 (0.44)	-0.43 (2.61)
SC quota	-0.06 (0.32)	-0.08 (0.36)	0.17 (0.41)	0.19 (0.46)
SC	0.04 (0.11)	0.03 (0.13)	0.09 (0.18)	0.12 (0.19)
Class	0.10* (0.04)	0.10† (0.05)	0.06 (0.07)	0.05 (0.10)
Sex	-0.35*** (0.06)	-0.37*** (0.06)	-0.35** (0.11)	-0.39** (0.13)
Education	0.30*** (0.03)	0.28*** (0.05)	0.33*** (0.06)	0.33*** (0.07)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
BSP constituency	0.50 (1.09)	0.52 (1.26)	0.43 (1.18)	0.66 (1.33)
Quota*SC	0.13 (0.28)	0.11 (0.29)	0.05 (0.32)	-0.00 (0.36)
State fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>N</i> respondents	17,610	17,610	5,468	5,468
<i>N</i> constituencies	351	351	112	112
AIC	20,339	19,976	6,486	6,370

Standard errors clustered by parliamentary constituency in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

SOURCE: Data are from *ibid.* to Table 2 and the Election Commission of India, as compiled by the author (available at <www.francesca.no/data>).

standard errors assume that all the observations in the study are completely independent of each other. In the case of a survey asking questions about the performance of politicians, it does not seem reasonable to assume independent answers from people living in the same constituencies. The clustered standard errors are much larger than both the naïve and the robust standard errors, showing that it is important to account for this lack of independence among the individual responses.

All the models presented in Table 3 are logistic regression models, and the coefficients are log odds ratios. Positive coefficients indicate that people with

the characteristic given by the variable are more likely to say that their vote has an effect, while negative coefficients indicate that they are less likely to do so. For example, the negative and highly statistically significant coefficient on the sex variable in Model 1 suggests that women are less likely than men to report that they feel their vote matters. Not surprisingly, sex and education level are strong predictors of people's perception of the efficacy of their vote. However, our variables of interest do not seem to predict the responses to this question. People are not more likely to report that their vote has an effect in SC constituencies, nor are SCs in SC constituencies more or less likely to report that they feel that their vote matters. The findings are robust to the inclusion of state level fixed effects.

The models also include a variable for whether the BSP had been in power in the constituency. I chose to include this control variable because the presence of an SC-dominated party could be an important confounding factor for the relationship between quotas for SCs and perceptions of vote efficacy for voters. However, this variable is not significant in any of the models, nor does it change the coefficients of the other variables in the models, suggesting that having lived in a constituency with a BSP politician is not correlated with people's responses to the question about the efficacy of their vote.

Models 3 and 4 are the same models as 1 and 2, regressed on a reduced sample. In this case, I matched parliamentary constituencies to each other on the basis of proportion of SCs in their population as of 1971, in order to reduce the bias resulting from non-random assignment of reserved seats. Within every state in the sample, I matched each of the reserved parliamentary constituencies to the general constituency that was the closest possible in terms of proportion of SCs when reserved seats were selected in the 1970s. Since the 1976 selection was based on the proportion of SCs in a given constituency compared to other constituencies in the same state, matching on this observable variable should hopefully also improve the balance on unobserved confounding factors.²³

While the difference between the proportion of SCs in the reserved and general constituencies before the matching was eight percentage points (22% and 14%), the difference afterward was reduced to about two percentage

23. I used the function `Match()` in the R-package "Matching" with exact matching on state and closest neighbor matching on the proportion of SCs. This function is described in Jasjeet S. Sekhon, "Multivariate and Propensity Score Matching Software with Automated Balance Optimization: The Matching Package for R," *Journal of Statistical Software* 42:7 (2011), pp. 1–52.

points, with 22% in reserved constituencies and 20% in general constituencies.²⁴ The groups of reserved and general constituencies still had different proportions of SCs in the population, but these proportions were much closer to each other than was the case in the full sample. It is therefore possible that the bias introduced by the difference in the proportion of SCs in general and reserved seats has been reduced in this smaller sample, although it cannot be completely removed because reserved seats by definition have a higher proportion of SCs. Because the matched sample did not achieve balance and the survey data are not at the constituency level, I chose to run logistic regression models on the reduced sample of people living in the matched constituencies. Using this reduced sample of 5,468 people (representing 112 constituencies), I am comparing people who live in reserved constituencies to people living in general constituencies with a similarly high proportion of SCs.²⁵

The results from the logistic regression models using the reduced sample are reported in Table 3. Model 3 includes controls for individual characteristics, and Model 4 also includes state-level fixed effects. There are no substantive changes to the results in the models, even using such a different sample. Again, we see that sex and education level are strong predictors of whether voters feel that their vote matters, while neither the quota system, being an SC individual, nor the interaction between these two variables predicts much of the variation in the outcome variable.

The robustness of the observed patterns with regard to the inclusion of individual characteristics, state fixed effects, and a reduced sample with improved balance on the percent SCs in the population of the constituency suggests that the pattern we observed in the data was not the result of bias. There really seems to be no correlation between the quotas for SCs and the propensity to have faith in the efficacy of voting, neither among SCs nor non-SCs.

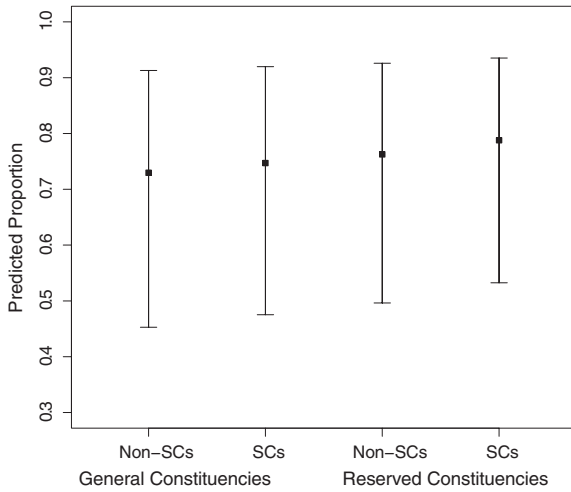
Figure 2 presents a graphic illustration of the predicted probabilities of people saying they feel their vote counts. The predictions are based on Model 3. The squares represent the predicted probabilities when the values for all the control variables are set to their median.²⁶ The line shows the

24. One reserved constituency was excluded because no close match could be found.

25. Note that since all of the individual-level variables are post-treatment, the findings in the models can still not be interpreted causally.

26. I chose to present Model 3 because the restricted sample should provide better control for potential bias, and using Model 4 would entail choosing to calculate the values for a particular

FIGURE 2. Predicted Probabilities of Respondents Believing Their Vote Has an Effect, by Type of Group and Type of Constituency



SOURCE: Predicted probabilities were generated by the author on the basis of Model 3 reported in Table 3, using the function predict() in the R-package “stats” (as described in J. M. Chambers and T. J. Hastie, *Statistical Models in S* (Pacific Grove, Calif.: Wadsworth & Brooks/Cole, 1992).

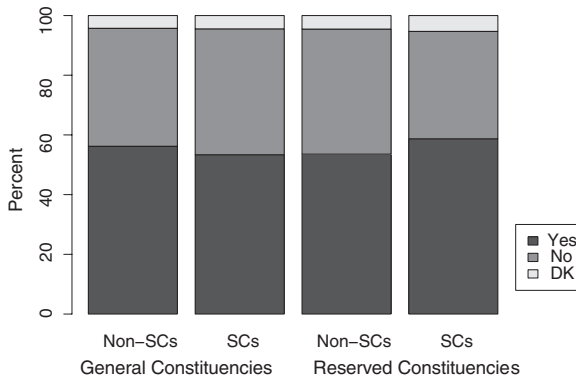
span from the minimum to the maximum predicted probability, given all possible combinations of the variables in the model. The figure illustrates that there is little difference in the predicted probabilities for reporting that the respondents’ votes matter across the different groups, even when we try to control for characteristics of the constituencies and of the individuals.

“Did Any Candidate, Party Worker, or Canvasser Come to Your House during the Campaign to Ask for Your Vote?”

In the previous section, I established that there is a robust pattern that people living in constituencies reserved for SCs do not have more or less faith in their vote having an impact on how the country is run, compared to people living in general constituencies. Another question in the survey asks whether a candidate, party worker, or canvasser came to respondents’ homes to ask for their votes during the 2004 campaign. This question gets at another aspect

arbitrary state. The median values for class and education level were 3, the median age was 35, and the median sex was 0 or male.

FIGURE 3. Distribution of Responses to the Question “Did Any Candidate, Party Worker, or Canvasser Come to Your House during the Campaign to Ask for Your Vote?”



SOURCE: Data are from the NES 2004.

of representation, namely, the amount of contact between constituents and the state around the time of election, which often is the voters' primary form of contact with the state. In the full sample of voters living in both general and reserved constituencies, 9,950 (55.6%) responded affirmatively to this question.

Figure 3 provides an illustration of the distribution of answers among SCs and non-SCs in both general and reserved constituencies. The proportions of “don't know” is quite even across the groups. In this case, the proportion of “yes” responses is slightly higher among non-SCs in general constituencies than non-SCs in reserved constituencies, and slightly higher for SCs in reserved constituencies than SCs in general constituencies.

Table 4 shows the proportions responding affirmatively to the question of having been contacted, among SCs and non-SCs in reserved and general constituencies. There is a small difference in the response rates for non-SCs living in different constituencies: 56% of the respondents in general constituencies answered affirmatively, as opposed to 54% in reserved constituencies. Among SCs living in general constituencies, 53% said that they had been contacted, compared to 59% among SCs in reserved constituencies. These differences are statistically significant.

As above, we need to probe the data further to see if the observed pattern is robust. Table 5 shows output from logistic regression models where the outcome variable is whether or not a person responded affirmatively

TABLE 4. Proportion of Respondents Reporting Contact with Party Workers or Candidates (Sample Size in Parentheses)

	<i>General Seat</i>	<i>SC Seat</i>	<i>P-value</i>
SC individuals	0.53 (2,041)	0.59 (678)	0.02
Non-SC individuals	0.56 (12,858)	0.54 (2,307)	0.02

SOURCE: Ibid. to Figure 3.

TABLE 5. Logistic Regression Models of Propensity to Report Contact with a Candidate, Party Worker, or Canvasser

<i>State</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
Intercept	-0.28 (0.21)	0.74 (1.88)	-0.44 (0.43)	0.36 (3.29)
SC quota	-0.10 (0.32)	-0.17 (0.35)	-0.16 (0.41)	-0.15 (0.46)
SC	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.05 (0.13)	-0.11 (0.17)	-0.09 (0.19)
Class	0.09* (0.04)	0.08† (0.05)	0.08 (0.07)	0.08 (0.10)
Sex	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.16** (0.06)	-0.12 (0.10)	-0.13 (0.12)
Education	0.10** (0.03)	0.10* (0.05)	0.15* (0.06)	0.16* (0.08)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
BSP constituency	-0.45 (1.05)	-0.29 (1.22)	-0.44 (1.19)	-0.07 (1.50)
Quota*SC	0.39 (0.24)	0.33 (0.24)	0.51† (0.28)	0.41 (0.31)
State fixed effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
<i>N</i> respondents	17,610	17,610	5,468	5,468
<i>N</i> constituencies	351	351	112	112
AIC	23,940	23,111	7,408	7,620

Clustered standard errors in parentheses

† significant at $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

SOURCE: Data are from ibid. to Table 4 and the Election Commission of India, as compiled by the author (available at <www.francesca.no/data>).

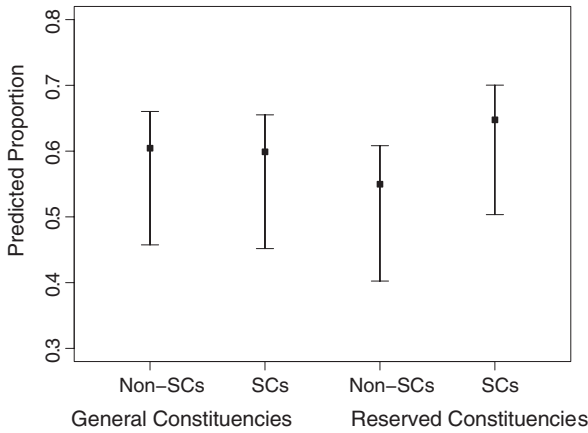
to the question of having been contacted by a candidate, party worker, or canvasser. Model 1 includes individual controls, while Model 2 also includes state fixed effects. Models 3 and 4 are the same models run on the data set restricted to people living in constituencies that had better common support on the proportion of SCs in 1971, as described in the previous section. As above, education is a strong predictor of people's responses across the different specifications. Sex and class are statistically significant predictors in the large sample, but not in the smaller sample.

From the coefficients on the SC quota variable, we can see that being a non-SC living in a constituency reserved for SCs is associated with a lower propensity to report contact with candidates and party workers. This difference becomes substantively larger when controlling for bias by including state-level fixed effects and reducing the sample. Similarly, the coefficients for the interaction term of the variable for SCs and the variable for reserved constituency is positive across all the specifications, suggesting that SCs living in SC constituencies are more likely to report contact with candidates or party workers. Using naïve or robust standard errors, these relationships are strongly statistically significant. Using standard errors that account for the lack of independence of people living in the same constituency (clustered at the parliamentary constituency level), the relationships are not statistically significant, except the coefficient of the interaction term in Model 3, which is statistically significant at the 0.1 level. Thus, we cannot conclude more from these findings than that SCs living in SC constituencies *might* have been contacted more frequently than SCs in general constituencies.

Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities of Model 3, holding the other variables in the model to their median.²⁷ The figure shows quite clearly that non-SCs and SCs have the same propensity to report contact with a party worker or candidate in general constituencies, while the difference between the predicted values is quite large in reserved constituencies: SCs living in SC constituencies have a higher predicted probability of reporting that they were contacted than SCs living in general constituencies. Non-SCs seem to have been contacted less in SC constituencies than comparable people living in comparable general constituencies. As noted above, however, although these patterns are substantively large they are not statistically significant once we

27. I chose to use Model 3 because Models 3 and 4 should be less biased since there is better common support for the SC-proportion of the reserved and general constituencies. The medians for class and education level are 3; for sex, 0 or male; for age, 35.

FIGURE 4. Predicted Probabilities of Respondents Reporting to Have Been Contacted by a Candidate, Party Worker, or Canvasser



SOURCE: Predicted probabilities were generated by the author on the basis of Model 3 reported in Table 3, using the function predict() in the R-package “stats” (as described in Chambers and Hastie, *Statistical Models in S*).

account for the fact that respondents living in the same constituencies are not independent of each other.

CONCLUSION

Quotas are employed all over the world for different groups and with various justifications. In the case of quotas for women, it is often argued that women simply represent women better because they have a different experience of the world and therefore have different political priorities than men. In the case of the quotas for SCs in India, the focus has been on the intention to ensure the empowerment of a traditionally impoverished and oppressed group in society. At the same time, critics of the quota system have argued that non-SCs who live in reserved constituencies feel disempowered and alienated. This paper has addressed the issue from a slightly different angle by exploring whether people feel more or less included in the democratic process in constituencies that are reserved for SCs.

The analysis suggests that there is no difference in the degree to which people feel their vote counts in reserved and general constituencies. This pattern is robust to several model specifications and also to restricting the sample to constituencies that are more comparable in terms of the proportion of SCs in the population. This suggests that people neither feel democratically

empowered nor disenfranchised by living in a constituency that is reserved for SCs. There might be some difference, on the other hand, in the proportion of people who are contacted by party workers or candidates in general and in SC constituencies. There is a pattern in the data that SCs living in an SC constituency are more likely to be contacted by party officials than SCs living in general constituencies, and that non-SCs living in SC constituencies are less likely to be contacted than non-SCs living in general constituencies. This pattern remains the same across different model specifications but is not statistically significant once we account for the lack of independence in the responses from people living in the same parliamentary constituency. Thus, while the quotas do not seem to affect people's faith in the efficacy of their vote, they might bolster the contact between the state and the citizens they are meant to benefit.