

POLITICAL AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

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Rationale



- Correcting Bias by ensuring exposure
 - ▣ No ex ante investments to signal quality as elected politician
 - ▣ Discrete nature of success implies limited experimentation
 - Evidence from gender quotas

- Ensuring representation of non-majority preferences
 - ▣ Equity: Different groups have distinct preferences over public goods and publicly provided private transfers
 - ▣ In divided societies, organizing political competition along existing social divides may improve politician quality
 - Evidence from caste reservation

Bias and Female Politicians

- In July 2008, women accounted for 18.4 % of parliamentarians worldwide (IPU, 2008)
 - ▣ In Arab Countries and India this number stands below 10%
- This disparity rarely reflects legal restrictions:
 - ▣ Women can vote, women can support candidates, and women can run for office in almost every country
 - ▣ In many countries, female voter turnout exceeds male turnout
- An important policy response has been gender quotas in politics: Over 100 countries have some form of political affirmative action

Beaman et al



- We exploit a policy in India which mandated quotas for female leaders: one third of all village councils must have a woman as the head.
- In Birbhum, West Bengal, we examined whether reservation changed:
 - Electoral outcomes for local council positions in West Bengal in 2003 and 2008
 - Villager evaluations of male and female chief village councillors (Pradhans) in India
 - Experimental data on prejudice towards female leaders

Selection of Reserved GPs

- The Panchayat Constitution Rule of West Bengal was modified in April 1998 to introduce reservation
- Reservation status is randomized
- 4 types of GPs:
 - ▣ First time reserved in 2003, Reserved in 1998 and 2003, Only reserved in 1998 and Never reserved
 - ▣ Reserved in 1998 and 2003 occurs in 20 GPs: due to process which jointly determines SC/ST reservation
- Constitutional rule provides a specific set of rules which ensure the random selection of GPs where the office of Pradhan is reserved for a woman.

2008 GP Election

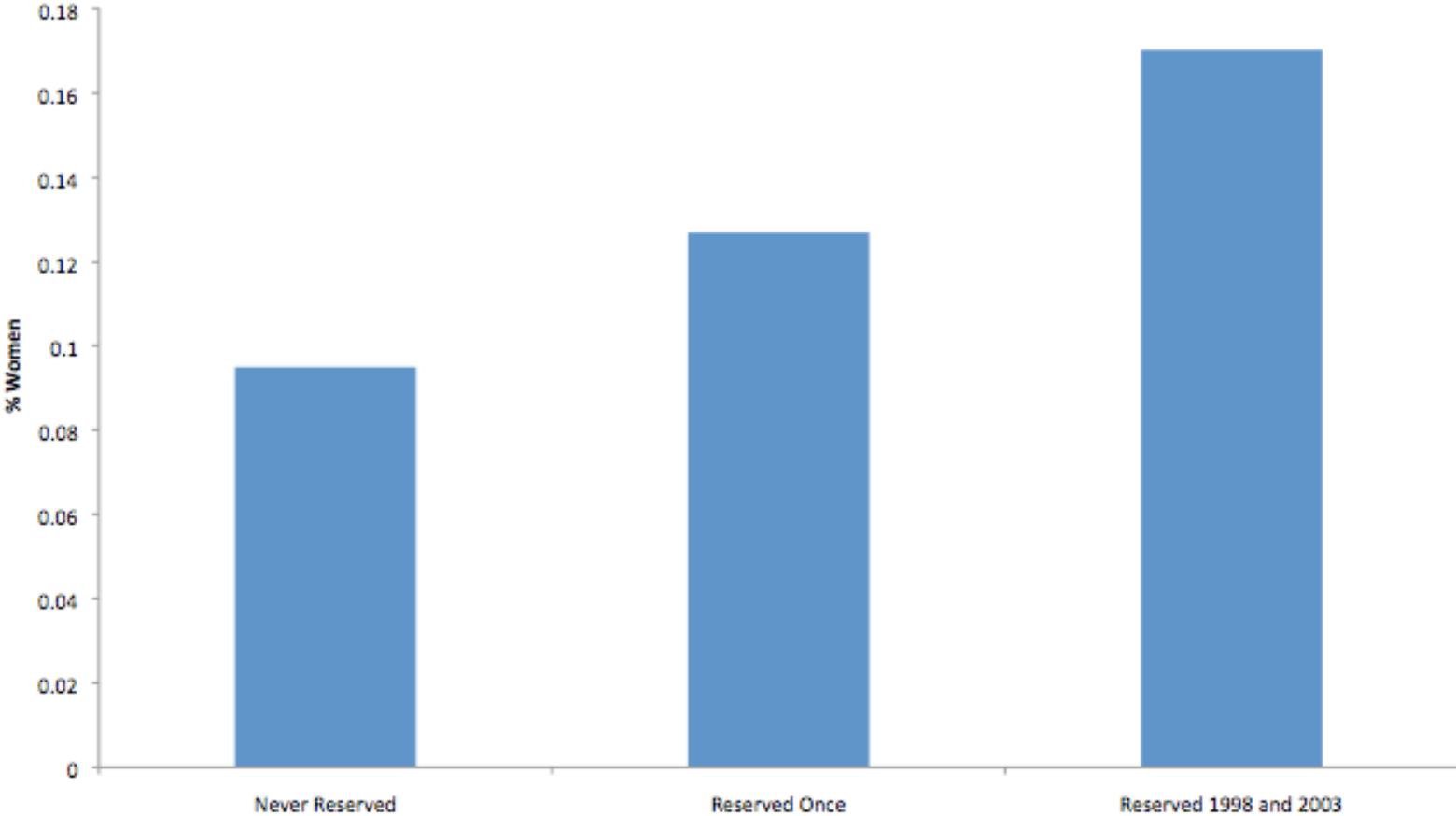


- The May 2008 Panchayat elections provide an opportunity to look electoral outcomes for women.
 - ▣ We use data on who stood for, and won, election for ward member for all wards in Birbhum district in the 2008 election.
 - ▣ We use data on who won Pradhan nomination in unreserved GPs in six districts

Evidence from India



2008 Pradhan Election Outcomes



Perceptions of Effectiveness: Speech

- Experimental evidence on perception of competences:
 - VILLAGER: The tube well of our Kumarpara is not functioning. The repairing job of the tubewell in your locality has been done partially, but the same work at Nutangram has been completed.
 - PRADHAN: For repairing of tubewells maximum amount of funds of the Panchayat is being drained out. As a result of which, other works can't be done. From the next stage you, the people, should take mental preparations that the minor repairing jobs of the tubewells won't be done by the Panchayat. [...] The Government won't provide all the money. [...] Therefore the people will now share the jobs, which the Panchayat did mostly. Then the total work can be made with a success. So in the next stage that preparation have to be taken. I would now like all villagers to approve the village budget.
 - Audio recording of a Pradhan speech was administered to all adult respondents. Gender of Pradhan randomly manipulated
 - Afterwards villagers asked a host of questions on Pradhan effectiveness

Reduced Bias

- In unreserved villages, women leaders are ranked 0.054 standard deviation below men. This bias is absent in villages which had been reserved.
- Observe similar pattern in stated perceptions and also implicit attitudes (as measured by IAT)
- Broader implications:
 - Reservation can have significant medium-run implications for voter behavior
 - Suggests that rotation of political reservation is a good policy
 - In the presence of bias, partial policies such as party lists may backfire

Preferences and Affirmative Action



- Democratic institutions may not provide minority groups political voice
- One group of policy responses have worked to create minority-majority jurisdictions
 - ▣ In the US, move away from racial gerrymandering to partisan gerrymandering
 - ▣ Some countries have responded by creating different electoral rolls (Belgium, Rwanda)
- However, a common impact of these laws has been to increase presence of minority legislators

Legislator Identity

- The simplest political economy model, median voter, would suggest that legislator identity is irrelevant
- However, this is not true with incomplete policy commitment
- In India, political affirmative action has taken the form of directly influencing legislator identity
 - ▣ At state and national level reservation for scheduled castes and tribes
 - ▣ At village council level, also reservation for women

Impacts



- Legislator identity influences policy outcomes
 - ▣ Pande (2003): At the state-level presence of SC/ST legislators associated with increased spending towards these groups (SCP and TSP) and increased activism on job quotas
 - ▣ At the village level, SC/ST villagers benefit from having SC/ST leaders
 - More home improvements (Besley, Pande and Rao 2007)
 - More public goods in SC/ST hamlets (Chattopadhyay, Duflo and Fischer)

Impacts



- At the village-level we observe that (controlling for wealth), panchayat leaders are more likely to have BPL cards (Besley, Pande and Rao)
 - ▣ This effect is absent among reserved politicians
- At the state-level (in UP), the rise of caste politics has been accompanied by an increase in criminal politicians
 - ▣ This effect is concentrated in jurisdictions where one caste forms a population majority but is absent in reserved jurisdictions

Interpretation

- Changing legislator identity affects policy-making: whether this is good depends on how we conceive of the political system
- In the short run, two forces imply limit the efficiency losses
 - ▣ These groups are economically disadvantaged so rent-seeking for them is non-distortionary (as in they typically qualify for the schemes)
 - ▣ In a political environment where caste is very salient, requiring politicians to be of the same caste reduces the dimensionality of political competition and makes quality more salient
- The dynamics are, however, less clear. Limited evidence that political reservation for castes caused caste politics

Conclusions



- No free entry into Political markets
 - ▣ Implies biases may persist in the absence of affirmative action – evidence suggests this may not need to be a long run policy
- Tyranny of the majority
 - ▣ Short run rationale for affirmative action
 - ▣ Longer run implications less clear – some evidence that economic growth may shift emphasis from publicly-provided private transfers to an emphasis on public goods