Can Political Parties Improve Minorities' Economic Status? Evidence from Schedule Castes in India

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Abstract

Existing studies on the economic efficacy of minority political voice focus on electoral rules that mandate the presence of racial/ethnic minorities within governing institutions – via electoral quotas, majority-minority districts, etc. In this study, we provide novel causal evidence on the redistributive effects of minority representation through political parties rather than through legal set-asides. We study caste-based parties in India that have *ex-ante* commitments to representing the interests of low-caste groups through increased fiscal transfers and protection from discrimination. Exploiting the outcome of close state assembly elections as a source of exogenous variation, we show that the marginal legislator from a caste-based party increases low-caste households' consumption from India's main safety net program by 4%. Further highlighting the importance of political parties' varying interests in redistribution, we find that descriptive representation guaranteed through India's legislative quota scheme affects redistribution to low-caste households only when representatives belong to caste-based parties. Low-caste representatives from India's major political parties have virtually no effect on low-caste welfare. Our results thus highlight an critical and under-emphasized role played by political parties for minority representation.

(JEL Codes: H32, H53, H54, I38, J15, O12, O23, P16).

Keywords: Electoral rules; Quotas and affirmative action; Minority representation; Redistributive spending; Pro-poor politics.

1 Introduction

Representation in government has long been believed to have important downstream social and economic consequences for members of disadvantaged minority groups (Mansbridge, 1999; Pande, 2003). More than 100 counties have in turn implemented legislative quotas that guarantee political voice for underrepresented minorities (Duflo and Chattopadhay, 2004; Lublin and Bolwer, 2018; Gulzar et al., 2019; Pande, 2003). Recent investigations, however, suggest that electoral quotas may not always further the material interests of minorities (Chin and Prakash, 2012). One hypothesis about why the effect of electoral quotas has been modest is the countervailing advocacy of powerful mainstream political parties—which often do not represent minority views (Dunning and Nilekani, 2013; Jensensius, 2017).

In this paper, we consider for the first time whether ethnic minorities can better effectuate policy change and increase pro-minority redistribution by leveraging the political party structures of democratic government. We assess this question by examining the effects of party representation for India's low caste groups — the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and Other Backward Caste groups (SC,ST, and OBC groups). These minority groups have worse education, labor market, and poverty outcomes relative to non-low caste ethnic groups. They also suffer from persistent discrimination in access to public goods and services, such as roads and drinking water (Bros and Couttenier, 2015). To study how political parties affect minority socioeconomic development, we examine the emergence of caste-based political organizations across India beginning in the 1980s. Relative to mainstream parties like the Indian National Congress (INC) or Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), these (primarily subnational) parties have historically developed policy agendas that favor primarily low-caste voters (Thachil and Teitelbaum, 2005).[1] Their platforms center on redistributing state resources toward low-caste groups, as well as increasing low-caste representation in public

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[1] The BJP is India's right-wing nationalist party while the INC is India's oldest political party with a centrist ideology.

institutions like schools and the public sector (Jaffrelot, 2003; Jaffrelot, 2011).[2] Surprisingly, though, there has been relatively little attempt to systematically analyze the effects of these minority parties (subsequently referred to as "low caste parties"), or how low caste partisanship interacts with India's system of electoral quotas. We provide such an analysis of identity-based political parties in this paper. Our focus on the effectiveness of minority-led parties provides evidence of a mode of minority representation that is distinct from mandated representation via affirmative action.

The methodological challenge we face in estimating the causal impact of minority representation though parties is that areas represented by low caste parties may differ along unobservable characteristics from areas that elect mainstream political parties, such as the BJP or the INC. In particular, unobservable ideological preferences may differ systematically between low-caste favoring and non-favoring constituencies. To address the endogenous relationship between party representation and economic outcomes, we use a fixed effects instrumental variables (IV) estimator that exploits constituency-level information on close elections between low caste and mainstream party candidates. In India, a politician's election to the state legislature is first-past-the-post, meaning election to office changes discontinuously when a candidate's margin of victory changes from negative to positive. Our empirical strategy is, in essence, an extension of a regression discontinuity design (RDD) based on the outcome of "tight" electoral contests where an outcome is decided by arbitrarily small differences in vote share between the winner and the runners-up. We leverage the fact that within a few percentage points of this threshold separating a winner from the runner-up, constituencies are likely to be comparable along most dimensions, and the electoral outcome is determined through unanticipated changes in voter turnout and behavior (Eggers et al. 2012).[3]

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[2] For example, former Prime Minister V.P. Singh once proclaimed that "no [sub-population] can be uplifted merely by money. They can develop only if they have a share in power and we are prepared to provide this share...we want to give an effective role in the power structure and running of the country to the depressed, downtrodden and backward people" (Jaffrelot, 2003).

[3] This empirical strategy is similar to several recent papers tying sub-state level elections to state-level

Our results show that the electoral success of low caste parties has a positive causal impact on low caste households' monthly consumption of subsidized food grains from the public distribution system (PDS) – India's largest social safety net program (Bhattacharya et al. 2017). We consider this to be an appropriate outcome as household surveys show that over a third of low caste households fell below the official poverty line in 1999-00 (relative to 8 percent of non-low caste households), suggesting that low caste households would be relatively more dependent on anti-poverty programs such as the PDS. In terms of magnitude, a 10 percentage point increase in the fraction of state-level legislators representing low caste parties in a district[4] generates a 4 percentage point increase in low caste households' likelihood of consuming from the PDS. Along the intensive margin, a similar increase in the fraction of low caste party legislators in a district increases the monthly consumption of subsidized food grains by 7 percent (i.e., an additional kilogram of grains per month for the average low-caste household). Consistent with our contention that these parties engage in targeted redistribution, we do not find any comparable effects for non-low caste households. The baseline results thereby document that electoral competition and grassroots political mobilization can shape redistributive spending in favor of low caste constituents.

We next consider the role of party politics within India's extensive system of electoral quotas for SC/ST politicians by restricting our analysis to the sample of electoral constituencies "reserved" for SC/STs through electoral quotas. As only SC/ST candidates can contest seats from these reserved constituencies, this restriction allows us to hold the caste identity of a legislator constant. When examining toss-up elections *within* the set of reserved constituencies, we find that political party effects diverge substantially across mainstream and caste-based parties: legislators elected through the electoral quotas impact low caste households' consumption from the PDS *only* when they represent low caste parties. The results suggest a complementary role played by select political parties in ensuring low caste

outcomes (Clots-Figueras, 2011; Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras, 2014).

[4] Districts form the third-tier of administration in India, following the state. It is comparable to the U.S. county.

representation through the electoral quotas translates into economic benefits for low caste households.

Finally, we turn to mechanisms through which partisan politics affect government redistribution. We consider the prospect of new/revised state policies, as well as improvements in existing constituent services. We first show that legislators from low-caste parties continue to affect their constituents' (i.e., SC/ST households') consumption from the safety net even in the *absence* of majority power. We interpret this finding as suggesting that low-caste party legislators are likely using their influence over local government affairs to improve the targeting of public transfers to low-caste households, rather than budgetary expansions (which would be more likely if part of the state's ruling coalition). This channel is supported by our finding that 40 percent of the increase in PDS access along the extensive margin can be attributed to a reduction in administrative exclusion errors. Improved targeting causes a sharp reduction in the number of eligible low-caste households *not* consuming from the PDS.[5] We interpret our analysis as evidence that legislators representing low caste parties use their local networks to act as "enabling agents" who can ensure that low caste households receive their entitled share of subsidies from the state (Bardhan, 2016).

Contributions

Our paper contributes to a rich literature on the representation of minorities' policy interests in legislative bodies. This body of work has produced mixed results regarding the efficacy of representation based on the ascriptive characteristics of politicians (Cameron, Epstein, and Halloran 1996; Lublin 1999; Bieber 2008; Sances and You, 2017). Several papers have also focused specifically on the socioeconomic effects of minority representation in India based on the country's caste-based quotas at both the state and village levels. Some — e.g., Pande (2003), Chin and Prakash (2011), and Gulzar et al. (2019) — find that the reservations

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[5] Households falling below the poverty line, and rural landless households are entitled to receiving a monthly per capita allocation of 5 kilos of food grains from the PDS.

system does benefit low-caste groups by encouraging the redistribution of public goods. However, work by Parikh (1997), Dunning and Nilekani (2015), and Jensenius (2017), find very little effect of the electoral quotas on either low caste poverty reduction or pro-minority redistribution.

Our paper is among the very few to causally evaluate how political parties with an explicit commitment to minority interests affect redistribution and governance in multi-ethnic democracies (Thachil and Teitelbaum, 2015). We contribute to a handful of studies that have considered how political parties within the democratic structure may help understand the muted effects of legislative quotas for ethnic minorities (Dunning and Nilekani, 2013; Jensenius 2017; Bhavanani, 2015).[6] Our paper complements this strain of research by showing how the efficacy of quotas are contingent on partisan politics and shows that political parties' policy priorities can improve the efficacy of political institutions. By focusing on parties with caste-friendly policy agendas, we evaluate the impact of "substantive" minority representation, rather than "descriptive" representation (Pitkin, 1967; Mansbridge, 1999). Our paper contributes to the literature by providing evidence that heterogeneity by partisan affiliation *within* electoral quotas may partially explain conflicting results on the efficacy of India's quota system.

More generally, we also contribute to the existing literature on the importance of political parties on government redistribution and related economic outcomes. While Warshaw and Benedictis-Kessner (2016) find that partisan affiliation has an effect on government expenditure, Ferreira and Gyourko (2009) find no such impact of party affiliation on state and local government spending in the U.S. By identifying a significant impact of parties on public transfers, our paper provides alternative evidence that the policy preferences of political parties can affect distributional outcomes not only at the aggregate level, but also at the

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[6] For example, through qualitative fieldwork, Jensenius (2017) documents how minority representatives prioritize representing their party over representing the minority, within quota-reserved seats. Similarly, Bhavnani (2017) also references the electoral success of the BSP (a political party comprised largely of SC citizens), and suggests that electoral competition through political parties might be a more effective pathway to increase minority political representation.

level of individuals and households.

2 Background and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Political Representation through Low Caste Parties

The latter half of 1980s witnessed an upsurge in political mobilization of low caste groups, particularly in northern India, resulting in the formation of low caste parties that contested federal and state elections across both reserved and non-reserved constituencies. The mobilization was powered primarily by two political parties, the Janata Dal (JD) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).[7] Both parties had similar political objectives: to increase targeted redistribution to low caste groups and enhance the representation of low caste communities' in public institutions (including public employment and higher education).

Using historical sources on party origins and electoral alliances, we classify a total of 31 political parties as caste-based parties. For simplicity, we heretofore refer to these as "low-caste parties."[8] Appendix A provides further background on the low caste parties, justifying our classification of these parties and tracing their electoral success. We note, however, that are our categorization roughly mirrors recent work by Thachil and Teitenbaum (2015) (also used in Kapor and Magesun, 2018).[9]

We highlight two principal features of low caste parties which distinguish them from

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[7] The latter catered mostly to the Scheduled Castes (SC) or *Dalits* while the former appealed mostly to the OBC community. For a more detailed discussion of the caste system in India and its bearing on politics, see Jaffrelot (2003) and Jaffrelot (2011).

[8] The large number of low caste parties is due to the multiple splits which have occurred in the Janata Dal, particularly during the 1990s. Most of these splits have resulted due to contests for party leadership between major party leaders and have resulted in the formation of regional parties, typically wielding political power in one or two major states. Most of the parties which have split from the Janata Dal have attempted to retain the original party name in some form – for instance, the two major off-shoots of the Janata Dal in the northern state of Bihar are called "Rashtriya Janata Dal" and the "Janata Dal (United)". Similarly, the Janata Dal off-shoots in Orissa and Karnataka are called "Biju Janata Dal" and "Janata Dal (Secular)."

[9] Thachil and Teitenbaum (2015) classify "ethnic" parties in India as "encompassing" and "narrow" ethnic parties. 5 (1) out of 8 (5) "narrow ethnic parties" ("encompassing ethnic parties") as identified by Thachil and Teietenbaum (2015) are also classified in our paper as low caste parties. Our classification of low caste parties also correspond closely with Besley and Burgess' (2000) classification of "soft-Left" parties.

mainstream parties: first, these parties nominated a significantly higher number of low caste politicians to contest federal and state elections, relative to mainstream parties. This is seen in Figure 3 (Appendix B) which shows across 41 state-electoral cycles that the electoral success of low caste parties is positively correlated with the fraction of low caste (SC/ST and OBC) legislators elected to the state legislature. Second, much of the political leadership of these parties comprised of politicians hailing from low caste backgrounds (Jaffrelot, 2003 and Jaffrelot, 2009).

There are conceptual reasons to predict that parties committed to low caste interests will produce different policy effects than politicians elected through the electoral quotas. Mainstream political parties in India – all of whom nominate candidates to fill reserved SC/ST seats – have generally not been controlled by low caste leaders (Jaffrelot, 2003; Bhavnani, 2017). Jensenius (2017) reports through field research that SC/STs legislators elected through electoral quotas are often forced to adhere to party mandates that do not align with SC/ST interests. Moreover, even with the limited power provided under the political reservations, low caste groups have struggled to shape public policy in their favor, despite constructing various political coalitions. The most enduring such voting coalition was constructed by the INC, between upper caste Brahmins, Muslims, and *Dalits*. In all such alliances, *Dalits* were considered a "junior partner," with no controlling stake in the policy agenda (Jaffrelot, 2003; Lerche, 2008).[10]

The electoral success of low-caste parties such as the JD (along with its fragments) and the BSP between 1990 and 2010 (see Figure 2, Appendix B) resulted in a sharp increase in the political representation of low caste citizens in state legislatures, causing a shift in political power from upper caste elites to low caste citizens – a process termed by Jaffrelot (2003) as India's "silent revolution".[11] Moreover, these legislators were now representing parties with an explicit agenda to forward the interests of low caste citizens. This makes the political

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[10] This meant that initially, the primary electoral competitor of low caste parties was the INC, as evidenced in Table B4 (Appendix B).

[11] This term originated with from V.P. Singh, a key leader of the JD, and Prime Minister from 1989-90.

representation of low caste citizens through low caste parties comparable to "substantive representation" posited by Pitkin (1967), as opposed to "descriptive representation" achieved through the electoral quotas.[12] This paper seek to causally identify whether this "substantive representation" for low caste citizens through low caste parties translated into increased socio-economic benefits for low caste citizens.

2.2   Context: The Public Distribution System

To evaluate the impact of party representation on India's historically-disadvantaged caste groups, we examine state legislators' impact on constituents' access to India's Public Distribution System (PDS). The PDS is the country's largest social safety net program in terms of both overall expenditure and the number of beneficiaries. In 2014, the program accounted for 46% of federal social safety net spending, and provided nearly 800 million beneficiaries subsidized grains through a network of over 500,000 "fair price shops" (Bhattacharya et al. 2017). This distribution of subsidized food through the PDS remains a central component of India's expanding social safety net today.

The PDS is jointly administered by the federal and state governments. The former is responsible for the procurement and transfer of food grains to states and also finances the subsidy; the latter is responsible for selecting the beneficiaries eligible to receive the subsidized food grains and ensuring their delivery to households through designated fair price shops. States are also empowered to increase the subsidy and expand the coverage of the PDS.[13] The identification of BPL households was undertaken through the Ministry of Rural Development in each state while the federal government fixed the volume of food grain subsidy to the headcount ratio of 1993 and left this unchanged through 2013 (Balani,

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[12] Pitkin (1967) characterizes "substantive representation" as one where the politician represents a voter's interests without necessarily sharing the voter's ascriptive identity. In contrast, she terms "descriptive representation" as when the politician shares select ascriptive identities with the voter such as race, gender, language or ethnicity.

[13] For instance, Tamil Nadu in 2000 made the PDS universal. This model was adopted in late 2000s by a number of other states.

2013). Since 2000, a new group of PDS beneficiaries were created through the Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY - translating to "food to the poorest") targeting the most vulnerable groups such as landless households, marginal farmers, and urban slum dwellers, who were guaranteed 20 kilograms of grains per month from the PDS (Balani, 2013).

Since its inception though, the PDS has been plagued by errors of exclusion and inclusion, along with concerns regarding diversion of subsidized food grains to the open market fair price shop owners.[14] Thus, only 36 percent of households below the poverty line (BPL) reported purchasing any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days (National Sample Survey, 1999-00). Along, the intensive margin, for BPL households reporting any purchase of food grains from the PDS, the average purchase was 15 kg of food grains in the past 30 days – significantly lower than the monthly entitlement of 20 kg. In light of these leakages, the Planning Commission's (2005) evaluation of the PDS recommended enhanced participation from elected local representatives for improved accuracy in the identification of eligible households, reductions in the exclusion error, and checking the pilferage of subsidized food grains.[15]

We consider the PDS as an appropriate outcome to gauge the impact of low caste parties on public transfers for four reasons. First, low caste households have a significantly higher likelihood of being poor: based on the nationally representative household consumption survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSS) and the official poverty lines in 1999-00, 27 percent of low caste households can be classified as below the poverty line, as opposed to 9 percent of non-low caste households.[16] This suggests that low caste households would stand to gain from an improvement in social safety net programs such as the PDS. Second, eligible low caste households face higher exclusion errors from the PDS.

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[14] For instance, the Planning Commission in an evaluation of the PDS in 2005 estimated exclusion errors up to 43% (Planning Commission, 2005).

[15] The Planning Commission specifically calls for a greater involvement of *Gram Sabhas* and *Panchayati Raj Institutions* which form the lowest tier of locally elected representatives in India.

[16] The corresponding statistics in 2011-12 was 27 percent and 8 percent. Overall, the average per capita consumption levels of low caste households were 33-40 percent lower than upper caste households in this period.

Thus, based on the NSS data in 1999-00, only 35 percent of low caste households below the poverty line reported any consumption from the PDS in the past 30 days. Third, for low caste households reporting any consumption from the PDS, food grains sourced from the PDS comprised 25 percent of the total food grain consumption, asserting that the PDS is a non-trivial source of food grains for these households. Finally, the NSS in 2011-12 reported significantly higher rates of participation in the PDS for low caste households, with 64 percent of eligible low caste households reporting some purchase of food grains (Figure 6, Appendix B).[17] This paper seeks to test whether this increase in low caste households' consumption from the PDS can be causally attributed to the electoral success of low caste parties.

2.3 Politicians and the Safety Net: Channels of Influence

The ability of state governments to select eligible households and determine subsidy amounts showcases how state legislators can affect households' consumption through PDS transfers. In addition to influencing legislative measures such as an expansion of the PDS to include new beneficiaries or expanding the quantum of existing subsidy, state legislators can use their local influence and networks to increase households' access to the PDS. Based on the evaluations of the PDS undertaken by the Planning Commission (2005), as well as recent findings from Dreze and Khera (2015), we consider three channels – bureaucratic, enforcement and legislative – through which state-level politicians can impact low-caste households' PDS consumption.

With respect to the bureaucratic channel, legislators can influence the issuance of ration cards, which enable eligible households to access the PDS (i.e., the extensive margin of program participation). While the actual issuance of cards is handled by local bureaucrats, state legislators can exert influence over bureaucrats' decision-making through the

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[17] This is accompanied by a doubling (tripling) in the per capita consumption of food grains for (poor) low caste households and a sharp reduction in the exclusion error for low caste households.

civil servant promotion and transfer process (Iyer and Mani, 2012).[18]

Second, legislators possess substantial social and political influence within their constituencies (Jensenius, 2017; Gulzar and Pasquale, 2017). This political influence can reduce leakage from the PDS through monitoring of subsidized food grains from local ration shops, as well as ensuring that these shops remain open for the stipulated duration to enable households to purchase food grains. Legislators can also ensure that BPL and AAY households in particular are receiving the full monthly entitlement prescribed by law. We refer to this as the "enforcement channel" which can affect low caste households' consumption from the PDS along both the extensive and intensive margins.

Finally, legislators can expand outlays to the PDS program (i.e., a "legislative" channel, since these are legislative decisions). This would be reflected in public expenditures and can result in a higher level of subsidy per unit of food grain, or improvements in the delivery of food grains through investments in transportation and storage technologies.[19] Any such effects would occur primarily along the intensive margin. It is worth noting that only the legislative channel would require a legislative majority. In contrast, effects stemming from bureaucratic and enforcement effects are primarily functions of legislator effort and local networks and would not require a legislative majority.

Guided by these three channels, we identify whether legislators representing low caste parties affect low caste households' consumption from the PDS across both the "extensive" (PDS access) and the "intensive margins" (quantity of PDS food grains)

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[18] The transfer of bureaucrats and police officers is an instrument which is frequently used by low-caste party politicians, primarily to facilitate the promotion of bureaucrats belonging to low caste backgrounds (Jaffrelot, 2003).

[19] This could include contracting with high quality transporters to ensure timely delivery; improved storage facilities to prevent the infesation of rodents; and investments in human capital to improve the quality of workers in PDS shops.

3 Data

To study the impact of low caste party representation on public transfers, we combine constituency-level electoral data from the Election Commission of India (ECI) with household consumption data from nationally representative household surveys. The ECI provides data on turnout and candidate vote shares for all constituency-level elections to the state legislatures for every state. The outcome of each election is determined by the "first-past-the-post" system, with the party securing the maximum votes in the constituency being declared the winner.[20]

Our sample covers 62 state-electoral cycles across 16 major Indian states between 1994 and 2011.[21] State elections are typically held every 5 years, implying at least 3 electoral cycles for each state in our sample. This amounts to over 14,000 elections, of which 90 percent (nearly 13,000 elections) include at least 1 low caste party as a contestant. There are on average 19 constituency-level elections per district during any electoral cycle and low caste parties on average garnered 22% of the votes cast in the district and won 24% of the elections contested.

The paper's primary outcome of interest is low caste households' consumption of subsidized food grains from the PDS, recorded in the National Sample Survey (NSS), which is a nationally representative household survey. We restrict ourselves to the quenquennial surveys — a set of repeated cross-sections covering over 80,000 households across all Indian districts.[22] As the NSS did not identify OBC households till 1999, we limit the sample to four survey rounds – the 55th, 61st, 66th and 68th rounds – between 1999 and 2012.[23] Since

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[20] The pluralist framework of Indian democracy allows for multiple political parties contesting the election in each electoral constituency. Political parties nominate candidates from each electoral constituency. If the party secures the maximum number of votes and wins the election, the individual represents the party from that constituency in the legislature for a period of 5 years. Individuals unaffiliated to any political party may also contest the elections as independent candidates.

[21] The states are: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

[22] The sample size of the annual surveys at the level of district is too small to detect a statistical impact.

[23] The calendar years corresponding to the survey rounds are: 1999-2000, 2004-05, 2009-10 and 2011-12.

the NSS data is not annual, we match the electoral outcomes for the closest election year preceding the NSS survey year.[24]

The consumption surveys collect data on the consumption of major food and non-food items during the past 30 days, for which both the physical quantity and the rupee amount spent is reported. We exploit this information to determine the amount of food grains - wheat and rice - consumed by households from the PDS.[25] The surveys also inform us about aggregate consumption, household land holdings, literacy and household location (rural or urban). Comparing panels B and C of Table B1, we see that low caste households have significantly lower levels of per capita consumption and literacy, and a significantly higher likelihood of being landless and residing in rural areas.

4 Empirical Strategy

4.1 Instrumental Variables Framework

This paper seeks to identify the impact of minority political representation through select political parties on constituents' access to public transfers – namely low caste households' consumption from the PDS. We begin with a simple OLS specification:

$$Y_{ijdt} = \alpha_d + \phi_j + \delta_t + \eta_{t-y} + \beta ShLowCasteWin_{dt} + \mathbf{X}_{ijdt}\psi + \epsilon_{ijdt} \tag{1}$$

i in Equation (1) indexes the household residing in district d, surveyed in year t.[26] Y is typically one of two primary outcomes of interest. The first is a dummy equaling 1 if the household purchased any food grains (rice or wheat) from the PDS in the past 30 days

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[24] We include 1 year lag between the year of elections and year in which household outcomes are measured, to account for the lag between elections and any policymaking process. In other words, we map the electoral outcomes to the previous electoral cycles for the states for which held elections during or just prior to the NSS survey period. The mapping is shown in Tables B2 and B3 (Appendix B).

[25] The PDS also provides subsidized sugar and kerosene in addition to food grains. However, we restrict our focus only to food grains as they form the largest component of the PDS.

[26] j in (1) is akin to a quarter fixed effect, denoting the quarter in which the survey was undertaken.

(participation along the extensive margin). The second is the per capita amount of food grains purchased by the household from the PDS in the past 30 days (participation along the intensive margin).

Due to the mismatch in the administrative levels at which elections are contested (electoral constituencies) and households are identified (districts), we aggregate the results of multiple constituency level elections to the level of district. The independent variable of interest thereby is *ShLowCasteWin*, which denotes the fraction of legislators (as a share of total electoral constituencies in the district) representing low-caste parties in district *d* and election year *y*, expressed as:

$$ShLowCasteWin_{dy} = \frac{LowCasteWin_{dy}}{TotalElections_{dy}} \tag{2}$$

where *LowCasteWin* is the total number of elections won by low caste parties in district *d* and electoral cycle *y*, scaled by the total number of elections held in the district. **X** is a vector of household and district-level covariates.[27] α and δ denote district and survey round fixed effects, controling for time and region-invariant characteristics affecting households' consumption from the PDS. η is a fixed effect for legislative assembly tenure, controlling for political cycle effects on access to the PDS.[28]

Along the extensive margin, β estimates the change in a household's likelihood of consuming any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days, resulting from a 1 percentage point increase in the fraction of legislators elected from low caste parties in the district. Along the intensive margin, β estimates the impact of a 1 percentage point increase in the

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[27] The covariates included are: dummies for the caste category of the household – SC or OBC; dummies for the whether the household belongs to a religious minority — Muslim, Christian; dummies for whether the household is rural, female headed, landless or a marginal land owner; a dummy for whether the head of household has completed higher education; household size; number of females in the household; number of children in the household; land owned and cultivated (log); district urbanization; district share of low caste households; district share of BPL households; district voter turnout; average number of parties contesting in the district; and district share of constituencies reserved for SC/ST candidates.

[28] This fixed effect controls for cyclical factors contributing to the relationship between legislators and households' consumption from the PDS. Thus, if legislators view PDS as a vote-buying mechanism and expand households' access to the PDS prior to elections, η would control for such a secular effect.

fraction of legislators elected from low caste parties on the percentage change in the monthly per capita quantity of subsidized food grains purchased from the PDS.

An OLS estimation of (1) however may yield biased estimates of β due to possible endogeneity between PDS transfers to low caste households and the electoral success of low caste parties. For instance, as low caste households are on average poorer, they may have a higher likelihood of consuming food grains from the PDS. If these households are also more likely to vote for low caste parties, it would generate an upward bias on the estimated β. Alternately, if low caste households are concentrated in regions with poor physical infrastructure affecting the timely delivery of food grains and low caste parties also enjoy higher electoral success in such areas, an OLS estimate of β using (1) would be biased downwards.

We address this endogeneity problem using an instrumental variables (IV) strategy, exploiting the district-level variation in low caste party representation arising from the outcome of close electoral races involving low caste parties, akin to Rehavi (2008), Clots-Figureas (2011), and Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras (2014).[29] The intuition behind this approach is that when the difference in vote-share between the two candidates is arbitrarily small, the electoral outcome can be determined by small shifts in vote share (a possible example is unanticipated changes in voter turnout). As political parties have imperfect control over their respective vote shares, it is argued that they are unable to manipulate the outcome of "close elections" arising from such small shifts in vote share (Eggers et al. 2014). Resultantly, the outcome of such elections can be considered to be quasi-exogenous. Akin to the independent variable of interest, we also aggregate collections of these quasi-exogenous outcomes to construct our instrument at the level of district.[30]

Specifically, we define our instrument, *ShLowCasteCloseWin*, as the fraction of close

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[29] These papers study the impact of female legislators on economic outcomes.

[30] One threat to this assumption would exist if mainstream parties coordinated with low caste parties during elections. However, parties classified as low caste parties in this paper had limited pre-electoral alliances with mainstream parties, reducing the extent of this problem.

elections won by low caste parties in the district:

$$ShLowCasteCloseWin_{dy} = \frac{LowCasteCloseWin_{dy}}{TotalCloseElections_{dy}} \qquad (3)$$

where the numerator is the total number of close elections won by low caste parties, scaled by the total number of close elections contested by low caste parties in the district. The identification thereby is derived from variations in the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in a district, induced solely through changes in the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district.[31]

With the instrument so defined, we implement a two-stage least squares framework to identify the impact of legislators representing low caste parties on household consumption from the safety net. The first stage of the IV framework is:

$$ShLowCasteWin_{dt} = \alpha_d + \delta_t + \pi ShLowCasteCloseWin_{dt} + \mathbf{X}_{dt}\gamma + \theta_{dt} \qquad (4)$$

and the second stage:

$$Y_{ijdt} = \alpha_d + \phi_j + \delta_t + \eta_{t-y} + \beta ShLow\hat{C}asteWin_{dt} + \mathbf{X}_{ijdt}\psi + \epsilon_{ijdt} \qquad (5)$$

The endogenous independent variable – the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district – is instrumented by the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district. As the incidence of close elections in a district is potentially endogenous, we control for the fraction of close elections contested in all specifications. For the purposes of this paper, an election is considered "close" if the difference in victory margin between the winner and the runners up is less than or equal to 5 percent of the votes cast in the constituency. We select this threshold based on the optimal bandwidth method proposed

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[31] Within the IV framework, these districts form the "switcher" groups. Thus, districts which witness no close elections between low caste and mainstream parties do not contribute to our empirical strategy as the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in these districts are unchanged by the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties.

in Calonico et al. (2015). However, we also verify that the results are stable to alternate thresholds of close elections.

4.2 Examining the Validity of the Instrument

Before discussing the results, we present a few standard validity checks of the instrument (Imbens and Lemieux (2008)). First, we examine whether the density of the forcing variable – low caste party win margin – is continuous at the discontinuity of 0 where the electoral outcome changes discontinuously from a low caste party defeat to a low caste party victory. This examines selective sorting of low caste party candidates into winning (treatment) and losing (control) status.[32] Figure 1 reveals no obvious sorting around the discontinuity, and the estimate from the McCrary test is small and statistically insignificant, disallowing us from rejecting the null hypothesis of no discontinuity at the cutoff of 0.

We next test for the smoothness of constituency-level observables across the low caste party win margin at the cutoff 0, similar to Meyersson (2015). Figure 2 plots the unconditional means of several constituency-level covariates corresponding to 8 percentage point bins of low caste party win margin, with the smoothness at the win-loss threshold being evidence of the lack of winner-sorting at the discontinuity. Across the 8 plots, we are unable to visually discern any discontinuity in the running variable across any of the constituency-level covariates and the confidence intervals also overlap, confirming covariate balance at the cutoff for low caste party win margin.

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[32] In the simplest case where an election has two candidates, one belonging to a low caste party and the other to a mainstream party, the win margin is the difference in vote share between the low caste and the mainstream party. With multiple candidates from low caste and mainstream parties, we define the low caste win margin in constituency c and election year y - $LCWM$ - as the following: in the event of a low caste party victory;

$$LCWM_{cy} = WLCVS_{cy} - \max\left(NLCVScy\right) \qquad (6)$$

where $WLCVS$ denotes the vote share of the winning low caste party, from which we subtract the maximum vote share received amongst all mainstream parties contesting the election in constituency c. The win margin is defined analogously, in the event of a mainstream party winning the election.

Figure 1: McCrary Test for Discontinuity of Low Caste Party Win Margin Around 0
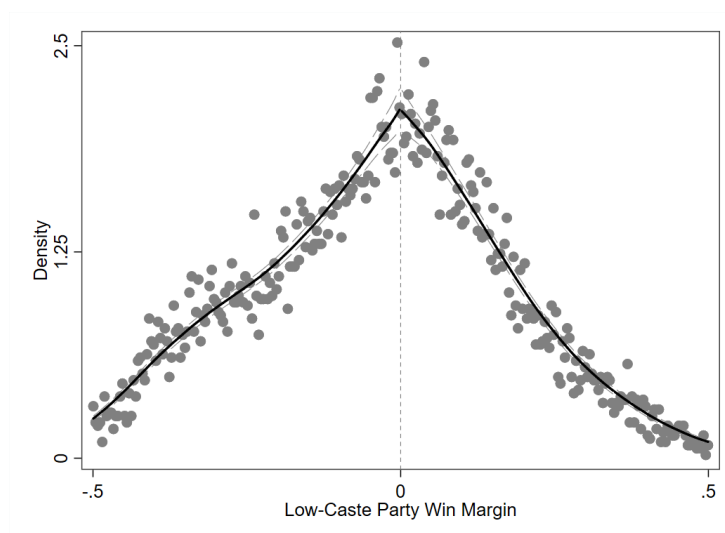
Notes: The figure plots the density of elections by win margin. A victory margin in excess of 0 represents an AA party victory; a victory margin less than 0 represent an AA party loss. Each point on the plot represents the density of AA party victory margin in each of the 500 bins of AA party vote share. The line segments indicate the test for a discontinuity in the AA party victory margin at the threshold of 0, as proposed by McCrary (2007). The associated robust t-statistic and p-value is -1.35 and 0.176 - suggesting there is no sorting around the "win" discontinuity.

Figure 2: Check of Covariate Balance Across Low Caste Party Win Margin
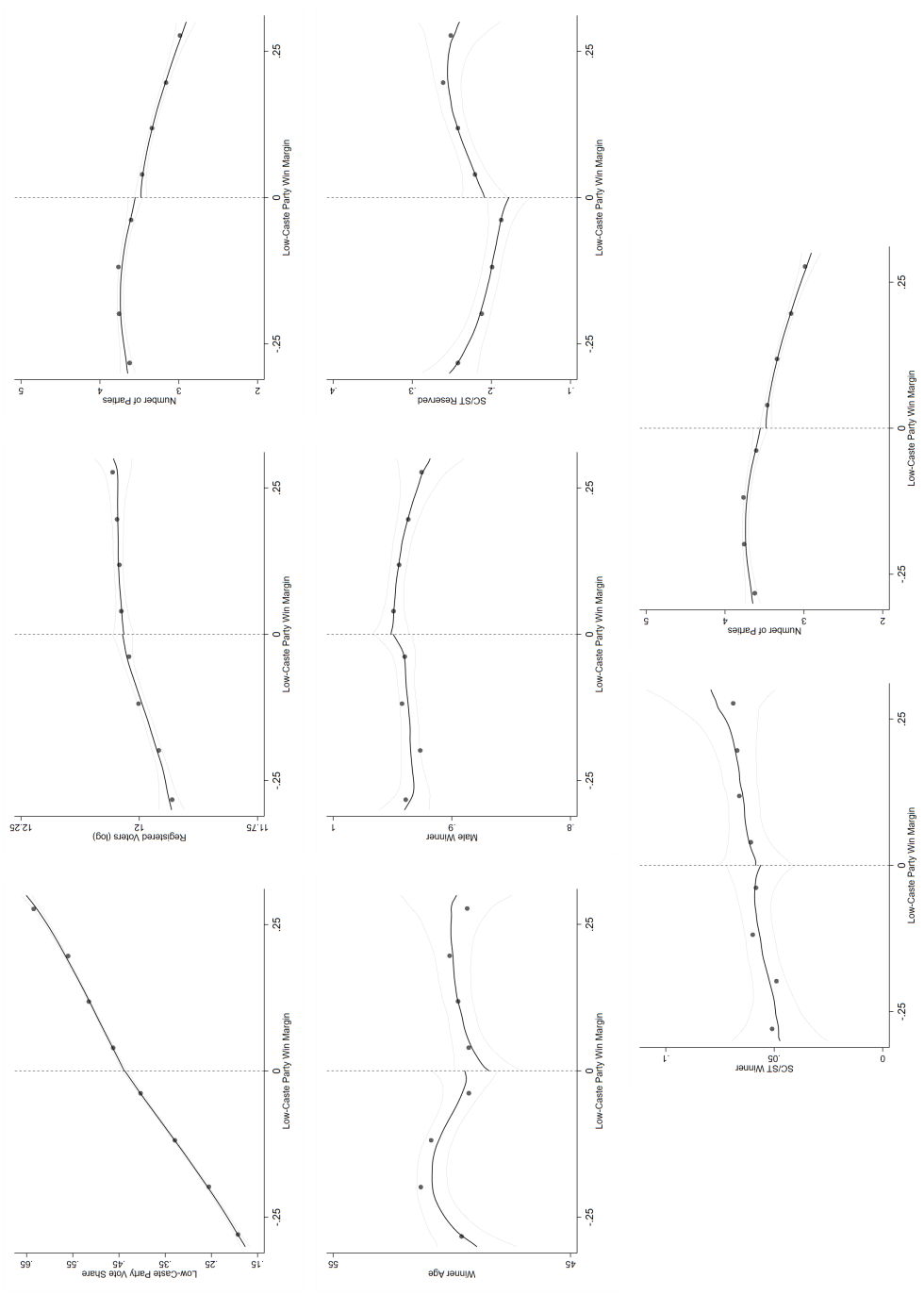
Covariate balance checks at the constituency level. The following covariates are tested: AA party vote share; number of eligible voters; voter turnout; share of constituencies reserved for SC/ST candidates; number of candidates contesting; share of winners from SC/ST community; share of male winners. Registered voters Each point corresponds to unconditional means of each covariate in each of the 500 bins of AA party vote share. The solid lines represent 95 percent confidence intervals.

Having demonstrated the smoothness of the running variable of interest (low caste party win margin) at the discontinuity of 0, we next show that our instrument – the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in a district – is orthogonal to district-level observables. In this regard, note that if both contestants in a close election have an equal chance of winning, a party contesting N close elections in a district would be expected to win $\frac{N}{2}$ close elections.

To this effect, first, from the summary statistics in Table B1 (Panel A), we observe that the average district in our sample witnesses 3 close elections in an electoral cycle and conditional on the incidence of at least 1 close election in the district, the unconditional mean of the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties is 0.49 – statistically indistinguishable from 0.5. Graphically, the left hand panel in Figure 4 (Appendix B) shows that the distribution of the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district (conditional on at least 1 close election involving low caste parties) is centered around 0.5. The right panel of Figure 4 (Appendix B) presents the unconditional relationship between expected and actual close wins by low caste parties. Expected close wins is defined as half the number of close elections contested by low caste parties (at the 5 percent margin). The figure confirms that actual close wins (horizontal axis) closely track expected close wins and the red dashed line estimating the linear relationship between the two variables almost overlaps with the green 45-degree line where expected close wins equal actual close wins. Table B5 (Appendix B) regresses the total number of close elections won by low caste parties in the district on the total number of close elections contested by low caste parties in the district. We see that the coefficient on the number of close elections contested by low caste parties is statistically indistinguishable from 0.5 across all specifications and is robust to the inclusion of district, election year and state-election year fixed effects, while being orthogonal to district-level covariates.[33]

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[33] Only 1 out of 26 covariates is significant at the 5 percent level, suggestig that only the number of close elections contested by low caste parties predict the total close elections won by low caste parties in the district.

Table 1: Verifying District Covariates Don't Predict the Fraction of Close Elections Won by Low Caste Parties

	Panel A: Political						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Past Support, Lag 1			Contemporaneous Factors			
	State Power	Share Win	Vote Share	Voter Turnout	Effective No. of Parties	Average Candidates	SC/ST Reserved
Fraction Close Win 5pc	-.0017	-.0299	.0735	-.0748	.0162	-.0064*	-.1448
	(.0695)	(.0686)	(.1431)	(.1660)	(.0213)	(.0036)	(.1673)
Observations	1233	1469	1469	1724	1724	1724	1724
R^2	.47	.43	.43	.41	.41	.42	.41
	Panel B: Demographic						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Share Rural	Share LowCaste	Share Female	Share Female Head	Avg Household Size	Share Literate	Share Secondary +
Fraction Close Win 5pc	-.0994	.0297	.3982	-.4682	-.0346	.1632	.3256
	(.2438)	(.2076)	(.8478)	(.4653)	(.0430)	(.2391)	(.2966)
Observations	711	711	711	711	711	711	711
R^2	.58	.58	.58	.58	.58	.58	.58
	Panel C: Economic						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Consumption Per Capita	Land Holdings	LFP	Share Self Employed	Share Salaried Worker	Share Formal Sector	Share Public Sector
Fraction Close Win 5pc	-.1029	-.0013	-.0760	.1656	.1391	.5017	.2131
	(.1263)	(.0151)	(.2957)	(.3002)	(.3215)	(.3894)	(.3399)
Observations	711	711	711	711	711	711	711
R^2	.58	.58	.58	.58	.58	.58	.58

Notes: This table shows that the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in a district is orthogonal to district-level covariates. The unit of observation in each specification is the district. The outcome of interest in each column is the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district in an electoral cycle. All specifications include district and election year fixed effects. In Panel A, the independent variable of interest in column (1) is whether a low caste party was in power during the previous electoral cycle; column (2), the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the previous electoral cycle; column (3), the district vote share of low caste parties in the past electoral cycle; column (4), the contemporaneous voter turnout; column (5), the average effective number of parties contesting elections; column (6), the average number of candidates contesting elections; column (7), the fraction of constituencies in the district reserved for SC/ST candidates. In Panel B, the independent variable of interest in column (1) is the share of rural households; column (2), the share of low caste households; column (3), the share of females; column (4), the share of female headed households; column (5), the average household size; column (6), the share of literate workers; column (7), the share of workers with secondary education or higher. In Panel C, the independent variable of interest in column (1) is monthly per capita consumption for households; column (2), average land holdings for rural households; column (3), labour force participation rate; column (4), the share of self-employed workers; column (5), the share of salaried workers; column (6), the share of formal sector workers; column (7), the share of workers employed in the public sector. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

Finally, Panels A, B and C of Table 1 shows that the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district is not predicted by district covariates. Here, we individually regress our instrument – the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district – on district-level electoral, demographic and economic characteristics, after controling for the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties in the district, district and time fixed effects. None of the 24 specifications yield a statistically significant coefficient. Critically, columns (1)-(4) in Panel A of Table 1 show that prior levels of electoral support to low caste parties do not predict the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the current electoral cycle.

5 Results: The Impact of Low-caste Parties

We now turn to our main results, which identifies the impact of legislators representing low caste parties on safety net consumption of low caste households. We also document that legislators elected through the electoral quotas affect low caste households' consumption from the PDS only when they represent low caste parties.

5.1 Baseline Effects

Table 2 present the baseline results identifying the impact of low caste party legislators on low caste households' PDS consumption. Columns (1)-(4) show the extensive margin results where the dependent variable is a dummy equaling 1 if the household had purchased rice or wheat from the PDS in the past 30 days; columns (5)-(8) show the intensive margin results where the outcome is the logged per capita food grains (in kilograms) purchased from the PDS in the past 30 days. The sample is restricted to low caste households and standard errors are clustered by district.

Columns (1) and (5) of Table 2 presents the IV results without covariates while columns

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(2) and (6) include covariates. The inclusion of household and district covariates do not affect either the magnitude or the precision of the coefficients – regardless of their presence, the IV estimates detect a positive and statistically significant (5% level) impact of legislators representing low caste parties on low caste households' consumption from the PDS, along both the extensive and intensive margin. Resultantly, all subsequent discussions consider results including covariates.

Table 2: Low Caste Party Legislators, Electoral Quotas and PDS Consumption: Baseline Results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Pr(Any PDS = 1)				Monthly Per Capita PDS (Logged)			
Low Caste Party Win	.3692**	.3591**		.0487*	.8016**	.7436**		.0077
	(.1872)	(.1440)		(.0287)	(.4006)	(.3135)		(.0433)
Share Reserved			.0375				-.0903	
			(.0981)				(.2180)	
Observations	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452
R^2	.25	.30	.31	.31	.23	.29	.30	.30
Dep Var Mean	.37	.37	.37	.37	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Specification	IV	IV	OLS	OLS	IV	IV	OLS	OLS

Notes: This table presents the baseline results estimating the impact of low caste party legislators on low caste households' purchase of food grains from the PDS. The unit of observation is the household. The outcome of interest in columns (1)-(4) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household purchased any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; in columns (5)-(8), the logged quantity of food grains purchased from the PDS over the past 30 days. The sample is restricted to low caste households. The independent variable of interest in columns (1)-(2), columns (4)-(6), and column (8) is the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district. The independent variable of interest in columns (3) and (7) is the fraction of constituencies in the district which are reserved for SC/ST candidates through the electoral quotas. The specifications in columns (1)-(2) and (5)-(6) are estimated using an IV specification where the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district is instrumented by the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district. The remaining specifications are estimated using an OLS specification. All specifications include the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Columns (2)-(4) and (6)-(8) also include household and district covariates (including the fraction of low caste and SC/ST households in the district). Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

The estimated coefficients in columns (2) and (6) are economically significant. A 10 percentage point increase in the fraction of elections won by low caste parties increases the likelihood of low caste households purchasing food grains from the PDS by 3 percentage

points (relative to a mean of 33 percent in the first survey round in our sample in 1999-00), while the corresponding increase for the quantity of food grains purchased is 7 percent. Along the extensive margin, this represents an increase in access for an additional 12,700 households in the average district.[34] Along the intensive margin, as the mean level of food grains consumed by a low caste household from the PDS in 1999-00 was 1.2 kilograms, this translates into an additional 80 grams of subsidized food grains purchased from the PDS, per person, per month, or approximately 1 kilogram per year.[35]

To gauge the impact of the marginal legislator representing low caste parties, recall that each district on average witnesses 19 elections, implying that one additional legislator elected through an additional close election won by low caste parties is equivalent to a 0.05 (1/19) percent increase in the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district. This amounts to a 2 percentage point increase in the likelihood of low caste households consuming from the PDS and a 4 percent increase in food grains per capita purchased from the PDS.

Reduced Form and First Stage

Table B7 (Appendix B) show the reduced form and first stage results corresponding to the baseline IV coefficients. Columns (1)-(4) show the reduced form coefficients, all of which are positive and significant, irrespective of the inclusion of covariates. The first stage coefficient without covariates is shown in column (5) while column (6) includes covariates. The coefficient is positive and significant (1% level) while the associated F-statistic is significantly higher than the prescribed lower bound of 10. To assess the impact of 1 additional close election won by low caste parties in the district, note that conditional on total close elections contested by low caste parties and total elections held in the district, 1 additional close

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[34] In 1999-00, the average number of low caste households in each district was approximately 343,00 so the approximate increase in the number of households access the PDS is 0.037*343,000.

[35] In terms of nutritional value, under the assumption that 100 grams of cooked rice provides 300 calories, the coefficient implies that a 10 percentage point increase in the fraction of low caste legislators in the district increases the daily subsidized caloric consumption for a low caste individual by 6 calories or approximately 0.3 percent of daily nutritional intake for an adult male.

win by a low caste party should result in $\beta * \frac{TotalCloseElections}{TotalElections}$ wins for low caste parties in the district.[36] As the average district witnesses 19 elections and low caste parties contest 2.6 close elections, an estimated $\beta = 0.11$ implies that 1 additional close win for low caste parties in the district translates to 0.8 or approximately, 1 additional electoral win for low caste parties in the district.

The first stage coefficient in this regard effectively validates the exclusion restriction of the IV specification which states that the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties should affect outcomes for low caste households solely through its impact on the fraction of total elections won by low caste parties in the district. The coefficient in columns (5) and (6) of Table B7 (Appendix B) points exactly to that – an additional close election won by low caste parties in the district results only in 1 additional election won by low caste parties. The lack of a multiplier effect also rules out that our identification is driven by "wave" elections where there is a local positive "wave" in favour of low caste parties. If so, we would have expected an additional close win by low caste parties to have a positive spillover on the electoral success of low caste parties across other constituencies in the district.

Comparison of OLS and IV Coefficients

The OLS specification corresponding to the IV estimates in columns (2) and (6) are shown in columns (4) and (8) of Table 2. The extensive margin coefficient is small and significant at the 10% level while the intensive margin coefficient remains positive but is imprecisely estimated. Comparing the IV and OLS coefficients, we see that the OLS coefficients are biased downwards. This is consistent with the findings of Rehavi (2008) and Clots-Figueras (2012), who use a comparable empirical strategy to identify the impact of female legislators on economic outcomes. There are two potential explanations for this: first, as described in Section 4.1, omitted factors correlated with the success of low caste parties are negatively

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[36] This is derived by totally differentiating the equation $\frac{LowCasteWin}{TotalElections} = \alpha + \beta \frac{LowCasteCloseWin}{TotalCloseElections}$, holding constant *TotalCloseElections* and *TotalElections*.

correlated with the outcome of interest, biasing downwards the relationship between low caste parties and PDS consumption for low caste households. Alternatively, there could be positive selection amongst legislators who contest close elections on behalf of low caste parties. Thus, if political parties can anticipate the incidence of a close electoral contest (without being able to influence its outcome due to imperfect control over vote shares), they may nominate candidates with higher ability in such constituencies. These candidates upon winning can also be expected to exert greater effort, resulting in improved outcomes for low caste households.[37]

Low Caste Parties and Non-Low Caste Households

Table B6 (Appendix B) presents estimates for the impact of the electoral success of low caste parties on the consumption of food grains from the PDS for non-low caste households. While the estimated coefficients are positive, they are imprecisely estimated and smaller than those obtained in columns (1) and (2) of Table 2 by a factor of 3. Statistically, we can reject the equality of the impact of legislators representing low caste parties across low and non-low caste households with 95 (99) percent confidence along the extensive (intensive) margin.[38] This confirms that legislators from low caste parties are actively targeting the PDS towards low caste households and the positive effect identified for low caste households is not a spillover emanating from a secular increase in PDS consumption across all households.

Does Party-based Representation Differ from Quota-based Representation?

Given that much of the literature on minority representation and distributive politics focus on the impact of India's reservation policy, we also estimate the impact of electoral quotas on public transfers as a benchmark for our exercise. Using a specification comparable to Pande (2003) and Chin and Prakash (2011) where we control for the contemporaneous

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[37] It is possible therefore that the IV coefficients represent an upper bound for the impact of low caste parties on low caste households' consumption from the PDS.

[38] The respective p-values are 0.016 along the extensive margin and 0.007 along the intensive margin.

share of low caste households in the district, along with our remaining covariates and fixed effects, columns (3) and (7) of Table 2 however finds little impact of the electoral quotas on low caste households' consumption from the PDS – consistent with the findings of Jensenius (2017). The coefficients are small, not statistically significant, and in fact, negative along the intensive margin (column (7)), suggesting that political representation via electoral quotas alone have little effect on low caste households' consumption from the PDS.

5.2   Robustness of Baseline Results

Our results are robust to a number of alternative empirical modeling choices – including varying the thresholds of close elections, alternate categorizations of low-caste parties, and alternate regression specifications. Columns (1)-(6) of Table 3 shows that the results are stable to redefining the close election threshold at the 3, 4 and 6% of win margins. For both the intensive and extensive margins of safety net access, the coefficient indicating the impact of low-caste party representaiton suggests positive impacts for low-caste households, statistically significant at the 5% level.[39] Columns (7) and (8) of Table 3 show that our results remain unchanged if we restrict the sample solely to districts which witnessed at least 1 close election. This check reassures us that mechanically forcing the instrument to take a value of 0 in districts with no close races does not change our core finding.

In Table 4, we demonstrate the robustness of our finding to alternate classification of low caste parties. We start in columns (1) and (2) by excluding the Left parties from the set of low caste parties. Section A (Appendix B) argues for the inclusion of these parties within the umbrella of low caste parties as they had repeatedly formed coalitions with low caste parties and also shared very similar policy objectives. However, as the Left parties

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[39] The sole exception to this is the extensive margin coefficient at the 3% margin of close elections (column (1)), which is significant at the 10% level.

Table 3: Low Caste Party Representation and PDS Consumption: Robustness to Alternate Thresholds of Close Elections and Excluding Districts Without Close Elections

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
			Alternate Threshold For Close Elections					
							Exclude Districts Without Close Elections	
	3 Percent		4 Percent		6 Percent			
	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita
Low Caste Party Win	.3461*	.7984**	.4071***	.7660**	.1735**	.3551**	.2859***	.6108***
	(.1835)	(.3849)	(.1561)	(.3335)	(.0819)	(.1537)	(.0967)	(.2255)
Observations	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452	140903	140903
R^2	.30	.29	.30	.29	.31	.30	.34	.32

Notes: The above table shows the robustness of the baseline results to alternate definitions of close elections and restricting the sample to districts with at least 1 close election. The unit of observation is the household. The dependent variable in columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household has purchased any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; in columns (2), (4), (6) and (8), the logged quantity of food grains purchased by the household from the PDS in the past 30 days. The independent variable of interest is the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district, instrumented by the fraction of close election won by low caste parties in the district. The threshold for close elections in columns (1) and (2) is a win margin of 3 percent; in columns (3) and (4), 4 percent; in columns (5) and (6), 6 percent. Columns (7) and (8) exclude districts which have no close elections involving low caste parties (at the 5 percent margin). All specifications control for the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Household and district-level covariates are also included. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

have typically viewed policy debates through the prism of class, as opposed to caste, they strictly cannot be considered as low caste parties. To this effect, we drop the states of West Bengal and Kerala where the Left parties have been the strongest and achieved the majority of their electoral success. The coefficients remain positive and statistically significant at the 5 percent level when we exclude these states.[40]

We next restrict our set of low caste parties to those operating in 6 major north Indian states – namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh – all of which experienced aggressive caste-based mobilization only since the late 1980s, under the auspices of the JD or the BSP.[41] This is motivated by Jaffrelot's (2003)

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[40] When the same specification is re-estimated for non-low caste households (results not shown), the coefficients remain small and imprecisely estimated, confirming yet again a null effect.

[41] Note that the positive correlation between the electoral success of low caste parties and the fraction of low caste legislators elected to the state legislative assembly is also the strongest for these states, as seen from Figure 3 (Appendix B).

study where the origin of low caste movements in southern and western India are traced to the pre-independence period. This could be driving our results if legislator effficacy is positively correlated with political experience. The results in columns (3) and (4) of Table 4 confirm that low caste party legislators continue to have a positive impact on low caste households' consumption from the PDS even when the sample is restricted to these states. While we lose half of our sample, the coefficients remain significant at the 15% percent level.

Table 4: Low Caste Party Representation and PDS Consumption: Alternate Samples

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	No Kerala West Bengal		Only North Indian States		Only Uttar Pradesh	
	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	Any PDS	PDS PerCapita	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita
Low Caste Party Win	.3066**	.5448**	.2294	.4661		
	(.1322)	(.2422)	(.1599)	(.3385)		
BSP Win					-.0452	-.1827
					(.0581)	(.1248)
BSP Win*SC					.1591**	.3431**
					(.0749)	(.1446)
BSP Win*OBC					.1089*	.2226*
					(.0589)	(.1165)
Observations	199780	199780	92678	92678	35107	35107
R^2	.31	.30	.16	.18	.12	.13

Notes: This table shows the robustness of our results to alternate samples. The unit of observation is household. The outcome variable in columns (1), (3) and (5) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household has consumed any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; in columns (2), (4) and (6), the logged per capita food grains (in kilograms) purchased from the PDS in the past 30 days. The independent variable of interest in columns (1)-(4) is the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district; in columns (5) and (6), the fraction of elections won by the BSP in the district. In each instance, the fraction of elections won by low caste parties (BSP) is instrumented by the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties (BSP) in the district. Columns (1) and (2) exclude the states of West Bengal and Kerala from the sample; columns (3) and (4) restrict the sample to 6 north Indian states - namely Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, which witnessed the most intense mobilization of low caste parties. Columns (5) and (6) restrict the sample solely to Uttar Pradesh. All specifications include district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects, along with household and district covariates. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

The last two columns of Table 4 restrict the sample solely to a single state and a single low caste party by examining the impact of the BSP in Uttar Pradesh. This provides a clear mapping of the political party to the low caste community as the BSP has aggressively

championed the cause of the *Dalits* (SCs) and also been led by *Dalit* leaders.[42] We thereby test whether the district-level electoral success of the BSP significantly impacts SC households' consumption from the PDS. As we are focusing on a single state, we use a pooled sample of households and test for differential effects of BSP legislators across SC and OBC households.[43] The results in columns (5) and (6) detect a positive and significant coefficient on the interaction term for both SC and OBC households. However, while the interaction term with OBC households is significant at the 10% level, the one for SC households is significant at the 5% level and 1.5 times larger (though not statistically different) than OBC households. On the contrary, the uninteracted term estimating the impact of the BSP on non-low caste households is negative, albeit not statistically significant.

Table B11 present additional specification tests in support of the baseline results. Columns (1) and (2) shows the robustness of the results to weighting by the NSS assigned household weights which makes the sample nationally representative.[44] Columns (3) and (4) show the stability of the results to the inclusion of state-specific time trends while columns (5) and (6) do the same for district-specific time trends. This confirms that the results are not generated through some common time-varying unobserved state or district-level factor positively correlated with both the electoral success of low caste parties, and low caste households' consumption from the PDS.

Finally, we show through a coefficient plot in Figure 3 (Appendix B) that the baseline results are robust to the dropping of individual states, alleviating concerns that the results might be driven by a single low caste party operating out of one state. We also show through two placebo tests in Table 5 that neither a 1 period lead in the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district, nor the fraction of elections won by major mainstream parties such as the BJP and the INC, affect low caste households' consumption from the

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[42] While there exists sub-castes within the *Dalit* community and the BSP's support group in recent years have tended to be concentrated within the *Jatav* sub-caste of *Dalits*, the party in its initial years enjoyed widespread support from across much of the *Dalit* community (Chandra 2005).

[43] We exclude ST households due to the considerably small population of STs in Uttar Pradesh.

[44] The household weights equal the inverse of the household's sampling probability.

PDS. The coefficients for the former are negative and imprecise, while that for the latter is small, positive and not significant.

Figure 3: Robustness of Results to Exclusion of Individual States
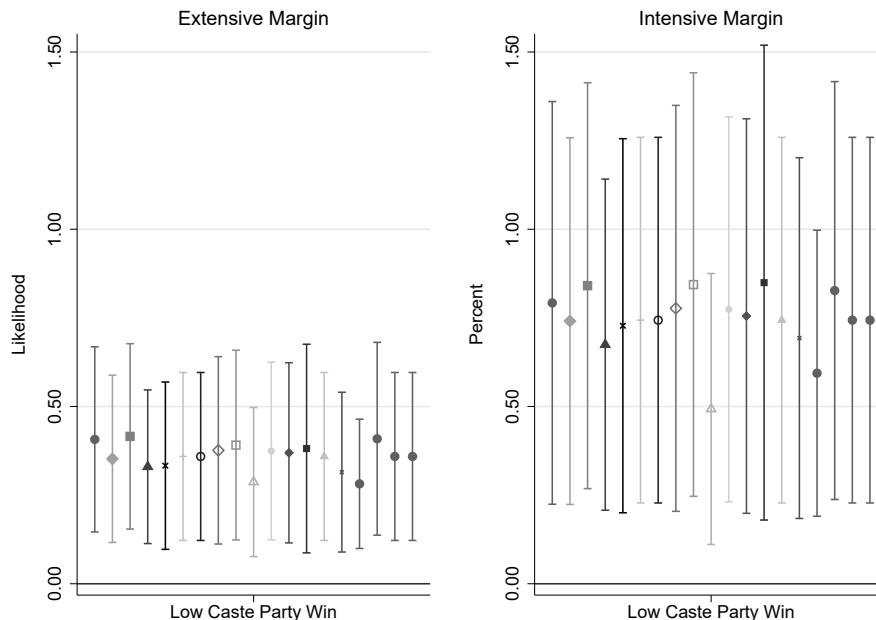
Notes: Figure demonstrates the robustness of baseline results by plotting point estimates from Equation 5 after excluding each individual state one by one. The outcome of interest in the left hand panel is a dummy equaling 1 if the household had made any purchases from the PDS in the past 30 days; the outcome of interest in the right hand panel is the logged quantity of food grains purchased from the PDS by households in the past 30 days. All specifications include district and survey round fixed effects, along with household and district covariates. Standard errors are clustered by district. The vertical lines represent the 90 percent confidence intervals. The sample is restricted to low caste households.

6   Political Parties or Electoral Quotas? What Drives Low Caste Households' Consumption from PDS

We now turn to the paper's key hypothesis: are political parties with a specific policy commitment towards low caste citizens more effective than the institution of electoral quotas in

Table 5: Political Parties and PDS Consumption for Low Caste Households: Placebos

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Low Caste Party Wins, Lead 1			Mainstream Party Wins		
	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita
Low Caste Party Win, Lead 1	-.0277	-.1987				
	(.1322)	(.3143)				
BJP Win			.0147	.0164		
			(.0829)	(.1327)		
INC Win					-.0474	-.0640
					(.0487)	(.0914)
Observations	183766	183766	222452	222452	222452	222452
R^2	.33	.32	.31	.30	.31	.30

Notes: Table shows placebo test results. The unit of observation is the household. The dependent variable in columns (1), (3) and (5) is a dummy equal to 1 if the household has purchased from the PDS in the past 30 days; in columns (2), (4) and (6), the logged quantity of PDS food grains. All specifications control for the fraction of close elections contested by the respective party, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Household and district-level covariates are also included. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

effecting public transfers towards low caste citizens? We exploit the institution of electoral quotas by virtue of which a pre-determined share of electoral constituencies in each district are "reserved" for SC/ST candidates, who alone can contest elections from such constituencies. Thus, regardless of the identity of the winning party, the legislator elected from these constituencies would always hail from a SC/ST background. This allows us to isolate the impact of legislators across political parties on our outcomes of interest, while holding the caste identity (SC/ST) of the legislator constant. If electoral quotas are sufficient to ensure public transfers to low caste households, we should expect to see no difference in the impact of low caste legislators elected through the quotas across party affiliations on low caste households' consumption from the PDS.

We use this strategy to compare the impact of legislators from low caste parties and two major mainstream parties – namely the BJP, and the INC – on low caste households' consumption from the PDS. The results are shown in Table 6: the outcome of interest in Panel A is consumption from the PDS along the extensive margin; in Panel B, along the intensive margin. For each party, the independent variable of interest in columns (1), (3)

and (5) is the fraction of elections won by the party of interest in reserved constituencies; in columns (2), (4) and (6), the fraction of elections won by the party of interest in non-reserved constituencies. In each instance, the fraction of elections won by a party from reserved (non-reserved) constituencies in the district is instrumented by the fraction of close elections won by the party from reserved (non-reserved) constituencies.

Across both Panels A and B, columns (1) and (2) of Table 6 show that regardless of the type of constituency, legislators representing low caste parties have a positive and significant impact on low caste households' consumption from the PDS. All the coefficients are significant at the 10% level with the extensive margin impact of low caste party legislators from reserved constituencies being significant at 1% level and the intensive margin impact of low caste party legislators from non-reserved constituencies significant at the 5% level.[45] On the contrary, irrespective of the type of constituency, none of the two mainstream parties have any impact on low caste households' consumption from the PDS, either along the extensive, or the intensive margins. The estimated coefficients for both parties are small and imprecisely estimated.

In terms of statistical significance, we are unable to reject the null that the impact of low caste party legislators elected from reserved constituencies is equal to low caste party legislators elected from non-reserved constituencies. Thus, irrespective of the type of constituency from which they are elected, legislators representing low caste parties have a positive and significant impact on low caste households' consumption from the PDS along both the extensive and intensive margins.

Comparing the coefficients across political parties, we note that within reserved constituencies, legislators from low caste parties have a significantly higher impact than legislators representing the two mainstream parties (coefficients significantly different at the 5% level). Morever, when we compare the impact of legislators representing low caste par-

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[45] The corresponding p-values in columns (1) and (2) of Panels A and B are, 0.002, 0.063, 0.052 and 0.023 respectively.

ties elected from non-reserved constituencies (thereby the legislator not necessarily hailing from the SC/ST community), against those elected from reserved constituencies (whereby the legislator by design hails from the SC/ST community), but representing one of the two mainstream parties, we see that the former also has a significantly higher impact on PDS consumption by low caste households (significant at the 5% level for both sets of parties and outcomes).

In summary, the results in this section highlight the critical role played by the policy preferences of political parties and provide a potential explanation to the recent findings of Dunning and Nilekani (2012), Jensenius (2017) and Bhavnani (2017), all of whom find muted effects of the electoral quotas. Our results suggest that low-caste legislators elected through the reservation program do affect outcomes for low caste households, but only when they are members political parties with an policy commitments favoring low caste citizens. In our view, these findings provide empirical evidence consistent with *substantive* representation for socio-economically underprivileged citizens (Pitkin 1967). The results also offer causal evidence in favor of Acemoglu et al.'s (2016) theoretical prediction that institutional changes solely affecting *de jure* political power will continue to have a limited effect on redistribution, unless accompanied by broader changes in *de facto* political power, which alters the overall societal distribution of political power.

Table 6: Political Parties across Reservations and PDS Low Caste Consumption

	Panel A: Extensive Margin					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
			Pr(Any PDS = 1)			
	Low Caste Party Legislators		INC Legislators		BJP Legislators	
Reserved Constituencies	.1346***		-.0330		-.0156	
	(.0509)		(.0261)		(.0291)	
Non-Reserved Constituencies		.2181*		-.0237		.0271
		(.1145)		(.0451)		(.0697)
Observations	219411	219695	219411	219695	219411	219695
R²	.31	.31	.31	.31	.31	.31
Dep Var Mean	.37	.37	.37	.37	.37	.37
	Panel B: Intensive Margin					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
			Per Capita PDS (Logged)			
	Low Caste Party Legislators		INC Legislators		BJP Legislators	
Reserved Constituencies	.2071*		-.0409		-.0141	
	(.1076)		(.0517)		(.0533)	
Non-Reserved Constituencies		.4902**		-.0351		.0220
		(.2344)		(.0864)		(.1071)
Observations	219411	219695	219411	219695	219411	219695
R²	.30	.29	.30	.30	.30	.30
Dep Var Mean	1.78	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80	1.80

Notes: Table shows the impact of legislators from low caste and mainstream parties on low caste households' PDS consumption, across reserved and non-reserved seats. The unit of observation is the household. The dependent variable in Panel A is a dummy equaling 1 if the household has purchased from the PDS in the past 30 days; the dependent variable in Panel B is the logged PDS food grain quantity. Reserved constituencies are those where only SC/ST candidates can contest elections; in non-reserved constituencies, any candidate can contest elections. The independent variable in columns (1)-(2) is the fraction of elections won by low caste parties; in columns (3)-(4), fraction of elections won by the BJP; in columns (5)-(6), the fraction of elections won by the INC. In each specification, the fraction of elections won by low caste parties/BJP/INC from reserved (non-reserved) constituencies is instrumented by the fraction of close elections won from reserved (non-reserved) constituencies. All specifications control for the fraction of close elections contested, and district, survey round, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Household and district-level covariates included. Standard errors are clustered by district.

7 Heterogeneous Effects of Low-caste Legislators

This section examines differential effects in the impact of low caste party legislators across executive power, individual low caste communities, legislature tenure and household consumption levels. In the process, we shall attempt to identify the channel through which low caste party legislators might be impacting low caste households' consumption from the PDS, and rule out alternate explanations for the baseline results

7.1 Local vs. State: Heterogeneity by Executive Power

We begin by testing for differential effects of low caste party legislators by executive power. This tests whether low caste party legislators affect PDS consumption through local networks or require broader access to political power in order to be effective. We would expect the latter to be particularly true if the increase in low caste households' consumption from the PDS is arising due to an expansion of public expenditures to the PDS (the legislative channel), which would be possible only when legislators are able to influence the budgetary process by being a part of the government. To this effect, we define the dummy *Low Caste Govt* to equal 1 if low caste parties form the government in the state, either by themselves, or in coalition with other parties, and interact it with the fraction of legislators representing low caste parties in a district.[46]

Columns (1) and (4) of Table B8 (Appendix B) test for differential effects of low caste party legislators when low caste parties are in government. The interaction terms are small and not statistically significant, while the uninteracted term estimating the impact of low caste party legislators when low caste parties are not part of the government remain positive and significant. Thus, legislators representing low caste parties continue to impact low caste

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[46] As we have 2 endogenous variables in this specification – the fraction of legislators representing low caste parties in a district, and its interaction with low caste government, we also have two instruments – namely the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district and its interaction with low caste government.

households' consumption from the PDS even when low caste parties don't hold executive power, and they do not have a heightened impact when low caste parties enjoy executive power, implying that executive power is not a necessary condition for low caste parties to affect public transfers. The results thereby suggest that legislators' local networks, through either of the bureaucratic or enforcement channels are more effective in influencing public transfers in favour of low caste households.[47] The results in this light are consistent with the fieldwork of Jensenius (2017) who documents that state legislators are influential within their constituencies and can affect outcomes solely through local networks, even without access to broader political power.

7.2 Heterogeneity by Low Caste Community and Legislative Tenure

The remaining tests of heterogeneity in Table B8 (Appendix B) considers competing channels which might be explaining the impact of low caste parties on low caste households' consumption from the PDS. We first test whether the impact of low caste parties are concentrated within the OBC community – the largest and most upwardly mobile amongst the three low caste communities.[48] If so, the positive impact of low caste parties can be argued to reflect elite capture by dominant groups. We test this by identifying heterogeneous treatment effects of low caste party legislators across SC and ST households. Columns (1) and (3) of Table B8 (Appendix B) rule out this explanation: while the interaction term for SC and ST households is small and not precisely estimated, the sum of the coefficients remain positive and significant in each case, confirming that an increase in the fraction of legislators elected from low caste parties positively affect the consumption of all three low caste communities from the PDS.

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[47] As the sum of the coefficients is also positive and significant, the results don't rule out the legislative channel per se, but indicates that it might not be the dominant channel through which these legislators are affecting the PDS consumption of low caste households.

[48] Collectively, the OBC community comprises between 35 and 40% of the national population and approximately two thirds of low caste households. They also fare better on education, land ownership and expenditure parameters as opposed to SC or ST households.

We next test whether our results can be explained through the channel of vote buying. It is plausible that legislators representing low caste parties engage in cheap talk prior to elections by claiming to represent low caste interests, and deliver on their agendas only before elections to boost their re-election prospects. In such a situation, we would be incorrectly interpreting targeted vote buying as low caste parties' policy commitment towards low caste citizens. If this explanation is correct, we would expect the positive impact on low caste households to be concentrated in the years prior to state elections. We test this by interacting the fraction of low caste party legislators with a dummy equaling 1 if the survey was conducted in the last two years of the state legislature's tenure. Columns (2) and (4) of Table B8 (Appendix B) negate this explanation: the coefficients on the interaction term are in fact negative and significant – opposite of what we would expect if low caste party legislators were exploiting the PDS for pre-election vote buying. Thus it is unlikely that the positive effect of low caste party legislators on low caste households is driven by electoral motives alone.

7.3   Low Caste Parties or Pro-Poor Parties?

The previous section ruled out that our results can be attributed to the capture of public resources by dominant groups or vote-buying strategies of low caste parties. We now consider whether the baseline results can be explained by the fact that low caste parties are parties which support a general expansion of social safety net programs. As low caste households have a significantly higher likelihood of being poor, this mechanically increases their propensity of being a beneficiary from the PDS and consuming at higher levels from the same in the presence of these parties.[49] This would however imply that we are erroneously classifying pro-poor parties as "low caste" parties. However, if this explanation is correct, we would a) expect the effects to be concentrated within poorer low caste households; and b) expect

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[49] For instance, based on the NSS surveys, 87 and 90 percent of the BPL households in 1999-00 and 2011-12 were low caste.

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poor non-low caste households who might be dependent on the PDS to also benefit in the presence of legislators representing these parties.

We examine this hypothesis by testing for differential effects across households falling in the bottom decile (quartile) of the consumption distribution. For each survey round, we compute the 10th and 25th percentile of the monthly per capita consumption and assign households to each of these groups.[50] Subsequently, we define a dummy equaling 1 if the household falls in the bottom decile (quartile) and interact it with the fraction of legislators elected from low caste parties in the district. We would expect a positive coefficient on the interaction term for both low and non-low caste households if low caste parties are essentially working towards overall poverty alleviation and not targeting the transfers towards low caste households.

The results in Table B9 (Appendix B) confirm that low caste parties are exclusively targeting the PDS towards low caste households. The interaction term in columns (1)-(4) where the sample is restricted to low caste households is small and statistically insignificant, ruling out any differential effects for this sub-sample of households. The uninteracted effect of low caste party legislators however remains positive and statistically significant at the 5% level in each case, and the sum of coefficients is also jointly significant at the 5% level. Thus, a higher fraction of legislators representing low caste parties results in an increase in low caste households' consumption from the PDS, irrespective of their location in the consumption distribution.[51]

On the contrary, when the sample is restricted to non-low caste households (columns (4)-(8)), we see that while the coefficient on the interaction term remains small and imprecise,

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[50] As consumption patterns vary across rural and urban households, we compute the percentile breaks separately for urban and rural households.

[51] These results however do not indicate elite capture of PDS benefits by the relatively less poor low caste households. Note first that as the sum of the coefficients are statistically significant, low caste households in the bottom quartile (decile) of the consumption distribution also continue to access the PDS, both along the intensive, and the extensive margins. Moreover, while the PDS is an entitlement to BPL households, APL households are also eligible to make purchases from PDS shops subject to availability. A case for elite capture could have been made if the poor low caste households were completely excluded from the PDS, while the non-poor low caste households continued to benefit from it.

the direct effect of low caste legislators also remains smaller than those estimated in columns (1)-(4) and fails to achieve statistical significance with the exception of column (8). There too, the coefficient is weakly significant at the 10% level (p-value of 0.08) and a third in magnitude to the corresponding coefficient for low caste households estimated in column (4). Thus, legislators representing low caste parties continue to have little impact on non-low caste households' consumption from the PDS, even when they fall in the bottom decile (quartile) of the consumption distribution. These findings support our contention that low caste parties are mainly targeting resources toward low-caste households, and rule out the likelihood of effects being driven by generically pro-poor parties.

8   Reductions in Low-caste Administrative Exclusion

Section 2.2 noted that the PDS has been afflicted by errors of exclusion (Figure 6 Appendix B) while Section 2.3 discussed how legislators can improve households' access to the PDS along the extensive margin through the bureaucratic and enforcement channels. We now test whether low caste party legislators indeed reduce the exclusion of eligible low caste households from the PDS.[52] We measure exclusion errors in two ways: the first is a dummy equaling 1 if the household is a BPL household but did not undertake any consumption from the PDS in the past 30 days. The second is a broader definition where the dummy equals 1 if the household is a BPL household, or a rural landless household, and did not undertake any consumption from the PDS in the past 30 days. The first outcome measures exclusion errors as BPL households who did not consume from the PDS; the second measure captures the AAY group, which includes BPL or landless households. Households in both groups however are entitled to receive subsidized food grains from the PDS.

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[52] While inclusion errors have also been a concern for the PDS, we refrain from examining inclusion errors as states have the flexibility to expand on the list of PDS beneficiaries, making it harder to identify errors of inclusion.

Table 7: Low Caste Party Representation and Exclusion Errors from PDS

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
		Pr(No PDS = 1)		
	Low Caste		Non-Low Caste	
	BPL	BPL or Rural Landless	BPL	BPL or Rural Landless
Low Caste Party Win	-.4111**	-.3926**	-.2593	-.1139
	(.1923)	(.1525)	(.2333)	(.1527)
Observations	61584	97753	9729	17715
R^2	.31	.30	.27	.24
Dep Var Mean	.56	.55	.68	.69

Notes: This table shows the impact of low caste parties on the likelihood of eligible low and non-low caste households being excluded from the PDS. The unit of observation is the household. The dependent variable in each specification is a dummy equaling 1 if the household did not undertake any consumption of food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days. Columns (1) and (3) restrict the sample to BPL households; columns (2) and (4) restrict the sample to households who are either BPL, or rural and landless. The households considered in columns (1) and (2) are low caste households; in columns (3) and (4), non-low caste households. The independent variable of interest is the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district, instrumented by the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district. All specifications control for the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects, and household and district covariates. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

Columns (1) and (2) of Table 7 show that the low caste party legislators have a negative and significant impact on the exclusion of eligible low caste households from the PDS. In column (1), where the sample is restricted to BPL low caste households, a 10 percentage point increase in the fraction of low caste legislators in the district causes a 4 percentage point reduction in the likelihood a low caste BPL household not consuming from the PDS. Column (2) restricts the sample to low caste households who are either BPL or are rural and landless and finds a similar effect of low caste legislators on exclusion errors – at the mean of the dependent variable in the baseline data of 1999-00, a 10 percentage point increase in the fraction of low caste party legislators in the district reduces the likelihood of exclusion errors by 6 percent, amounting to 4,700 households.[53] Comparing the effects with the baseline results, this implies that approximately 40 percent of the increase in PDS consumption for low caste households along the extensive margin can be attributed to a reduction in exclusion

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[53] The mean of the dependent variable in 1999-00 is 65 percent so the coefficient reflects a reduction by $0.039/0.6476 = 6$ percent. Also, 34 percent of low caste households fall in the BPL or rural landless category, implying that the exclusion error is reduced by 343,00*0.039*.33 = 4,700 households.

errors by legislators representing low caste parties.

On the contrary, columns (3) and (4) undertake the same exercise but restricts the sample to upper caste households. The coefficients, while negative, are smaller in magnitude (particularly column (2) vs column (4)) and imprecisely estimated. Thus, while legislators representing low caste parties reduce the likelihood of exclusion errors for eligible low caste households, they have little impact for eligible upper caste households. Table B10 (Appendix B) on the other hand shows that none of the other mainstream parties have a comparable effect on exclusion errors from the PDS for eligible low caste households. The coefficients in fact are positive, although imprecisely estimated in all but one instance. The results in Table 7 thereby provide empirical support for the presence of the bureaucratic and enforcement channels in affecting low caste households' consumption from the PDS.

9   Identifying the Political Mechanism

Section 7.2 established that executive power is not a necessary condition for low caste parties to influence public transfers to low caste households, pointing to the presence of the bureaucratic and enforcement channels. This was supported by the findings in the previous section which established that the reduction in exclusion errors associated with the PDS accounted for 40 percent of the increase in PDS consumption from low caste households along the extensive margin. We now attempt to distinguish between the bureaucratic and enforcement channel by testing for persistence in the impact of legislators representing low caste parties across electoral cycles.

We hypothesize that if the bureaucratic channel is sufficient for low caste households to consume from the PDS, we would expect to see a persistent effect of legislators representing low caste parties. This is because the bureaucratic channel captures the lobbying efforts of legislators in assisting low caste households to obtain the necessary documentation required to access the PDS – namely BPL/APL ration cards. As there is no time duration associated

with these cards, if the cards alone are sufficient to access the PDS, low caste households should be able to consume from the PDS, even in the absence of legislators representing low caste parties. However, if the impact of legislators representing low caste parties is restricted only to the electoral cycle in which they are elected, it would suggest that the availability of ration cards is not a sufficient condition to access the PDS: low caste party legislators are required to ensure access to the PDS through the enforcement channel.

Table 8: Persistence in the Impact of Low Caste Party Representation on PDS Consumption

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	PDS Consumption		Exclusion Error	
	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	BPL Households	BPL or Rural Landless
Low Caste Party Win	.3502***	.7267***	-.4319**	-.3948***
	(.1302)	(.2773)	(.1781)	(.1330)
Low Caste Party Win, Lag1	.0931	.2996	-.2751	-.1746
	(.1705)	(.4103)	(.1974)	(.1740)
Observations	217874	217874	59806	95424
R^2	.31	.30	.32	.31
Dep Var Mean	.37	1.80	.56	.55

Notes: This table tests for persistence in the impact of low caste party legislators. The unit of observation is the household. The outcome of interest in column (1) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household purchased from the PDS; in column (2), the logged quantity of PDS food grains purchased; in columns (3)-(4), a dummy equaling 1 if the household did not purchase from the PDS. Sample is restricted to low caste households. Column (3) restricts the sample to BPL households; column (4) restricts to households who are either BPL, or rural & landless. The main independent variable is the district fraction of elections won by low caste parties, instrumented by the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties. Regressions include the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, and the standard controls.Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

We test this hypothesis by identifying whether low caste party legislators elected in the previous electoral cycle continue to have an impact on low caste households' current consumption from the PDS. The findings in Table 8 however does not support this hypothesis. We see that while an increase in the fraction of legislators representing low caste parties in the contemporaneous electoral cycle has a positive and significant impact on low caste households' consumption from the PDS, there is no corresponding effect of the fraction

of elections won by low caste parties in the district in the previous electoral cycle – the coefficients are all significantly smaller and imprecisely estimated.[54]

The findings of Table 8 thereby confirms that the influence of legislators representing low caste parties on public transfers to low caste households is limited to the duration in which these legislators hold office. The fact that the positive effects on public transfers do not extend beyond one electoral cycle indicates that these legislators are affecting public transfers through the enforcement channel, whereby legislators assist low caste households to receive their entitled share of subsidized food grains from the PDS through a direct intervention at the level of the PDS shops.[55]

10 Conclusion

This paper studies whether minority political representation affects social safety net transfers for historically discriminated and economically underprivileged minority citizens. We focus on political representation for India's low caste citizens, who have been long discriminated through the hierarchical caste system. Contrary to the existing literature which has examined the economic impacts stemming from mandated electoral quotas for low caste SC/ST citizens, this paper studies the economic impacts emanating from the electoral success of select political parties led primarily by low caste leaders with ex-ante commitments towards representing lower caste interests.

Using an instrumental variables strategy based on the outcome of close elections between low and non-low caste political parties, we show that the electoral success of low caste parties has a positive causal impact on low caste households' consumption of subsidized food grains from India's largest safety net program. Importantly, our results show that leg-

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[54] The results are unchanged if we exclude the fraction of low caste legislators in the contemporaneous electoral cycle from the specifications.

[55] In the absence of data on BPL/APL card holdings by households, we are unable to test whether low caste party legislators indeed affect the likelihood of low caste households in obtaining these cards.

islators elected through the electoral quotas impact low caste households' consumption of subsdized food grains only when they represent low caste parties. Our empirical findings in this regard document the economic impacts of substantive political representation of minority citizens, as posited by Pitkin (1967), as opposed to descriptive representation achieved through mandated electoral quotas.

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Appendix

A   Historical Background of Low Caste Parties

This section provides a historical background on the political mobilization of low caste citizens in India, leading to the formation of low caste parties. We next layout the defining characteristics which we use to classify select political parties as low caste parties. At the outset though, it is worth mentioning that most political parties in India typically mention the economic advancement of low-caste populations as part of their political agenda. The numerical majority and geographic dispersion of the low-caste communities make it difficult for any political party aspiring for national or state power to be openly hostile, or even indifferent to these communities.

For instance, prior to the 1980s, the catch-all Congress Party was the preferred political option for the lower castes and would include the economic improvement (though not political) of the lower castes in their electoral agenda. However, we distinguish other parties from our grouping of low caste parties along two dimensions: first, low caste parties actively attempted to increase the political representation of low-caste legislators by nominating a higher number of low-caste - particularly OBC - candidates from non-reserved constituencies. As Jaffrelot (2003) states, the electoral success of these parties effectively reduced the share of upper-caste legislators, particularly in the northern Indian states, from over 50 percent in the early 1970s to 30 percent by the end of the 20th century. Moreover, key leadership positions in these low caste parties were also staffed by low-caste individuals, as opposed to the Congress or the BJP, where the party leadership was typically comprised of upper caste individuals during this period. Section A.1 traces the growth of these parties while Section A.2 provides qualitative evidence from existing fieldwork supporting our classification of select political parties as low caste parties.

A.1   Political Trajectory of Low Caste Parties

The aggressive political mobilization of India's low caste citizens began in the mid-1980s in the heavily populated north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It was led primarily by two parties - namely the Janata Dal (JD) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). While the latter's target voter base were the *Dalits* (Scheduled Castes (SCs))), the former drew support primarily from the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Muslims. Both parties claimed to represent the broad coalition of low caste citizens including both SCs and OBCs.

The first major electoral success for low caste parties came in 1989 when the JD emerged as the second largest party in the federal elections and led the federal government in coalition

with 6 other parties. Within a year of forming the government, the JD implemented legislation setting aside 27 percent of federal public sector positions for the OBC community.[56] Between 1990 and 1994, the JD also secured electoral majorities in the north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, in addition to Orissa and Karnataka.[57] During this period, the JD however also fragmented into multiple constituents leading to the rise of powerful regional parties which wielded considerable clout at the state level. Figure 1 (Appendix B) depict the growing electoral success of low caste parties in terms of vote shares across major Indian states between 1987 and 2009. Between 1990 and 2010, all the major regional off-shoots of the erstwhile JD enjoyed at least one full five year stint in power across four major states - Karnataka in southern India, Orissa in eastern India and Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in north India.[58] Similarly, the BSP, after two short-lived attempts at governance, successfully obtained a majority in 2007 and ruled Uttar Pradesh till 2012.

Finally, in addition to the regional off-shoots of the JD, we also include the Left parties and the DMK based in the southern state of Tamil Nadu within the ambit of low caste parties.[59] These parties have consistently formed pre-poll electoral alliances[60] with the low caste parties in our sample and also have policy objectives closely aligned with those of the JD and the BSP.[61] However, as these parties did not originate through the process of caste

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[56] This was on the basis of the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. The Mandal Commission was established in 1977 by the federal government to determine caste groups eligible for affirmative action, and also quantify the level of affirmative action required to adequately represent lower castes in public institutions. Although the commission submitted its recommendations in 1980, the two subsequent federal governments led by the Congress party refrained from acting upon the proposed recommendations or even initiating a discussion on the same in Parliament.

[57] One of the initial administrative actions of the JD in the states was also to expand the existing affirmative action schemes and promote officials from low caste backgrounds to higher positions in the administration.

[58] As seen from Figure 1 (Appendix B), along with winning the requisite number of elections to form state governments, low caste parties between 1987 and 2009 maintained a considerable electoral presence in 7 major states by winning at least 20 percent of the popular vote. For instance, in the 2000-2010 period, the two major fragments of the JD in Bihar (the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Janata Dal (United) - JD(U)) have consistently polled between 35 and 45 percent of the popular vote. Likewise, in Uttar Pradesh, the BSP and the principal JD offshoot, the Samajwadi Party (SP), received 30 percent of the votes in 1993, and their combined vote share steadily increased to over 50 percent in 2002 and have stayed at that level for the next decade. The stability in vote shares of the AA parties underline the presence of a core support base which can confer the necessary bargaining power in state legislatures to influence public policy, even when not part of the government.

[59] The paper's grouping of low caste parties have share a significant overlap with the "soft Left" parties defined by Besley and Burgess (2000).

[60] The Left parties and the DMK for instance supported the National Front federal government led by the JD in 1990; they also were part of the federal United Front government which was a coalition government formed mainly by the splinter groups associated with the JD. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the Left parties have typically allied with the JD and its splinter groups - namely the RJD and the SP.

[61] The Left parties and the DMK have been in existence for longer than either the JD or the BSP and have achieved electoral successes since 1967 in the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal. While the

based mobilization, we show in Section **??** that our results are stable to the exclusion of these parties from the group of low caste parties.

A.2 Distinguishing Features of Low Caste Parties

Primarily drawing from the pioneering work of Jaffrelot (2003), we classify select political parties as "low caste parties" based on two major distinguishing factors – caste composition of party candidates and political rhetoric concerning low caste citizens. With regard to the first, Jaffrelot (2003) through his interviews of low caste party leaders highlights that a major grievance of politicians from low caste backgrounds with regard to the mainstream parties in the 1970s and 80s was the severe under-representation of low caste citizens in the federal and state legislatures. Thus, for the first 3 decades post independence, legislators from upper caste communities comprised in excess of 50% of the federal legislature, even though they accounted for under 20% of the national population (Jaffrelot, 2003). This significant over-representation of upper caste elites in the political process was reflected in the popular slogan amongst low caste parties in the late 1980s: "*mat hamara, raj tumhara, nahin chalega, nahin chalega.*" ("The existing system of our votes and your leadership will no longer be accepted.") In this light, both the JD and the BSP from their initial days committed towards enhancing the political representation of politicians from low caste communities in both the federal and the state legislatures. The JD for instance in 1989 committed that 60% of their candidates in the federal elections will be selected from low caste communities.

The caste backgrounds of legislators elected from low caste parties through the 1990s confirms that their political rhetoric was not cheap talk. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh – India's most populous state – across 6 electoral cycles between 1985 and 2002, 31 to 54% of the legislators representing the JD and its subsequent regional breakaway, the SP, hailed from the OBC community. In addition to this, 20% of the JD/SP's legislators from the

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Left parties have typically preferred to frame policy debates around the issue of class as opposed to caste, the strong correlation between caste and income results in the welfare of lower castes being a major policy agenda for these parties. The DMK on the other hand was formed after a split in the Justice Party in 1946, which was essentially a 'rationalist' anti-upper caste party, formed in the 1920s to challenge the hegemony of the upper castes in the southern province of Madras (the predecessor to the state of Tamil Nadu). The DMK as a party split in 1972 leading to the formation of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). In this paper, we do not classify the AIADMK as a low caste party as the core leadership of this party has been dominated by upper castes and the party had a distinctly toned down 'anti-upper caste' rhetoric after splitting from its parent organization. When in power, both the Left parties and the DMK have also implemented policies targeted to benefit low caste populations. The DMK for instance championed affirmative action policies in Tamil Nadu, leading to a large percentage of public sector jobs being reserved for low caste citizens; the Left parties have successfully engaged in far reaching land reforms comprising of titling sharecroppers and providing land ownership to landless labourers, both of whom were drawn mostly from low caste populations.

SC community, implying that over 50% of the legislators representing the JD/SP belonged to low caste communities.[62] In the same period, 30-40% of the legislators representing the BSP were SCs, while another 20-40% were OBCs, implying that 50-80% of BSP legislators belonged to low caste communities. Upper castes on the other hand made up 15-25% of the legislators from either of these parties. This is in marked contrast with the two mainstream parties competing in Uttar Pradesh during this period – the BJP and the INC. In both these parties, politicians from the upper castes comprised 45-60% of the legislators, and the fraction of low caste legislators did not cross 40% during any electoral cycle for either party (Zerenini 2009).

The caste composition of ministers in the UP state government between 1985 and 2000 also undergoes a sea change with changes in the party in charge of the state government. Between 1985 and 1989, the centrist Congress party was the ruling party in the state and 60% of the ministers hailed from the upper castes – notwithstanding the Congress' rhetoric that it also represented the interests of citizens from the lower castes and worked for their political advancement. A similar pattern was observed when the BJP was in power during 1991 and 2000 with over 50% of ministerial positions being assigned to upper caste legislators. During both these regimes, only 20-35% of ministerial positions were allocated to those hailing from low caste backgrounds. This was inverted between 1993 and 1997 when first, the SP and the BSP formed a coalition government, and subsequently, the BSP led a coalition government with the BJP. In the first instance, only 6 % of the ministers were from the upper castes while 70% hailed from either the SC or the OBC communities, signalling a total inversion of the social hierarchy. During the latter period, the share of upper caste legislators as ministers exceeded to 20% but legislators from the SC and OBC backgrounds still accounted for over half the ministers in the BSP-BJP coalition government.[63] Thus, both the share of low caste legislators elected to the state legislature in UP, and the representation of low caste politicians in the UP government increased substantially through the electoral success of parties we classify as low caste parties (Zerenini 2009).

A similar pattern is observed in the state of Bihar which also witnessed an upsurge in low caste mobilization in the 1980s, led by the JD. During the 80s, the leading party in the state was the INC and 40% of the legislators from this party on average were from upper caste backgrounds, with OBCs and SCs making up between 19 and 17% respectively. In

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[62] This is well above the 22% reservation of electoral constituencies for SC/STs in the UP state legislature during this period.

[63] This government was led by Ms. Mawawati from the BSP, who served as Chief Minister. The alliance with the BJP was formed in the aftermath of the state elections after no party succeeded in achieving a plurality by themselves.

contrast, the JD (and subsequently its principal regional fragment, the RJD) between 1990 and 2005 had 50% of its legislators belonging to the OBC groups, and another 20% from the SC groups, totaling to over 70% of its legislators hailing from low caste groups (Robin, 2009).[64]

A potential argument which can be used to counter the limited representation for low caste citizens in mainstream parties in UP and Bihar is that these states had other parties to represent the interests of low caste citizens and resultantly, mainstream parties like the BJP and INC strategically catered to non-lower caste groups. However, when we look at other major states in northern India where electoral politics was dominated by these two parties and the JD and the BSP enjoyed little electoral success, we see a similar pattern of exclusion of low caste groups from the political process. Thus in the state of Madhya Pradesh (MP) in north India where the two major political players were the BJP and the INC, the share of upper caste legislators from either party between 1985 and 2003 was between 35 and 50%. OBCs on the other hand comprised 14-20% of the legislators from these parties while SC/STs accounted for 15-40%. The large proportion of SC/STs in MP was driven almost entirely through the electoral quotas as MP had a high share of indigenous communities, leading to a relatively high share of electoral quotas for ST politicians (Jaffrelot, 2009).[65]

However, whether the heightened political representation courtesy the electoral quotas also bestowed political power unto low caste legislators is debatable as upper caste individuals remained firmly entrenched in the key leadership positions of the two parties in this period. Thus, upper caste politicians constituted between 55 and 67% of the BJP state executive between 1991 and 2003, while individuals hailing from the SC and ST communities accounted for under 15% of such positions.[66] On the contrary, the BSP, which enjoyed a modicum of electoral success in the state elections held in 1998 and 2003 selected between 23-50% of its candidates hailing from the OBC community, 30% from the SC community and 16-26% from the ST community (Jaffrelot, 2009).

Similar trends are observed in the north-western state of Rajasthan which has also witnessed two party competition between the BJP and the INC between 1985 and 2003. In this period, between 20 and 36% (37-55%) of the INC (BJP) legislators were elected from upper caste communities. Representation for legislators belonging to the OBC community

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[64] In this period, the leading low caste party in Bihar – the JD (RJD in 2005) – won 124, 167 and 122 out of the 315 elections conducted in 1990, 1995 and 2000 respectively. This implies in excess of 80 low caste legislators elected due to the success of the JD/RJD to the state legislature in this period.

[65] The share of electoral constituencies "reserved" through the electoral quotas in MP till 2000 was 37%.

[66] A party's state executive is the prime decision making body of the party within the state. Appointments to this body is done by the party and is not conducted through elections, nor subject to any regulation. Parties thereby are free to nominate whomsoever they wish to these positions.

did not exceed 15% for either party in any of the 5 electoral cycles. A significantly high share of legislators in both parties however belonged to the SC/ST communities (between 15 and 40%), primarily due to the electoral quotas.[67] However, in this state too, we see a mismatch between the political representation of SC/ST groups through the electoral quotas and their corresponding representation in the primary leadership body of these parties where no such quotas exist. Thus, when comparing the state party executives in 2005, we see that almost half the members of the executives in both parties hail from the upper castes, while approximately 15% belong to the SC/ST community. This figure is quite stark in case of the BJP where 37% of its legislators elected in the state elections in 2003 hailed from the SC/ST communities, while only 17% of the BJP state executive was comprised of SC/ST politicians (Jaffrelot and Robin, 2003).

To obtain a representative picture of whether the success of low caste parties is indeed correlated with an increase in the political representation of low caste citizens, we aggregate the fieldwork data presented in Jaffrelot (2009) from 9 states between 1985 and 2003.[68] This provides us with 41 state-electoral cycles to examine the relationship between the fraction of legislators hailing from low caste backgrounds in the state legislature and the fraction of legislators representing low caste parties. The correlation is presented as a scatter plot in Figure 3 (Appendix B) and shows a positive relationship between the fraction of legislators from low caste communities and the fraction of legislators representing low caste parties in the state. The relationship is strongest for the fraction of legislators from the OBC community, with a raw correlation coefficient of 0.56. The correlation coefficients for all low caste (SC) legislators and low caste party legislators is slightly weaker at 0.48 (0.47).

Based on Figure 3 (Appendix B) and the fieldwork of Zerenini (2009), Robin (2009), Jaffrelot (2009), Jaffrelot and Robin (2009), we see that the political parties classified in this paper as low caste parties nominated a significantly higher fraction of politicians hailing from low caste backgrounds to contest elections. On the other hand, mainstream parties such as the BJP and the INC remained dominated by upper caste elites between 1980 and 2005. Moreover, when these parties were mandated by the electoral quotas to nominate low caste candidates to the state legislature, the control of the party remained with the upper caste elites as seen by their large representation in the state party executives. This guides our distinction of low caste parties, born through the political mobilization of low caste citizens, from our mainstream political parties operating in India.

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[67] The share of electoral constituencies "reserved" through the electoral quotas in Rajasthan was 29%.

[68] Specifically, these are the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

B   Additional Specifications and Robustness Checks

This section of the appendix presents additional descriptive statistics, results and robustness checks.

B.1   Figures

Figure 1: Electoral Support to Low Caste Parties Across States Over Time
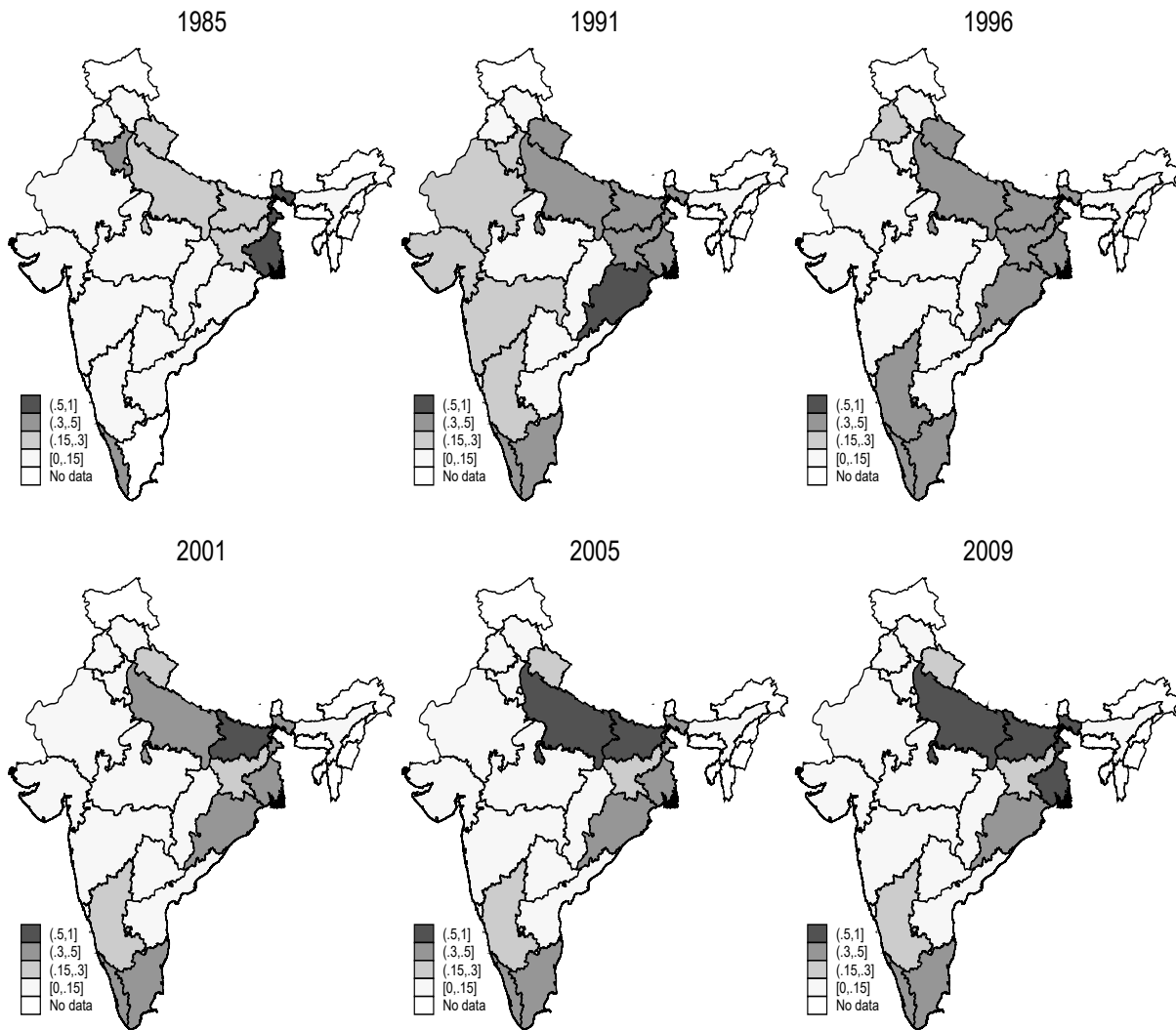
Notes: The above figures show the vote share of low caste parties across states at select periods of time.

Figure 2: Electoral Success of Low Caste Parties Over Time
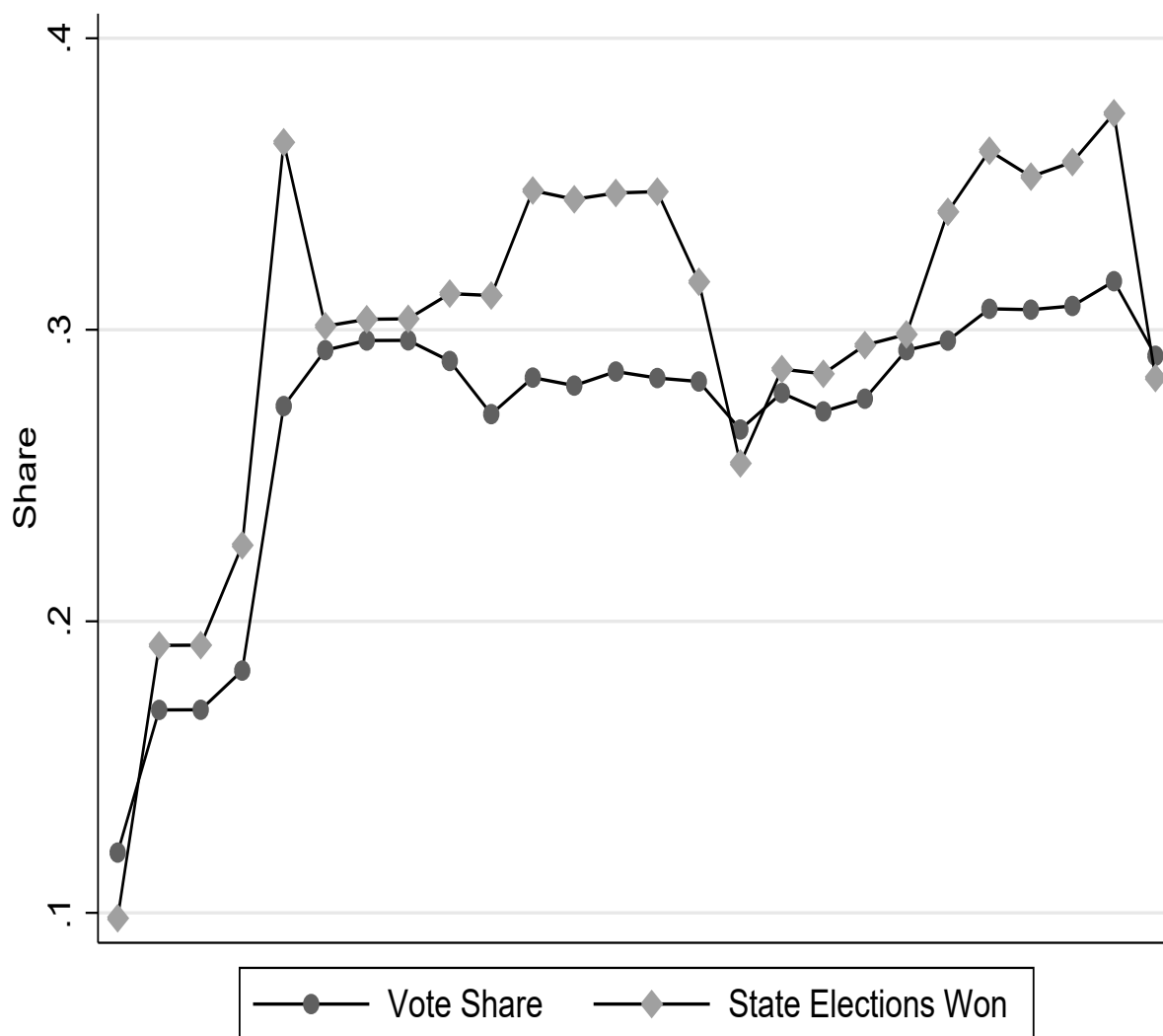
Notes: The figures above plots over time the average vote share and elections won by low caste parties in state legislatures. The low caste party vote share/share of legislators is weighted by the state's population.

Figure 3: Electoral Success for Low Caste Parties and Legislators from Low Caste Backgrounds
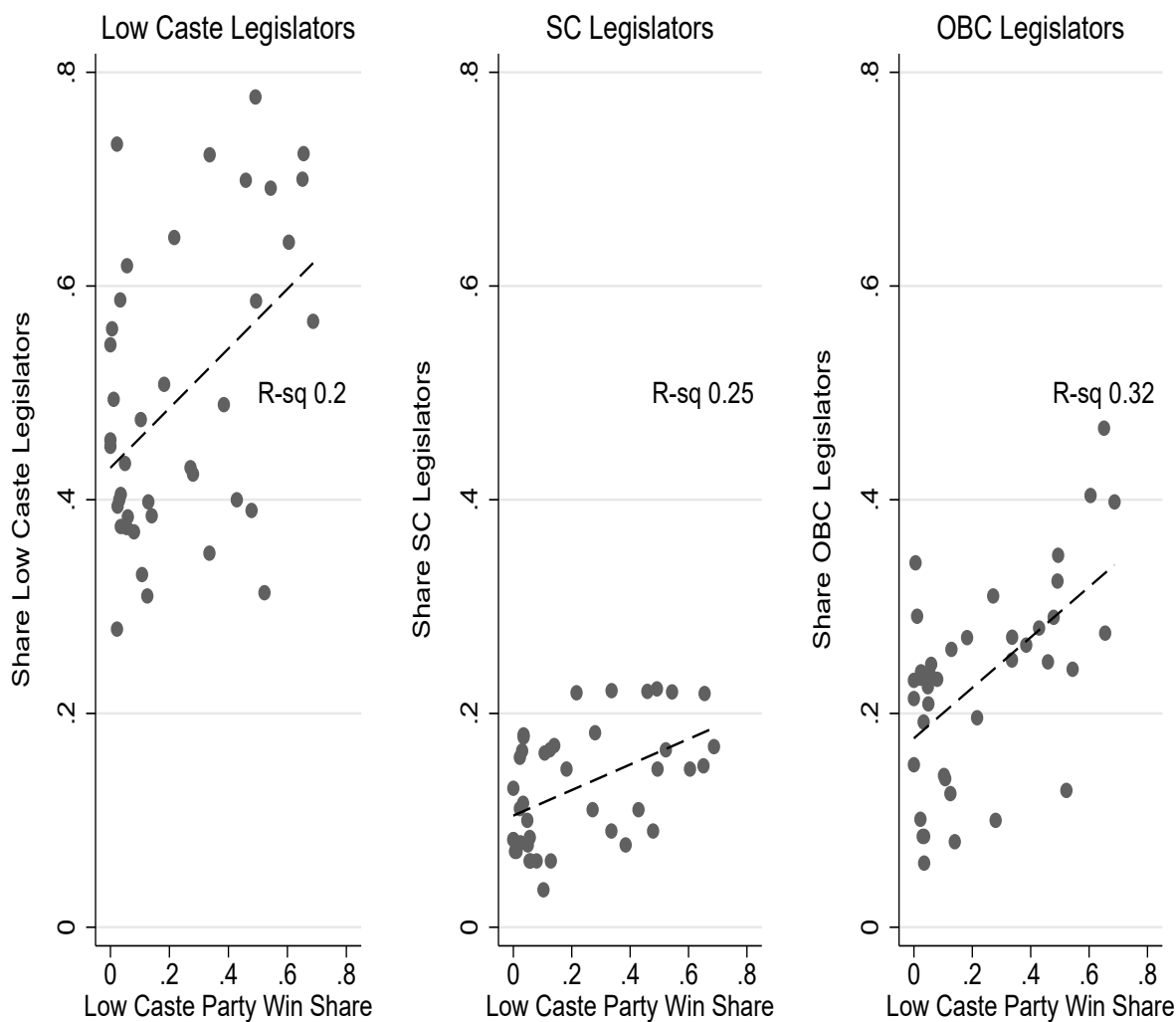
Notes: The figures above plot the correlation between the caste backgrounds of legislators in state legislative assemblies and the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the state. The first panel includes legislators hailing from SC, ST and OBC communities; the second panel includes legislators solely from SC communities; the third panel includes legislators from OBC communities. The states included are Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, for elections conducted between 1985 and 2007. The data for legislators' caste backgrounds are compiled from various chapters of Jaffrelot and Kumar (2009).

Figure 4: Close Electoral Wins of Low Caste Parties
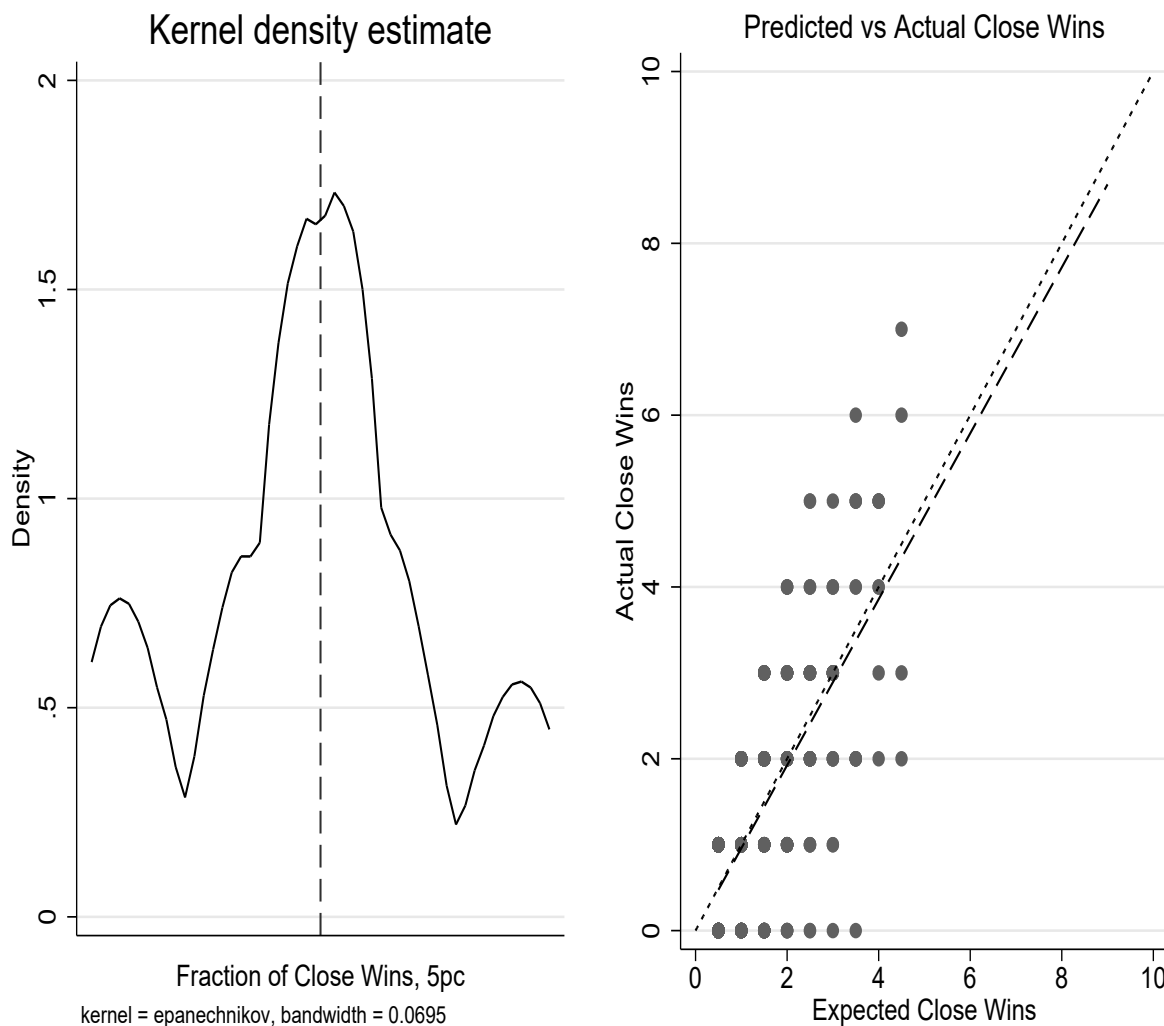
Notes: The figures above test whether low caste parties in expectation win half the number of close elections they contest in a district. The left hand panel plots the density of the distribution of the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the state. The right hand panel compares the actual number of close elecitons won by low caste parties with the expected number of close elections won by low caste parties. Expected number of close elections won by low caste parties is half the number of close elections contested by low caste parties in the district. The broken line is the 45-degree line where actual close wins equal actual close wins. The dashed line plots the linear fit between actual and expected close wins. Close elections are defined as those where the margin of victory between the winner and the runners-up is less than or equal to 5 percent of the votes cast.

Figure 5: Low Caste Party Win Margin and Fraction of Elections Won by Low Caste Parties in the District
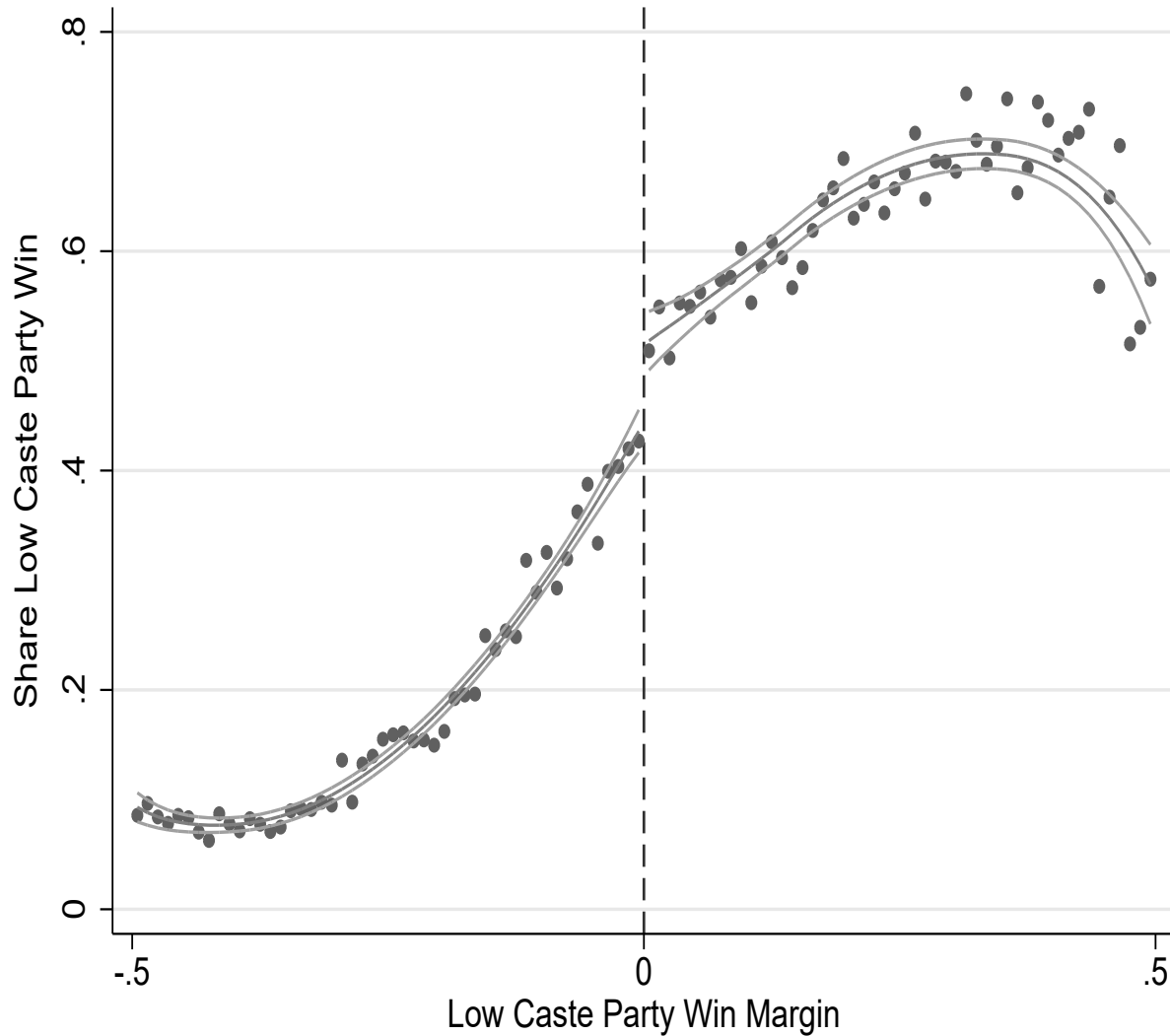
The above figure presents a graphical representation of the first stage of empirical specification. The horizontal axis is divided into 100 1 percentage point bins between -0.5 and 0.5 of low caste party win margin. Each point depicts the unconditional mean of the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district corresponding to that bin. The vertical dashed line represents the win margin of 0, where the outcome of the election switches discontinuously from a low caste party defeat to a low caste party victory. The horizontal line is a local second order polynomial fit on either side of the cutoff of 0. The broken horizontal lines show the 95 percent confidence intervals for the polynominal fit on either side of the cutoff.

Figure 6: Household Consumption from the PDS Across Survey Rounds
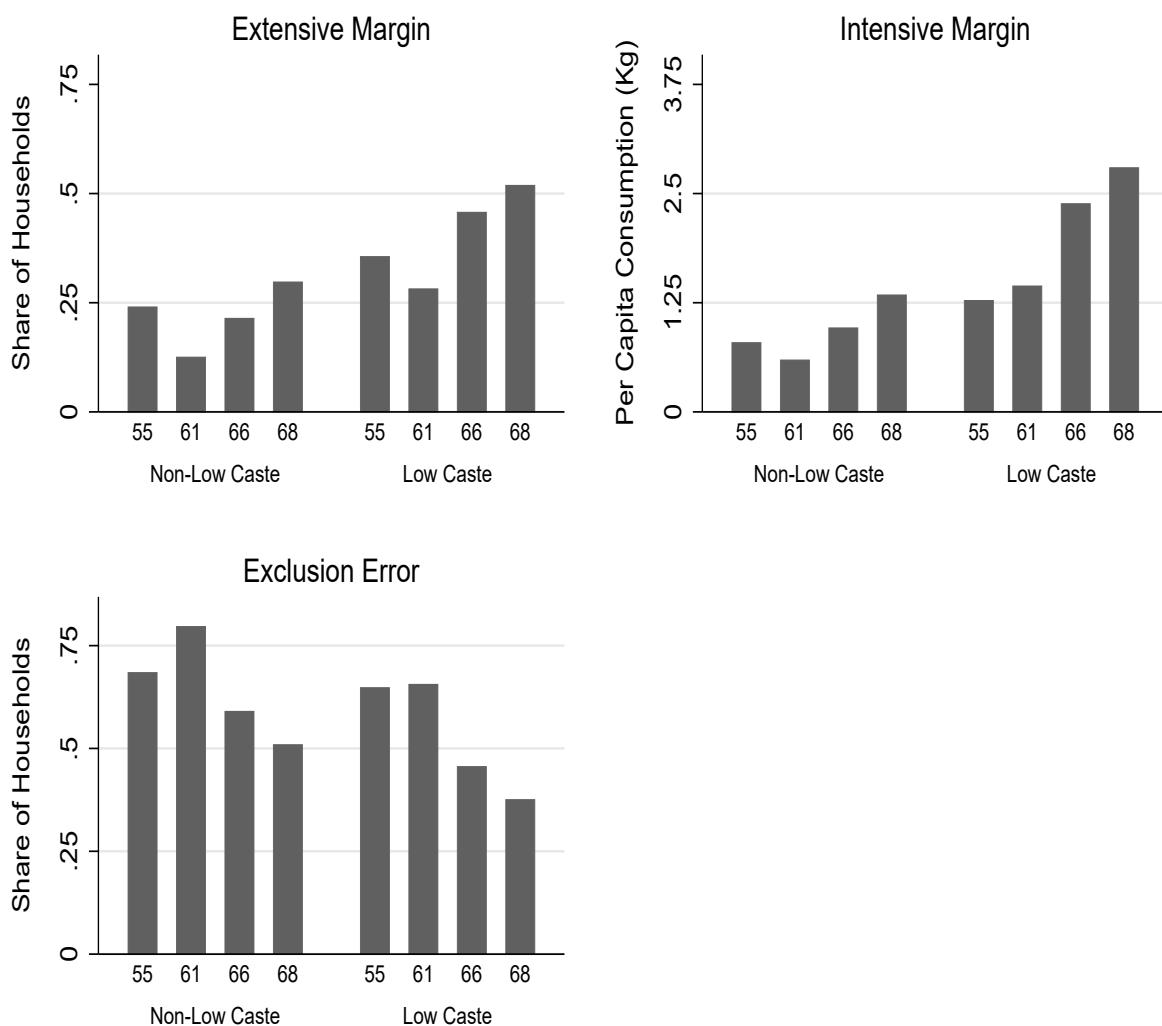
Notes: This figure shows low and non-low caste households' consumption from the PDS across the 4 NSS survey rounds. Extensive margin consumption measures whether the household consumed any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; intensive margin consumption measures the per capita food grains consumed by the household in the past 30 days; the exclusion error is the fraction of BPL or rural landless households which did not consume from the PDS oin the past 30 days. Round 55 corresponds to 1999-00; 61 to 2004-05; 66 to 2009-10; and 68 to 2011-12.

B.2 Tables

<div align="center">**Table B1:** Summary Statistics</div>

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	N
Electoral Variables					
Total Elections	19.4	13.29	1	59	306472
Fraction Low Caste Party Win	0.31	0.32	0	1	306472
Fraction Low Caste Party Close Win, 5pc	0.49	0.35	0	1	191548
Fraction Close Elections, 5pc	0.13	0.16	0	0.75	306472
Low Caste Party Vote Share	0.27	0.21	0	0.82	306472
BJP Vote Share	0.18	0.15	0	0.6	306472
INC Vote Share	0.25	0.14	0	0.58	306472
Voter Turnout	0.65	0.1	0.36	0.88	306472
Fraction Reserved Constituencies	0.24	0.18	0	1	306472
Effective No. of Parties	3.17	0.76	2.07	6.83	306472
Low Caste Households					
Any PDS Consumption	0.37	0.48	0	1	232187
Per Capita PDS Consumption	1.78	2.92	0	12.5	232187
Per Capita Monthly Expenditures (Rupees)	1004.64	1242.37	2.41	205987	232150
Headcount Ratio	0.27	0.45	0	1	232187
Rural Household	0.68	0.47	0	1	232187
Fraction Landless	0.36	0.48	0	1	156820
Literates in Household (Share)	0.61	0.33	0	1	232187
Household Size	4.84	2.5	1	43	232187
Non-Low Caste Households					
Any PDS Consumption	0.19	0.39	0	1	96135
Per Capita PDS Consumption	0.82	2.13	0	12.5	96135
Per Capita Monthly Expenditures (Rupees)	1458.92	1695.34	5.47	87633	96125
Headcount Ratio	0.11	0.32	0	1	96135
Rural Household	0.51	0.5	0	1	96135
Fraction Landless	0.23	0.42	0	1	48612
Literates in Household (Share)	0.8	0.26	0	1	96135
Household Size	4.65	2.52	1	52	96135

Notes: This table presents the summary statistics from the electoral and household data. The unit of observation is the household. The top panel presents the summaries for the electoral variables; the middle panel presents the summaries for low caste households; the bottom panel presents the summaries for non-low caste households. The fraction of close elections won by low caste parties is conditional on there being a close election in the district. Landlessness is calculated only for rural households.

Table B2: Mapping of NSS Survey Rounds and State Election Years - List 1

State	Survey Round	Election Year
Andhra Pradesh	55	1994
Andhra Pradesh	61	1999
Andhra Pradesh	66	2004
Andhra Pradesh	68	2009
Assam	55	1996
Assam	61	2001
Assam	66	2006
Assam	68	2006
Bihar	55	1995
Bihar	61	2000
Bihar	66	2005
Bihar	68	2010
Chhattisgarh	61	2003
Chhattisgarh	66	2008
Chhattisgarh	68	2008
Gujarat	55	1998
Gujarat	61	2002
Gujarat	66	2007
Gujarat	68	2007
Haryana	55	1995
Haryana	61	2000
Haryana	66	2004
Haryana	68	2009
Jharkhand	61	2000
Jharkhand	66	2005
Jharkhand	68	2009
Karnataka	55	1994
Karnataka	61	1999
Karnataka	66	2004
Karnataka	68	2008

NSS round 55 was conducted between 1999 and 2000; round 61 between 2004 and 2005; round 66 between 2009 and 2010; and round 68 between 2011 and 2012.

Table B3: Mapping of NSS Survey Rounds and State Election Years - List 2

State	Survey Round	Election Year
Kerala	55	1996
Kerala	61	2001
Kerala	66	2006
Kerala	68	2011
Madhya Pradesh	55	1998
Madhya Pradesh	61	2003
Madhya Pradesh	66	2008
Madhya Pradesh	68	2008
Maharashtra	55	1995
Maharashtra	61	1999
Maharashtra	66	2004
Maharashtra	68	2009
Orissa	55	1995
Orissa	61	2000
Orissa	66	2004
Orissa	68	2009
Rajasthan	55	1998
Rajasthan	61	2003
Rajasthan	66	2008
Rajasthan	68	2008
Tamil Nadu	55	1996
Tamil Nadu	61	2001
Tamil Nadu	66	2006
Tamil Nadu	68	2011
Uttar Pradesh	55	1996
Uttar Pradesh	61	2002
Uttar Pradesh	66	2007
Uttar Pradesh	68	2007
West Bengal	55	1996
West Bengal	61	2001
West Bengal	66	2006
West Bengal	68	2011

NSS round 55 was conducted between 1999 and 2000; round 61 between 2004 and 2005; round 66 between 2009 and 2010; and round 68 between 2011 and 2012.

Table B4: Non-Low Caste Winners of Close Elections Against Low Caste Parties

	No. of Close Elections	Fraction of Close Elections Won Against Low Caste Parties by		
		BJP	INC	Other Mainstream Parties
3 Percent Margin	835	0.26	0.48	0.26
4 Percent Margin	1142	0.26	0.47	0.26
5 Percent Margin	1423	0.27	0.46	0.27

The above table shows the fraction of close elections won by non-low caste parties against low caste parties by type of party and threshold of close elections. The time period under consideration is 1987 to 2012. INC refers to the Indian National Congress; BJP refers to the Bharatiya Janata Party

Table B5: District-Level Predictors of Low Caste Party Wins in Close Elections

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Total Close Elections Won By Low Caste Parties					
	5 Percent Threshold					
	No Covariates			With Covariates		
Total Close Elections, 5pc	.5313***	.4821***	.5065***	.5241***	.4859***	.5089***
	(.0295)	(.0528)	(.0550)	(.0389)	(.0549)	(.0559)
Low Caste Party Vote Share				.2394	.2910	-.0970
				(.2395)	(.6607)	(.7326)
Voter Turnout				-.4339	-.6946	-.2570
				(.3038)	(.8968)	(1.1217)
Effective No. of Parties				-.1274***	-.1118	-.1185
				(.0365)	(.0844)	(.0858)
SC/ST Reserved Constituencies				-.0697	-1.5073*	-1.3345
				(.1131)	(.7987)	(.8739)
Share Rural				.4327*	.6145	.4612
				(.2392)	(.6257)	(.6056)
Share Female				.6435	1.0846	1.2086
				(1.0192)	(1.4381)	(1.3662)
Average Age				.0090	.0192	.0126
				(.0143)	(.0306)	(.0297)
Share SC/ST/OBC				-.2093	-.6902*	-.6313*
				(.1583)	(.4129)	(.3680)
Land Holdings				.0175	.0505	.0490
				(.0142)	(.0375)	(.0383)
Share Literate				.2269	.5061	.2534
				(.2507)	(.5679)	(.5976)
Share Secondary +				-.2144	-.9078	-.7247
				(.3442)	(.6828)	(.7280)
Share Self-Employed				.2130	.6282	.5489
				(.4438)	(.6646)	(.7042)
Share Employer				-2.9873	-3.7769	-2.0466
				(2.0029)	(3.5964)	(3.8618)
Share Wage Worker				.3545	1.3713	1.3580
				(.5175)	(1.0376)	(1.0029)
Share Casual Wage Worker				.0287	.5404	.6573
				(.2928)	(.5523)	(.5341)
Share Formal Sector				.4382	-.0073	-.4071
				(.5012)	(.8041)	(.7992)
Share Public Sector				-.1562	.3304	.3088
				(.4133)	(.6694)	(.7294)
Share Private Sector				-.0329	.2157	.2276
				(.1594)	(.3819)	(.4204)
Monthly Consumption Per Capita				-.0616	-.4288	-.4259
				(.0813)	(.2664)	(.2842)
Observations	897	897	897	897	897	897
R^2	.82	.87	.88	.82	.88	.89
District FE	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Time FE	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
State-Time FE	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
Significantly different from 0.5 (p-val)?	.29	.73	.91	.54	.80	.87

Notes: This table shows the district-level predictors of low caste party victories in close elections. The outcome of interest in each specification is total close elections won by low caste parties in the district. The independent variable of interest is total close elections contested by low caste parties at the 5 percent threshold of close elections. Columns (2) and (4) include district and election year fixed effects; columns (3) and (6) include district and state-election year fixed effects. The sample is restricted to districts which witnessed at least 1 close election between low caste and non-low caste parties at the 5 percent threshold of win margin. Columns (4)-(6) include district-specific covariates. Standard errors are clustered by district.

Table B6: Low Caste Party Representation and PDS Consumption for Non-Low Caste Households

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Pr(Any PDS = 1)		Monthly Logged Per Capita PDS	
Low Caste Party Win	.1391	.1297	.2828	.2468
	(.1247)	(.0904)	(.2137)	(.1533)
Observations	84020	84020	84020	84020
R^2	.17	.22	.15	.20
Dep Var Mean	.19	.19	.77	.77
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table presents the baseline results estimating the impact of low caste party legislators on non-low caste households' purchase of food grains from the PDS. The unit of observation is the household. The outcome of interest in columns (1)-(2) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household purchased any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; in columns (3)-(4), the logged quantity of food grains purchased from the PDS over the past 30 days. The sample is restricted to non-low caste households. The independent variable of interest is the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district, instrumented by the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district. All specifications include the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Columns (2) and (4) also include household and district covariates. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

Table B7: Low Caste Party Representation and PDS Consumption: Reduced Form and First Stage

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Reduced Form				First Stage	
			Monthly PDS Per Capita		Fraction Low Caste Party Win	
	Pr(Any PDS = 1)					
Low Caste Party Win, 5pc	.0392**	.0851***	.0414***	.0857***	.1061***	.1152***
	(.0154)	(.0322)	(.0132)	(.0289)	(.0324)	(.0279)
Observations	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452
R^2	.26	.24	.31	.30	.88	.90
Dep Var Mean	.37	1.80	.37	1.80	.32	.32
Covariates	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Notes: This table presents the reduced form and first stage results corresponding to the baseline results. The outcome of interest in columns (1)-(2) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household purchased any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; in columns (3)-(4), the logged quantity of food grains purchased from the PDS over the past 30 days; in columns (5) and (6), the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district. The independent variable of interest is the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties at the 5 percent win margin. All specifications include the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Columns (2), (4) and (6) also include household and district covariates. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

Table B8: Differential Effect of Low Caste Party Legislators on Household PDS Consumption

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Pr(Any PDS = 1)		Per Capita PDS (Log)	
Low Caste Party Win	.3586**	.4512**	.7507**	.9963**
	(.1454)	(.1826)	(.3225)	(.4168)
SC*Low Caste Party Win	-.0119		-.0445	
	(.0271)		(.0581)	
ST*Low Caste Party Win	.0203		.0186	
	(.0842)		(.1630)	
Last 2 Years*Low Caste Party Win		-.1637*		-.4492**
		(.0904)		(.1857)
Observations	222452	222452	222452	222452
R^2	.30	.30	.29	.28
Dep Var Mean	.39	.36	1.91	1.80

Notes: This table tests for heterogeneity in the impact of low caste party legislators. The unit of observation is the household. The dependent variable in columns (1)-(2) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household has purchased any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; in columns (3)-(4), the logged quantity of food grains purchased by the household from the PDS in the past 30 days. The interaction term in columns (1) and (3), are a dummy equaling 1 if the household is a SC or ST; in columns (2) and (4), a dummy equaling 1 if the survey is conducted during the last 2 years of the state legislature's tenure. In each instance, the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district is instrumented by the fraction of close election won by low caste parties in the district. All specifications control for the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Household and district-level covariates are also included. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

Table B9: Low Caste Party Representation and PDS Consumption: Differential Effects Across Households in Bottom Decile/Quartile of Consumption Distribution

	Low Caste				Non-Low Caste			
	Bottom Decile		Bottom Quartile		Bottom Decile		Bottom Quartile	
	(1) Any PDS	(2) PDS Per Capita	(3) Any PDS	(4) PDS Per Capita	(5) Any PDS	(6) PDS Per Capita	(7) Any PDS	(8) PDS Per Capita
Low Caste Party Win	.3596**	.7502**	.3738**	.7783**	.1289	.2460	.1422	.2685*
	(.1455)	(.3164)	(.1455)	(.3165)	(.0909)	(.1531)	(.0904)	(.1535)
Low Caste Party Win*Bottom 10pc	-.0155	-.0715			.0644	.1007		
	(.0437)	(.0843)			(.0619)	(.1207)		
Low Caste Party Win*Bottom 25pc			-.0335	-.0891			-.0121	-.0274
			(.0341)	(.0699)			(.0424)	(.0751)
Observations	222452	222452	222452	222452	84020	84020	84020	84020
R^2	.31	.30	.32	.30	.23	.21	.24	.22
Dep Var Mean	.48	2.60	.46	2.33	.36	1.73	.33	1.47

Notes: The above table shows the differential effect of low caste party legislators across households in the bottom 10 (25) percent of the consumption distribution. The unit of observation is the household. The dependent variable in columns (1), (3), (5) and (7) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household has purchased any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; the dependent variable in columns (2), (4), (6) and (8) is the logged quantity of food grains purchased by the household from the PDS in the past 30 days. The interaction term in columns (1), (2), (5) and (7) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household falls in the bottom 10 percent of the monthly per capita expenditures distribution; in columns (2), (4), (6) and (8), a dummy equaling 1 if the household falls in the bottom 25 percent of the monthly per capita expenditures distribution. In each instance, the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district is instrumented by the fraction of close election won by low caste parties in the district. All specifications control for the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Household and district-level covariates are also included. Columns (1)-(4) restrict the sample to low caste households; columns (4)-(8) restrict the sample to non-low caste households. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

Table B10: Political Parties and Exclusion Errors Amongst Low and Non-Low Caste Households

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	5)	(6)
				Pr(No PDS = 1)		
	Non-Low Caste Household		Low Caste Household			
	BPL	BPL or Rural Landless	BPL	BPL or Rural Landless	BPL	BPL or Rural Landless
Low Caste Party Win	-.2593	-.1139				
	(.2333)	(.1527)				
BJP Win			-.0034	.0164		
			(.1175)	(.1094)		
INC Win					.1110	.0631
					(.0822)	(.0698)
Observations	9729	17715	61584	97753	61584	97753
R^2	.27	.24	.31	.31	.31	.31

Notes: This table shows the impact of mainstream parties on the likelihood of eligible low caste households being excluded from the PDS. The unit of observation is the household. The dependent variable in each specification is a dummy equaling 1 if the household did not undertake any consumption of food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days. Columns (1), (3) and (5) restrict the sample to low caste BPL households; columns (2), (4) and (6) restrict the sample to low caste households who are either BPL, or rural and landless. The independent variable of interest in columns (1) and (2) is the fraction of elections won by low caste parties in the district; in columns (3) and (4), the fraction of BJP in the district; in columns (5) and (6), the fraction of elections won by the INC in the district. In each instance, the fraction of elections won by low caste parties, BJP and INC in the district is instrumented by the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties, BJP and INC in the district. All specifications control for the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, BJP and INC, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects, along with household and district covariates. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.

Table B11: Low Caste Party Representation and PDS Consumption: Alternate Specifications

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	With Household Weights		State Time Trends		District Time Trends	
	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	Any PDS	PDS Per Capita	PDS Per Capita	PDS Per Capita
Low Caste Party Win	.3638**	.6943**	.3134**	.6757**	.3705**	.7144**
	(.1499)	(.2944)	(.1316)	(.2809)	(.1839)	(.3350)
Observations	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452	222452
R^2	.32	.31	.31	.30	.31	.30

Notes: The above table shows the robustness of the baseline results to alternate specification choices. The unit of observation is the household. The dependent variable in columns (1), (3) and (5) is a dummy equaling 1 if the household has purchased any food grains from the PDS in the past 30 days; in columns (2), (4) and (6), the logged quantity of food grains purchased by the household from the PDS in the past 30 days. The independent variable of interest is the fraction of close elections won by low caste parties in the district, instrumented by the fraction of close election won by low caste parties in the district. Columns (1) and (2) weigh the specifications by the NSS assigned household weights; columns (3) and (4) include flexible linear state time trends; columns (5) and (6) include flexible linear district time trends. All specifications control for the fraction of close elections contested by low caste parties, along with district, survey round, survey subround, and electoral cycle fixed effects. Household and district-level covariates are also included. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by district.