

**Layers of Subordination:  
Intersectional Approaches to Affirmative Action in Rural India**

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LAYERS OF SUBORDINATION: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION IN RURAL INDIA

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Does state intervention in development processes generate structural and social transformation for marginalized groups? This project studies the use of electoral quotas in India's Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) system to understand whether affirmative action policies actually improve development outcomes for Scheduled Caste (SC) groups and women. It adds to the larger quota literature through the use of intersectional lens to analyze the impact of affirmative action on development outcomes. With the use of original survey data from 64 villages of Rajasthan, it shows that state interventions do not have universal effects on caste or gender groups. Specifically, access to public goods like roads and water increase for SC populations when the Sarpanch is also SC. Alternatively, women do not report increased access to 'female-oriented' goods under the presences of a female Sarpanch. Additionally, in-depth interview data reveals the different ways elected officials from minority groups use and grow from political access. Importantly, interview data demonstrates that disadvantage is not always cumulative. Ultimately, this dissertation shows that the effect of caste is moderated by gender, just as gender is moderated by caste.

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## Chapter 1

### Theoretical Underpinnings of Affirmative Action

#### *1.1 Questions*

Though representative government has been a mainstay of modern government for the past 200 years, truly equal representation remains elusive. While the number of minorities and women elected to public office is steadily rising worldwide, a large deficit in opportunity and outcomes still exists (World Economic Forum 2014). This deficit is further reflected in the overall socio-economic status of disadvantaged groups and less confidence in government among ethnic and racial minorities (Hero and Tolbert 2004). Recognizing this inequality, many state governments have taken it upon themselves to increase minority representation and access to power, primarily through the use of affirmative action policies. Recently, electoral quotas have become a popular means to improving parity among men, women, and people from different ethnic backgrounds in over 90 countries as outlined by the Quota Project.

Given the widespread use of electoral quotas, this study asks whether such policies actually produce the intended effects of more equal representation and better governmental outcomes for targeted populations. I break down this larger puzzle into two questions. First, does the access to power afforded by electoral quotas improve people's lives? Second, do electoral quotas have different implications for people with or without intersecting minority identities? Numerous studies on the effects of electoral quotas in a comparative setting reveal mixed outcomes of affirmative action policies. For example, Francheset, Krooks and Piscopo (2012) argue that the cross-national variation in benefits from electoral quotas depends largely on the way outcomes are

measured, the requirements of the legislation, and how legitimate these laws are considered. Additionally, affirmative action policies seem to have larger positive effects in proportional representation systems, specifically those that make use of candidate lists during elections. Outcomes of other forms of affirmative action (such as in employment and education in the United States) are equally varied, especially in terms of outcomes for minority populations and changing beliefs.<sup>1</sup> In recent scholarship, analysis of the effect of quotas on people in multiple identity groups have also yielded mixed results (which I discuss in detail further on).

In response, this study adds to the growing literature on intersecting affirmative action policies through an in-depth approach to measuring outcomes and connecting these outcomes to important socio-political contexts. To answer these questions, I study the effect of affirmation action policies within Indian electoral politics, specifically at the village level where potential benefits to citizens are more immediately realized. India provides an excellent context for the study of quotas due to the semi-randomized and rotating nature of quotas at the most local level of government. The process of reserved seats that rotate consistently and are assigned at random provides scholars an opportunity to isolate the potential effects of quotas. With a clear idea of how villages are selected for electoral quotas, researchers can use the language of natural experiments to make causal claims about the relationship between equal opportunity structures and observable changes in outcomes.

Much of the work on the observable effects of gender quotas in India is based on Duflo and Chattopadhyay's (2004) study of women Sarpanch (village Presidents) in Rajasthan and West Bengal. This econometrics approach uses an original survey to measure whether certain female-

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the larger debate surrounding affirmative action in the US and beyond see Kalev, Kelly and Dobbin (2006), Holzer and Neumark (2000), Harper and Griffin (2011), and Dahlerup (2006).

oriented goods are provided more often in villages selected for the gender quota. From a preliminary survey, the authors conclude that women prefer development policies that make access to water easier, while men prefer increased road access. Using these two outcomes of interest, the study measures differences in water and road provision across 200 villages in a single election cycle. They conclude that since more water pumps are built in villages reserved for a female candidate than unreserved villages affirmative action policies are producing the desired results. Other scholars have built on these findings to find that exposure to female leadership reduces biases and stereotypes against women, though the results are limited to a small number of cases where a female-reserved seat is consecutively assigned to villages (Beaman et al. 2009).

Another body of research questions whether or not the changes in outcomes found in these studies are universal or consistent for all kinds of women in the rural context. While water pumps may increase in a subset of sample villages, Bardhan et al. (2005) find that female reservations are associated with lower net targeting of poverty alleviation and employment schemes to caste minority households. Especially in villages with high levels of landlessness and caste inequality, female reservations correlate with less access for already disadvantaged groups. Thus, it is possible that quotas are not able to ensure positive outcomes for all women in a given constituency. This debate over the average effects of quota implementation dominates most of the literature on female representation in India.

Scholarship on caste quotas in India is equally varied in its appraisal of positive effects for targeted groups. Pande (2003) argues that at the national legislative level political reservations increase targeting of subordinate populations for benefits, especially if political parties have not committed to certain pro- or anti-redistribution policies in the area. Moreover, as long as the minority population remains below a certain threshold, quota reservations will always increase

pro-poor policies in favor of caste minorities. At the gram panchayat level, the effects of electoral quotas are mixed. Besley et al. (2004) argue that access to public goods under political reservations depends on the type of good being distributed. For high spillover goods such as roads and drainage systems, physical proximity to the Sarpanch increases access for all caste groups. Low spillover goods such as homes, toilets and personal water/electricity connections are more likely to be distributed among villagers that share the same caste group as the Sarpanch. These findings indicate that caste quotas do not guarantee benefits to minority groups, though private redistribution to targeted groups is more likely. In stark contrast to these results, Dunning and Nilekani (2013) find that reservations at the local level do not increase benefit allocation across caste lines. Instead, electoral quotas create incentives to distribute goods across party lines, rather than caste lines. Especially since parties are moving towards multi-ethnic compositions, the effect of reservations is subject to party patronage first. Beyond material effects, Chauchard (2011) finds that the quotas for caste minorities improve relations between dominant and subordinate groups, though the results are based only on men's experiences of politics in India. The varying results presented here indicate that the story on caste quotas is still unclear, much like the current understanding of gender quotas in India.

While these studies are commonly cited in the quota literature, there are limitations to the analysis of affirmative action policies in rural India. In a survey of Karnataka households, Raabe, Sekher and Birner (2009) find that there is no effect of reservation policies on overall satisfaction with or access to public goods. Instead, pre-existing structural conditions influence outcomes more than state interventions. Evidence indicates that affirmative action does not guarantee more gender-equitable outcomes in rural service provision, but that social, economic, and institutional factors also constrain effective local governance and rural service provision beyond the women's

reservation effect (71). This lends further support to the importance of accounting for village and state context when measuring the effect of quotas in rural India. Moreover, as the authors point out, the foundational work on gender quotas that Chattopadhyay and Duflo present is specific to certain districts in West Bengal and Rajasthan. They do not explain their reason for selecting these states, nor explain whether these results can be generalized to the rest of the country (Raabe, Sekher and Birner 2009, 6).

Despite their many differences, what unites these previous studies is their shared inattention to the multiple groups women and ethnic minorities can identify with. In some cases, such as Duflo and Chattopadhyay (2004) or Beaman et. al (2009, 2012) the authors run separate models that test for difference in outcomes between villages with and without ethnic minority reserved seats. However, they do not control for the potential differences in goods provision between women of different caste backgrounds. Other studies may include the gender of a Sarpanch or a constituent as a control, without delving into the potential reasons why this might matter for larger analysis. Unfortunately, many more of these studies (notably Besley et al. 2004, Dunning and Nilekani 2013, and Chauchard 2011) simply do not address how their theories and evidence apply to men and women differently, if at all. In some cases, the authors fail to interview women while making large claims about changes in beliefs and attitudes. These and other studies that do not account for the multiple marginalities that leaders and constituents deal with and overlook important nuances important to fully measure the impact of affirmative action policy. I pay specific attention to both inter- and intra-group differences that can lead to differential outcomes for people experiencing the same government policy. Additionally, this study involves a deep understanding of the challenges and successes posed to the elected leaders themselves, in order to ground the analysis in a fuller local context. Unlike previous literature, it benefits from

my own extended time in the field and on the ground in over 80 villages and numerous government offices.

In the rest of this chapter, I examine the key literatures and theory that ground this study of affirmative action. In particular, I use discussions of mandated representation and forms of representation as a basis for understanding how inclusionary policies are expected to work. I then look at intersectionality as an emerging lens in the justice and representation literature. This discussion guides how I employ the intersectional approach as a tool in this study. Finally, I explore the many meanings of power and what it can mean in different contexts. I explicitly focus on power as the outcome of interest from electoral quota policies and describe how the multifaceted nature of material and social power matters in issues of equal representation. Using these various literatures as guiding tools in conjunction with quantitative and qualitative methods, this study finds that the substantive changes in outcomes for minorities are less obvious than expected and often work counter to expectations.

## *1.2 Forms of Representation*

As Hannah Pitkin (1967) first explained, the mandated inclusion of subordinate groups in legislative bodies can take on three forms of representation. Pitkin argues that the concept of representation does not ground itself in notions of democracy and liberty, but rather in the belief that a person has a right to self-rule and to have a say in the policies that govern her life. She explains that representation cannot be singularly defined and has various meanings that are context-dependent. With this framework in mind, Pitkin describes three of the most common kinds of representation. First is *descriptive representation*, which is derived from a concept of 'mirror' representation. As John Adams wrote in 1776, a legislature should look like 'an exact portrait' of

the population it derives from in order to best represent society (Pitkin 1967). Quotas that mandate certain groups should be present in legislatures are attempting to mirror society *demographically* by ensuring that all populations are represented, with a specific focus on the ethnicity and gender of the elected officials themselves. Linked to descriptive representation is *symbolic representation*. Symbolic representation focuses on the importance of a representative herself, and what implications her presence has for broader society. According to the modern quota literature, the symbolic representation of minority populations should change norms about subordinated people's involvement in politics and challenge existing notions of social behavior (Franceschet, Krooks, and Piscopo 2012).

Both descriptive and symbolic representation are concerned with the importance of what a representative looks like, and less so with what a representative does. In response, Pitkin proposes that instead of focusing on representatives that 'stand for' a group of people, attention should be paid to those that can 'act for' their constituents. This is defined as *substantive representation*. Legislators that come from certain identity groups will propose policies that are in line with the interests of the constituents that they most closely identify with. This assumption about substantive representation is one of the biggest driving forces behind modern affirmative action policies, as it is expected that women will work for women or members of ethnic groups will focus legislative attention solely on their co-ethnics. Whether or not this is true is widely debated, yet substantive representation remains important for both governments that implement policies and scholars assessing the impact of quotas. A framework of substantive representation is especially useful when measuring the value of affirmative action in society at large. While descriptive and symbolic representation are important means of increasing marginalized presence in political institutions, the substantive representation of targeted groups focuses on the outcomes that are produced from

new inclusion. In this project I argue that observing outcomes for minority groups can tell us whether or not descriptive representation has substantive repercussions for targeted populations. In the same way, I address whether equal opportunity (descriptive representation) can create equality of outcomes (substantive representation).

### *1.3 The Meaning of Mandated Representation*

Before discussing how I conceive of substantive representation and outcomes for marginalized groups, I first discuss the meaning of mandated representation in the broader literature on quota policies. Pitkin's work on the types of representation provides a framework for a more nuanced discussion of why quotas matter in democratic systems and is the precursor of most theory devoted to understanding quotas today. One foundational contribution to the scholarship on quotas is *The Politics of Presence* (1994) by Anne Phillips. In her seminal piece, Phillips argues that the use of quotas to ensure more varied representation creates a "politics of transformation that opens up a fuller range of policy options" (31). The inclusion of marginalized groups as elected officials ensures that legislatures can be sure to accommodate the needs and interests of groups that would otherwise be ignored or unknown by dominant group leaders. Liberal theories of democracy focus on the importance of ideas in representation, arguing that a better functioning government is one that ensures a spectrum of beliefs are debated. Phillips calls this the 'politics of ideas,' which assumes that any person can stand in for another when it comes to representing certain ideas or messages in the public sphere. In conjunction with Pitkin's challenge to merely descriptive or mirror representation of a population, Phillips argues for a move to the 'politics of presence' whereby historically disadvantaged groups are given an opportunity to be present in legislatures. While any person may be able to represent the interests of otherwise

subordinated groups, Phillips believes that "no amount of thought or sympathy, no matter of careful or honest, can jump the barriers of experience" (76, 1994). Quotas can ensure that marginalized groups are present in politics, and in turn increase the overall representation of new kinds of ideas. The use of affirmative action can bridge the gap between a politics of ideas and politics of presence, leading to more democratic representation.

Phillips' conception of politics is premised on a series of assumptions, the biggest of which is that members of marginalized groups will work in the interest of other marginalized citizens once present in political institutions.<sup>2</sup> Many scholars have grappled with this same assumption, most notably Jane Mansbridge (1999). Mansbridge argues that in fact, minorities should work in the interest of other minorities that they descriptively represent especially given historical contexts. With reference to the American history of marginalizing racial groups and women, she argues that "communicative distrust and un-crystallized interests" increase the need for descriptive representatives that can also substantively represent targeted groups (641). Legacies of mistrust, poor communication, and few shared experiences make representatives from dominant groups less able and willing to provide support to marginal citizens. Mansbridge makes the claim that marginal citizens will feel less kinship with these representatives and thus be less likely to petition for their specific interests. In addition, when the group interests of marginal populations are not clear, descriptive representation from subordinate groups can be useful in legislatures. The shared experience of marginal populations means that even if a representative does not have clear mandate from her constituents, she can at least provide better policy prescriptions than a non-representative legislator. Dovi (2002) agrees that descriptive representatives should be selected in

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<sup>2</sup> For more on this line of thought, see the literature on the black bourgeoisie in US Politics.

a way that ensure linkages with the marginalize groups they seek to represent. For her, "a commitment to a politics of presence would be more likely to support robust democratic relations if descriptive representatives were selected on the basis of their mutual relationships with dispossessed subgroups" (730). In this argument, Dovi claims that outlining additional criteria to choose the best descriptive representative for marginalized groups is just as important as mandated representation of those groups in political institutions.

In response to Mansbridge and supporters like Dovi, various scholars have argued that minorities do not always work in the interests of their respective identity groups. Dunning and Nilekani (2013) find that officials elected on ethnic quotas in rural India are more likely to distribute public goods on party lines than by ethnic ties. Similarly, Walsh (in Franceschet, Krook, and Piscopo 2012) finds that legislators elected on gender quotas in South Africa are expected to prioritize broader party agendas over any sort of female-oriented issues. One explanation for this observed effect of quotas comes from earlier literature that claims when female and minority representatives are not present in large numbers they cannot generate a 'critical mass' to work towards the interests of marginalized groups (Dahlerup 2006). Critical mass theory argues that without at least 30 percent representation of women or a certain minority group in a legislature, descriptive representatives would not have the moral and political support to propose and pass policy in the interest of those groups they claim to represent. Thus, the lack of minority development in political institutions was a problem of numbers, not the structure of political institutions or the agency of representatives themselves.

However, the critical mass argument has been strongly challenged in recent years. New studies find that women are still able to represent female interests even when they are few in number in legislatures (Bratton 2005; Childs and Krook 2009). In addition, the idea of critical

mass is shifting from a question of numbers to a question of whom. Childs and Krook (2009) argue for a notion of 'critical actors' from any potential representative group that are committed to ensuring legislation geared towards marginalized groups throughout the entire process. The debate around critical mass and whether or not marginalized groups want to represent marginalized interests only serves to complicate the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. In this study, I follow the premise (much like other scholars) that minority leaders will work in the interest of identity groups they most strongly identify with, regardless of a critical mass. However, as I discuss next, this premise is complicated by questions of intersectionality that affect targeted populations in India and elsewhere.

#### *1.4 The Need for an Intersectional Lens*

Although only recently explored, an inherent tension in the affirmative action literature is the interaction between multiple marginalized identities. What happens when a woman from a marginalized ethnic group is elected on a quota? How does her role as a representative compare to a marginalized male representative, or a dominant female representative? These questions necessitate deeper analysis into the intersecting subordinations that structure marginalized groups' political representation. In this section I briefly explain the research paradigm of intersectionality and discuss emerging literature on electoral quotas within this school of thought.

The concept of intersectionality originates from critiques of second-wave feminism. Starting in the late 1980s a new strand of feminist theory emerged from Chandra Mohanty's focus on 'third world feminism.' Mohanty argued that the Western feminist conception of women focused exclusively on the needs of white upper and middle class women, which further marginalized women who did not fit into this category. Scholarship that assumes that the needs of women are

universal across space, place, and time fails to provide context to analysis of gender difference and the meaning of patriarchy to women in non-Western contexts (Mohanty 1988). Shortly after, Kimberly Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality' to distinguish between the varying needs of women within the same cultural context. In a discussion of domestic violence against women, Crenshaw focuses on the unique position of black women victims, arguing that identity politics that are centered around 'women' as a collective "is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class" (Crenshaw 1991, 1242). Structural discriminations produced by race and class differences intersect with the subordination that women face, making for within group differences among females. Both Mohanty and Crenshaw influenced a new generation of feminist and race theory that allowed for more nuanced understanding of challenges women and marginalized groups face.

Since that time, new scholarship has emerged to make the concept of intersectionality more mainstream and accessible to broader debate. Ange-Marie Hancock (2007) argues that intersectionality can be used as a research paradigm that provides new insight into political and social behavior. Discussion of intersectionality vacillates between labeling the term a 'paradigm' versus a 'methodology' and the kinds of research methods that are best suited to this multi-dimensional school of thought (Nash 2008). Hancock argues that intersectionality as a paradigm is best researched through fuzzy-set logic, which allows for overlapping identities, without making multiple forms of marginalization simply cumulative or multiplicative in statistical analysis. Alternatively, Bowleg (2008) argues that survey and statistical work can be used to highlight intersectional differences among subordinate groups. Rather than ignore existing advancements in

these methods, the use of established research methods with an intersectional lens is possible with new forms of interpretation of categories and responses.

In the electoral quota literature, intersectionality as a guiding paradigm is relatively recent. Most classic works on electoral quotas tend to focus on either gender or ethnic quotas, or tend to assume that women from different ethnic backgrounds will respond to affirmative action policies in the same way (Duflo 2004; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Krook 2009). In a distinct shift from a solely gender focus of electoral quotas, Melanie Hughes conducted a cross-national analysis of gender and ethnic quotas across 81 countries. Using hierarchical linear models that pay attention to within group differences among women and people from the same ethnic background, Hughes provides evidence that affirmative action policies that are "a combination of national policies regulating gender and minority status benefits minority women to a greater degree than either policy alone"(Hughes 2011, 11). In addition, some electoral quota policies may disadvantage minority men and majority women in different ways. The attention to multiple identities in this work opened the door for new comparative work on both a large and small scale. Following this new foray in affirmative action, other scholars have assessed the different ways in which electoral quotas impact women, ethnic minorities, and their intersections in Bolivia, Singapore and Asian parliaments (Htun and Ossa 2013; Joshi and Och 2014; Tan 2014). These works and the new shift to more nuanced analysis of gender and racial difference has generated a push towards intersectional approaches in the study of politics.

This project adds to the growing literature on intersecting identities and electoral quotas through a study of women and caste minorities in rural India. While studies of subordination in India do not ignore multiple group identity, most of the work on affirmative action for marginalized groups in the country focuses on either gender or caste. I explicitly focus on the difference between

minority caste men and women, as well the difference between minority and majority caste women to understand what electoral quotas actually do for different kinds of subordination. Importantly, this approach can illuminate the different kinds of links between descriptive and substantive representation by breaking down the nuances in multiple identities. Also crucial is the focus on local level politics and affirmative action opportunities: this level of analysis provides more direct and compelling evidence for the arguments made here. For instance, measuring the effect of equal opportunities in the national legislature on equal outcomes at the local/individual level is less valuable. While affirmative action opportunities exist at many levels of government in the India system, I pay particular attention to the smallest unit of government where direct impact can potentially be the largest.

### *1.5 Power and Quotas*

This project asks whether affirmative action policies actually help targeted groups overcome subordination. To that end, it is concerned with the outcomes produced by certain types of preferential treatment, specifically the use of electoral quotas for women and ethnic minorities. Measuring outcomes, the success of quotas, or their potential impact is loaded with various assumptions and each researcher imparts their own view on studies of affirmative action. Among all the studies cited thus far (and others) the measurements of quota outcomes vary based on the kind of quota implemented, the institutional context and the specific region under analysis. Keeping with this pattern, I offer my own meaning of positive outcomes for subordinate groups that is predicated on the intentions of governments who implement affirmative action policies. While this meaning is subject to critique, I believe that using the state's goal as a baseline for measuring success provides more leverage on the question of whether or not state intervention can

matter in surmounting subordination. Specifically, as I explain below, I measure the potential effect of affirmative action through the power generated for marginalized groups.

The state intent behind affirmative action policies is often based on justice towards subordinate groups for historical marginalization and subjugation. By ensuring more equal representation in systems of decision-making, governments are attempting a form of distributive justice similar to that described by political philosophers such as John Rawls. Distributive justice is concerned with material elements of economic and socio-political capability that should be more equally provided across society. One critique of the distributive frameworks through which states define affirmative action and justice broadly is that they overlook the situations in which injustice is created. As Iris Marion Young explains, established notions of justice "[tend] to ignore the social structure and institutional context that often help determine distributive patterns"(Young 1990, 15). Historical patterns of subordination and oppression have lasting effects on the way that state institutions view the needs of minority groups and condition their interaction in social, economic and political spheres. Thus the focus on equal access to material goods (or non-material goods that have been made static) fails to account for the larger structures of power (meaning economic and social legacies of dominance) that influence the development of minority groups long-term. Young argues that the conflation of compensatory justice with distributive paradigms is common for political theorists. In line with this sentiment, I argue that the same problematic conflation is common for state governments that struggle with maintaining democratic systems in multicultural societies.

When governments enact quota policies, they intend to distribute two non-material concepts as material goods: specifically, power and presence in political institutions. Providing electoral quotas for disadvantaged groups should increase their ability for decision-making while

ensuring their descriptive representation in line with notions of equality and democracy (Krooks 2009). Importantly, for governments that enact such policies, there is no tension between descriptive and substantive representation. Implicitly, officials assume that increasing the representation of women or ethnic minorities will not only serve to challenge ideas about political leadership, but also that these newly elected leaders will be able to best understand and work for the interests of under-represented groups. The results of this project indicate that this link is not always clear not can it be assumed; moreover, multiple identities within marginalized groups condition the effect of substantive representation for people with intersecting oppressions.

These critiques of both distributive justice and the assumption that descriptive representation will equate with substantive representation are valid. Yet governments nonetheless expect representatives of marginalized groups to work for marginalized interests, and for this reason my study reflects these assumptions. by which states establish quotas and reserved seats, even if those original concepts are problematic. By taking the intended outcomes of affirmative action on the terms laid out by the state, I can more effectively critique the overall success of such policies by their own metrics.

So how, then, do states measure success? I believe that advocates of affirmative action focus on the *power* that representation in political institutions provides. Ensuring the participation of marginalized groups in democratic systems intends to increase their socio-political power as leaders, voters and receivers of public goods. Moreover, when political institutions are able to enact policies that are better suited for the intended marginalized recipients, it can lead to more socio-economic power and development for those groups.

Of course, power is a debated concept. I begin my definition of power with a brief overview of the term as understood in the social sciences. Stephen Lukes (1974) provides both a critique of

existing concepts of power and offers a holistic approach of his own that has since spurred even more debate on the topic. Lukes argues that previous studies of power were one-dimensional, in their focus on actors' 'power to' make decisions and exert control. Critics of this approach claimed that power has relational and unobservable effects, where by one actor can exert 'power over' another through direct and indirect means. This enlarges the scope of power to decision and non-decisional power, which is reflected in agenda setting and the way more powerful actors direct attention. Lukes terms this critique the two-dimensional nature of power, but also claims that it does not go far enough to understand the unobservable means through which power can be exerted over others. Lukes argues that what one- and two-dimensional power address is actually domination, whereby more powerful actors prevent others from fulfilling their natural preferences. He then grounds his own contribution- that of 'three-dimensional power'- in an understanding of preferences and interests which can be formed by a variety of sources. More importantly, Lukes discusses the way in which structures of power can alter actors' preferences in non-observable ways. Citing the 'sour grapes' argument by Elster (year?), he claims that in his conception of power, people can be encouraged to generate interests that go against what would otherwise be 'natural' for them. For example, Lukes discusses the caste system in India, whereby subordinate caste groups will imitate dominant caste practices in order to gain respectability over time. However, the power that rising minorities garner by these means is not a challenge to the existing system of power but rather serves to reproduce it (Lukes 1974, 50). Boulding (1989) builds on this notion with the concept of 'integrative power' which allows actors to form relationships and guide others' choices in a way separate from domination. A three dimensional view of power pays particular attention to the interpersonal forces that structure individual preference and choices in the social realm.

One of the most common issues for social scientists that set out to understand 'power' is that as Lukes defines it, power is an interdependent and inherently unobservable phenomenon. Relationships of 'three-dimensional power' are difficult to perceive and measure for those involved in the power structure, let alone an outside researcher attempting to quantify them. This necessarily means that as a researcher I must impart my own interpretation of power on my subjects. However, in doing so, I am careful to stick by the existing expectations of governments that enact quotas so that any analysis can be evaluated from the standpoint of policymakers. Thus I focus on two aspects of power emergent from access to political leadership for marginalized groups: first, the access to resources for indirect beneficiaries of affirmative action (meaning those citizens who are subordinate but not elected to political office), and, second, the self-actualization or empowerment of direct beneficiaries (meaning subordinates elected to positions of power on the basis of affirmative action).

Formulating power as access to resources derives from the capabilities approach to poverty first proposed by Amartya Sen (1993). In this fundamental analysis of how to measure and eradicate poverty, Sen argues for "a particular approach to well-being and advantage in terms of a person's ability to do valuable acts or research valuable states of being" (Sen 1993, 30). What this means is that better well-being and power over the self is dependent upon the capacity to make a range of choices based on one's livelihood and beliefs. For governments interested in compensatory justice for historically marginalized groups, improving their well-being and access to goods that would benefit their development is crucial. Sen's belief in "a person's actual freedom to live well and be well" (39) has been effectively translated into meaningful indicators for human development that have been accepted by national governments and international organizations. Following this, governments expect that affirmative action provides marginalized groups a chance

to control the distribution of public goods, which translates into positive substantive outcomes for other members of that same marginalized group. In turn, access to these resources should increase their well-being and make up for previous discrimination. Critics of Sen argue that the capabilities approach is similar to the notion of 'access to advantage' but this is not a challenge Sen is opposed to. He responds:

I do not see any great difficulty in 'extending the meaning of access in this way. An 'access' I enjoy may not have been created by me. But exactly the same applies to freedom and capability as well. The fact that a person has the freedom to enjoy a malaria-free life (or, to put it slightly different, that his choice of a malaria-free life is feasible) may be entirely due to the action of others (e.g., medical researchers, epidemiologists, public health workers) but that does not compromise the fact that he can indeed have a malaria-free life and has the capability (thanks largely to others) to achieve such a life. (41)

Sen's response ties together the practical and intended outcomes of affirmative action that governments seek. If increased access to resources (such as healthcare or better education facilities) for marginalized citizens are a result of electoral quotas that increase their descriptive and substantive representation, then affirmative action can be considered a success. The actual resources in question would depend on the national context and needs of the marginal group in question. In Chapter 3 I explore outcomes that increase human capability in the context of rural Rajasthan, which is based on the expressed needs of subordinate groups in these settings.

Next, I turn to defining empowerment for individuals elected to positions of power- here I look at how self-actualization occurs in these new roles. My understanding of empowerment is based on Luke's discussion of three-dimensional power as adapted by gender and development

scholars. Feminist thought on Lukes' third dimension of power finds that it provides a bridge between the concepts of domination and empowerment in their own work. For some, such as Allen (1999) the third dimension of power can be thought of as 'power with,' or the collective power that actors can generate in a system. Others, most notably Naila Kabeer (1994) define the third dimension as 'power within' which is an internal form of power that allows subordinate actors to challenge social structures. Kabeer's definition focuses on the non-observable strength that comes with concurrent gains in other forms of power. In this way, Lukes' original concept of three-dimensional power forms the basis for most modern concepts of empowerment. As subordinate groups gain access to new forms of power, power over decision-making, and the power within to confront structures of oppression they increase their self-actualization.

In this study, I look for the observable ways that empowerment presents itself among minorities benefiting from affirmative action policies. I choose to follow the multi-dimensional approach that previous scholars have used, but instead focus on empowerment as an outcome. While structures of power do affect relationships between minority leaders and broader society, I am more interested in the actual power gained from access to a leadership position. Measuring changes to the larger and non-observable structures of power that Lukes and Kabeer are concerned with is a much more difficult task that is out of the current scope of this study. More tangible instances of power can be seen in the way that minority leaders conduct themselves as representatives and the way they speak about their tenure. For instance, elected officials with 'power to' will have control and access to their seat, those with 'power over' will be able to exert their will and choice as decision-makers, and those with the 'power within' will describe experiences that confront norms of appropriate subordinated behavior. Those elected officials that access more of these multi-dimensional aspects of power are considered more empowered as a

result of the affirmative action policy. These understandings of 'power' are developed in more detail in further chapters based on the cultural and institutional contexts in which I ground the study.

### *1.6 Outline of the dissertation*

The numerous theoretical contributions to this chapter serve as the basis for the larger puzzle and questions that guide the project. Starting with Pitkin's distinction between descriptive and substantive representation to the debate over critical mass theory and what minority representation means, I develop the question of whether equality of opportunity leads to equality of outcomes. Then moving into the electoral quota and intersectionality literature I show that developing nuanced approaches to the question is critical to understanding the real relationship between opportunity and outcomes. With these underpinnings in mind, I define the intents and goals of electoral quota policies ultimately arguing that gaining power, both material and social, is the observable outcome that can indicate whether or not affirmative action policies have positive effect. As we will see in the remainder of this study, access to material power is not always improved for women (regardless of caste) while people of all castes do experience marginal improvements in certain kinds of access. Alternatively, as leaders, minority caste women are able to exert more independent power though not as much as their male counterparts. Dominant caste women are often least able to make use of new positions of power, indicating that equal opportunity will not always lead to equal outcomes, especially in a non-material sense. What these findings indicate is that the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation is mediated by identities- in this case gender and caste. This finding would not otherwise be possible without the use of an intersectional lens.

The rest of the dissertation continues as follows. Chapter 2 provides the historical context of electoral quotas in India, where this study of affirmative action is based. I also describe the nature of social relations in Rajasthan (the state of India selected for study) and provide justifications for case selection. In Chapter 3 I explore the effects of affirmative action on access to goods and resources, or the indirect benefits of these policies as described above. Chapter 4 is an in depth discussion of the kind of empowerment that representatives from subordinated groups experience after being elected to a position of power previously denied to them. Finally, in Chapter 5 I review the findings in a large context and discuss the implications for affirmative action broadly.

## Chapter 2

### The Case for India

State interventions in overcoming social disability have become a regular policy tool for governments, particularly through the expansion of affirmative action programs for women and ethnic or racial minorities. Electoral quotas to promote women's involvement in legislative government are mandated in over 90 countries, while other forms of preferential policies exist to promote racial and ethnic diversity in education and public institution (Quota Project). In this study, I focus on a comparison of both ethnic and gender-based reserved seats in the state of Rajasthan, India to gain more leverage on the question of whether equal opportunity can create more equal livelihood outcomes for the disadvantaged.

India provides an excellent context in which to study the effect of quotas for a variety of reasons. First, it is one of the few nations that have mandated both ethnic and gender based electoral quotas, including cross-cutting quotas for women from ethnic minority groups. The intersectional nature of quotas in India is crucial to understanding the meaning of quotas in a broader social context. Second, as I explore further below, these electoral quotas are implemented at the sub-national level through decentralized rural government.<sup>3</sup> Affirmative action policies at the local level provide greater opportunities for minorities to implement decision making that has

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<sup>3</sup> There is incredible variation state by state within India on how centrally mandated policies are implemented in states and the kind of budget they have to work with. In this project, I look specifically at Rajasthan because it is a state considered on the less successful side of local governance (Sandandan 2016). Budget allocation to local development is lower than in other states (such as Kerala) though it was one of the first implementing states of the PRI act. The fact that the PRI in Rajasthan is more inefficient than other states means that any effects I show in this project are contextual to less democratic systems- arguably where minority populations would need the most support from government interventions.

immediate and tangible outcomes. Finally, India has a long history of caste and gender subordination that national leaders have grappled with from British colonial rule to the present day. The persistence of caste and gender hierarchies in modern India today means that assessing the outcomes and success of these policies is important for both scholars and policy makers. In this chapter, I describe the social hierarchies that structure political involvement, the history of electoral quotas in India, and the system of decentralized government in which the quota system is based. I also provide details about the state and districts in which the study is based and review the methodology used for data collection.

### *2.1 Existing Hierarchies*

India is often lauded for its multi-cultural democracy that is able to rule over people from various linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds. At the same time, the presence of multiple identity groups creates space for various forms of oppression and subordination. One of the most pressing forms of hierarchy in India is the caste system. It has a historical legacy of discriminating against a specific group of people known as the Schedule Castes (formally the 'Untouchables'). Historically, the caste system was based around the occupation of each broad caste group or varna that Hindu individuals were born into. Each varna was engaged in specific occupations that could not be changed and were also metaphorically linked to parts of the human body. Brahmins, at the top of this system, were considered “the head” of society and were the religious leaders and priests of society. Just below them came the Kshatriya varna, who as 'the arms' were the warrior caste that protected and managed society. The 'torso' was comprised of the Vaishya caste of merchants, accountants and other providers of goods. Supporting the whole system in a subservient manner are the 'legs' made up of the Shudra class. Finally, below all of these castes, metaphorically the

'dirt' upon which society walked, were the Untouchables. These groups of people were considered so beneath the rest of the system that they were denied any varna or place in the system. Untouchables were forced to do what society considered the most unclean or impure jobs, such as street sweeping and skinning dead animal carcasses. As a result, they were ostracized from common society and expected to keep their physical distance from other caste groups, leading to the common use of "untouchable" to describe this group. In practice, this meant that these castes were not allowed to enter the same temples as the rest of society, were expected to live on the outskirts of villages, and abide by demeaning traditions such as ringing a bell whenever they approached a 'high' caste area. Caste status is determined by birth and is passed through the father, since the main marker of one's caste is her last name. Additionally, within each varna are various sub-castes known as *jati*, which are also organized in a hierarchy. The hierarchy of *jati* subgroups thus distinguishes the struggles of Untouchables from ethnic and racial minorities elsewhere, as different sub-castes may not necessarily see each as equal co-ethnics (Béteille 2002).<sup>4</sup>

In the post-independence era, the Indian government has made the concept of 'untouchable' illegal, and has given descendants from those groups a new social signifier as the SC. Linked to the SC are the Scheduled Tribes (ST), who are also descendants of former untouchables but are considered to have their own specific tribal culture unique from mainstream Hindu practices. For the sake of simplicity, I focus solely on the role of the quotas in promoting SCs' access to employment, education and political opportunities though the study of STs is equally important in

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<sup>4</sup> Much theory and understanding of the modern caste system is credited to Louis Dumont's (1980) study of caste and society in India. He argues the system is based on notions of ritual theory, while other class theorists believe caste is no different from the exploitative nature of class albeit with more rituals. Alternatively, Dirks (2001) emphasizes the anticolonial nature of reinforcing and perpetuating the caste system, which explains its persistence throughout years of modernization.

research on inequality. In modern India, SCs are still considered a 'lower' caste in comparison to the other historically casted *varnas*. Additionally, material inequality is often linked to SC/STs who have been typically denied education or control over resources. As Desai and Dubey (2011) demonstrate through an Indian national survey, persistent disparities in education, income and social networks exist between SC and non-SC groups. These findings counter the claims made by non-SC groups that material divides among castes no longer exist, and thus that caste based affirmative action should also be abolished. While some SCs have become notably rich and powerful (such as the former chief minister, Mayawati) these cases are relatively few in a population of over one billion.

Caste still guides much of Indian society, from the marriage market where preferences for in-caste marriages are reflected (Banerjee et al. 2013) to the frequent political mobilization of caste groups (Chandra 2004). The formal organization of caste groups into voluntary associations has far reaching political implications and caste associations have become powerful groups in both local and national government. As Rudolph and Rudolph (2012) note, caste associations have started petitioning the state for more than improved religious or social status by moving their demands into more economic oriented policies such as affirmative action in education and private sector employment. In these cases, the power of the caste association to successfully petition the government for new recognition relies on the sheer number of members, which in turn increases their power as cohesive voting blocs. This argument ultimately supports the claim put forth by Jeffery (2000), that “while caste as a religiously sanctioned system of resource transfer is in decline, caste organization and identity are important forms of social or symbolic capital for rural elites” (217). Though I and other authors will argue that caste still forms the basis of material deprivation and resource allocation in the Indian village, the point remains that caste groups have

gained more political leverage as a result of formal associations and voting behavior. Thus caste continues to be salient, both economically and politically, in the power structure of a village government. I return to these arguments and a detailed explanation of how these caste relations matter in rural India in section 2.5.

Another form of social oppression grounded in historical legacy is the persistent patriarchy that women across all caste, religious and class divides face. Specifically, for Hindu women their exclusion from public life is a direct result of religious doctrine and principles from the pre-colonial era. Ideas about pure and unadulterated women are tied to both a notion of religious purity and caste-based purity. Women with higher social standing are expected to be models of appropriate norms and women from lower social groups attempt to emulate these practices.

In rural India, women's subordination is reflected in expectations about their social roles but also in material terms such as the child-sex ratio (CSR), economic opportunity and personal autonomy. Given the expected expenses of raising and marrying off a daughter, female feticide or infanticide is a common practice. As a result, the ratio of girls age 0-6 to boys in the same age range is significantly lower across India. Nationally, the ratio of female children to boy children fell from .945 in 1991 to .927 in 2001, to .914 in 2011 (Census of India). Despite efforts by various organizations to improve attitudes towards females and laws to prevent sex selection, modern India still suffers from this discriminatory practice. Moreover, as Mary John (2011) notes: "significant forms of child neglect leading to high rates of mortality among girls in larger families went hand in hand with the growing practice of sex selection" (11). In some ways, the CSR is a crude measure of women's overall oppression; places where the ratio of girls to boys is more equal may indicate less negative attitudes towards females, as they are less likely to die from murder or neglect.

Assuming a girl child makes it past the age of 6 without losing her life, prospects after that are not much better, especially among poor, uneducated, and rural families. For women the greatest risk is to their economic independence and personal autonomy. Scholars have documented the disparities in women's development for years, from issues of literacy to fertility and control over their bodies (Dyson 1983, Malhotra 1995, Agarwala and Lynch 2006). In these cases, women are less educated than men, have lower access to resources regarding healthcare or family planning, and are often subject to the will and force of their husbands. At the same time, various authors have studied the way that caste intersects with gender (Liddle and Joshi 1986, Deshpande 2002). They argue that in some cases certain caste statuses can increase the economic independence of women (discussed further in Chapter 4). For those women that are able to gain education or employment, changes in their status and agency is a mark of development. Moreover, women's involvement in the independence movement and the growth of the women's movement in the late 1980s challenged many embedded notions of their participation in public and political spheres, thus encouraging more female development. These efforts are described further on, and set the backdrop for the gender reservation debate at the local and national level in India.

## *2.2 History of Affirmative Action in India*

Like most Indian history, the trajectory of affirmative action in the state is long and tumultuous. In this section, I provide a brief history of reserved seats in the political process, in order to provide context for the modern implementation of electoral quotas in India<sup>5</sup>. Affirmative action for minority groups in the modern Indian state originates in policies created by the British

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<sup>5</sup> I use the terms reserved seats and electoral quotas interchangeably in this study.

Raj to ensure equal representation of Muslims in Colonial India. During the independence movement, debates about representation turned to the SC (then referred to as 'depressed classes' or the 'Untouchables') and to some extent women's involvement in government. The British Raj often pointed to the social exclusion of minorities and women as a reason why India was not fit for self-rule, which seemed to only make affirmative action for these subordinated groups even more crucial in an independent state (Liddle and Joshi 1986).

As Indian leaders and thinkers began to self-organize into various political groups in the pre-independence era, debates on the future of an independent and democratic India took on a variety of issues. One of the most pressing issues was how to adequately address the legacy of social and economic inequality faced by the Untouchables. While Mohandas K. Gandhi was well known for his attempt to rename these minorities as 'children of God' (*Harijans*) and encourage their participation in a more inclusive Hindu society, other leaders also took the mantle of Untouchable representation upon themselves. B.R. Ambedkar, an English educated barrister from an Untouchable caste considered himself a more adequate representative of the interests of the Untouchables. In contrast to Gandhi, he supported the Untouchables as a group outside of the caste system and wished to see India move away from traditional definitions of hierarchy into a modern era of equality. At the same time, he supported the creation of 'Untouchable constituencies' to ensure that members from the depressed classes were able to access positions of power and be held accountable to those people they descriptively represented. In opposition to this, Gandhi argued that separate Untouchable electoral constituencies would only reinforce caste-based discrimination (McMillan 2005). Further complicating the debate was the British Raj's mixed record on affirmative action for the depressed classes, especially in places like the Bengal and the Punjab

where Hindu and Muslim populations were almost equal in number, meaning that privileges for Untouchables would create new balances of power in provincial politics.

The various political and ideological interests that fueled the caste debate did not provide an easy solution to the question of affirmative action for oppressed classes. In a roundtable conference held by the British government in 1932, British leaders conceded to Ambedkar's request for separate Untouchable electorates. In protest, Gandhi started an indefinite fast arguing that once separate electorates were established there would be no need for society *or the government* to address the problematic issue of untouchability, leading to further divides between various caste groups. Four days later, Gandhi and Ambedkar came to a compromise of reserved electoral seats for Untouchables that would be drawn from the general electorate. This agreement came to be known as the Poona Pact (signed on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 1932) and was the basis for future reservation policies in India (McMillian 2005). Three years later, when the British Government enacted the Government of India Act they officially changed the term for the 'depressed classes' to Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes. Finally, in 1950 with the ratification of the Constitution, the practice of untouchability was outlawed in India, and 33 percent of all national and state legislatures were reserved for SC/ST groups. The constitutional reservation followed the same mandate of the Poona Pact by which certain constituencies for state and national legislators were set aside for SC/ST candidates who would be elected by the general electorate. Contrary to what Ambedkar desired, these quotas meant that these elected officials were responsible to the entire constituency – including dominant caste voters – instead of only the needs and interests of fellow SC/ST voters. Importantly, these reservations were only supposed to last for ten years, after which they would no longer be used. Officials hoped that ten years would be enough to ensure more balanced representation among caste groups and thus reserved seats could cease. Instead, the

policy of reserved seats has been extended for ten-year increments every time the question of repealing the policy is raised. Moreover, new debates around quotas in education and government employment for the “Other Backward Classes” (OBC) add another layer to the affirmative action debate. Proponents of OBC quotas argue that class is more stratifying than caste in modern India, and access to opportunity should be conditioned on one’s economic status over name. This debate quickly becomes problematic since most class groups that seek quota status as OBCs coalesce around their *jatis* or caste associations. This serves to undermine the focus on the material elements of inequality. As result of prolonged caste quotas and new class-based policies, affirmative action has ceased to be a temporary fix to social inequality in India. Instead, it became a permanent fixture of politics. Since the ratification of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments in 1992 whereby the practice of reserved seats was extended to local elections, affirmative action has become a fixture of rural politics as well.

While the debate over reservations for caste minorities continued, women involved in the independence movement were fighting for both suffrage and quotas for women in national and state legislatures. Inspired by women's suffrage movements abroad, Indian and British women close to independence leaders argued that women's enfranchisement was equally important as the caste question. Interestingly, while leaders like Gandhi did encourage women's political involvement, they were less willing to have women actually involved in democratic processes at that time (McMillian 2005). Similar to the question of caste-based representation, women and men in the nationalist movement disagreed about whether or not separate gender quotas should be politically mandated. Many nationalists were in fact opposed to reservations of any kind for any sort of subordinate group, as they would simply create more divisions within the broader independence movement. While some concessions were given to women's enfranchisement and

56 reserved seats were set aside for women in the 1935 Government of India Act, it was not until the ratification of the Constitution in 1950 that universal suffrage was mandated. However, the writers of the Constitution did not allocate specific women's reserved seats in national and state legislatures as they did for caste minorities. Makers of the Constitution argued that not providing affirmative action for women "enshrined equality between women and men as a fundamental right" (Krook 2008, 87). The argument against female quotas was similar to Gandhi's original stance against SC/ST quotas, as special provisions for women would reinforce the difference between men and women instead of treating them as equal citizens in society. Despite these arguments, a special Committee on the Status of Women convened in 1971 recommended the creation of distinct women's panchayats within the local government system so that they could "break through the traditional attitudes that prohibit most women from articulating their problems and participating actively in the existing local bodies" (Kumar 1975, 26). While this recommendation was not implemented at the time, it later formed the basis for women's reservation in local bodies.

In the late 1980s, as women's movements in India reemerged on a larger scale, the question of gender quotas was once again raised. It was not until the early 90s when caste politics were coming to the forefront of debate again that the Women's Reservation Bill (WRB) was proposed. The WRB proposed that 33 percent of seats in national, state and local legislatures should be reserved for women, similar to quotas for SC/ST groups. Unsurprisingly, the debate around this proposal continues. As Nivedita Menon (2012) puts it, opposition to the WRB is not necessarily patriarchal in nature but rather "expresses the legitimate apprehension that a blanket reservation of 33 per cent for women would simply replace 'lower'-caste men with 'upper' caste women" (162). But despite the strong opposition to reserved seats for women in national and state legislatures, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution that mandate reservations for women in local councils

were passed with ease. So, while state and national legislators agree that women should be represented locally, they are less willing to extend the same benefit when their own seats are threatened by such a policy (Krook 2008). As a result, women's advancement in Indian politics and society remains problematic. I discuss this further in chapter 4.

### *2.3 The Local Politics of the Panchayati Raj*

I study affirmative action in India by focusing on the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI), which is the system of decentralized government mandated in the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution. Traditional village councils, known as *panchayats*, were common in the colonial and post-Independence eras. Prior to the 1992 amendments, panchayats were not formally vested with local power and were headed by elder dominant caste men in a village. These elders were considered informal powerholders, allowing them to adjudicate disputes between villagers and maintain social order according to local practices. It was on the backs of these traditional panchayats that the systematic decentralization of government was proposed, in order to provide a chance for self-rule as the nation moved from a heavily centralized state. However, as Jayal (2006) explains, the passage of these amendments "was not the result of a popular struggle for democratization. It was substantially inspired by the disappointment over the failure of development programs, and the perception that these would be able to perform better with local participations which would help to better identify local needs as well as deserving beneficiaries" (82). In the new panchayat system, local village councils retained social power. They also had new financial and bureaucratic support to provide public goods that were otherwise not reaching millions of villagers. Importantly, these new sites of power were implemented with caste and gender quota provisions from the beginning.

The organization of power and bureaucracy in the Panchayati Raj is as follows. At the most local level, villages are collected into Gram Panchayats (GPs). Each state government at the time of implementation of the PRI Act determined these Gram Panchayat boundaries. GPs can vary in size and population, from 2 to 10 villages/hamlets and populations from 2500 to 15000 citizens. The Gram Panchayat is headed by a Sarpanch (president) who is elected every five years from the constituency. Additionally, each village in a GP is divided into wards that elect council representatives every five years. The panchayat is the local center of power, and state-appointed officials called Panchayat Secretaries act as the government link between village decision-making and the bureaucracy of Indian government. GPs are mandated with the power to determine the distribution and maintenance of public goods such as water, roads, schools, hospitals, animal care facilities, the regulation of public land and resources, and the management of markets. In addition, GPs are able to tax their constituents and local shops to generate more revenue (though this policy is rarely implemented). GPs get a major share of their funding from State development ministries as well as direct transfers from the Central Government. The Sarpanch of a GP is a powerful figure that can act as a mediator between the formal state and citizens. For many without any government or political connections, the Sarpanch and her panchayat council members hold the power over development planning and the provision of key goods. The Sarpanch is seen as the final authority for development projects and is often the person negotiating deals between council members in order to ensure a quorum in voting processes. Given the historical domination of upper-caste men in local power, the PRI Act outlines a system of reservations for both the Sarpanch and panchayat member positions that ensure fair representation of caste minorities and women in these posts. A full list of prescribed duties as outlined in the Rajasthan PRI Act of 1996 is presented below. Later I discuss how these duties are applied in practice in a typical village government.

**Article 33. Duties and functions of Sarpanch\*.** - Besides holding Gram Sabha Meetings as per Section 3 of the act and panchayat meetings every fortnight as provided in Section 45, Sarpanch shall ensure/assist in discharge of following duties in addition to functions laid down in Section 32 of the Act.

- (i) Regulatory functions like:-
  - (a) Sanitation,
  - (b) Street lighting,
  - (c) Safe drinking water,
  - (d) Drainage,
  - (e) Public distribution system,
  - (f) Maintenance of rural roads,
  - (g) Registration of births and deaths,
  - (h) Sarpanch shall inform the Collector/Vikas Adhikari about flood, fire, epidemics and damage to Government properties, buildings, pipelines, handpumps electric lines etc. for taking necessary action, etc.
- (ii) Administrative functions like:-
  - (a) Development of Abadi area,
  - (b) Development of Grasses and trees in pasture lands through closure and controlled grazing,
  - (c) Prevent encroachments in abadi and Gochar lands,
  - (d) Raise resources for the Panchayat from water reservoirs, Nallas, Natural produce, Sikins and Hides of dead animals, Temporary use of land, Sale of land and the like,
- (iii) Development and proper utilisation of local physical resources for ensuring well-being of people.
- (iv) Assist in human and animal health, nutrition and family welfare programmes.
- (v) Undertake Rural Sanitation Programme.
- (vi) Undertake Development of way side facilities on National and State highways so as to raise own resources through auction of sites for Shops, Dhabas, STD booth, Petrol pump, Repair and Service Centres etc.
- (vii) Make efforts for raising public contributions for community works.

- (viii) Make special efforts for total literacy, women education, Prevention of Mrityu Bhoj, restrain Child Marriages, prevention of Un-touchability and oppression against women.
- (ix) Help in getting Social Security claims.
- (x) Assist in sanction of pension for old people, widows and handicapped persons.
- (xi) Prevent misuse of Panchayat Funds and bring transparency in functioning of Panchayat by placing income and expenditure details in every Panchayat meeting before signing Cash Book. In case Sarpanch does not utilise allotted funds, Collector shall be authorised to utilise such funds through a committee constituted for the purpose.
- (xii) Maintain quality of construction works and obtain completion certificate within one month of completion of work.
- (xiii) Arrange to issue demand notices and attachment warrants for timely recovery of Panchayat dues and ensuring proper executor through Committee of Panchas assisted by Secretary.
- (xiv) Arrange for conduct of Audit every year and compliance of Audit objections of his tenure even after the term of his election.
- (xv) Display details of works sanctioned and amount spent on a Board at Panchayat Headquarters as well as on work sites.
- (xvi) All such other functions as are necessary for the welfare of public.

\*From Rajathan PRI Act of 1996

All of the GPs in a certain area report to a sub-district panchayat, known as a Block Panchayat. Blocks comprise anywhere from 35 to 50 GPs. The Sarpanch represents each GP in a Block, and from this group of presidents the Block president is elected. Additionally, citizens from GPs can be elected to represent their constituency as Block panchayat members. Similar to the GP level, the Block panchayat is linked to sub-district bureaucracy that provides the financial and government backbone for development projects. Block members petition the Block President and officials for various forms of governance related aid, and the Block level unit can be another

source of funding for Gram Panchayats. Above the Block is the District level council, called the Zilla Panchayat. The Zilla Panchayat is comprised of 10 to 15 blocks in its district boundaries and is the highest level of panchayat governance. The Zilla president is elected from the pool of Block Level Presidents and the council is made up of other interested and involved citizens. Zilla Panchayats report to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development in each state, which in turn reports to State and Central government leaders. Similar to the GP level, quotas for SC/STs and women are mandated in the Zilla and Block Panchayats.

The quota system in the PRI is not as straightforward as in the national and state legislatures. In the latter, constituencies with higher percentages of SC/ST groups at the time of independence were provided with caste quotas that remain in place today. However, in the panchayat system caste and gender quotas are implemented by a process of randomization and rotation. At the Gram Panchayat level, each council is required to reserve a portion of seats for caste minorities. In total at least 33 percent of seats are reserved for women. However, in some states this has been increased to 50 percent reservation for women's seats.

The allocation of seats is implemented accordingly. In 1995 when some states began to implement the PRI and reservation of seats, census data from 1990 was used to compile a list of GPs by SC/ST percentages in each Block. This list was ordered in descending order, meaning the GP with the largest population of SC/STs relative to the total population in that GP at the time was listed first. The second GP would be the constituency with the second largest percentage of SC/STs in the Block, the third with the third largest and so on. In this way, all of the GPs in a Block were ranked by caste percentages. Then, on the basis of the total proportion of SC/STs to the general population within the State, a certain number of GPs were reserved for the Sarpanch seat. For example, if in 1990 a state of India had 20 percent of its population from an SC or ST group, then

20 percent of GPs within each Block of each District with the state would be reserved for an SC or ST representative. So, returning to the rank ordered list of GPs by population, in 1995 the first 20 percent of GPs in every block were reserved for a caste minority group. Then, within the already reserved seats, 33 percent of GPs were randomly assigned an additional quota for a woman, meaning that a twice-reserved GP would have to elect a woman from a caste minority group to the Sarpanch seat in that term. Of the remaining unreserved or 'open' seats, another 33 percent of Sarpanch seats would be reserved for women from any caste group.

Unlike the reservations that occurred at state and national levels, the GP reservations were not permanent. After the first round of elections in 1995, state governments would return to their lists and select the next twenty percent of GPs to be reserved for a caste quota, and then randomly allocated female quotas within the reserved and unreserved seats. In 2005, the Sarpanch reservation moved down the list to the next set of Gram Panchayats, and they repeated this again in 2010. What this means is that no panchayat could be forced to elect an SC/ST Sarpanch twice in a row, and depending on the way that randomization occurred from election to election, it is not guaranteed that a female quota could be mandated sequentially in a Panchayat. Thus, the longevity of the quota is short and citizens see each reservation as a five-year stint after which 'normal' elections can resume.

Despite the power formally vested to all elected leaders in the PRI, access to this power is not guaranteed in every panchayat. Much depends on personal ability and where a leader's politics lie. Those Sarpanch that are able to negotiate local power structures and established party politics can retain more control over their seats than those without experience in political negotiation. Moreover, personal and political ties to the right people are important in local politics. Since Sarpanch are often linked to political parties, they are considered power brokers between state

legislators and rural voters. Additionally, their power over development funds gives them economic power that can be used strategically by political parties and other local leaders. This means that backdoor politics are common in local governance, which changes the power dynamics that elected officials deal with in the village system. Especially since local development policies cannot be implemented without a minimum vote among the elected ward leaders in the Gram Panchayat, GP Presidents must be willing and able to negotiate between different political interests. In this study, I attempt to measure changes in outcomes under the assumption that Sarpanch operate with full control over their positions. This means that these Sarpanch can have more powerful decision-making abilities, which are then reflected in policy preferences and differences in outcomes for targeted subordinate populations.

This study fills in gaps in the literature to account for local context and multiple identities through a carefully crafted research design and methodology, described below. Importantly, I use multiple methods to paint a complete picture of village life and politics in rural Rajasthan. While the empirical methods and results presented in Chapter 3 provide interesting insight into the intersectional elements of affirmative action, it is the addition of qualitative understanding derived from participant observations and informal interview techniques that enriches this study. Before conducting the large-scale survey and structured interviews that provide the evidence for my claims, I spent 4 months visiting villages within the state where I met with local leaders, teachers in the local schools, and the general electorate. I also sat in on multiple council meetings at various levels of the PRI, which gave me a stronger understanding of the socio-political dynamics in local governance. These methods led me to new questions about the nature of representations and outcomes, ultimately cumulating in the fully intersectional approach applied in the project. In the process of meeting a diverse set of leaders and villagers, it became clear that people's multiple

identities mattered, whether as representatives or as constituents. Without the opportunity to explore the qualitative nature of political relationships, this study would lack the depth and contextual knowledge that allows it to make more nuanced claims. While most studies on electoral quotas in India narrow in on specific reservations or contexts, this in-depth analysis draws on various methods and types of evidence to provide a more complete and meaningful picture.

#### *2.4 The Case of Rajasthan*

Within India, this study focuses exclusively on the state of Rajasthan. While Rajasthan is the largest state by area, it is only the eighth most populous state in India. This is the result of large tracts of uninhabitable desert in the western region of the state. Rajasthan provides an excellent setting for this study, given it was one of the first implementers of the PRI and quota system in 1995. While the state government of Rajasthan has a great deal of control over panchayat schemes and fund allocations, monetary support from the Central government is also prevalent in most GPs across the state. This makes the interaction between local leaders and national vs. state politicians that much more salient, as some village Sarpanch will have stronger ties to their national representative than the state legislator or vice versa. These ties can impact the direction and flow of funding, and alter the overall agenda of local leaders. As a result, studying the effects of decentralization and affirmative action in Rajasthan provides an interesting backdrop of State-Centre power struggles that local leaders can capitalize on to their benefit.

As of the 2011 Census, more than 75 percent of the state's population lives in rural areas, which means the implementation of an effective and fair local governance structure is vital to the majority of citizens. At the same time, scholars consider Rajasthan less efficient or successful as a developing democracy (Sandananandan 2016). This means the need for more equal institutions

(especially for the disadvantaged) is vital; estimating effects in this case can reveal how affirmative action works in settings that need it most. Within Rajasthan, both systems of patriarchy and casteism structure society. Women are expected to remain veiled, refrain from speaking to unknown men, and otherwise remain within the strictures of a male-dominated society. Scheduled caste/Scheduled tribe groups in Rajasthan include the Bhils, Adivasi, Harijans and other local groups (Bairwa, Khatik, and Raigar). Despite government efforts to improve the conditions of these groups, many still struggle economically, resulting in overall political disempowerment. In such conditions, the importance of meaningful affirmative action policies becomes even clearer.

Rajasthan is a semi-arid state, varying from pure desert on the western front to slightly more lush vegetation and water access further east. Within Rajasthan, district divisions vary widely in agriculture, economic development and social history. In this project, I select four districts to study: Alwar, Nagaur, Tonk and Udaipur. These are highlighted on the map of Rajasthan below. For practical reasons, the majority of the districts selected in the study had to be constrained in areas surrounding the Jaipur district. Within the available options of districts, I was careful to select the sample on specific criteria. First, I selected districts that did not border one another in order to avoid potential crossover effects. Second, I looked for variation in economic and social prosperity. As Tables 2a and 2b below show, the variation and similarities in demographics and industrial focus among these districts is large. Udaipur District, farther south from the other selected districts, was selected to provide a different economic context and because the cultural context in this region of Rajasthan would be most unlike any of the others. This added key variation that allows me to make claims more generalizable to the state. Finally, I made sure the selected districts had enough villages to ensure proper sampling within them (described below).



Table 2a: District Profiles, Rajasthan India

District	Total Population	Percent SC	Percent Literate	Child Sex Ratio
Alwar	3,674,179	17.77	70.72	865
-Rural	3,019,728	17.90	67.85	867
-Urban	654,451	17.21	85.39	851
Nagaur	3,307,743	21.16	62.80	897
-Rural	2,670,539	22.97	60.91	894
-Urban	637,204	13.56	70.64	907
Tonk	1,421,326	20.26	61.58	892
-Rural	1,103,603	21.38	58.01	897
-Urban	317,723	16.34	73.84	897
Udaipur	3,068,420	6.14	61.82	924
-Rural	2,459,994	4.98	54.93	833
-Urban	608,426	10.87	87.52	865

Child Sex Ratio calculated as number of females ages 0-6 per 1000 males ages 0-6.

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table 2b: Primary Industries by Districts of Rajasthan, India

District	Total Workers	Per. Cultivator	Per. Agricultural Laborer	Per. Household Worker	Per. Other Sectors
Alwar	1,708,542	52.61	12.69	2.02	32.68
-Rural	1,487,935	59.41	14.05	1.81	24.72
-Urban	220,607	6.73	3.50	3.43	86.35
Nagaur	1,425,882	51.52	18.47	2.08	27.93
-Rural	1,238,230	58.28	20.03	1.63	20.05
-Urban	187,652	6.89	8.18	5.02	79.91
Tonk	649,161	50.23	17.47	2.47	29.83
-Rural	543,041	58.61	19.83	1.56	20.01
-Urban	106,120	7.38	5.42	7.12	80.08
Udaipur	1,365,783	39.47	22.18	2.46	35.89
-Rural	1,156,103	46.10	25.81	1.92	26.17
-Urban	209,680	2.90	2.21	5.41	89.48

Cultivators are agricultural workers who own the land they work on, Agricultural laborers work as tenants on others' land. "Household Workers" are employed in some form of productive labor but jobs are completed inside the home (such as tailoring or informal manufacturing). "Other Sectors" are all non-agricultural and household industry jobs.

Source: Census of India, 2011

In addition to their variation demographically, Alwar and Nagaur are considerably more developed than Tonk and Udaipur districts. Both have more access to piped and natural water, which makes farming a more profitable enterprise. Additionally, the abundance of marble and other natural resources provides strong secondary economic support to many villagers who either work in mines or own small marble businesses. In contrast to the relative success of these districts, Tonk and Udaipur are considered two of the twelve most backwards districts in the state of Rajasthan (Ministry of the Panhayati Raj) and since 2006 have received additional funding from the Central Government to development stronger economic and educational structures. Selecting these four districts for study provides both geographic and economic spread across the state.

Within each district, I select two Blocks (or sub-districts) at random for study. From each Block, I selected 8 GPs based on the kind of reservation for the seat of Sarpanch. I specifically choose GPs that are either open to any sex or caste, reserved for a woman of any caste, reserved for an SC of either sex, or reserved specifically for SC women. With these four categories of reserved or open seats, I select 2 GPs of each reservation type from each block. This means that

16 GPs are selected in each district, for a total sample of 64 Gram Panchayats in the study. Table 2c below shows the breakdown of GPs by District and Block.

Table 2c: Selected Rajasthan GPs by District and Block

District	Block	Panchayat	Sarpanch	District	Block	Panchayat	Sarpanch
Alwar	Rajgarh	Alei	SCW	Tonk	Malpura	Chainpura	OBCM
		Firojpur	OBCM			Chavandiya	SCW
		Khoh	SCW			Deval	GENM
		Nayagaon Bolka	GENW			Kantoli	SCM
		Palwa	SCM			Kirawal	GENM
		Rajorgarh	STM			Lambaharisingh	SCW
		Talab	GENW			Reendliya	SCM
	Thanagazi	Thanarajaji	SCM		Todaraisingh	Sindoliya	OBCW
		Duhar Chaugan	GENM			Alyari	SCM
		Dwarapura	STM			Barwas	GENW
		Garh Basai	SCM			Baseda	OBCM
		Guda Churani	SCM			Bavadi	SCW
		Jhiri	GENW			Bhasu	GENM
		Kharkari Kalan	SCW			Indokiya	OBCM
		Piplai	STW			Lambakalan	SCW
Nagaur	Kuchaman City	Saleta	SCW	Udaipur	Bhinder	Mor	SCM
		Chavandiya	SCM			Bhatewar	SCW
		Chosla	SCW			Chargadiya	OBCM
		Ghatwa	SCM			Dhamaniya	SCM
		Govindi	OBCW			Gotipa	OBCW
		Hudeel	SCW			Keekewas	OBCM
		Maharajpura	OBCW			Kheroda	SCM
	Parbastar	Todas	OBCM		Mavli	Menar	GENM
		Ugarpura	OBCW			Modi	SCW
		Badsiya	SCW			Bhansol	SCM
		Badu	SCM			Bijanwas	SCW
		Baghot	SCW			Boyna	SCW
		Harnava	OBCM			Ghasa	GENM
		Janjila	GENW			Javad	GENM
		Peeh	SCM			Mahuda	SCW
	Peeplad	GENW		Salera Kalan	GENW		
	Runija	OBCM		Veer Dholiya	SCM		

All villages with an ST or OBC Sarpanch were unreserved for a caste quota

## 2.5 The Rajasthan Village

While each village in Rajasthan is unique, there are certain socio-economic characteristics that carry over from village to village that condition both democratic processes and opportunities for development. Here I outline a typical village in rural Rajasthan that is based on the 10 months of fieldwork conducted in over 80 villages across 6 districts of Rajasthan. In doing so, I hope to create a backdrop for those less familiar with the structure of a north Indian rural life. Specifically,

I address the physical structure of a village, caste relations, and the nature of bureaucracy at the local level.

Geographically villages vary greatly in population density, but all follow a familiar pattern of organization and spread. Though the practice of untouchability is formally banned, the legacy of these beliefs is reflected most strongly in how villages are structured. Typically, upper-caste groups (such as *Brahmins* and *Rajputs*) live in central areas of the village which at the least are better planned and well maintained than other parts. Closer to the fields but not too far from main roads and market areas are the homes of the richer peasant caste (known as the *Jats*), with occasional mixing of other 'middle' caste groups. Farthest from the main markets and other homes are the SC/ST settlements, sometimes in separate hamlets disconnected from the main village. Roads in these areas are muddy at best, and surrounded with trash at worst, creating a feedback loop whereby upper castes assume SC/ST peoples are unclean and thus deserving of the trash continually heaped upon their portions of the village. The distinct separation of homes by caste not only ensures the continuation of implicit untouchability practices, but also furthers caste divisions among villagers.

The average village has water tanks located in central areas from which water can be collected. In some areas, upper-caste homes have been fitted with in-home taps that draw from the local tank. By contrast, non-dominant groups have to walk up to 2 miles away to reach the nearest water source. If the state-sanctioned doctor or nurse has been set up in the village, the office will be centrally located and far away from the ostracized castes. Roads and connectivity to the outer hamlets are poor and in dismal condition. Public grade schools will also typically be far away from those who are most likely to use it, with little in the way of proper pathways for children to take.

The picture here is clear; the physical structure of a village serves to reproduce embedded inequalities, even as the local government is expected to challenge them.

Politically, certain castes in Rajasthan are more mobilized than others. Strongest are the *Jats* who as Rudolph (2012) argues, “profit from vigorous and effective leadership” even as they only make up 9 percent of the population (342). As wealthy farmers with a strong sense of caste and self-determination, the *Jats* create powerful economic and voting blocs in the average village, thus improving their likelihood of ruling formally and informally. Alternatively the *Rajputs* and other upper-castes are less interested in local power and are content with their “ritual status as highest caste” (O’Reily 2014, 379). Alternatively, SC groups are less confident of their strengths as a voting bloc. Given the structural constraints on their time and education levels, they are less likely to effectively organize in Rajasthan. Despite the lack of formal organization, political parties will still work with caste leaders to ensure bloc votes for a certain candidate, though cohesion around a single SC candidate is rare. As a result, even in villages with an SC elected president, *Jat* leaders hold strong sway and can influence political decisions through various channels. For example, in a village visited during initial fieldwork, one SC Sarpanch explained that during his election SCs could not collectively agree on a single candidate to run for the seat. As a result, he sought support from the *Jats* of the village to garner enough votes for a win. At the same time the Upsarpanch (vice-president) seat was won by a *Jat*, giving the group both a formal role in the government and informal power over policy through their control over the Sarpanch. These power relations reflect themselves in the way public goods are distributed in a village, making any small gains by SC groups that much more meaningful.

The typical day in a village starts early, usually with the sunrise. Women are first to rise, and start their day with various chores around the house, including preparing meals and getting

children ready for school. During the planting and harvest season, both men and women will spend a majority of their day in the fields (unless their main source of income does not come from farming). Men who work labor jobs or as low-level bureaucrats will be gone most of the day, while women stay behind to tend to the home and children. In many cases, males of the family will relocate to the nearest city for seasonal work and return home for a few weeks between temporary jobs. During the off-season for both farming and other kinds of labor, men of both castes can be found sitting around the local tea stall playing cards or having a smoke while reading the news. This pattern continues until the evening when the low light and lack of consistent electricity shuts down most village activity, though this is also the time most men begin drinking liquor which continues well into the night. The same cannot be said of women, who will remain at home or at part-time jobs they find in the village. With an increased burden on their unpaid labor, women who are elected Sarpanch often have to manage both household work and their official duties. In rare instances, we met young women whose mother-in-laws picked up their duties around the house to allow them freedom to work on panchayat issues. In some cases, women Sarpanch who had daughter-in-laws were able to leave household duties to the other women at home and could be more involved in the panchayat. More often than not, however, women Sarpanch were expected to balance household duties and Panchayat work. In the case of illiterate or disempowered women, home labor took precedence since a male from the family was always willing to step in and control the Panchayat in lieu of the elected female representative. The same issue never arose for men. Regardless of caste status, those elected Sarpanch put their duties above all and left the running of households to women. These structures and systems were a common theme in the complaints of women as both leaders and voters.

In addition to the dynamics described above, the structure of village bureaucracy differs greatly from that on paper. As outlined above, the Sarpanch has a wide mandate of economic and social development in the panchayat. In reality, this power and influence can be exerted to its fullest extent or not at all depending on the structure of party and caste relations in her jurisdiction. During the course of fieldwork, I met with a variety of Sarpanch that demonstrated a wide range of abilities as leaders, with some finding ways to be highly effective using state and non-state resources. For example, in Veer Dholiya the SC Sarpanch used his links with both party officials and NGOs to increase the level of service provision and create new skills training programs for women. Others, like the Sarpanch of Aliyari were well known for their involvement as local leaders in other gram panchayats. The Sarpanch explained that he had been elected previously in a different GP, and upon knowing their village was selected for the SC quota Aliyari residents asked him to move to their location so he could contest and win the seat. These kinds of leaders were bolstered by the sheer breadth of Panchayat mandates and by linkages to higher level leaders (such as the elected legislator for the region) and their parties. In other cases, having strong educational backgrounds helped leaders make full use of their powers, as described in Chapter 4.

On the other end of the spectrum, GPs with ineffective or corrupt Sarpanch were common. Many women and minority leaders reported feeling blocked by the influence of other caste groups in the village, or by the controlling party of the region. For example, Gyani Devi, the president of Chavandiya (a remote GP in the Jaipur district) recounted how her power as Sarpanch had been cut out from underneath her by other family members. Her husband's uncle had previously been Sarpanch in the GP and wanted his own daughter-in-law to win the female reserved seat. Instead, Gyani Devi won the seat through her own ties in the village. At the time, the local legislator (also called an MLA) belonged to the center-left Congress Party. In order to handicap her powers, Gyani

Devi's uncle-in-law convinced the legislator that she had switched support to the opposing BJP party, and as a result did not warrant further support. The MLA used his own influence over local leaders and bureaucrats to halt the work Gyani Devi wished to complete in the Panchayat-reflected in the relatively poor conditions we saw during our visit there. In other cases, the desire for personal gain led to serious corruption issues, like in one remote village of Udaipur. In this case, the current Sarpanch was the second to be elected in the five-year term. His predecessor had used the first three years of his tenure to siphon money from Panchayat funds to himself, until he was caught and sentenced on corruption charges. While residents reported that the new Sarpanch had tried to make some improvements in the remainder of the term, the GP lagged severely behind that of others in the region.

It is important to note that the Sarpanch has a great deal of say over who receives access to individual level goods like money to build in-home toilets or enrollment in local labor rosters. Moreover, the word or force of a Sarpanch can be hugely influential – as in the case of leaders who register consistent and loud complaints against state employees like teachers and healthcare providers. The power to influence the behavior of others is an unspoken but crucial aspect of being a Sarpanch, and thus knowing who is more likely to exert this power is important in a larger study of affirmative action.

## *2.6 Methodology*

In this study I employ a survey instrument, formal interview techniques and participant observation to gather data on the impact of reserved seats for socially disadvantaged groups. In each of the 64 villages, I implemented on average, 16 surveys from four different social groups- non-SC men, non-SC women, SC men and SC women- for a total of 910 respondents. Respondents

were selected via a random walk method; in each village we found the hamlet or area where non-SC or SCs lived and then proceeded down roads selecting every  $n$ th household for an interview. We were careful to avoid sampling men and women from the same household in order to increase the overall reach of the survey. The survey questions asked about a respondent's demographic indicators as well as their access to water, roads, and other public goods. In addition, I asked respondents to report whether or not the Sarpanch had done anything to help them specifically, and how many times the respondent had been to the local Panchayat in the past 6 months. I also asked whether or not the respondent would be interested in running for the Sarpanch seat in the future. The full results of this survey analysis are presented in the next chapter, which examines whether or not villagers' access to resources increases when the Sarpanch is from the same caste or sex group as them.

In addition to the survey, in 50 of the GPs selected for study I interviewed the Sarpanch or their representative. The interview was structured around demographic questions about the Sarpanch, public works that had been completed under their tenure, as well as the political and financial challenges of being a local leader. I also asked these presidents about their own desires as leaders and future politicians. The full analysis of this qualitative data is presented in Chapter 4, which looks at how access to political leadership affects relations of power for subordinate castes and women. In addition, this chapter presents some of the findings from participant observation in out of sample villages of the Jaipur and Sikar Districts.

Prior to conducting the full survey and interview instruments, I spent time observing the local politics of GPs in places where women elected on a reserved were perceived as strong leaders by higher state officials. I also randomly selected various pairs of villages with SC and non-SC women to visit repeatedly and observed local council meetings in these GPs. These visits informed

much of the survey and interview questions I used in the study of the selected villages. I explicitly chose to employ both quantitative and qualitative methods in this study to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of village politics. The participant observation and informal interviewing during the first stage of research provided me with a much stronger sense of what issues were at stake in local government, as well as the various levels of bureaucracy and patronage that leaders were dealing with. Additionally, the act of walking around and visiting a variety of villages helped me to see common issue areas that villagers expected support on. Especially interesting were the informal interviews conducted with different types of leaders, which gave me a more local context on which to develop my empowerment measures. Even during the collection of formal quantitative data during the survey phase, my R.A.s and I went to each village or hamlet of interest to get a sense of how development had occurred beyond what respondents told us. During these visits I was also able to either corroborate claims made by Sarpanch in my interview with them or find interesting issues to raise with them later (if our meeting happened after the official survey). This kind of reflexivity was critical to ensuring that the survey was consistent in how we asked questions of respondents and Sarpanch. Despite the regional and economic variation in the sample, the act of walking around every village and speaking personally to half of the survey respondents allowed me to form a picture of the typical village, which informs much of the information presented in section 2.6. While I make use of statistical models and analysis to understand the results of the quantitative data collection, in this dissertation I give equal importance to the qualitative data collected during fieldwork to depict a more complete picture of affirmative action and decentralization in rural Rajasthan.

The research methodology and case selection outlined above provide a snapshot of quota effects in a particular setting of rural India. Some may argue that the scope of the study is too

narrow to draw larger conclusions about the nature of affirmative action in India and comparatively. By contrast, I believe this research agenda provides key insights on the intersectional and immediate effects of quotas on empowerment and development. Within India, Rajasthan is a relatively poor and less developed state, especially in rural areas. Moreover, society in village Rajasthan is highly stratified and segmented. This creates unequal access to whatever resources do exist. Understanding changes in outcomes under inclusive electoral policies for a population that is already suffering from a lack of resources adds to the overall value of the study, as it highlights the challenges and successes of affirmative action where these policies are needed most.

Broadly speaking, India and Rajasthan as a specific case study adds to a growing literature on affirmative action in developing nations and the intersection approach to these questions. As one of the few places that implements both gender and caste based quotas in a rotating system, India provides a great deal of leverage on the question. The specific nature of affirmative action, plus the large mandate given to Sarpanch makes it much easier to narrow in on the exact effect quotas can have on targeted populations. The research design focuses on gathering strong quantitative and qualitative data to both illuminate the greatest needs for targeted populations, and the mechanisms through which elected leaders become empowered. Having personally visited and surveyed respondents in each village of the survey gives this project much greater depth than the large n studies conducted by most scholars of quotas in India. The questions themselves are designed to get at the underlying needs of respondents and the main challenges that Sarpanch face in their tenure. Both the pre-survey research and in-depth interview techniques used during the process of survey implementation better inform the design and analysis employed here.

## Chapter 3

### The Effect of State Intervention on Citizen Outcomes

In this chapter, I explore the effects of two kinds of state interventions meant to overcome socio-economic inequality – the decentralization of government policy-making and implementation of federal level affirmative action policies. Working together, the programs fit into a broader concept of state-mandated social transformation that scholars argue may lead to more just and equitable outcomes for historically disadvantaged populations. In the Indian context, for example, decentralized government in the PRI should give citizens more power over decision-making while the use of reserved seats for marginal groups should ensure that all voices are heard in a process of deliberative democracy.

Through a large-n study of public goods provision in rural Rajasthan, I demonstrate that the effects of subaltern leadership in decentralized state governments are varied for targeted groups, both in terms of substantive transformations (such as improved access to public goods) and symbolic ones (e.g., greater public confidence in minority officials). Though many scholars argue for a clear, positive effect of minority representation in local government (Duflo and Chattopadhyay 2004, Chauchard 2011), I show that state transformation processes are not always so straightforward given the heterogeneous nature of the power structures that individuals experience in their local political systems.

In order to provide a broader context for the meaning of state intervention in development, I focus on whether quotas are more effective for one type of minority population over another by accounting for the effect of affirmative action on people from multiple disadvantaged groups. This

question is of vital importance in the debate surrounding affirmative action, as most studies of quotas chose to focus on single minority groups at a time, such as women or disadvantaged race and caste groups (Beaman et al. 2009; Duflo 2004; Dunning, Nilekani, and Padmavathi 2013). In doing so, scholars base the success of affirmative action policies on a comparison between subaltern and dominant social groups. Implicitly, these studies assume that the success of quotas will be observed when a targeted group attains similar levels of political power as dominant caste. This means that if the representation of minority needs increases in majority-controlled legislatures, then affirmative action is doing its job to improve outcomes and participation for the most vulnerable populations.

I argue that understanding the effects of affirmative action requires a larger, albeit more complicated, comparison between the various disadvantaged populations that quotas target. A singular focus on gender, race, or caste quotas only shows part of the picture; it demonstrates the difference these policies make for certain groups vis-à-vis their social “opposites”, but not relative to the rest of the population. In other words, such studies do not provide a larger context for the effect they observe. For example, imagine that electoral gender quotas increase the amount of 'pro-women' policy proposed in a national legislature by  $x$  percent, but racial quotas do not change the amount of 'pro-race' legislation proposed in the same body. What then, is the real or overall effect of quotas in this case? Assessing the effect of affirmative action on only one group, women, would indicate that state intervention is working. Yet, in the broader context, such policies only work half the time or in very specific situations.

In contrast to such work, this study brings evidence to bear on the question of whether it is easier to overcome one social “disadvantage” over another in the presence of overt, state-led action

against discrimination. The question refers to racial, gender, and caste hierarchies that occur both between the oppressors and the oppressed, as well as within marginalized groups themselves. When governments enact affirmative action policy, do some groups have an easier time capitalizing on new opportunity structures than others and why?

Through an in-depth study of electoral caste and gender quotas in rural India, I demonstrate that the effects of affirmative action depend on the target population being affected. Moreover, I find that women in general, minority castes in general, and women belonging to minority castes experience oppression in different forms. Results indicate that while caste-based discrimination can be reduced by minority access to positions of power, the effects are heavily conditional upon gender. At the same time, however, some development outcomes affect women differently conditional on their caste (such as economic precarity), while other issues (such as violence against women) are a common experience for women regardless of caste.

The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows. In the next section I discuss some theoretical implications underpinning this study, followed by the hypotheses I choose to test. I then proceed to describe the data use and the statistical methods employed. In section six, I present the results of testing and conclude with a discussion of what these results mean for my question as a whole.

### *3.1 Measuring Outcomes*

As described in Chapter One, this project is concerned with the power that affirmative action policies can provide to subordinate populations. One intention of better government representation for minorities is to increase the tangible and intangible power of the weakest sections of society. The fact that different people assign different intentions to such policies and

different meanings to the power relationships they seek to alter, however, complicates any general interpretation of policy efficacy. To clarify my analysis, and in acknowledgement of the multiplicity of phenomena that ‘power’ refers to I explicitly define ‘power’ in this study as access to material resources that are necessary for human development and improvements in one's overall well-being. This follows closely from Amartya Sen's concept of human capabilities that speaks to the underlying principles of state development and interventions more broadly, as discussed in Chapter 1. Moreover, these principles of human development comprise part of the intent behind both the PRI system and the use of reserved seats in Indian politics.

The sweeping decentralization brought in by the central Indian state in the early 1990s was not the product of a long struggle for self-rule by rural populations, as might be assumed, but rather the government's attempt to reduce the burdens of service delivery on central and state leaders (Jayal 2006). By concentrating fiscal and development power in Gram Panchayats, the new PRI system attempted to ensure better access to development resources for even the most remote citizens.<sup>6</sup> Policy makers thought the responsibilities and capabilities enshrined in local government could provide basic goods, such as clean water and road systems, as well as more advanced

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<sup>6</sup> Limitations to service delivery is a major area of research on decentralization in India, and is often tied to arguments about co-optation by local elites. Bardhan (2002) argues that “local governments are often at the mercy of local power elites who may frustrate the goal of achieving public delivery to the general populace of social services, infrastructural facilities and conditions conducive to local business development” (202). Structural conditions such as information asymmetries, low funding and local capture contribute to the overall inefficiency of panchayat councils, meaning that those that need public goods the most often have the least access to it. As Jakimow (2014) explains, this occurs because “new institutions of local governance are not established on a ‘blank state,’ but are shaped and reworked by the prevailing political economy, cultural politics and existing socially-embedded institutions” (165). While local panchayats are expected to be better service providers than the central or state governments, they are not created in a vacuum and are necessarily subject to the same problems that other areas of government experience. While the government has devolved various responsibilities to the local level, Fernandes (2003) believes the central state has not devolved an adequate amount of power to ensure meaningful enforcement and goods delivery by panchayats but the schemes are not specified in the legislation, but rather crafted state by state in legislative assemblies, hence the difference in outcomes.

resources like schools and village employment opportunities. Importantly, local power generated through decentralization should be better able to target public goods than a distant state or central government.

Giving fiscal and programmatic controls to a local governance structure that is in direct contact with beneficiaries is a part of the broader goal of the PRI to intertwine democratization and development. The local power that comes with the Panchayat system can then translate into better outcomes for human development, which should lead to more economic, social and political power for villagers. Similarly, the implementation of reserved seats in the PRI is focused towards increasing the presence of otherwise marginalized groups in public life.

As previously described, scholars often tie affirmative action policies to a theory of distributive justice that should create economic growth and foment opportunities for underrepresented populations to empower themselves (Young 1990). Using affirmative action policies in development institutions like the PRI, which might otherwise be overrun by majority caste groups and men, are especially important in the pursuit of economic growth and empowerment of traditionally subaltern populations. For example, historically, elder upper-caste men, who were often the final authority in village disputes, dominated village councils.

The new distribution of fiscal and development power in the PRI runs the risk of perpetuating existing systems of oppression, especially since the same beliefs that typically keep women and low-caste groups out of power could bias the election process. Reserved seats are meant to subvert these processes and ensure that all voices are represented in the new governance system. Especially important is the belief that the mandated inclusion of minorities in positions of

power will translate into better material and social outcomes for subordinate groups as representatives of these populations receive more access and control over institutions of power.

Politicians inherently target commitments to both local power and to distributive justice for the most vulnerable populations of the village system. Ideally, this dual commitment works to increase representation and human development among marginalized individuals. To gauge this synergistic relationship, I study the two effects in a very specific way. I measure the effect of minority leadership via a reserved seat on perceived access to resources for targeted groups, while most studies of reserved seat policies in India claim to assess the effect of affirmative action on general or otherwise unspecified social outcomes for subaltern castes and women.

Based on this analysis, I argue that although a reserved seat is able to bring a subordinate group member to power, it is not the quota itself that generates positive or negative outcomes; rather, the effect of different kinds of leaders comes to the fore in explaining divergent outcomes. If there is a positive correlation between SC or female leadership and access to important material resources for these same groups, then it follows that minority involvement in local politics improves development outcomes for the group in question. This, in turn, would justify the use of reserved seats to ensure the representation of these groups in the PRI. In the next section, I outline some of the expected outcomes of minority leadership and describe the kinds of public goods that should be better distributed when a subordinate group member is in control of the Gram Panchayat.

### *3.2 Hypotheses*

With this framework in mind, I set out to understand the effect of quotas on various groups in rural India. I focus on the effects of affirmative action policies on citizens' outcomes and

participation. These effects will be different across the two types of quotas: i.e., those for SC groups and for women, and the differing gender and caste effects within these groups respectively. I argue that, as a whole, there is a significant difference in perceived improvements for SCs versus women. Within these two groups, however, multiple identities create variance in outcomes for women of different caste and men and women from the same social group.

*H1: If an SC Sarpanch is present, then SC members have better access to functioning roadways and public water.*

*H1a: The effect of an SC Sarpanch on access to roads and public water will not vary among men and women from SC groups.*

These hypotheses focus on substantive outcomes for caste minorities. Preliminary research that I conducted in 2013 indicates that the main needs for SC groups focused around roads and water, two of the most basic public goods. Given that the Panchayat council determined where roads and water tanks are placed within the GP, it is easy to see how marginalized groups are routinely denied access to these goods in their areas or hamlets of the panchayat.<sup>7</sup> Though this may not seem like a caste-specific need on the surface, SCs often do not have access to these two vital public goods, making each of them high priority interests for SC voters. I hypothesize, therefore, that having a Sarpanch from a similar marginalized background increases the amount of public goods distribution in SC areas, and thus their overall livelihoods.

Hypothesis 1a argues that SC access to goods will not be gendered. Since roads and water are provided at the household level, there is no reason to believe that SC women would be more

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<sup>7</sup> Roads and water are two of the most common goods provided by local leaders and simplest to fund- meaning the ease to build this infrastructure in a five-year term is relatively high for most Sarpanch.

or less likely to receive these goods than SC men. While this claim may seem intuitive, I draw attention to it in an effort to fully develop an intersectional analysis of quota effects on indirect beneficiaries. As such, these hypotheses follows:

*H2: If a female Sarpanch is present, then women have more access to female-oriented public goods such as toilets, healthcare and reduced violence.*

*H2a: SC women will have less access to female-oriented public goods even with the presence of a female Sarpanch.*

Ethnographic work and existing literature demonstrate that, beyond the need for water and sewage management, women are concerned with access to better healthcare, toilets and a reduction in alcohol-induced violence in the village.<sup>8</sup> I hypothesize that a female Sarpanch would be aware of these issues, and women would feel more comfortable expressing such concerns to another woman in power. A reduction in alcohol consumption and related violence is possible if female Sarpanch are willing to shut down local liquor shops (something within their leadership purview). Additionally, these Sarpanch could allocate more material and political resources from panchayat funds to ensure the proper maintenance and availability of government medical clinics in the GP. In particular, the Sarpanch could use their power and influence as local leaders to petition the state government to send regular healthcare providers to the village or provide adequate funds to build free clinics. These funds are readily available through a variety of schemes outlined by the Rajasthan state government, but require local leaders to take the initiative to request and use the

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<sup>8</sup> Women in rural India are often subject to patterns of violence and abuse by their husbands. Instances of abuse often increase in the presence of alcohol, which is why many women favor banning alcohol sales in village boundaries.

monies appropriately. Similar to SC groups representing SC needs, women Sarpanch would be interested in improving those conditions most pressing to other women in the panchayat. Sub-hypothesis 2a argues that any positive effects of a female Sarpanch are conditional on caste. While the hypothesis broadly supposes that women work for women, it is important to note that access to certain goods will necessarily be different for SC women who typically live in less developed hamlets and areas of their villages. Testing the effects of having a female Sarpanch on one of the most economically deprived groups in rural India is critical to understand the real value of affirmative action.

*H3: If a minority leader is elected, then that person's election will increase attendance at Gram Panchayat meetings by members of the leader's minority group.*

*H3a: SC women will attend panchayat meetings less than SC men, even with the presence of an SC Sarpanch.*

*H3b: SC women will be more likely to attend panchayat meetings than non-SC women, even under the presence of a female Sarpanch.*

In theory, having a female Sarpanch should make women feel more comfortable approaching an otherwise male center of power. Knowing that there will be at least one woman present may incline other women to increase their attendance at open panchayat meetings or go to the building to present their needs. It is entirely possible, however, that women may feel more at ease meeting the female Sarpanch in her home or at the temple. This would mean attendance at the panchayat would be low, but that they would at least report that they have spoken to the Sarpanch or expressed her needs to her outside of formal governmental processes.

Sub-hypotheses 3a and 3b again address the question of intersectionality by pointing out that SC women will behave differently from SC men and non-SC women. Hypothesis 3a argues that if SC attendance increases as the result of an SC Sarpanch, then these results will be conditional on sex, given the nature of women's presence in the public sphere in rural India. In hypothesis 3b, I claim that even though SC women do not attend meetings as much as SC men, relative to non-SC women their presence is increased. While norms about women's presence in public do apply across castes, SC women are more likely to break from those norms for economic reasons. The need to earn supplemental wages will increase SC women's likelihood of attending meetings, since they are already engaged in the public sphere in some capacity. A female Sarpanch will not be enough for non-SC women to overcome these ideas about appropriate behavior.

*H4: Quotas increase public acceptance about minority involvement in local leadership, specifically among dominant group members.*

While affirmative action policies are controversial in public discourse, once implemented they have the power to change ideas about minority leadership. This is commonly referred to the symbolic effect of quotas, which can affect both majority and minority opinions. This hypothesis argues that the presence of an SC, woman, or SC woman Sarpanch will lead to more positive views of affirmative action policies, specifically electoral quotas, among non-SC men (the existing dominant group). As direct beneficiaries, we would expect SC and women to be in favor of positive discrimination but the same cannot be said for non-SC men who are threatened by these policies. However, the actual participation of minorities through a quota may have a positive effect on attitudes.

### 3.3 Case Selection

While I outline the distribution of quotas for caste minorities and women in a previous section, it bears a quick synopsis in reference to case selection. When implementing caste quotas during the first round of electoral reservations, officials decided which areas to target by first sorting the Rajasthani GPs in descending order by percent SC/ST in each block of each district in the state. Irrespective of when the quotas were being implemented, however, officials based their decisions on data about the overall proportion of SC or ST groups in Rajasthan from a 1990 census. Next, based on the proportion of SC or ST groups across the state *in 1990*, officials allocated a caste quota to the first 33 percent of GPs in each block.

Within the caste reserved seats, officials also selected at random at least 33 percent of the seats for a gender quota. Doing so made those seats eligible only to women from the reserved caste. Of the seats remaining un-reserved for any caste, 33 percent were reserved at random for only a gender quota – meaning women from any caste group could run in that seat. The remaining GEN seats were those that remained unreserved in any capacity. Importantly, reserved seats rotate every five years at election time. By moving down the original list of GPs sorted by caste population from 1990, officials distribute the caste quotas to those panchayats falling below the original percent cut off. After re-selection of new GPs for the quota, gender quotas are randomly allocated among seats as before. Table 3a below demonstrates an example of how this process works.

Table 3a: Example Reservation Process within a Block

Gram Panchayat	Percent SC (in 1990)	Place in Reservation Order	Year Reserved
Bariya	49%	1	1995
...	...	7	1995
Golikebas	38.5%	8	2000
...	...	14	2000
Badakala	26%	15	2005
...	...	21	2005
Kathiwar	19%	22	2010
...	...	28	2010
Chaksu	9%	29	2015 (expected)
...	...	35	2015 (expected)

For this study, I began by selecting GPs that had been caste, gender, or caste and gender reserved in 2010. Then, based on caste populations, total population, and literacy rates for these cases, I found similar villages in the same areas that had never been reserved for a caste quota.<sup>9</sup> I chose to use total population and literacy rates as control variables in order to ensure similar demographics across matched villages. The inclusion of caste population was important as a control for the potential power of SC/ST voting blocs in villages and changes in caste-wise population from 1990. I chose literacy as a key indicator as a proxy for general socio-economic development, since no other adequate measure existed in the census at the village level.<sup>10</sup> With no significant differences among villages for these controls, I can safely make claims about the effect of a reserved seat without fear of potential confounding variables.

<sup>9</sup> It was difficult to find villages that had never been reserved for a female, but in all cases I made sure there was not a reserved female seat in the most immediate election prior to the then current tenure.

<sup>10</sup> Since I chose to use the Child-Sex Ratio as a potential influence on the success of female leaders (as a proxy for levels women's oppression in a village), I explicitly did not control these levels across villages, but inadvertently found that the average CSR was similar among the selected control and treatment villages. Table 3b below demonstrates the average differences between reserved and unreserved villages.

Table 3b: Demographic Statistics of sampled Gram Panchayats, Rajasthan

Quota Status	Total Pop.	CSR*	Per. SC	Per. Literate	Existing Water Sources	Existing Roads
Caste Reserved	5228.5	.87	16.5	51.1	7.1	5.9
Caste Unreserved	5131.3	.90	15.3	51.1	7.2	6.7
Gender Reserved	4933.7	.88	16.9	49.8	6.3	5.7
Gender Unreserved	5486.2	.90	14.8	52.3	7.9	6.8

\*Child Sex Ratio (CSR) calculated as the proportion of females ages 0-6 to males ages 0-6. Data on GPs compiled from Census of India 2011, NREGA e-portal, and State Election Commission of Rajasthan

Within the selected GPs, I followed a standard method of data collection. I selected villages within the GP that most approximated caste proportions and literacy rates of the entire panchayat itself. In some cases, this was the main panchayat village and in other cases this was the village the Sarpanch lived in. In each village, my RA and I collected an average of 16 interviews- 4 each from SC women, Non-SC women, SC men and Non-SC men. Respondents were selected by a randomized sample- such as selecting the nth house on the left side of the street for men, and on the right side for women. This provided a small sample of village life from the targeted and control groups of quotas. Moreover, the physical act of walking around the various caste hamlets provided ethnographic detail about the actual state of the village. In total I collected 910 surveys from the 64 villages, with data on access to public goods, the prevalence of social issues, and respondents' attitude towards the panchayat and quotas.

The survey instrument listed in Appendix C has a wide range of questions and potential outcomes that I do not analyze in this project. On paper, many of the questions I asked respondents seem to be interesting and immediately relevant to the subject at hand. In practice, however, most indicators suffered from low variation or response rates. As a result, these measures did not provide any meaningful leverage on the larger question of benefits to individuals. Moreover, informal

responses I collected during the survey indicated that measures that would otherwise seem important in the village context actually provided very little useful information.

One example of an indicator that initially seemed very interesting for the survey but that ultimately failed to yield meaningful analytical results is the series of questions about children's attendance at anganwadis. Anganwadis are government run childcare sites within villages, targeted to children between ages 0-5. These centers provide care options for women that are out of the home during the day and also guarantee a mid-day meal to enrolled children. The quality of care can range widely in anganwadis – from single room structures inside a government school to large standalone units with demarcated kitchens and toilets.

Given the nature of services an anganwadi provides, officials and scholars tend to think of these centers as a public good directed at women, especially working women. It follows then that female Sarpanch should be more focused on ensuring the adequate functioning of these services in the interest of their female constituents. As a result, they may be more focused on providing resources to the anganwadis and villages selected with a female president would have better childcare centers.

The survey instrument had three specific questions about anganwadis meant to measure the overall reliability of services in the village. First, it asked respondents if any children from their household attended the local anganwadi. If so, it then asked the respondent if the center was in good condition, and if children received the mandated mid-day meal (called *poshar*) there. These questions were designed to elucidate what should be a core female issue and provide greater insight into how female leadership can change the local landscape. However, the sampling methodology and nature of the questions meant that not every respondent was able to answer questions related to childcare provision making the variation on the answers low. In the final data, only 27 percent

of respondents reported having a child that attend the local anganwadi, and of those 93 percent reported the anganwadi was in good condition.

The lack of variation and responses made this measure inadequate at addressing whether or not different kinds of leadership matter for certain policy outcomes. During follow up questions, it was also revealed that the anganwadis only operate from 7 AM to 2 PM. For women who work full days, this timing is inconvenient and either makes them less likely to send their children to the center. While, in theory, the anganwadi would be a key example of women's interests and a potential measure for outcomes, ultimately this object of inquiry was less useful in this specific survey. A more detailed and specific approach to assessing services and use of the childcare centers across villages would have been interesting, but was out of the scope of this project.

In other cases, some questions did not sufficiently pick up on the necessary nuances of village politics. For example, the question of whom people asked for help in the village did fine during pre-testing but during the full survey did not elicit systematic responses. The goal of asking this question was to assess whether or not people turned to the Sarpanch before anyone else in the village, to get a sense of trust and dependency on the local leader.

Most people, however, expressed self-reliance or support from family and friends – most likely presuming that 'needing help' was a monetary not social need. This changed the nature of responses in the full dataset. Additionally, this question attempted to quantify and categorize information that would be better assessed through qualitative means, especially since it relates directly to the issue of local politics and relationships which are difficult to effectively quantify. Thus, while the survey asked interesting and potentially useful questions, in practice the responses were not cohesive or meaningful enough to warrant further analysis. I instead focus on those goods that are more universal and easier to measure (such as water and sanitation), as well as attitudes

that can be surmised from certain answers. For descriptive statistics on some of the more interesting outcome variables asked in the survey, please see Appendix A.

### *3.4 Methods*

To understand the effects of quota policies on outcomes for targeted populations, I chose to employ hierarchical linear models. Most econometric studies of electoral quotas in India focus on regression discontinuity designs (RDD) and randomization models in an attempt to gain leverage on understanding the presumed local average treatment effect of the policy intervention. Though these models have some advantages, on the whole I find that these approaches lack important nuance that is key to understanding quota effects. Specifically, while such models excel at providing unbiased estimates of a local effect, the external validity of these effects must be evaluated separately. Below, I first explain why I choose not to follow an RDD as well as move beyond simple comparison of means tests (in line with natural experiment methodology).

In the panchayat system, random assignment of seats for women sets up a natural experiment that various scholars have tried to take advantage of to gain leverage on the question. The assignment of caste quotas is not so straightforward however. This is why previous studies have used regression discontinuities to test for differences between GPs that are along the cutoff for reservation in a given year. While this yields some interesting results, I chose not to follow this exact method for two reasons.

First, in 1994 when the PRI first came into effect, government officials compiled lists GPs by SC population, using 1991 census data to tabulate the population totals. Officials claim the same list has been in operation since that time (though I was unable to extract the exact list from any official at the various levels of government). However, the demographics of GPs drastically

changed in the 15 years since the creation of that list, meaning that some villages that had a very low proportion of SC groups at the start of the reservation cycle may now have much more.

Second, Rajasthan is in its fourth round of the PRI election cycle (elections are held every 5 years since 1995). So, GPs that were reserved for a caste-quota in the 2010 election cycle were farther down along the caste-wise population list – in fact they were the second to last group to receive the caste quotas in the state. This means that the GPs that have never had the SC caste quota and were unreserved seats in the 2010 election are next on the list for reservation under the current allocation guidelines.

A regression discontinuity would focus on panchayats right around the cutoff line for the 2010 reservation, but this sort of analysis makes more sense when there are a large number of panchayats on either side of the threshold. Since I was working with blocks that had an average of 35 GPs, the number of panchayats reserved for the caste quota was about 5 in the current election cycle, and there were about 5 panchayats that had never been reserved for an SC seat before. Being the last 5 GPs in the block, focusing on the cutoff point would not add a great deal of power to the analysis overall. While a true RDD would ignore changes in demographics in order to assess differences at the threshold, I believe the changes in caste proportions can matter greatly for the overall success of a Sarpanch from an SC group.

Therefore, when choosing villages for study, I matched caste proportions of currently reserved and unreserved GPs, which created more variation in the data. This means there are some panchayats with as few as 8 percent SCs and others with around 24 percent. Doing so provided a more complete picture of the quota effect, especially in those GPs where quotas would be most important- where SC populations are low and they cannot coalesce to make a powerful voting bloc.

Moreover, I move away from means comparison tests between outcomes for citizens in villages that have female and male Sarpanch. Quotas are assigned at the GP level, but most outcomes of interest are measured at individual levels. Since individuals are nested within GPs, a hierarchical linear design more completely models the reality of how these electoral quotas work. The nested model also allows for random-effects at the village level, while testing the correlation between GP electoral quotas and individual outcomes. The hierarchical linear model can be thought of as a two-level model, demonstrated below.

#### Level 1: Within Village Model

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{Individual Caste}_{ij}) + X_{2...n}(\text{Individual Controls}) + \beta_{2...n}(\text{Village Controls}) + r_{ij}$$

#### Level 2 Model: Between Village Model

$$\begin{aligned}\beta_{0j} &= \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \text{Village Quota} + u_{0j} \\ \beta_{1j} &= \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11} \text{Village Quota} + u_{1j} \\ \beta_{2...nj} &= \gamma_{2...n0} + \gamma_{2...n1} \text{Village Quota} + u_{2...nj}\end{aligned}$$

#### Combined Model

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} \text{Village Quota} + \gamma_{10} \text{Individual Caste} + \gamma_{11} \text{Village Quota} * \text{Individual Caste} + X_{2...n}(\text{Individual Controls}) + \beta_{2...n}(\text{Village Controls}) + u_{0j} + u_{1j} + r_{ij}$$

A hierarchical linear model is based on fixed effects at level 1 (in this case individual village respondents) while allowing for random effects at level 2 (here the instance of a quota at the village level). In the combined model, the outcome Y for individual *i* in village *j* is a function of the interaction of a village caste quota at level 2 and the individual's caste at level 1. The same model is replicated with an interaction between individual gender and the presence of a gender quota at the village level.

In all models, I control for individual measures of education, amount of land owned, age, measures of income, whether or not the Sarpanch lives in the same village as the respondent, and

whether the individual reported voting for the then incumbent state party. At the village level, I control for percent of SC relative to the population, the child-sex ratio from age 0-6, percent literate, population size of the Gram Panchayat and whether the GP was reserved for a female Sarpanch in 2005.

In this study, I employ both continuous and binary outcome variables. For Hypothesis 1, the two outcome variables are access to water and roads, which are measures, based on survey questions. Water is a binary variable about whether or not the respondent reports easy access to clean water, coded 0 for 'no' and 1 for 'yes.' Access to roads is a continuous variable that is a measure of respondents self-reporting of number of roads in their area of the village, whether or not these roads are in good condition, and if there are drainage corridors alongside the roads. The scale of this measure goes from 0 to 3. Outcome variables in Hypothesis 2 are measures of women's access to toilets, healthcare and reported instances of violence towards women.<sup>11</sup> All measures are binary, coded 0/1 as no/yes. To measure respondents' attendance at village meetings (for Hypothesis 3), I asked respondents how many times they had gone to the panchayat to ask for help or describe a problem in the last 6 months. Responses ranged from 0 to 12 (meaning 2 times a month). Finally, the last measure for Hypothesis 4 is another binary response to the two questions "Should there be caste (or gender) quotas for the Sarpanch seat?" The next section presents the result of testing these models.

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<sup>11</sup> These goods, while not considered high on priority lists do fall under the purview of the Sarpanch and Panchayat more broadly. Specifically, GP leaders have the power to allocate material support to poor households to build toilets, can shut down local alcohol sellers and can focus energy on making sure local clinics are maintained and operating.

### 3.5 Results

In the first set of hypotheses, I measure differences in access and distribution of material public goods that are considered critical elements of development agendas. At the first level of analysis, results reveal stark differences in access by caste and gender for neighborhood goods and individual goods (Table 3c).

**Table 3c: Individual Access to Public Goods**

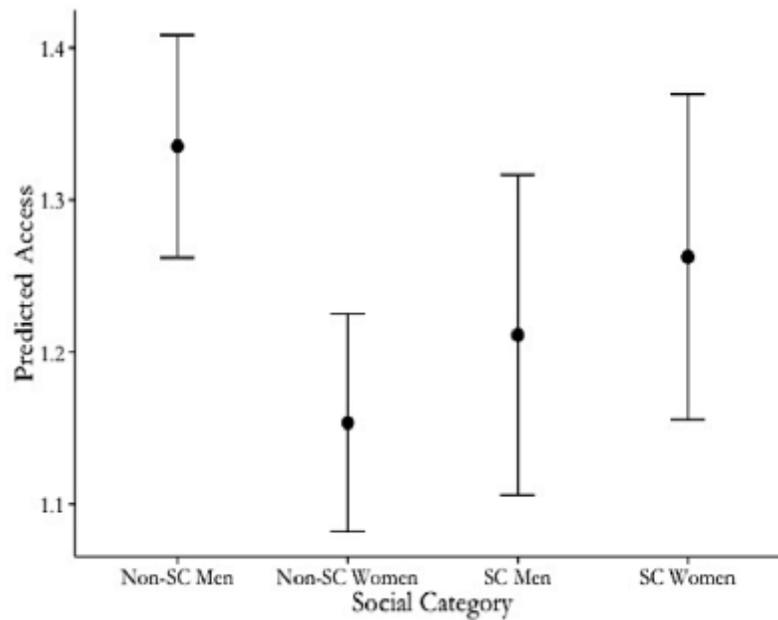
Predictor	Water	Roads	Healthcare (Odds Ratios)	Sanitation (Odds Ratios)
Scheduled Caste	-0.352*** (0.077)	-0.163 (0.102)	0.593* (0.157)	0.532* (0.160)
Female	-0.182* (0.076)	0.060 (0.100)	0.639 (0.161)	2.208** (0.616)
SC x Female	0.239* (0.097)	-0.011 (0.128)	1.778 (0.590)	0.706 (0.276)
Constant	1.537*** (0.132)	1.188*** (0.215)	0.177*** (0.069)	0.260** (0.115)
N	891	903	907	898

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Access to water is significant lower for both SC men and women, and for non-SC women, with .35 and .18 units less access respectively. However, the positive and significant coefficient on the

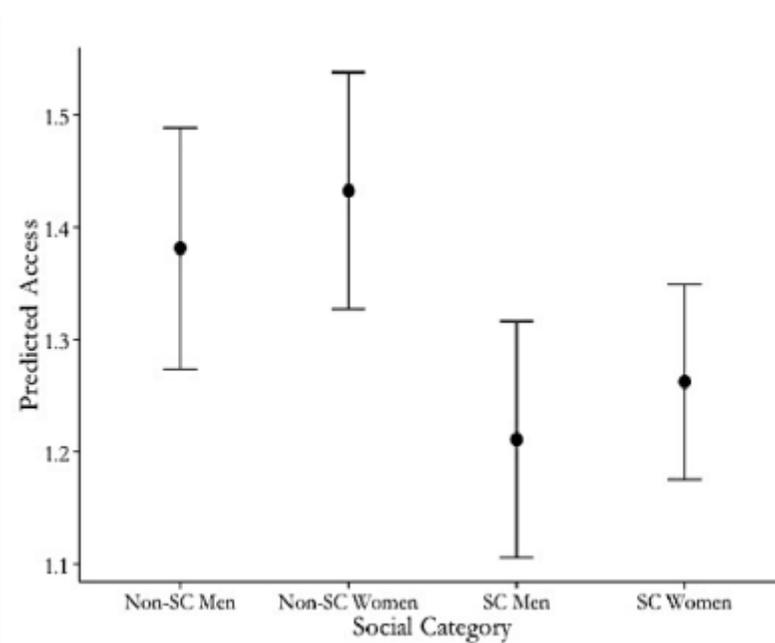
interaction between SC and female does not mean that SC women have more access to water than the other social categories as the marginal plot of this model indicates (Figure 3b).<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 3a: Marginal Water Access by Individual**



<sup>12</sup> These results do not include access to private taps. In the survey instrument we asked respondents about their access to the nearest government provided water source. People with private access to water responded that the state allocated water was poor or low quality, which was then recorded in the survey.

**Figure 3b: Marginal Road Access by Individual Type**



Marginal plots show that access to water is almost equal among SC men and women, but there is a gender gap among non-SCs. It is important to note that this measure of water is about perceived ease of access to and reliability of water sources. What this means is that for a non-SC male and non-SC female living in the same neighborhood, a distance of .5 km to the nearest public water source means different things. Since the mobility of most non-SC women is severely limited (even with respect to SC women), what may seem like a short distance for an upper-caste man would not be the same for a woman of the same caste. This may also explain why SC men and women do not perceive water access differently, as SC women expect to travel greater distance for water with lower repercussions for mobility in the public sphere.

When it comes to access to roads around a respondent's home and area of the village, there is no significant difference by caste or gender. Marginal plots (Figure 3) do indicate clustering around mean predicted access by caste. In this case there is little difference by gender, which fits

with H1 that certain public goods are perceived as equally available for men and women in the same areas.

For access to healthcare and sanitation, some counterintuitive results emerge (full results in Appendix B). First, being SC has a negative effect on availability of these goods, which is not unexpected given their disadvantage in broader society. However, there is no difference in perceived access to healthcare between women and men. Access to sanitation is less available to SC respondents than dominant caste groups, but within dominant castes, women are more likely to report access to in-home sanitation than men. These results indicate there may be some interesting gendered effects to how dominant groups perceive sanitation. Deeper analysis and a set of follow up surveys is needed to explain this surprising result.

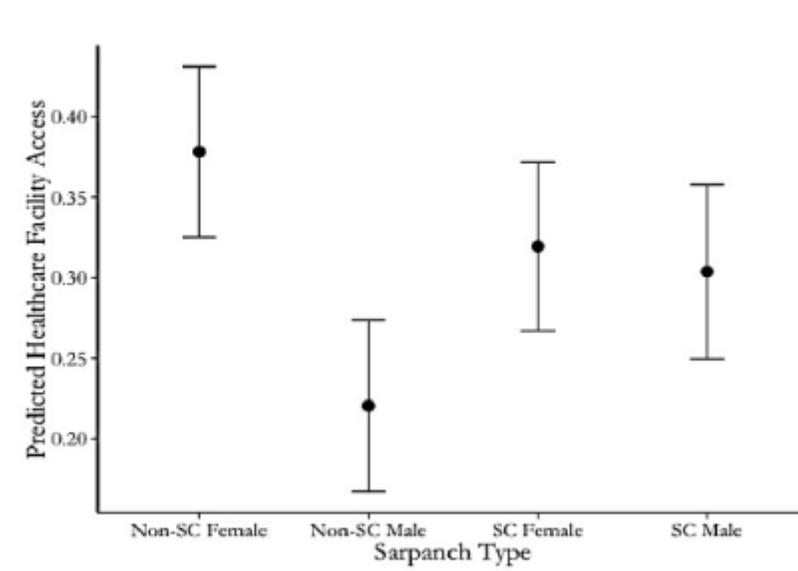
**Table 3d: Provision of Public Goods by Sarpanch Type**

Predictor	Water	Roads	Healthcare (Odds Ratios)	Sanitation (Odds Ratios)
SC Sarpanch	0.153 (0.161)	-0.073 (0.277)	2.566* (1.062)	3.255* (1.600)
Female Sarpanch	-0.162 (0.160)	-0.382 (0.273)	1.785 (0.782)	1.109 (0.558)
SC x Female Sarpanch	-0.148 (0.222)	0.564 (0.381)	0.427 (0.247)	0.471 (0.317)
Constant	1.441*** (0.139)	1.316*** (0.228)	0.126*** (0.051)	0.235** (0.108)
N	891	903	907	898

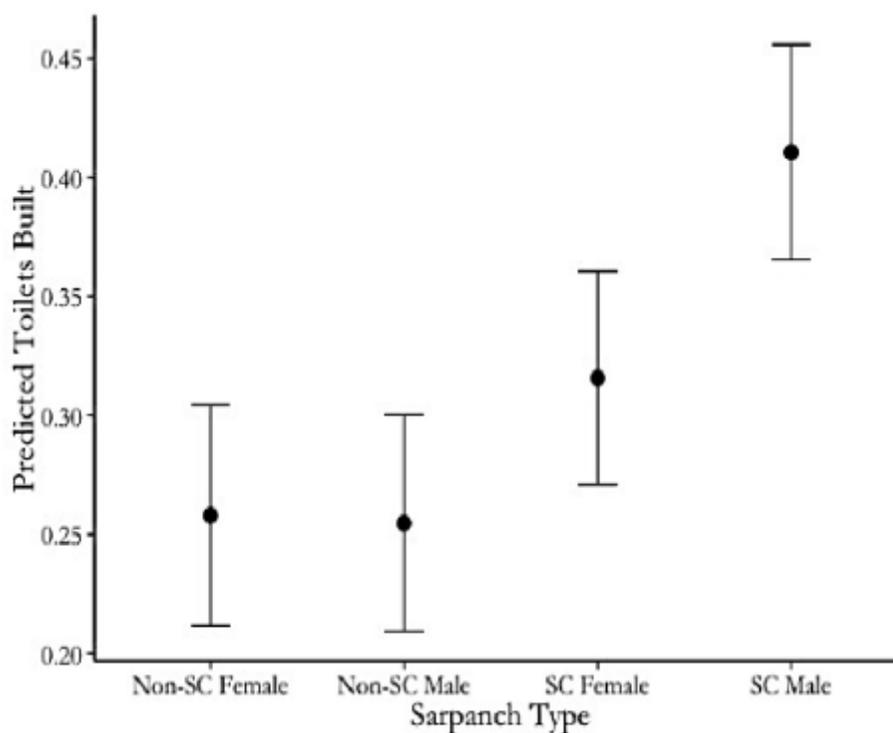
\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

Models of perceived access to certain goods controlling for Sarpanch type provide more counterintuitive results (Table 3d). For neighborhood-based services, the presence of a minority leader either by caste or gender has no effect on overall access to public water or roadways. In the case of low-priority public goods, healthcare and sanitation, I predicted that women leaders would be more likely to provide these services than men but results demonstrate no effect of female leadership on the presence of these goods. Instead, being an SC male Sarpanch makes a leader 2.6 times more likely to provide healthcare services and 3.3 times more likely to provide sanitation goods. Marginal plots below of Sarpanch type and likelihood of goods provision demonstrate the exact variation in policy preference by caste and gender (Figures 3c and 3d).

**Figure 3c: Healthcare Provision, by Sarpanch Type**



**Figure 3d: Sanitation Provision, by Sarpanch Type**



In the instance of healthcare, there is no significant difference in provision between women of different castes and SC men. Surprisingly, there is a strong gender effect among non-SC female and male Sarpanch. If we are to believe that healthcare is considered a female interest, then the significant divergence between non-SC women and men leaders indicates that gendered differences reflect themselves more among certain castes than others. Since SC groups are already marginalized, it is possible that male SC Sarpanch are more attuned to the needs of women as another marginalized group.<sup>13</sup>

The same sense of socio-political rapport seems to be missing among non-SCs, which may explain the gender divide in this case. Interestingly, the gender divide is present among SCs in the

<sup>13</sup> Interviews with SC male Sarpanch indicated that they were in fact attuned to the needs of women in their lives. However, this evidence for this explanation is not systematic.

case of sanitation provision (the difference, however small, is significant). In this case, SC men are more likely to provide toilets than SC women, and much more so than non-SCs in general. Again, rather than following the prediction that women will be more likely to provide these goods, we see a counterintuitive policy preference for sanitation among SC men and no gender difference within dominant caste Sarpanch.

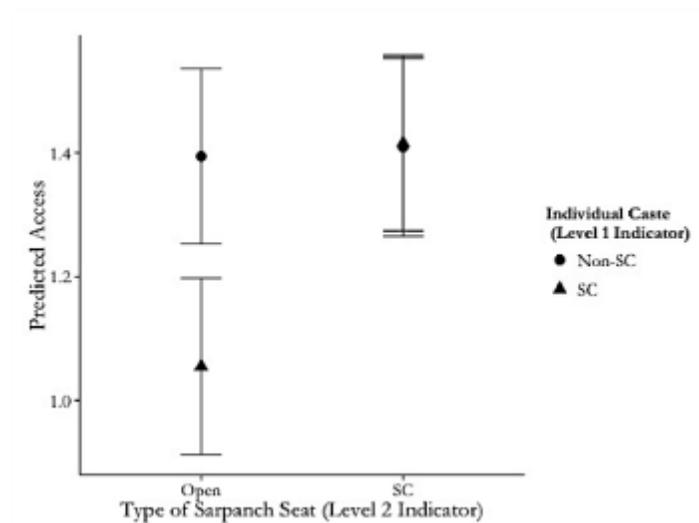
Here, caste is a compelling explanation for the strong preference among SCs for sanitation provision, as these minority Sarpanch are more sympathetic to the needs of economically deprived populations that need assistance. As for the gender difference, it is entirely plausible that due to the difficult nature of programmatic bureaucracy related to sanitation development, SC women are less able to implement sanitation programs that they might otherwise support-making this an issue of efficacy, not preference.

At the cross level-that is, the specific effect of minority leadership on minority access to public goods – results are significant for only road provision (see Figure 3e). The presence of an SC Sarpanch almost equalizes access to roads between non-SCs and SCs, providing some evidence for the positive influence that new kinds of leadership can have on subordinate populations. The same change in access is not present in water provision. Access to water in Rajasthan is difficult given a low water table and dry climate. Multiple interviews with Sarpanch indicated that even with the political will and budget to build public water pumps, providing reliable access to water is difficult. Even in cases where GPs build multiple access points, ground water in Rajasthan is often high in fluoride content, making it unsuitable for drinking.

As a result, overall public sources of water are difficult to provide, regardless of a Sarpanch's gender or caste status. This is reflected in the fact that even for non-SC populations, the presence of a dominant caste leader does not increase their access to water (results not shown). Among

women, access to health and sanitation goods does not increase either under female leadership nor SC leadership.

**Figure 3e: Cross Level Marginal Road Access**



In the next set of results, I look at the individual and cross level variation in democratic participation, by measuring the number of times an individual has been to public Gram Panchayat meetings in a 6-month period. Unsurprisingly, there is a large gender gap in attendance rates, as women's mobility and presence in political spaces is severely limited (see Table 3d). Results show that women attend 1.5 fewer GP meetings than men, with no difference by caste among women (Model I). However, the presence of a female leader does not increase women's attendance at gram panchayat meetings (Model III). This is not a dramatic finding given the extensive tokenism of female leadership in rural India—even if a women Sarpanch is seated at the Panchayat, she is usually distanced from the public proceedings and thus is unable to provide a meaningful example to other women. In a more interesting null result, being SC does not decrease the amount of meetings a villager attends nor does the presence of an SC Sarpanch increase attendance (Models I and II). This means that SC villagers are comfortable participating in local governance at equal levels as

the dominant caste regardless of which caste the Sarpanch is from. Thus, affirmative action is not necessary for increasing caste-wise participation in democratic institutions at the local level. At the same time, electoral gender quotas are not sufficient to increase women's participation in local governance.

**Table 3d: Attendance at Gram Panchayat Meetings**

Predictor	I	II	III
SC Individual	0.056 (0.233)	-0.117 (0.226)	-0.052 (0.174)
Female Individual	-1.489*** (0.229)	-1.590*** (0.168)	-1.705*** (0.219)
SC x Female Individual	-0.199 (0.296)		
SC Sarpanch	0.085 (0.176)	0.015 (0.231)	0.090 (0.176)
Female Sarpanch	0.054 (0.180)	0.054 (0.180)	-0.065 (0.233)
SC x SC Sarpanch		0.143 (0.296)	
Female x Female Sarpanch			0.234 (0.296)
Constant	1.963*** (0.256)	2.045*** (0.255)	2.068*** (0.255)
N	910	910	910

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

Finally, I test the impact of minority leaders on attitudes towards electoral quotas. By asking respondents if they support the use of affirmative action for the Sarpanch seat, I hope to uncover whether the presence of a minority individual in power changes beliefs about mandated representation. If people have more positive attitudes towards quotas in the presence of an SC or female Sarpanch, then experiencing a new form of political leadership can increase overall acceptance of state interventions in socio-political development. This would mean affirmative action could have meaningful symbolic effects on populations as a whole.

**Table 3e: Individual Attitudes towards Quotas, Odds Ratios**

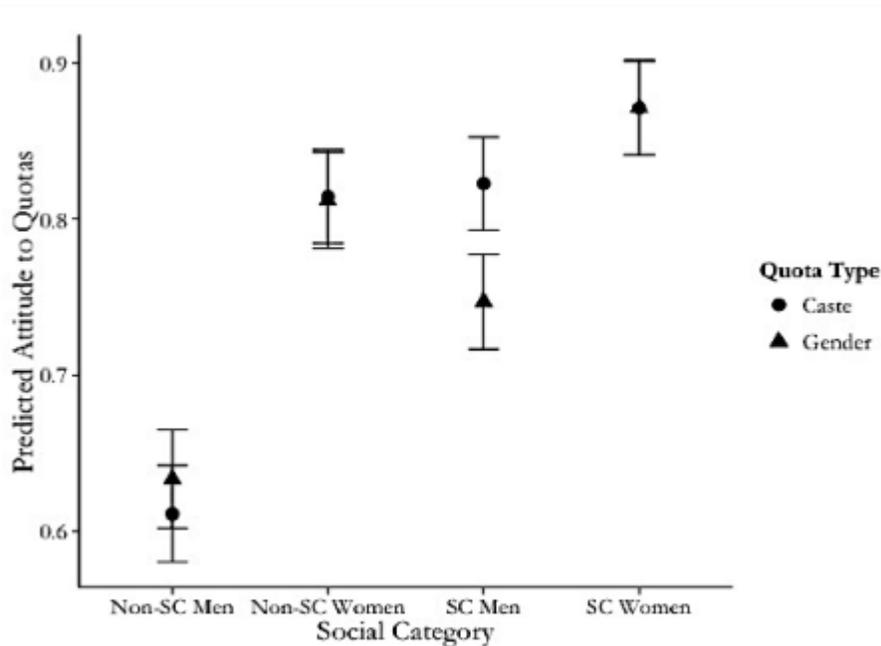
Predictor	Caste Quota	Gender Quota
SC	3.716*** (1.070)	1.995** (0.508)
Female	3.863*** (1.094)	3.388*** (0.921)
SC x Female Individual	0.472 (0.190)	0.839 (0.310)
Constant	2.158* (0.807)	1.861* (0.568)
N	876	875

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Before delving into the impact of minority leadership on attitudes, I first test the difference in support of electoral quotas across various respondent categories. Results in Table 3e show that being SC and female have significant positive correlations with attitudes towards caste and gender quotas. SCs are 3.7 and 1.99 times more likely to support caste and gender quotas than non-SCs, while women are 3.8 and 3.4 times more likely to support quotas than men. However, the

interaction between SC and female is not a significant value for either quota. The marginal plots of these results in Figure 7, reveal an interesting difference.

**Figure 3f: Marginal Attitudes towards Quotas**



As predicted in Hypothesis 3a, non-SC men have the lowest positive attitudes towards both kinds of quotas, as their access to power is most threatened by these policies. Non-SC women have much more positive attitudes that are closer to SC women. Interestingly, SC men have significantly higher positive attitudes towards caste quotas than they do for gender quotas. This may reflect a sense of threat from gender quotas among SC men as well. Moreover, within men there is a caste-wise difference in attitudes towards gender quotas while there is no difference towards either quota among women of different caste groups. However, within both caste groups, men have significantly lower attitudes towards gender quotas than women. This indicates that norms of women's behavior and expectations of the abilities as leaders are just as pervasive for minority men as majority men.

**Table 3f: Effect of Minority Leadership on Attitudes towards Quotas, Odds Ratios**

Predictor	Caste Quota	Gender Quota
SC Sarpanch	0.296** (0.119)	0.992 (0.332)
Female Sarpanch	1.082 (0.474)	0.591 (0.195)
SC Sarpanch x Female Sarpanch	1.040 (0.586)	1.002 (0.447)
Constant	2.492*	1.990*
N	905	900

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

At the second level of analysis SC leadership has a significant negative effect on attitudes towards caste quota, dropping the likelihood of support for these policies by 70 percent. This effect is universal across all respondents, which means that even SCs support quotas less under minority leadership. No such effect is present for female leadership. The same negative effect of SC leadership is observed in the cross level analysis (Table 3g).

**Table 3g: Cross Level Effects on Attitudes, Odds Ratios**

Predictor	Caste Quota	Gender Quota
SC	3.108** (1.113)	1.783** (0.373)
Female	2.914*** (0.651)	4.863*** (1.548)
SC Sarpanch	0.325*** (0.103)	0.980 (0.217)
Female Sarpanch	1.108 (0.314)	0.746 (0.191)
SC x SC Sarpanch	0.800 (0.333)	
Female x Female Sarpanch		0.495 (0.191)
Constant	2.363* (0.864)	1.761 (0.523)
N	905	900

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

Taken as a whole, these results indicate that for dominant castes, the presence of an SC leader reduces support for caste quotas (coefficient on 'SC Sarpanch' is less than zero). At the same time, the presence of an SC Sarpanch has no effect on SC attitudes. In contrast to government expectations that experiences with minority leadership would positively influence non-SC beliefs, the data reveal that caste quotas further stratify the beliefs of non-SCs from SCs. The same is not true of men's attitudes towards women's involvement in the public sphere-the presence of a female leader has no effect on support for gender quotas.

What explains this divergence in effect of minority leadership on attitudes? One explanation may be that because support for women's participation in government is already so low among men introducing female leadership cannot do any more harm or benefit. Attitudes towards caste quotas are generally more positive for both men and women, which could mean SC leaders have more expectations to fulfill as Sarpanch. Another explanation is that the blame for general dissatisfaction with local leadership is inaccurately placed on the caste status of the Sarpanch as a convenient excuse for her shortcomings, a belief that came up in informal interviews with local leaders and officials. What these results mean is that affirmative action has more power to transform ideas about participation by caste than for gender, but this effect is not positive for overall social transformation.

### *3.6 Discussion*

These results indicate that the effect of quotas for outcomes and participation by subordinate groups is not always clear, especially when considering intersectionality. In certain cases, caste quotas do increase access to some goods for ethnic minorities but women do not get

more public goods delivery under female leadership. In addition, women's attendance and interactions with presidents does not increase in the presences of a gender quota.

Attitudes towards gender and caste quotas are generally positive among subordinate groups, though the actual instance of a caste quota has a negative effect on respondent's willingness to approve of affirmative action policies. Interestingly, when broken down by caste and gender, we see that SC men and women, as well as non-SC females cluster around similar attitudes towards affirmative action, while non-SC males have a strong negative bias to both kinds of quotas. This may not be a counter-intuitive finding per say, but the evidence serves to reinforce the importance of understanding intersectionality.

While the correlation between SC or female leadership and positive outcomes is not always evident, the results indicate that caste groups are more likely to use their power to the benefit of their own group members, whereas women are much less likely to do. Additionally, the mixed effects of intersecting identities points to an interesting conclusion- the effect of a leader's caste identity on access to goods is mediated by the gender of the respondent, and the effect of a leader's gender identity on access to goods is mediated by the caste of the respondent. While not a simple statement, it certainly provides much-needed nuance to an important area of government policy.

The implications of these mixed and sometimes null results are critical to better understand minority representation as a whole. While in theory quotas should improve livelihoods for targeted groups, in practice the structural constraints on leaders themselves most likely lead to less meaningful outcomes. In most cases, villages were experiencing either a caste or gender quota for the first time meaning the overall impact of representation was already likely to be low. Even after 20 years of affirmative action practices, the rotating nature of these policies makes it easy for Sarpanch and citizens alike to make do for 5 years before returning to ongoing systems of power.

Non-rotating SC quotas to the national legislature have been in effect for over 30 plus year, the effects of which are only becoming noticeable now. Future research could assess the instances of access for minorities in panchayats with repeated instances of quotas, to better understand continuous long-term effects. Moreover, women leaders in this sample were very often token leaders for another male in their family, and some SC presidents often felt pressured by dominant caste groups. Even if minorities attain positions of power through electoral quotas, they are still subject to existing caste and gender hierarchies that pervaded the system for years before. Thus, expecting an immediate change in outcomes for targeted groups is a far reach (though this also makes cases of positive outcomes that much more meaningful). In the next chapter, I explore the dynamics of minority leaders themselves, and what access to new positions of power means for the SC and women elected by a reserved seat.

## Chapter 4

### Empowering Direct Beneficiaries of Affirmative Action Policies

In modern India, ethnic and gender subordination permeate structures of society such that minorities often have very little access to political resources and positions of power. Affirmative action policies like electoral quotas aimed at minorities intend to improve their socio-political stature by ensuring their representation in local and national government. But are these policies more effective at helping subalterns challenge caste or gender oppressions? This chapter looks at the effects of electoral quotas in the local politics of village councils called Gram Panchayats (GPs) to assess whether access to the Sarpanch position (president's seat) increases the empowerment of minority leaders. The previous chapter and other literature have studied the effect of electoral quotas on subordinate citizens' access to goods. Here I instead focus on the leaders themselves, to assess whether or not affirmative action policies matter for the direct beneficiaries themselves. I find that the effects of such policies are more nuanced than previous literature suggests, and that the intersection of caste and gender matters greatly to completely understand how well state levers of intervention can help subalterns overcome subordination.

Debates on the status of minority Sarpanch in rural India center on whether or not caste and gender quotas create strong and empowered leaders over time. However, these commonly cited studies do not account for variation within minority groups, or the mechanisms through which leaders become abler political figures. For example, Beaman et al. (2009) use large-n survey analysis and implicit attitude tests to determine that quota-elected women Sarpanch in West Bengal take more control of their panchayats as their tenure goes on, and in the process create more

female-oriented public goods. However, they do not explore the potential caste differences among these female leaders, again assuming that all women behave and experience village politics the same way. Ban and Rao (2008) also find similar evidence that females can surpass male leaders with more experience, and that on average they do not perform any worse than their male counterparts. A majority of the women in their sample are not token leaders, though their study is conducted in the state of Kerala- a place that is more progressive than Rajasthan. Additionally, Dunning and Nilekani (2013) demonstrate that leaders elected on a caste quota are less likely to cater only to caste needs and are empowered enough to participate in local party politics. These choices alter the nature of public goods distribution and indicates that quotas are overall challenging the notions of subordination present in modern rural India. Again, this paper misses a critical opportunity to discuss the difference between male and female caste leaders, as well as compelling mechanisms for why this shift in beliefs occurs.

While there are various examples of strong minority leadership in the Indian political context, it is not clear how affirmative action policies affect minorities elected to a position of power. The existing literature on the subject tends to classify Sarpanch either by caste or gender, without focusing on the multiple identities that minorities have. Caste and gender-based discrimination against quota-elected officials will necessarily vary across different sub-groups of a larger targeted population. SC men, SC women, and non-SC women will all experience power and subordination in unique ways, which are not fully addressed in previous studies. In this chapter I make use of an intersectional methodology, which casts new light on the nature of subordination to better understand when and why quotas are successful in creating more equal power distributions. The intersectional approach provides more nuance into the question of affirmative action, especially since quotas in rural India are allocated with multiple minority identities in mind.

The qualitative data presented here comes from research in 4 districts of rural Rajasthan. Rajasthan provides an excellent case in which to study these effects because quota policies and the current panchayat system have been in effect since 1995. Moreover, Rajasthani society is heavily governed by caste structures, meaning that finding positive effects of affirmative action is especially important. Additionally, patriarchal norms are pervasive for Rajasthani women such as the practice of *ghunghat* (veiling) and expectations of obedience for married women. Using in-depth interview data, I demonstrate that levers of state action are able to help leaders overcome some caste-based discrimination. However, this effect is only observed for SC men- SC women are less likely to overcome the baseline gender subordination they face in both the private and public sphere to be leaders in their own right. What this means is that the effect of affirmative action on caste subordination is mediated by gender. At the same time, gender quotas do not have a universal effect for women's empowerment- in the case of gender subordination, the effective of affirmative action is mediated by caste. Thus, state intervention in social transformation is not as straightforward as implementing large-scale quota policies given the complicated nature of subordination for minorities in India.

The rest of the chapter continues as follows. In the next section, I define terms of empowerment among local leaders in rural India, followed by an overview of the claims I make in the third section. The fourth section looks at the role of quotas in overcoming caste-based discrimination, as well as other sufficient conditions. In the fifth section I discuss gender-based subordination and the varying effects of patriarchic domination among women from different caste groups. Finally, I conclude with some implications of these findings.

### *4.1 Defining Empowerment*

In earlier chapters I outline the meaning of power in different contexts and distinguish between material power and intangible social power. While the human capabilities approach guides my understanding of the power indirect beneficiaries of affirmative action policies gain, in this chapter I focus on the self-actualization or empowerment of minority leaders that win access to the seat via the reserved seat. Using empowerment as an outcome of interest is a key part of development ideology that favors local government and affirmative action. However, the concept of power and empowerment is not easily defined nor is one understanding universally accepted across scholars, development workers, and policy makers. In this section, I use Aradhana Sharma's study of female empowerment through government organized programs and Anirudh Krishna's study of social capital in developing village society to set up my categorization of 'empowerment' that is both context dependent and subject to my own Western academic influences of what power means.

In her book, *Logics of Empowerment* (1998) Sharma studies the role of the government organized Mahila Samakhya (MS) program in rural Uttar Pradesh. MS is a joint government-NGO program that focuses on women's empowerment, specifically through grassroots organization and means. A critical feature of the MS is that it "explicitly takes an open-ended, process-oriented approach to subaltern women's empowerment and resists defining empowerment according to stringent criteria" (Sharma, 25). Sharma emphasizes this point in her study and is careful to say that her analysis is not about measuring the successes or failures of the MS program in generating empowerment, but rather about how the concept of empowerment is formulated and the realities these policies produce. In this endeavor, she outlines two schools of thought on what

empowerment means. First is the Gender and Development approach (GAD), which derives from a neoliberal understanding of justice and economic power. Empowerment, defined as the ability for self-help and self-esteem, should increase participation in free markets and democratic structures, which in turn generates better governance for all involved citizens. By providing women with the tools for empowerment, such as micro loans for small business ventures, or education on their rights or the rule of law, GAD development programs intend to bring about larger social transformation. In this formulation, empowerment is the means to an end- the end being a more just and equal society.

An alternative approach to empowerment is rooted in a Gandhian notion of self-rule or *swaraj*. Sharma describes this form of empowerment as a rejection of existing institutional structures, so that leaders with spiritual and ethical standing can spearhead development at the village level. Gandhi's idea of empowerment "was not one grounded in rationality and scientific reasoning but in the local moral universe," which derived from his other principles on morality and justice (Sharma, 14). For Gandhi, issues like literacy or neoliberal economic development were less empowering than good moral conduct that would create more balanced and just beings. Importantly, ideas about power and development should come from the self and society itself, not top down from the state. In this way, his concept of empowerment was an end within itself. Sharma highlights the tensions between defining empowerment as a means versus an end in itself in the MS program, as it tries to both alert subaltern women to the structures of oppression placed on them while trying to produce tangible outcomes for women that fit in the development agenda. She argues that in fact the state-mandated expectations of empowerment reduce the overall strength of the program as bureaucratic ideals and measurements sneak into what should otherwise be a grassroots program meant to increase women's knowledge.

In this study, I use a Gender and Development approach to empowerment that focuses on changes in leaders' behaviors and control over local institutions of power that is tied to modern liberal concepts of power (articulated in full in the first chapter). As a researcher, I impose my own sense of what empowerment means on my subjects based on expectations of local government and affirmative action in a Western, liberal feminist framework. Sharma believes ideas about what self-actualization means should come from the subjects themselves, but in order to make claims across a large number of Sarpanch I need to define those terms externally. At the same time, the external impositions of empowerment agendas are in line with the way the Indian state and liberal development rhetoric address inequality broadly, and so fits in with the larger project's attempt to understand the success or failure of affirmative action from the government's viewpoint.

Sharma's study focuses on the influence of external groups on minority empowerment. In contrast, Krishna (2002) looks at the role of existing social and human capital in creating new leadership in rural India. While the PRI system and education are important elements of development, Krishna provides evidence that "non caste-based political entrepreneurs" called *naya neethi* are the new leaders of local politics in rural India. These *naya neethi* are typically young literate men who simply put, can get things done. Whether it means helping elderly or illiterate villagers apply for government pension or successfully mobilizing citizens to petition local government for certain services, it is these new intermediary power brokers that utilize social and human capital to their own and others' advantage. Krishna's study highlights a form of village structure that gives power to agents that are able to do- regardless of their status as government officials or elected leaders. In my own definition of empowerment, I draw on these kinds of practical powers to understand whether or not Sarpanch are able to be as useful as the new leaders that Krishna finds in rural Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

With these contextual factors and the discussion of ‘power to’, ‘power over’ and ‘power within’ from Chapter One, I outline four typologies of Sarpanch empowerment. These typologies serve to organize the various empowerment outcomes into broader and more manageable categories. Originally derived from the above discussion of power, I refined the typologies through participant observation and both informal and formal interviews with Sarpanch, citizens, and other government officials in the Jaipur and Sikar districts of Rajasthan. These categories outline the kind of leadership we might expect to see from subordinate people when elected to a seat of power.

First is the token leader—a Sarpanch that is not empowered at all. In lieu of doing his or her own work, another member of society or their family is the effective Sarpanch. The elected official is a rubber stamp on all documents and is present at panchayat meetings only for formality's sake. Common examples come from women who are elected on a gender quota but are completely uninvolved in the work, though there are certainly cases where SC men are also token leaders for a more powerful leader in the village. The perception of most citizens and bureaucrats is that most female Sarpanch are token leaders for their husbands or other men in the family. One district level official told me that in all of Rajasthan, "at least 90 percent of women Sarpanch are *anghuta tek*h (rubber stamps)" (Interview, September 2013). Whether or not this is true, this category of empowerment serves as a baseline to understanding the broader effects of affirmative action.

In the next category of empowerment is a Sarpanch that is still not in control of her panchayat, but can at least speak to the basic development and work done during her tenure. While this Sarpanch may not have 'power over' agenda setting, she is at least aware of the activity in her GP indicating some level of access to the seat, which indicates ‘power to’ learn more information. This kind of Sarpanch can be thought of as an 'aware but inactive leader.' Beyond this is the third category of an 'aware and active leader' who has the 'power to' gain and understand development

information and 'power over' agenda setting and goods allocation. However, the 'aware and active' Sarpanch still does not have the 'power within' to challenge certain norms of subordination. I came across one such male SC Sarpanch in the Jaipur district in early 2014. The first half of our interview was conducted semi-privately, with only a few other villagers around. During that time, he spoke openly and competently about the development work he'd done and the system of local politics he engaged in. Halfway through, the Upsarpanch (vice-president) arrived at the panchayat. The Upsarpanch was a dominant caste male, and upon his arrival the Sarpanch deferred to him to let him speak and finish the rest of the interview. This was an interesting dynamic to observe, because even though the Sarpanch had clearly gained some empowerment from his tenure, it was not enough to overcome the underlying subordination he felt in front of dominant caste men. It was clear that even though the quota had generated tangible forms of power for him, he still lacked social empowerment<sup>14</sup>.

A Sarpanch that has gained social empowerment (power within) and is aware and active in the operation of her panchayats is a 'completely empowered leader.' Generating the power within means being able to confront norms about subordinate behaviors, roles, and expectations. For women, this means feeling comfortable speaking in front of men or removing their veil in public. SCs, men and women, will be empowered when they choose not defer to dominant caste members. One striking example of a completely empowered leader is Radha Devi, a middle-aged SC woman Sarpanch whose panchayat is centrally located in the Jaipur district. Radha Devi comes from a humble agricultural background, but her election to the Sarpanch seat changed her social and

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<sup>14</sup> It could also be possible that this Sarpanch recognized the social challenges he faced and chose to 'tone' himself in order to ensure a larger success in the face of hierarchy. This would be a strategic choice reflecting some form of empowerment. However, as an outside observer, I can only assess and interpret actions as I see them- without knowing this person's motives I cannot assume strategic actions.

economic status drastically. Despite being uneducated she has taken effective control of her panchayat, and during my repeated interviews with her various citizens would come by to solicit her help. She was able to speak openly and clearly about her role as Sarpanch and had also forged a connection with the local Congress party leaders, which contributed to her overall political success. To further her goals as an effective leader, she applied money from the Sarpanch salary towards building a large office where she could hear citizens and hold meetings. Most importantly, Radha had surmounted a great deal of subordination as an SC woman. In the multiple times I met with her, I never once met her husband nor did she ever indicate that her husband helped her with her work. Moreover, she had gained enough stature in the village that even dominant caste men came before her to get help. Her example provides the other end of a spectrum of empowerment. These four types of empowerment cover a broad range of Sarpanch activity and help make sense of the various ways that affirmative action can help people overcome subordination.

Before describing the mechanisms for empowerment in the next section, I wish to make an important but brief point. This typology of empowerment assumes that women are empowered when they act like men, or that SC are empowered when they behave like upper-caste villagers. By putting emphasis on knowledge, speaking abilities or presence in public life, this conception of empowerment inherently skews towards 'acting like a dominant caste male.' There are potentially other, less overt, ways in which marginalized groups can express their self-actualization but are much harder to measure and observe from an outsider's perspective. The measures of empowerment outlined here fall within a liberal feminist school of thought- that equality between women and men, or SC and non-SC people is achieved when weaker sections of society successfully imitate the actions of more powerful group members. While this approach to gender and race equality is loaded with its own set of normative problems, in this study it provides

observable expectations that are necessary for a more consistent assessment of affirmative action more broadly.

## *4.2 Empowerment Pathways*

In this chapter, I assess the effect of affirmative action on empowerment for subordinated groups with the dynamics of intersecting identities in mind. To this end, I propose two major mechanisms that describe the interaction of caste, gender and state intervention in overcoming oppression. As I describe later on, the data used here is entirely qualitative in nature. This means the claims I make are necessarily based on subjective coding of interviews, but may well provide insight into the processes of how affirmative action policies may or may not improve outcomes for elected officials. Rather than focus on generating a generalized theory of subordination, I focus my claims and evidence on the unique caste and gender structure of rural Rajasthan to provide a more distinct understanding.

*Mechanism 1: The effect of affirmative action on overcoming caste subordination is moderated by education, previous political experience, and gender.*

*1a. Affirmative action policies for subordinated castes result in greater empowerment when elected officials have a baseline educational background.*

*1b. Affirmative action policies for subordinated castes result in greater empowerment when elected officials have previous political experience.*

*1c. SC men garner greater political empowerment from caste quotas than SC women.*

These pathways highlight the additional factors that improve the chances of electoral policies having meaningful effects, specifically education and previous political experience. The interest in formal education and political experience as important moderating variables in the overall question of affirmative action comes from new amendments to the Panchayati Raj Act as well as from informal interviews during the initial fieldwork process. In December 2014, the Rajasthan state government enacted a new law mandating that all elected panchayat officials must have at least eight years of formal education (Pande 2015). Citing the growing number of instances where illiterate Sarpanch claim to be tricked into signing documents and records that they wouldn't otherwise, the government argues that requiring a minimum level of education will prevent more corruption and better governance. While not explicit, this law will severely reduce access to political positions for SCs and women, who are on average less educated than men from dominant groups. However, entering the Sarpanch seat with even a minimum level of education may provide two benefits to a newly elected SC leader. First, it ensures a basic understanding of reading, writing and mathematics, which means the Sarpanch can be independently responsible for the panchayat documents that come before him. This also helps prevent dominant caste members from taking advantage of an uneducated or unaware SC Sarpanch. Second, as the level of education goes up, so does the respect conferred upon the Sarpanch, even if they come from a subordinate caste. Higher education gives an SC Sarpanch more credibility in their role and improves relationships between the Sarpanch, other local leaders and government officials. Additionally, education provides an SC leader with confidence and knowledge that can be effectively leveraged to produce better development outcomes overall. In this study, I examine whether or not instances of education actually help SC Sarpanch in their empowerment process.

At the same time, the policy enacted by the government does have serious consequences for minority access to positions of power, especially if they come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This is why in 1b I argue that previous political experience can be equally empowering for an SC Sarpanch. While formal education may provide a certain set of skills, different forms of political knowledge may be as useful for otherwise subordinate groups. Elected officials will frequently make reference to *rajneethi*, which is the term for politics in Hindi, but colloquially means a sense of corrupt and dirty politics that one must engage in<sup>15</sup>. Less confident (or perhaps more honest) Sarpanch will claim, '*mujhe rajneethi karni nahi aatha*' (I don't know how to do *rajneethi*), indicating their unwillingness or inability to engage in the system of dirty politics. *Rajneethi* is ubiquitous in Indian politics from the national to the local, making it an unavoidable feature of elected office. Thus, for an SC elected on a quota the willingness and ability to play by the rules of *rajneethi* can be helpful and encourage them to be more empowered in the new position of power. Especially when a leader does not have formal education, political knowledge and connections can be as equally beneficial. This claim is in strict contrast to the claims promoted by the new Rajasthan government policy and proposes alternative routes to success for SC leaders.

Finally, in 1c I argue that the effect of affirmative action policies will be more meaningful for SC men than SC women. This idea follows from norms of subordination and gender hierarchy that advantages male participation in politics. While SC men do experience subordination in the

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<sup>15</sup> *Rajneethi* is a wide and varying term- ranging from political savvy on how to manipulate and control power to more 'dirty' tricks such as the use of brute force or money to accomplish political will. The most common ideas associated with *rajneethi* are a sense of collusion and backchannel politics that requires confidence and often a less ethical approach to leadership.

public sphere, SC women face both public and private oppression. The expectations of women in Rajasthani society mandate her silence and veiling in front of men (a practice known as *ghunghat* which I explore later on); women who choose not to obey these norms of behavior are subject to great social sanctioning including reputation costs. These practices result in many women becoming token leaders, despite the instances of strong female leadership at the national and state level in India. Even if SC women are able to go to the panchayat or speak in front of other men, their relative understanding and empowerment as local leaders will be less than SC men who have more independent freedom of movement and participation in *rajneethi*. Renowned Indian scholar Nirmila Buch (2010) points to the constraints women in local politics face and the perception around their abilities as leaders. While the caste-based affirmative action policies do have the potential to create widespread change, I argue that for SC women the ideational element of patriarchy is more persistent than the norms of *jati* subordination that affect men. The persistence of patriarchy in this case means that SC women will have less independent access to their legally prescribed formal power and are less able to become empowered when compared to the male counterparts.

The next set of pathways to empowerment are concerned with the effect of affirmative action on overcoming gender subordination and the factors that may or may not facilitate women's empowerment.

*Mechanism 2: The effect of affirmative action on overcoming gender subordination is moderated by private decision-making authority and caste.*

*2a. The extent of empowerment a female leader will gain is dependent upon the private rule dynamics of her family.*

*2b. SC women gain more empowerment and leadership knowledge than non-SC women when elected via a gender quota.*

Here I focus on the difference between women who are and are not empowered by affirmative action. Earlier I discussed the subordination that women face in the public sphere, which dictates their overall involvement as leaders. Yet the public sphere is merely a reflection of the private sphere where subordination begins. While liberal democratic theory attempts to create a reductionist understanding of politics, feminist critiques are quick to point out that the 'personal is political.' Okin (1989) explains that "what happens in domestic and personal life is not immune from the dynamics of power, which has typically been seen as the distinguishing feature of the political" (128). Though we may be quick to focus on the elements of subordination within broader society, those norms of oppression begin within the family through the sexual division of labor and ideas about women's capacities. Moreover, women are frequently married into villages far from their native homes which makes them more subject to the norms of their in-laws and ideas about respectable movement for a daughter-in-law (Dyson and Moore 1983). As a result, the mobility of women is restricted privately, which in turn effects their ability to be engaged leaders in the public sphere. A woman's independent mobility matters greatly for her overall accountability as a local leader, especially if she expects to be responsive to ever changing village needs. Women

leaders from households that do not impede on their mobility or allow them more control over their work will gain more empowerment than those in more oppressive homes.

In 2b I suggest that SC women will gain more empowerment than non-SC women, which is derived from traditional regulations on women's mobility. Since SC families are on average less wealthy it is expected that women will also engage in some sort of work to supplement household income (Rahman and Rao 2004). This activity in the public sphere provides them with more public confidence and also makes their presence in spaces outside the home more palatable to both members of their family and the community at large. In general, this makes it easier for SC women to get involved or at least pay more attention to panchayat work since they have already broken some of the norms about correct behavior. In contrast, women from dominant caste groups are expected to protect Hindu traditional culture by avoiding the public sphere, interactions with non-familial men, and public work. In doing so they stay virtuous and uphold the family and community's honor, much in line with ancient principles of social organization (Deshpande 2002). In this way, the effect of affirmative action on gender is moderated by caste as well.

The data for this study come from 49 interviews conducted with Sarpanch across 4 districts of Rajasthan- Alwar, Nagaur, Tonk and Udaipur. These 4 districts vary in their relative wealth distribution, access to water, and primary sources of livelihood. Alwar and Nagaur are relatively more prosperous districts, with both strong mining and agricultural industries. In contrast, Udaipur and Tonk are considered two of the most backward and economically deprived districts in the state as they lack resources and the capacity to generate human capital. Within the sample of 49 interviews, 25 are with male leaders and 24 with female leaders (or their husbands). Additionally, 30 of the total interviews are with SC leaders (men and women both) and 19 are with non-SC

Sarpanch. Respondents were asked about their involvement in panchayat duties, what works they have sanctioned since becoming Sarpanch as well as other questions about local politics. The interviews provide insight why and when quota policies might work to help minorities overcome their subordination. To protect the identity of interview subjects, all names in this study have been changed from the original.

### *4.3 Caste Empowerment*

In rural India, caste-based discrimination takes on a variety of forms but is at the baseline a systematic denial of access to the public space by restricting the movement of SC peoples. In addition, dominant caste groups will follow customs known as *chuachut* (roughly translated as 'touching'). A person engaging in *chuachut* will not let SCs eat or drink from the same utensils as the dominant groups, nor will they let them sit on chairs in public spaces, such as the panchayat. This concept extends most frequently to banning SCs from entering certain dominant caste temples or areas of a village. The concept of *chuachut* is a practice that falls under broader caste discrimination known as *jatiwat*, in which members of the same caste group tend to cluster together against less dominant groups. *Jatiwat* is a more political practice, as it is referenced as a way to encourage support for certain electoral candidates or to bring larger group concerns to the forefront of local politics. *Chuachut* is not used in a political manner, but is still tied to the overall structure of power and ritual hierarchy in a village.

In theory, electoral quotas should help SCs overcome these forms of casteism through their political empowerment. A reservation for an SC seat in a given GP provides caste minorities with the 'power to' attain a position of leadership that would otherwise be systematically denied to them because of dominant caste *jatiwat*. In the sample of Sarpanch interviews conducted 67 percent of

SC Sarpanch reported that they would not have been elected without the help of a reserved seat given the existing structure of political power and subordination in the village. Moreover, despite the state guarantee of a seat, the power of a winning candidate is sometimes challenged by existing elites who are unwilling to let go of control of the GP. Badami Devi, an SC female Sarpanch in Alwar district explains the challenges she faced upon winning the election in 2010:

"The first Sarpanch [before me] was a Thakur. Who would have voted for an SC without a reserved seat? He caused a lot of problems to the work in the beginning...They put pressure on [us]. It was a problem; they were saying that she is low-caste we will not let her go [to the panchayat]. Then the Secretary was tied to the old Sarpanch. He wouldn't let anything happen, or give us money...it was because of my caste. They did not want us in the seat. Still, we did the work in the end. But my husband is smarter in these matters, so he got work done and got us our power back. It took a long time to get [the Secretary] out of the seat. Now he is gone." (Interview, Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014)

In this instance, the previous Sarpanch was a dominant caste male, with political ties to the Secretary of the panchayat. With this bureaucratic link, he attempted to halt Badami Devi's ability to take control of her rightful seat. By blocking her access to the Sarpanch power, he hoped to create a case against Badami Devi that would prove she was an inept leader and lead to her removal from the post. By her own account, this was most likely due to a desire to ensure the SC candidate he supported could win the seat by forcing a re-election. This way the Thakur could still retain control over the seat, even if the GP was subject to a caste reservation. When asked if she felt that being a woman prevented her from gaining political power, Badami Devi was clear that the political pressure she faced in her first few months as Sarpanch was a result of her caste and much less so about her status as a woman.

Even when an SC Sarpanch is able to take his or her post after the election, this does not guarantee 'power over' the seat, agenda setting, or the distribution of goods in a village. For example, in a remote village of Tonk District I met a young SC Sarpanch, Ganesh, who provided

a very nervous and superficial account of his presidency in his village. Unsatisfied with the conversation as a whole, I followed up with various informal interviews with different members of the community. From a mix of men and women in the village I heard a common story about the state of power in the panchayat. In 2010, shortly after the election, the more powerful group of dominant caste men in the GP colluded to generate false charges against Ganesh, accusing him of stealing funds from the panchayat. As a result, Ganesh lost the political support of the local legislator, and the dominant caste men were able to wrestle power away from him. It was clear from the state of development in the village that the power shift produced tangible effects for SC villagers who had very little access to basic goods that were otherwise well provided for in more dominant caste areas (Survey Data, 2014). Without 'power over' agenda setting or the distribution of public goods in the GP, it was difficult for Ganesh to generate 'power within' and improve the overall quality of his tenure as Sarpanch. Ganesh's case is an instance of an "aware but inactive" Sarpanch, whose empowerment goes only so far.

These cases provide some evidence of the potential pushback against ethnic quota policies, resulting in their overall lack of efficacy. However, there are two forms of human capital that may improve the chances that affirmative action will empower SCs- education and the ability to engage in politics. If affirmative action policies provide SCs with the power to be elected, then these additional factors help generate further empowerment after being elected.

A key example comes from a medium-size GP in Alwar District, where the SC Sarpanch, Suresh Lal, was a college teacher before being elected on the reserved seat. Though he did not believe he would have been able to gain the position without a quota, once in power Suresh Lal demonstrated a great capacity for leadership and governance. In five years, he utilized panchayat funds to build new roads in the entire panchayat area, improve access to water for all parts of the

community, and increase access to education for children of the GP. Moreover, Suresh's educational background helped him access new sources of funding for development projects, such as enlarging the reach of the local school to provide high school education through community fundraising efforts. The confidence he carried as an educated and qualified president also meant that he would not be easily bullied by local pressure, as he describes below.

"Villagers fight here- once they were arguing about where the boundary walls [between existing land and a newly constructed road] should go. Some of them didn't want the wall to cover their land. They told me to take more land from the other [side of the road]. I said if you don't give me the space then the road will be too small. So I went to the Block Development Officer and the Senior District Magistrate, and wrote a notice against those villagers. Then they sent a notice against me! I didn't accept their notice. I told the postman, I'll get it from you tomorrow, I am building my road today. I called the police to take care of them." (Interview February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014)

Suresh's example demonstrates his complete empowerment as Sarpanch of the GP. Not only did he take control of agenda setting in the panchayat, but also when his authority was challenged he did not back down from dissent- despite his otherwise subordinate status in broader society. The fact that Suresh is a well-educated and respected member of his community legitimized the power he received from the reserved seat, resulting in large-scale improvements across the GP.

While education provides a strong base for better leadership and political skills, it is not a necessary condition for an SC Sarpanch to become empowered on the seat. Another sufficient type of knowledge, that of politics or *rajneethi* can help an otherwise uneducated person navigate panchayat bureaucracy and local development just as well. As one SC Sarpanch from Tonk District put it, "when the people choose you, they choose you because they want a good person who can do what is required of him. He can handle certain people as they need to be" (Interview Feb 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014). Implicit in this idea is that the Sarpanch should be able to negotiate power and patronage

within the village system and beyond, even with less-than-honest means. Having a strong background in political participation and an understanding of the intricacies of *rajneethi* can give an SC leader the edge necessary to maintain power after winning a seat. In the sample selected for this study, 46 percent of SC men interviewed had less than a 10<sup>th</sup> grade education and instead relied on previous political experience to bolster their leadership (such as involvement with the local branch of a party). Additionally, some of these Sarpanch were well connected to local party organizations or NGOs that facilitated their entry into local politics as ward members originally. Though formal education would have given these Sarpanch certain other advantages, the ability and willingness to engage in *rajneethi* can be as equally meaningful when it comes to empowering SC leaders.

The empowerment of ethnic minorities via reserved seats and increased human capital can have a lasting effect on how broader society views minority leaders and how those leaders view themselves. Though a well-educated or politically involved SC may garner some more respect in the village, many Sarpanch recounted how they still experienced instances of *chauchut* before attaining the Presidency. In the cases for this study, 60 percent of SC Sarpanch reported that after winning the election they did not experience casteism from dominant groups, and that they could openly sit and talk with members of dominant caste groups. A SC Sarpanch from a medium-size GP in Alwar District described casteism as a problem of education, yet in the same breath explained that he did not experience it anymore.

"The main problem is education. People say that this person is from SC, so he should not come in my house or touch my dishes. People do not do this with me though since I am on this seat. They have to come to me to get help, to get things done. But people have this psychology about it. But this problem is going down slowly. It will go away with education." (Interview February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014)

Though education can certainly help people overcome ethnic prejudices, in the case of SC Sarpanch, the power afforded to them by a quota was more useful in surmounting the subordination of *chuachut*. While the reserved seat and their education or political abilities empowered them to take control of their political position, the power of being in a top leadership role furthered this empowerment by forcing dominant castes to treat minority Sarpanch as equals, if not more. Seeing SCs in positions of power also has important consequences for how SCs see themselves. A young SC Sarpanch explained the following when asked what changes had come from the Sarpanch quota in his GP- "I am on this post, so with me there is a change. There is a difference, that I can go sit on the cot with the generals. So people [SCs] are thinking why can't I sit there too? It does change people's thinking" (Interview February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014). The evidence presented here indicates that caste-based quotas plus some form of human capital can actually help minorities overcome their subordinate status and make use of the power afforded to them via affirmative action. This evidence lends support to the idea that descriptive representation can indeed lead to better substantive outcomes, both material and symbolic.

However, the interactive effect of affirmative action, education and political experience is also moderated by the gender of the Sarpanch in question. In all the case presented so far, all the SC leaders were men as no women demonstrated the same development. None of the female SC Sarpanch I met were independent leaders, though on average they had more awareness and knowledge than women from dominant castes. What explains this difference in outcome for SC men and women? While both face the burden of discrimination in the public sphere, only the woman will experience subordination at home. While a female SC will seek help from her family as a newly elected official, an SC male Sarpanch will not ask his wife to accompany him to the panchayat to ensure work is done properly. If an emergency occurs in a village late at night, the

male Sarpanch will not ask his wife for permission, nor will he ask her to go in his place. Despite her relative mobility the SC woman is still subject to the same concerns about capacity, respectability, and safety as her non-SC counterpart is. Even Badami Devi, the SC woman whose power to the seat was contested by the dominant caste ex-Sarpanch, is no longer managing her panchayat now that her right to the seat is solidified. When asked if she participates in meetings at the block and district level, she explained, "In the beginning when I was having the trouble doing work, when they were putting charges against me, then I went a lot. Now my husband goes to get work done...how can I do all this work alone? I go sometimes [to the panchayat] to see the work, but otherwise he does it" (Interview February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014). It is interesting to note that Badami Devi's desire to be involved in the panchayat ended after her name was cleared, and from then on she was content to let her husband manage the work.

One final piece of evidence confirms that SC women experience a different form of oppression than their male counterparts. During the interview phase we called each Sarpanch to set up a meeting time and place. When calling, I (or my RA) would ask to speak to the Sarpanch of X Panchayat. In most of the cases where we phoned a number that was listed next to a female Sarpanch a male would answer the call. In the remaining cases when a woman did pick up the phone, upon asking for the Sarpanch the phone was automatically given to a male, who was usually the Sarpanch's husband. Access to the Sarpanch was limited and siphoned through their male family members- something that we never experienced with an SC male Sarpanch, even if he seemed otherwise subject to caste-based discrimination. Thus it is important to note that subordination in the public sphere does apply to both caste and gender subalterns, but the extent and maneuverability does differ between SC men and SC women. The compounding effect of being an SC woman increases the likelihood of manipulation or tokenism, while an SC man will

still have a chance to prove himself given the right circumstances of education, political knowledge and where he stands in local power structures.

#### *4.4 Gender Wise Empowerment*

In the previous section, I demonstrate that it is possible for subordinate groups to overcome their caste subordination with the help of electoral quotas but the effect of this state intervention is constrained by the gender of the elected leader. I now turn to gender quotas, to further explore the structure of subordination on women and their potential for empowerment.

Women's empowerment as public leaders is conceptually the same as that for caste minorities, even though the discrimination each group faces is experienced differently. The biggest complaint from voter surveys against female leaders is that they are uneducated, too quiet, and unable to fulfill their duties as Sarpanch independently. Traditional practices such as *ghunghat* and an unwillingness to educate women are the underlying causes of structural oppression for women in rural India. Over time these practices prevent women from cultivating speaking skills, confidence, and basic human capital. Moreover, unlike uneducated subordinate caste men, women have a much harder time understanding and participating in *rajneethi* particularly because men dominate it. It is important to note that ideas about women's appropriate behavior are not only enforced by men, but also by other women who perpetuate patriarchic norms across generations (which in itself becomes compelling evidence for how deeply ingrained patriarchic norms are). Often it is women who will sanction an independent female for removing her *ghunghat* in front of men and elders or will spread gossip about a woman's respectability if she speaks to her Secretary openly and directly.

As with ethnic minority leaders, women first generate empowerment through the 'power to'- that is meaningful access to their positions. However, a common perception of female Sarpanch is that they are token leaders, and that their husbands, brothers, fathers and sons will do the real work. This stereotype of female leaders is unfortunately well founded, especially in the random sample of Sarpanch selected for this study. Of 24 women Sarpanch interviewed, all women reported that another male member of their family or community manages the panchayat and they simply sign where appropriate. While these women do attend panchayat meetings, it is usually behind the veil (in *ghunghat*) and they rarely speak up at these meetings. For example, at sub-district meeting of all Sarpanch in the area, attending male Sarpanch stood up and declared their opinions to the entire room. In contrast, women Sarpanch who wanted to speak of an issue in their panchayat approached the head table and spoke one-on-one with the sub-district officials while the men argued loudly over them. In other panchayat meetings across the sampled area, female elected representatives would often sit to one side of the room with their heads covered, while the male ward members would discuss the agenda items. For non-SC women the notion of respectability is amplified, so an uneducated upper-caste female is even more likely to remain quiet in front of the public as a whole. The difference in how non-SC women and SC women respond to norms of oppression is critical in the intersectional approach applied here, and becomes more evident in further discussion. As previously discussed, these forms of public sphere oppression can be overcome with education and political knowledge, though in this sample it is more likely for SC men to be able to exert power than women.

While most women are unable to gain meaningful access to their positions as Sarpanch, there are still some who remain aware of panchayat functions. Most notably, these women are involved or attentive enough to know about the completed and ongoing work in the constituency

and can relate that information to others. During the interviews conducted in early 2014, women Sarpanch were asked to describe what work had been done in the panchayat since their election and what issues still remained unresolved. In the sample selected for this study, of twenty-four female Sarpanch, eleven women were able to provide details about various development projects undertaken in their tenure meaning they can be considered "aware but inactive leaders." The remaining fifteen women either said they did not know anything and ask us to speak to another male about the work or provided very sparse answers about the functions in the panchayat. A typical conversation with these women went as followed:

"T: We are here from Jaipur to talk to the Sarpanch. Can we talk to you about your work?"

SP: I don't know anything; you should talk to my husband.

T: But that is fine, whatever you can tell us is useful!

SP: No I don't do any of the work, I just make *roti subzi* [food]! (Laughs)" (Interview April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014)

In a few cases, the woman's husband or son would dominate the conversation while the female Sarpanch sat quietly by the side. Attempts to engage the actual Sarpanch would not work, as she would be unwilling to respond- either out of respect to the male in the room or out of the assumption that she would be unable to provide the correct answers to our questions. While perhaps these interviews would have gone differently if the male in the room had been away at the time, the fact that most women did not feel comfortable speaking in front of men indicates that norms of appropriate behavior still dominate. Unlike SC men who may gain respect and power from access to the seat, a majority of women leaders still remain in *ghunghat* and have not gained knowledge or confidence (or the power within) to speak about their new roles. The lack of female empowerment is often reinforced by the male family member who will act as an interlocutor

between the Panchayat Secretary (who is almost always a male) and the female Sarpanch<sup>16</sup>. Women who are at least 'aware but inactive' share one trait that allows them to take the first step towards empowerment- permission from the home. Sometimes this means husbands who choose not to make tokens of their wives, in other cases it means mother-in-laws and other elders of the house do not attempt to control her access to the outside world. While we can make arguments for individual capacity, without first acquiring family support- either through practical help or freedom for mobility, an elected woman in rural India will not be able to take full advantage of her new position.

Beyond the nature of private-sphere authority, caste is also an important factor in determining how women are empowered in leadership positions. For example, of the fifteen female Sarpanch who could not speak about their role as leaders, six women were SC and nine were from non-SC caste groups. Yet among the eleven women who were aware of their panchayat's development activities, nine were SC and two were from the General caste group. Both of these General caste women were older women, who were well into their fifties and whose children were already independent. Among the SC women there were three women below the age of 35 while the rest were between 40 to 65 years old, meaning more variation in the kind of ethnic minority women who had gained some knowledge over the course of four years. These women also had a range of basic education, though none had progressed beyond the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and most lived in semi-permanent homes.

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<sup>16</sup> The Panchayat Secretary is a government official who manages the bureaucratic and financial aspects of the GP. Usually a male, the secretary is another key power holder in the community, though he never lives in the GP assigned to him (often secretaries live in a large town or city in a given area and commute to their GP as needed). Since the Secretary is the link between local leaders and the formalized aspects of local governance, his role as a power broker is greatly amplified. As we've seen in some examples here, when the Secretary is allied with groups against the Sarpanch, it can severely hamper the work of a local leader.

In exploring these cases, it becomes clear that 'women' as a group requires deeper analysis through an intersectional approach. Even in the small sample provided here, more SC women had attained some level of knowledge over time than dominant caste women. This idea was reinforced in many informal interviews conducted during the larger survey research as many Rajput women (one of the most dominant caste groups in Rajasthan) frequently said they had no knowledge of the village outside their home since they rarely left it. Men and women from dominant caste groups were more likely to reinforce these patriarchic norms than men and women from SC groups. In the following cases, I discuss both ways that women can attain some empowerment and highlight the differences between women from different caste backgrounds.

Thus far analysis has focused on those women who remain disempowered by social structures despite state intervention, yet there still are positive examples of female empowerment—even if they are rare. Within the sample for this study, two older SC women Sarpanch exhibited interesting tendencies that indicated access to the seat did have some effect on them. First is the case of Kamla Bairwa, a widowed elderly woman from a remote village in Udaipur district. Kamla is an uneducated woman, whose two sons are involved in farming. She repeatedly and openly insisted that she did not do any of the work herself, but rather the Upsarpanch (vice-president) managed the work and told her where to sign. However, during the course of our interview a young man arrived at Kamala's home to get her signature on a form. We watched as she looked over the form and then refused to sign, stating that the form was incomplete without an attached photo of the applicant. Upon returning to the interview, I commented that Kamla seemed fairly aware of certain regulations, despite her low involvement in panchayat work. She responded, "In five years of doing this work I will pick up something. I have to know when to sign at least" (Interview April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014). She immediately followed this assertion with a confession that she would only go the

panchayat to sign paperwork but not speak there. Kamla's example provides insight into some of the nuances of what quotas actually do for subordinate groups. While she hasn't become empowered in her ability to speak openly or dictate the development agenda, Kamla is still able to understand the rules of her post.

Another example comes from Veena Meghwal a SC woman Sarpanch in Tonk district. Even though her son conducts most of the work for the panchayat, she has taken an active interest in the welfare of the GP. Despite her illiteracy she does her best to understand the bureaucratic aspect of the work and even travels to sub-district meetings. When I commented that some women leaders are restricted from doing any panchayat work, let alone leave the house, she replied. "I go to meetings. Sometimes I even go to the block meetings alone in the bus. I get the photocopy of the paperwork and my son reads the papers to me" (Interview February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014). At the same time, Veena says that she remains in *ghunghat* when at the panchayat, but that she is not afraid to speak from behind it and communicate with women of the village. Though she may not have total power over the control of the panchayat, she does have the power within to remain engaged overall and even be present at meetings outside the village. This makes her both 'aware and active' as a Sarpanch. Both of these women demonstrate some of the ways in which quotas can work to change the lives of elected minority representatives, even if it is in a small way.

While on average SC women may be able to exert freedom and power in their leadership positions, there are still cases of women's empowerment among non-SC female Sarpanch. One striking case comes from preliminary interview work conducted in October 2013, when I interviewed women Sarpanch that had been recommended to me by the Jaipur District Panchayat Head, or Zilla Pramukh. In those interviews, I sought out women leaders who were not just token figureheads. My search led me to the western part of the district, to Dudu block where I met with

Anju Kanwar, an elder Rajput woman Sarpanch who had previously been the principal of the local school and child care centers. Her education and reach within the community helped her win the seat in 2010, and after becoming Sarpanch she consciously worked on development issues for the broader village and women alike. Most notably, she provided aid to many widowed women and orphaned children by ensuring they received due pensions from the state. On the surface the independence of this educated, upper-class woman was striking- she was able to manage her panchayat and retain power over important functions and agenda settings. However, it became clear as well that certain beliefs and social structures impeded Anju, especially when she mentioned her initial uncertainty about running for the seat:

"T: You felt like you would need help in this work?

SP: To go out in the field, outside. We are from a Rajput society, so how can a woman go into the field alone like that? She needs someone to go with her. This occurred to me. Then my husband took his retirement. Fieldwork a lady cannot do on her own. Like if something happens late at night how can she go? For revenue work a woman has to go out, she can't do that alone...There was a lady SP before, but she was uneducated. This is a big thing. I can do all the written work myself, except for the revenue.

SP's Husband: I have told her not to do the revenue work, because there can be a lot of problems that arise in that. If a name or something gets written wrong or the like.

SP: Women have to be careful in that." (Interview October 2013)

Despite Anju's education, experience and stature as a former principal, she and her husband both felt that revenue issues were outside the scope of her abilities. So while she certainly had power over her panchayat, she did not seem able or willing to find the power within to challenge certain norms about appropriate behavior for women from a Rajput background. Similarly, to Veena, she was 'active and aware' as a female Sarpanch, but her unwillingness to confront norms about appropriate behavior for a Rajput women held her back from achieving total empowerment.

This is in line with the idea that SC women are more likely empowered, though as these cases show, that empowerment still comes with some caveats.<sup>17</sup> Crucially, while SC women may sometimes enjoy greater mobility than non-SC women, it is relative freedom. Women in rural India, regardless of their caste group, are still subject to ideas about their abilities, rights and roles, which ultimately make it more difficult to take advantage of affirmative action programs like electoral quotas.

The implication of this finding is quite jarring. If women who are elected to a leadership position require permission from their families in order to enter the public sphere and control their seat, then their empowerment as Sarpanch is dependent on a male's approval. Even in the cases where elder women in the family provide the required approval, those notions of appropriate behavior are grounded in patriarchic norms. While government policies and affirmative action may increase the amount of women who are able to get elected, these policies fail to address the private sphere domination that eventually replicates itself in the public sphere. Anne Phillips (1991) puts it best— "it is one thing to say that both spheres are characterized by democratically unaccountable power, but once we turn to what might be the democratic solutions, there are important distinctions of kind" (103). Even if electoral policies are in operation, there are no possible concurrent programs that could be applied in the private sphere to ensure women's equal participation in these institutions. While caste does moderate the oppressive nature of gender hierarchy for elected women officials, it is clear that on average patriarchy persists in a way that weakens the positive effect of state intervention on subordination.

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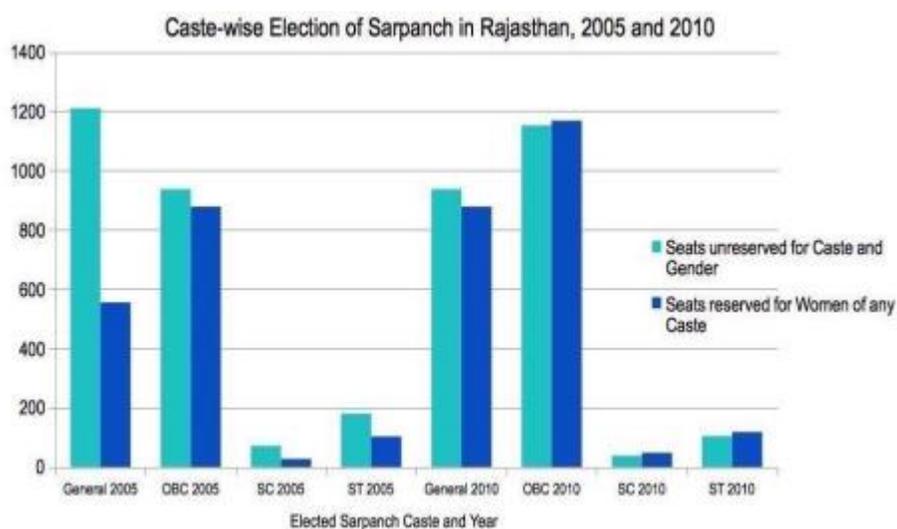
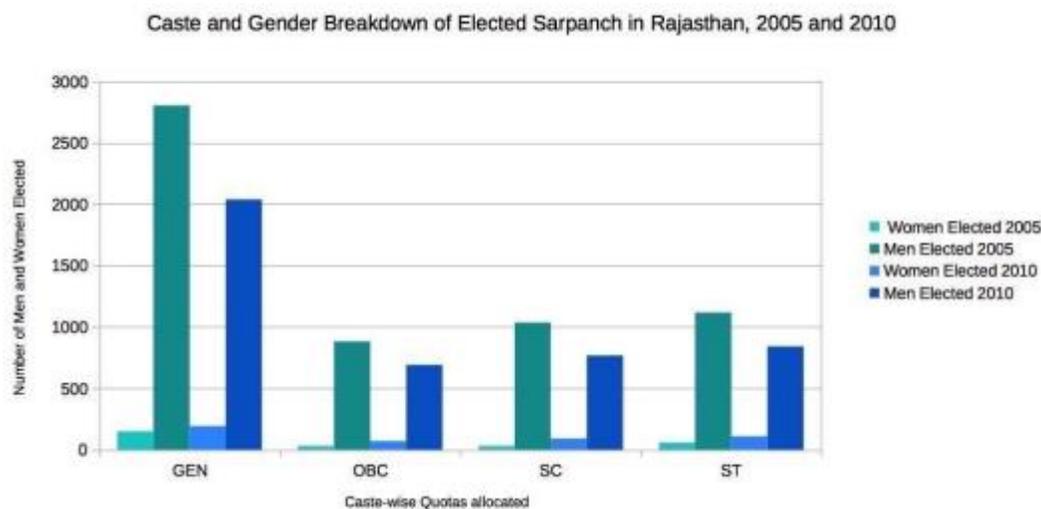
<sup>17</sup>Even though SC women have more mobility, they are extremely disadvantaged in their overall economic status, livelihoods and educational backgrounds. The freedom of mobility comes at a price and does not necessarily make the otherwise difficult lives they lead any easier. For more, see Despande (2002).

#### *4.6 Discussion*

This chapter has thus far focused on a specific sample of Sarpanch to assess the empowerment that can come with access to positions of power. What about the large scale effects? Quotas in Rajasthan have been in effect for 20 years, with the first reservations starting in the 1995-panchayat elections. Even if affirmative action policies are not creating strong short-term impacts, over the long run they may have already started changing attitudes towards minority involvement in politics. One way to measure this effect is to look at the data for how many minority Sarpanch are elected on unreserved, open seats. Open seats also rotate through the panchayat system, providing opportunities for anyone to contest the seats. There are three different types of seats in each election cycle- one is a seat that reserved for a specific caste, but not a specific gender, one that is reserved for women but not of any particular caste, and a truly open seat that has no caste or gender requirements. The data below show how many women and caste minorities have won on these open seats in the past two elections in 2005 and 2010 for the entire state of state of Rajasthan.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Data comes from the Rajasthan State Election Commission.



The first chart shows the difference between women and men elected to certain caste-wise reserved (or unreserved) seats in both 2005 and 2010. For example, in general, non-caste reserved seats women disproportionately won fewer seats than men in both elections. For other class and caste-based quotas, such as OBC, SC, and ST seats women do not win as many posts as men. This indicates that there is a strong preference for male candidates over female candidates, even in the long term. The second chart shows the caste-wise election of men and women to open and female-reserved seats. In both elections, General and OBC candidates won the majority of seats that were

not reserved for any specific caste. The success of OBCs in general elections is often used by general castes and wealthier classes as an argument against class-based reservation. General caste groups argue that OBCs are unfairly gaming the affirmative action system to gain power for their caste groups, regardless of class, and that the evidence shows people in these categories are already successful without the presence of a quota. Regardless, SCs and STs continue to be underrepresented in elections to open seats. The summary statistics presented indicate that even though quotas have been in effect for a long time, the overall attitudes towards minorities in leadership positions has not changed. One reason is perhaps that voters from non-reserved caste backgrounds think that ethnic minorities have already received enough opportunities to be elected because of quotas, so unreserved seats should automatically go to the general castes. Another possible problem is that reservations are in constant rotation across panchayats, so minority leaders do not get a chance to grow and practice leadership over time. Without more consistent access to positions of power, subordinate groups cannot develop their skills and demonstrate real ability, leading to continued beliefs that minority candidates are not as qualified as dominant caste candidates.

When it comes to the empowerment of leaders from oppressed populations, the results of this study demonstrate that overcoming subordination with affirmative action is a nuanced process. Caste-based quotas can lead to empowerment for SC groups, but this effect is moderated by the gender of the Sarpanch. Similarly, gender quotas are not consistently successful in helping women overcome patriarchic norms, though this effect is also dependent upon the caste of the female Sarpanch. Though there are some examples of women leaders who gain power from access via a reserved seat, on average the affirmative action policies implemented by the state are inadequate by themselves. While education does have some interesting and important effects in reducing

inequality, this evidence should not be taken as support for the new policy requiring a minimum education level for Sarpanch, especially since previous political experience and family support can ensure that even uneducated minorities can be empowered and successful leaders. This policy will serve to disempower uneducated minorities that would have otherwise been able to make use of the electoral quotas, resulting in a further failure of affirmative action to empower the weakest sections of society. Also, since women are disproportionately uneducated in rural India it will discriminate against those women who most need support from the state. Though the survey responses collected for the purposes of this study indicate that on average most citizens will be pleased with this policy, it ultimately will fail subordinate populations in the long run. This study shows that affirmative action policies on their own are not very successful in helping minorities overcome oppression, meaning that new and more penetrating forms of state intervention are necessary.

## Chapter 5

### The Moderating Effect of Caste and Gender

#### *5.1 Restating the Question*

While this study examines a particular state intervention in a unique context, it also addresses a larger question of development and political parity in the modern world. As socio-economic gaps between dominant and subordinate groups increase year by year, demand for more equal political representation grows louder. In particular, electoral quotas are seen as a means to redress legacies of material and social inequality among the most disadvantaged groups in democratic political systems. Numerous states have enacted some form of quota policy in legislative, party, and local contexts in an attempt to create more representative political structures that should lead to more equitable distribution. Given the widespread popularity of electoral quotas this study asks two important questions about the use of this type of affirmative action policy. One, does more equal representation lead to better outcomes for targeted groups? Two, how do multiple and overlapping identities condition the larger effect of an electoral quota policy?

Theoretical justification for the use of electoral quotas go back to the early sixties with Hannah Pitkin's work, but it is only in the past 20 years that scholars have attempted to measure the real effect of these affirmative action policies. In particular, studies look at the material gains that electoral quotas should provide to disadvantaged groups such as improved access to public goods and services. Following in the pattern of the electoral quota literature, this project quantitatively measures potential changes in outcomes and qualitatively assess how new forms of

power impact elected minority leaders. Thus I ask whether or not quotas work at both the individual and larger group level and whether or not quotas can generate social and material power.

The second question about electoral quota policies provides a more targeted approach to understanding when and where affirmative action policies are most effective. A new body of literature acknowledges the multiple forms of disadvantage that any given person can have, which in turn conditions how well state interventions can work for him or her. In particular, I ask whether or not intersectional identities matter in the overall effect of electoral quotas. The focus on multiple marginalities is developed out of a specific school of thought that draws on Black and Third World Feminism. In doing so, this project provides a deeper understanding of who benefits most from electoral quotas- providing richness and context to both the affirmative action and Indian political development literature.

## *5.2 Contributions and Findings*

Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study provides a level of depth and knowledge that benefits scholarship on electoral quotas in India and worldwide. As discussed in Chapter One, existing literature on quotas in rural India fails to account for the interaction between caste and gender in social and political settings, and as a result does not adequately understand the nuances that emerge. In this project, I structure the research design around three categories of identities that account for the different ways that SC women, SC men and non-SC women will respond to state interventions. The explicit focus on these groups in the selection of villages and sampling of survey respondents gives the quantitative findings more nuance than simply stating that caste or gender quotas are successful. Additionally, the qualitative research goes further into measuring outcomes for elected leaders and understanding when quotas can be most useful for

targeted populations. The explicit focus on elected officials and the use of rich interview data is markedly different from the most popular studies of quotas in India, which instead rely on pseudo-experimental design to make causal claims. Rather than make claims of causality, this project explains potential shortcomings and benefits of quotas while demonstrating why these outcomes are observed.

Importantly, this project contributes to a growing field of intersectional approaches to electoral quotas worldwide. Building off of Hughes (2011), this study provides rich context to support claims that electoral quotas operate differently within ethnic groups and among women. In taking the larger quantitative work of Hughes to a specific context, I highlight the broader need for precise research and policy setting in the question at large. Though large-n studies of intersectional electoral quotas can tell us of general trends in policy setting outcomes it is the unique context of this study that provides hypotheses and evidence about the mechanisms through which affirmative action policies work.

The analysis presented in Chapters 3 and 4 reveal both expected and unexpected findings about intersectional outcomes from electoral quotas in rural India. For material outcomes, HLM models demonstrate that caste-wise access to roads is improved in the presence of an SC president elected via a quota. At the same time, the presence of a female leader does not improve women's access to female-oriented goods like healthcare and sanitation. Interestingly in the case of public roads and water service, gender conditions access to these goods for non-SC women more than SC women. That is to say, SC women have on average the same kind of access as their male counterparts, but non-SC women have less access than non-SC men. These findings directly challenge earlier work by Duflo and Chattopadhyay (2004) that argues women have increased

access to water and sanitation resources under female leadership, while acknowledging the ways in which women can differ within their gender identity.

The analysis also measures changes in public participation and attitudes towards minority leadership as a result of electoral quotas. These observations provide evidence of the potential symbolic effect of affirmative action. In particular, I found that women respondents, regardless of their caste, did not attend general panchayat meetings even when the Sarpanch was a female. At the same time, most women reported they never spoke to the female Sarpanch of their village—indicating a general distance and involvement from the political process. Alternatively, SC men had almost equal attendance rates as non-SC men, and the presence of a caste minority Sarpanch in a village did not increase SC involvement in the panchayat. This indicates that caste-wise discrimination against public participation was less prevalent than social forces preventing women from being involved in local democratic systems.

In another interesting symbolic effect, men of both castes were significantly less likely to be supportive of gender quotas than women in their own caste groups. While SC men supported caste quotas almost as equally as their female counterparts, their attitudes towards female public participation was far lower and trended closely to the beliefs of non-SC men. These findings lend support to the claim that norms of patriarchic domination are persistent and being marginalized in one regard (such as caste) does not necessarily make a person more sympathetic to other kinds of subordinate populations. In another stark finding, the presence of an SC Sarpanch reduced the likelihood of support for caste quotas among all populations while having a female Sarpanch did not influence attitudes towards gender quotas at all. In this case, it is entirely possible that expectations of a female leader were already so low that implementation of a gender quota did nothing to change attitudes. The difference in influence between the kinds of quotas once again

highlights the potential for change in caste-wise attitudes even as gender-based discrimination remains difficult to surmount.

In Chapter 4, I delve into deep interview and observational data to understand how minorities elected via quotas are able to be successful (or not) in their new roles. As leaders, SC men are generally more powerful than both SC and non-SC women, especially when those men are able to leverage existing social and political knowledge. The use of intersectional approaches in this aspect of research revealed that while SC men were able to use new positions of power to surmount caste discrimination, SC women were less able to overcome their social disability because of their gender. However, in relation to Non-SC women, SC women benefit from slightly more freedom of mobility that can improve their leadership abilities, though they often suffer from more material and educational inequality. Once again, the intersectional take on power demonstrates that while SC women may be most cumulatively disadvantaged, the difference in leadership ability is more nuanced among women and within castes. Thus in both material and non-material outcomes, caste has a moderating effect on gender just as gender has a moderating effect on caste.

Importantly, female leaders with some degree of power have it because of familial support, that is from elders and men in their home that grant permission (whether explicit or not) to these women. Thus the freedom and abilities of strong women are conditioned on the personal beliefs of men and women who are embedded in an inherently gendered and caste-focused society. This makes the interplay between caste and gender much more complex, and furthers the argument that intersectional understandings of oppression are crucial in understanding social inequalities. Some interesting, and as of yet unexplored, cases of these tensions between caste and gender come from the presence of strong female leaders across India. Most famous of course is the steel-willed Indira

Gandhi, whose power as a woman was rarely an issue among her various other contentious policy decisions. However, the intersection of caste and gender is most curiously seen in the case of Mayawati, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. As an unmarried Dalit woman, her rise to head of a caste-based political party in such a large state was no small feat. While everything about Mayawati would be considered taboo at the village level, her strong presence in State and Central politics indicates just how far even an SC woman can go- without the need to rely on affirmative action policies. And yet, like many of the strong women described in this study, Mayawati benefited from the support of strong men in her life. Her family gave her the freedom to be educated as a lawyer while Mayawati's strong connection with the caste and party leader Kanshi Ram gave her the platform on which to build her political base. Notably, the absence of a husband, or a dominating father-in-law who might have otherwise tried to control her actions as a woman and leader is important in Mayawati's story of political gain. Thus for women like Indira and Mayawati, the absence of strong male opposition to their development and personal support from family members/mentors cultured the conditions in which they could become enigmatic leaders. These two women are the exceptions that prove the rule- the persistence of gender-based discrimination for both dominant and minority caste women in India condition their participation as leaders in local, state, and national government.

### *5.3 Some Measurement Caveats*

In this study I make use of existing theories of both material and social power to understand whether or not affirmative action policies have impact on livelihoods. However, the ways in which outcomes are defined and measured are by no means objective or universal across all individuals

in the sample. I recognize these measurement caveats that undeniable condition the results of this project.

Importantly, in the quantitative study of individual access to goods the survey measures citizens' *perceived* access to public services. Thus these results are subjective to each person's assessment of adequate or inadequate goods provision. More objective measures could be derived from some government sources such as NREGA (a national employment guarantee program) but would be a partial reflection of services available in villages due to incomplete data and misreporting. While some may argue that the survey instrument is an incomplete assessment of public goods, in fact this measure provides important insight into how citizens experience the local state. Rather than assume that objective measures from government sources reflect accurate public goods provision, I chose to use survey responses to most closely measure what people experience and where they feel services are lacking.

While my survey instrument and quantitative measures do not impose external assessments of access, the qualitative measures of empowerment described in Chapter 4 do. Specifically, the means by which I make the various stages of power operational are subject to a Western academic view of what personal empowerment should look like. For example, the idea that active leaders must be able to speak intelligently about local decision making may not be an accurate reflection of actual empowerment. Some leaders, particularly women, may have internal knowledge of local politics and development, but could be feigning ignorance in order to protect their status in the family and society at large. Even without the presence of men during these interviews, women may feel unease with demonstrating knowledge or power that could potentially harm them in otherwise strict societies. Or, like Anju from Chapter 4, these women may be completely empowered and yet choose not to confront norms of the household and society- an assumption that

all empowered women do so is necessarily grounded in a Western notion of feminism. Similarly, SC men may be afraid to express the true nature of local politics for fear of repercussion from dominant caste groups- leading them to project less empowerment or ability than they may actually have. Moreover, minorities in Indian society may experience empowerment and development in less observable and subtle ways. The measures and interpretations I use necessarily impose an outside view of empowerment on subjects. Perhaps a less subjective measure would be to let the respondents describe empowerment in their own words, but then these experiences would not be comparable across cases. An awareness of this and other measurement caveats is crucial to put the results of the study in a large context.

#### *5.4 The Road Forward*

Some may argue that the main finding of this study- that caste and gender intersect in unique ways to condition the effect of state interventions in overcoming inequality- provides a more context dependent assessment of affirmative action than a generalizable claim. While this may be true, that by no means discounts the use and applicability of this study and methods in other issue areas of socio-political transformation. Conscious assessment and awareness that intersecting identities matter in counter-intuitive ways is crucial for stronger social science research and policy making on a larger-scale.

Curiously, India is one of the few countries that enforces both gender and caste electoral quotas at the local level but does not do the same for national and state legislatures. In Chapter 2 I discussed the history behind national SC/ST quotas and the rationale for not including women in these affirmative action programs. Now, some feminist movements are pushing for new legislation to reduce the number of SC/ST seats and make a certain percentage of positions female reserved.

Critics of these policies argue that doing so will take power away from marginalized castes while providing more strength to dominant castes, since upper-caste women are most likely to win general women's seats (Menon 2012). The debate circles back to the question of whether SCs deserve affirmative action more than women, while failing to recognize intersectional effects. Moreover, proponents of a women's reservation in national elections overlook the issues of critical mass raised in chapter one. Given the results of this study, it does not seem probable that simply electing more women to legislative seats would increase the amount of female-oriented policy- especially if the number of elected females was small in a larger body that already does not pay attention to the specific needs of female constituents. At the same time, there are potential benefits to the individuals elected as legislators under such a quota- though these effects could be smaller for presumably well-educated and wealthy female politicians.

What could be done to improve the overall chance for success of electoral quotas in India and abroad? The relationship between opportunity and outcomes is not direct, meaning that more interventions (from state or society) are necessary to ensure better substantive outcomes from descriptive representation. Education is certainly an important factor in overall success for local leaders. However, the new restrictions of allowing only 10<sup>th</sup> grade educated candidate to run for council seats is counter-productive to wider representation. Instead of restricting those with lower education levels, state governments should be investing more time in training elected officials on important duties and potential challenges in their new positions. While each state within India has some minimal training programs implemented for new Sarpanch, these programs are not mandatory and are held in the state capital, making attendance difficult. Providing better resources

and training at the sub-District level is key to making electoral quotas work in the interest of leaders and citizens.

Another area where the state can make a concentrated effort is in ensuring elected females are successful in leadership roles is by introducing more women into the position of Panchayat Secretary. As previously discussed, the relationship between the Sarpanch and the local government official is important for effective governance. Encouraging and soliciting more women for this position as well as posting female Secretaries in GPs allocated for a female quota would be an ideal way to challenge social norms and increase female presence in local government.

Though these two recommendations could go a long way in improving leadership abilities and outcomes for minority populations, ultimately there is only so much the state can do in overcoming larger social subjugation. While casteism and gender-based discrimination have reduced in the presence of modernization, growth in education, and affirmative action much remains to be done for minority groups and women. Long-term change is only possible through the continued efforts of government officials, strong local leaders, and conscious efforts by men and women to challenge the norms of oppression that structure much of current-day inequality.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Clustered Standard Error Models, OLS and Logit regression

Predictor	Water	Roads	Healthcare	Sanitation
SC Individual	-0.402** (0.128)	-0.365* (0.142)	0.673 (0.168)	0.576 (0.179)
Female Individual	-0.181 (0.102)	0.130 (0.134)	0.706 (0.264)	1.945* (0.596)
SC Sarpanch	0.143 (0.136)	-0.272 (0.283)	2.237* (0.801)	2.276* (0.937)
Female Sarpanch	-0.087 (0.154)	-0.313 (0.281)	1.556 (0.785)	0.936 (0.409)
SC Female Individual	0.268* (0.115)	-0.001 (0.153)	1.598 (0.446)	0.783 (0.274)
SC Female Sarpanch	-0.236 (0.203)	0.537 (0.366)	0.504 (0.278)	0.618 (0.341)
SC SP x SC Individual	0.112 (0.136)	0.382* (0.182)		
Female SP x Female Ind.			1.115 (0.470)	1.201 (0.467)
Ind. Income (Centered)	0.096** (0.032)	0.043 (0.050)	1.063 (0.077)	2.036*** (0.198)
Ind. Edu. (Centered)	0.015 (0.008)	0.013 (0.012)	1.022 (0.019)	1.133*** (0.030)
Fem. Reserved 2005	-0.213* (0.103)	-0.016 (0.186)	1.324 (0.325)	0.664 (0.224)
Congress Supporter	-0.090 (0.080)	0.048 (0.100)	0.832 (0.164)	0.753 (0.150)
SP in Same Village	0.020 (0.125)	0.274 (0.165)	2.632*** (0.595)	1.765 (0.550)
Centered GP Pop.	0.000	-0.000	1.000	1.000

	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Centered GP CSR	1.176*	0.936	0.073	0.738
	(0.588)	(1.141)	(0.121)	(1.309)
Centered Percent SC	0.036**	-0.007	0.944**	1.065*
	(0.011)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.029)
Centered Percent Lit.	0.019*	0.011	1.040	1.033
	(0.008)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Cen. Prior Water Sources	0.003			
	(0.007)			
Centered Prior Roads		-0.007		
		(0.023)		
Centered Prior Sanitation				1.000
				(.)
Constant	1.458***	1.297***	0.159***	0.222***
	(0.164)	(0.263)	(0.066)	(0.090)
N	891	903	907	898

\* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001

Predictor	Meeting Attendance	Attitudes on Caste Quota	Attitudes on Gender Quotas
SC Individual	-0.023	3.399***	2.338*
	(0.303)	(1.148)	(0.804)
Female Individual	-1.589***	3.517***	5.029***
	(0.263)	(1.232)	(2.067)
SC Sarpanch	0.029	0.337**	1.104
	(0.231)	(0.139)	(0.381)
Female Sarpanch	-0.068	1.237	0.740
	(0.290)	(0.531)	(0.262)
SC Female Individual	-0.195	0.516*	0.842
	(0.312)	(0.170)	(0.319)
SC Sarpanch x SC Individual	0.126	0.915	0.725
	(0.265)	(0.366)	(0.287)

Female SP x Female Individual	0.230 (0.296)	0.914 (0.353)	0.502 (0.193)
Individual Age (Centered)	0.004 (0.007)	0.992 (0.007)	0.982** (0.006)
Individual Edu. (Centered)	0.038 (0.021)	0.993 (0.028)	1.011 (0.025)
Individual Income (Centered)	-0.071 (0.062)	0.927 (0.079)	0.980 (0.075)
Female Reserved 2005	0.251 (0.173)	1.000 (.)	1.000 (.)
Congress Supporter	0.185 (0.198)	1.373 (0.342)	0.828 (0.149)
SP lives in same village	-0.179 (0.156)	1.159 (0.289)	1.150 (0.272)
Centered GP Population	0.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)	1.000 (0.000)
Centered GP CSR	0.836 (1.032)	0.651 (1.039)	12.421 (17.684)
Centered Percent SC	-0.002 (0.012)	0.992 (0.022)	0.999 (0.023)
Centered Percent Literate	-0.003 (0.016)	0.951* (0.021)	1.026 (0.017)
SC Female Sarpanch		0.934 (0.511)	1.004 (0.384)
Constant	2.049*** (0.255)	1.861 (0.796)	1.510 (0.592)
N	910	876	875

### Descriptive Statistics of Unused Outcome Variables

Outcome	n	mean	sd	median	min	max	range	skew	kurtosis	se
Ration Card	888	1.21	0.44	1	0	2	2	0.98	0.18	0.01
PDS	879	0.65	0.48	1	0	1	1	-0.63	-1.61	0.02
Anganwadi	900	0.27	0.44	0	0	1	1	1.03	-0.94	0.01
Midday Meal	368	0.81	0.39	1	0	1	1	-1.57	0.47	0.02
Anganwadi Condition	431	0.93	0.26	1	0	1	1	-3.24	8.5	0.01
Females School Attendance	910	0.81	0.39	1	0	1	1	-1.56	0.43	0.01
Highest Grade Offered	910	9.88	1.64	10	1	12	11	-0.76	1.32	0.05
Adult Education Center	120	1.95	1.54	3	0	4	4	-0.19	-1.65	0.14
Public Employment (NREGA)	897	0.47	0.5	0	0	1	1	0.11	-1.99	0.02
Ease of NREGA Employment	550	0.62	0.49	1	0	1	1	-0.48	-1.78	0.02
Problem Solver in Village	908	2.02	1.19	1	0	5	5	0.6	-0.86	0.04
Whether Sarpanch Resolves Issues	789	0.44	0.53	0	0	4	4	0.86	1.87	0.02

## Appendix B- Explanation of Control Variables

### Level 1 Controls:

Individual Age- Measure of a respondent's reported age at time of survey.

Individual Education level- Measure of respondent's reported highest grade attended. 0 is for no school/illiterate up until 12. Some college is recorded as '13' with some post-graduate attendance as '14'.

Individual Income- Assessment of individual income level, additive scale. Respondents were asked if they had any of the following goods in their home: television, fridge, motorcycle, tractor and car. Each positive affirmation was recorded as a '1' and added together into a total score

ranging from 0 to 5. People with higher income levels may be able to access certain goods through private sources instead of relying on public provision through the local council.

Congress Supporter- At the time of the survey, the incumbent central party was the Indian National Congress. Additionally, the Congress party had only recently lost the election in the state of Rajasthan, meaning it was in power during a majority of the panchayat cycle that this survey was concerned with. This control measures whether or not a respondent reported voting for the Congress in the state elections.

SP lives in same Village- Since Gram Panchayats span anywhere from 2 to 5 distinct villages, it was possible that respondents were reporting higher access to goods because the Sarpanch lived in their village

Level 2 Controls:

Female Reserved 2005- 0/1 measure of whether or not a village had been reserved for a female Sarpanch in the most recent 2005 election.

Centered Panchayat Population- Based on 2011 Census data.

Centered Panchayat Percent SC- Based on 2011 census data, proportion of SC population to total GP population. This is included since places with a higher proportion may be more likely to form stronger voting blocs and pressure groups, which would increase their overall likelihood of access to certain goods.

Centered GP Child Sex Ratio- Included as a crude measure of existing patriarchy. Places with a higher ratio would be less biased towards girl children and potentially women as well, which would change the nature of women's leadership and provision of female oriented goods. Data from 2011 census.

Centered Panchayat Percent Literate- The overall literacy of a GP may affect access to certain goods such as water, health and sanitation. More literacy could be associated with higher wealth in the community meaning more options for privately provided resources, and less dependence on the Sarpanch. More literate communities may also be more likely to attend Panchayat meetings.

Prior Water, Roads and Sanitation Sources- These are measure of reported government built sources in years leading up to the election of the Sarpanch in 2010. Used as a control of existing public goods.

### **Appendix C-Survey Instrument**

A. Respondent Details

Sex: Female/ Male Caste : SC/Gen/OBC/ST Age:

How many years have you lived in this village?

What work do you do?

How far have you studied?

B. Household Details

Which of the following items are used in this house?

TV fridge motorcycle four-wheeler tractor

Does this household have its own land? Yes No Don't Know Unclear/NA

Amount \_\_\_\_\_

How far is the nearest government hand-pump/well from your house? Nearby Neither near nor far Far away DK

Is there any problem with the nearest government hand-pump/well?  Yes  No Don't Know Don't Know

Describe:

Are there enough roads in your area of the village?  Yes  No Don't Know Unclear/NA

Are the roads in this area of the village in good condition?  Yes  No Don't Know Unclear/NA

Is there a good drainage system in your area?  Yes  No Don't Know Unclear/NA

In the past six months, how many times has someone fallen ill in this house?

\_\_\_\_\_

Was their treatment easily done in the village? Easily done Not Easily Don't Know

Which ration card do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you actual get the rations from the PDS?

Which rations do you bring?

Do any children go to the anganwadi from this house?

Are they getting mid-day meals from there?

Is the anganwadi in good condition?

Does someone in this house get a pension

Which one and when was it received?

### C. Public Goods Availability

*Basic Needs (Water, Roads, Light, Healthcare, Toilets)*

Does electricity come regularly in your home?

Do you have a toilet built in your home?

If yes: When was it built? \_\_\_\_\_

*Development Needs (Education, Adult Education, Employment, Ag. Cooperatives)*

Are both boys and girls able to attend school regularly in this village

What is the highest grade available for boys and girls here?

Does the village offer the adult education program? If yes, do you attend it?

Have you demanded work from NREGA?

Is it easy to demand work through NREGA here?

Describe:

Does this village have agriculture cooperatives?

Are you part of an ag. cooperative?

Describe

*Social Needs (Marriage age, SHGs, Abuse, Other)*

At what age do girls get married in the village?

Are there any training programs for women in this village?

Do men often drink alcohol in this village?

Have you heard of men beating their wives after drinking alcohol?

Is there any issue still remaining in the village?

### D. Local Governance and Quotas

When there is a problem in the village, who do you go to for help?

Do you go yourself to the gram sabha to tell about your problems?

If yes- how often in past 6 months to one year? If no- why?

Does the Sarpanch resolve your problems?

If not- why? If yes- describe:

Is there anyone else in the village who helps resolve problems?

When there is a fight in the village who do you go to resolve it?

Prompt: for example if two households are having an argument, who will people expect to fix the problem?

Does the Sarpanch live in your village?  Yes  No  Don't Know

Are you from the same caste as the Sarpanch?  Yes  No  Don't Know

If yes- do you feel that being from the same caste has given you a special benefit?

If no- do you feel you have received less benefits because of that?

Only for women in female reserved GP- Have you ever spoken to the Sarpanch?

Do you think there should be a caste quota for Sarpanch?

Do you think there should be a gender quota for Sarpanch?

Prompt- for example do you feel you can easily speak to the Sarpanch because they are of the same caste/gender?

Do you wish to run for this seat in the future?  Yes  No  Don't Know  Unclear/NA

Which party did you vote for in the last election?  Congress  BJP  Other party  No party  Unclear