A Clientelistic Interpretation of Effects of Political Reservations in West Bengal Local Governments

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- Conversely, effect of SC reservations is significantly positive for both groups

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- We shall conclude by discussing normative implications: what this implies for how government accountability ought to be assessed

The Context: West Bengal Panchayats

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- We conducted a household survey in 2004, with a stratified random sample of 2400 households covering all of rural West Bengal, asking their household heads to identify LG programs they have benefitted from since 1978

Household Characteristics

TABLE 1. Sample Characteristics: Household Heads

Agricultural Land Ownership	No. of households	Age	% Male	Maximum education in household	% SC	% ST	% Agriculture Occupation	% Immigrants
Landless	1214	45	88	6.6	35	2.4	26	40
0-1.5 acres	658	48	88	7.8	34	4.9	65	17
1.5-2.5 acres	95	56	92	10.8	15	7.4	82	19
2.5-5 acres	258	58	93	11.1	24	3.1	72	10
5-10 acres	148	60	89	12.5	22	4.1	66	12
10 acres and above	29	59	100	13.9	24	6.9	72	14
ALL	2402	49	89	8.0	32	3.4	47	28

TABLE 2: PUBLIC BENEFITS RECEIVED DURING 1998-2004			
	VILLAGE % HH's REPORTING	INTRAVILLAGE SHARES SC/ST	FEM
Any Benefit	26.92	41.56	8.58
Drinking Water	4.03	38.03	8.19
Housing and Toilet	1.95	50.31	12.38
Employment	3.63	63.26	7.60
BPL card	2.73	31.83	8.89
Roads	9.32	33.82	9.03
IRDP Loans	0.70	52.39	7.36
Minikits	0.94	47.57	7.79
Notes: Intravillage shares: proportion of benefits reported by designated group. SC/ST: scheduled caste or tribes; FEM: female-headed households percent of village households for SC/ST: 35; for FEM: 10			

TABLE 3: GP PRADHAN RESERVATIONS				
	For Women		For SC/ST	
Election year	# GPs	% GPs	# GPs	% GPs
1998	22	39	19	33
2003	16	28	23	40

TABLE 4: WOMEN PRADHAN RESERVATION EFFECTS TARGETING OF AGGREGATE NUMBER OF BENEFITS, 1998-2003-04		
	Intra-Village SC/ST Share	Intra-Village FEM Share
Reserved Dummy	-.109**	-.016
	(.043)	(.014)
constant	.449***	.086***
	(.018)	(.009)
Number observations, villages	164,87	164,87
R-sq.	.019	.115
Notes: ***, **, * denotes significant at 1%, 5%, 10%		
Robust standard errors clustered at GP level, in parentheses		
Village and GP timeblock dummies included		
Dependent variable: intra-village share of specified group in distribution of benefits		
Using data from two GP administrations: 1998-03, 2003-04		

Explaining Effects of the Reservations

- Consistent with Besley, Pande and Rao (2005) for BPL targeting in South Indian villages over three states, and with our earlier work (Bardhan, Mookherjee and Parra Torrado (2010)) in WB using local government data on spending and benefits distributed until 1998

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- Unless women elected to reserved posts came from non-SC-ST households, were more opposed to SC-ST groups than their male counterparts, and indifferent to the needs of female-headed households
- Can test this: look next at effects of joint women-SC reservations (accounting for about 10%) of GPs and checking whether the adverse impact on SCs vanishes

TABLE 5: JT. SC/ST-WOMEN PRADHAN RESERVATION EFFECTS ON TARGETING TO SC/ST GROUPS (TOTAL NUMBER OF BENEFITS	
	Intra-Village SC/ST Share
Reserved Dummy	-.081
	(.060)
constant	.540*
	(.300)
Number observations, villages	164,87
R-sq.	.027
Notes: ***, **, * denotes significant at 1%, 5%, 10%	
Robust standard errors clustered at GP level, in parentheses	
Village and GP timeblock dummies included	
Dependent variable: intravillage share of SC/STs	
Includes control for demographic share of SC/STs	

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- Elite capture is more likely in villages with greater land inequality and poverty of vulnerable groups
- Then we would expect to see the adverse impact to be greater in villages with higher inequality and poverty

TABLE 6: HETEROGENEITY OF FEMALE RESERVATION EFFECT W.R.T. VILLAGE LAND INEQUALITY

	Intra-village SC/ST share
Reservation dummy	-1.739***
	(.445)
Reservation*% Land Medium and Big	.603***
	(.181)
Reservation*SC/ST Landlack Rate	1.768***
	(.413)
% Land Medium and Big	-.096
	(.404)
SC/ST Landlack Rate	-3.624***
	(.928)
Constant	3.961***
	(1.880)
Number of observations,villages	157,82

Notes: SC/ST Landlack rate denotes fraction SC/STs either landless or marginal landowners.
Controls include village and GP timeblock dummies, besides % households landless,
% households SC/ST and their interactions with reserved dummy.
***, **, * denotes significant at 1%, 5%, 10%.
Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at GP level.

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- Probabilistic voting behavior — based partly on policy consequences, partly on other idiosyncratic, random elements (uniform density σ_i, group i's 'swing propensity') and on campaign advertising
- An elite group e that can make campaign contributions to either party conditional on policies chosen; (parameter h, the sensitivity of votes to campaign finance, determines extent of capture)

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- Voters need to forecast likelihood of either party winning, to calculate the instrumental benefits
- Impose some technical conditions (sufficient randomness in votes/turnout/counting errors) to avoid multiple sunspots equilibria

Electoral Competition and Voters Payoffs

- Two parties L, R; each party selects for its policy platform an *allocation* $\{q_{ik}^p\}_{i,k}$, satisfying $q_{ik}^p \in [0,1]$ and $\sum_i \sum_k \mu_i q_{ik}^p \underline{t}_k \leq A$
- Voter payoffs are the sum of three components:

$$W_i = L_i + \theta_i N_i + (1 - \theta_i) I_i$$

where:

- L_i *Loyalties:*

$$L_i \sim U[\underline{\epsilon}_i + h(C^L - C^R) - \frac{1}{\sigma_i}, \underline{\epsilon}_i + h(C^L - C^R) + \frac{1}{\sigma_i}]$$

where C^p : campaign spending by party p, h : effectiveness of campaign spending in swaying voters, σ_i : 'swing propensity' of group i

Voters Payoffs, continued

- *Non-Instrumental Payoffs:*

$$N_i = \sum_k q_{ik} v_{ik} + V_i(A - \sum_j \sum_k q_{jk} \underline{t}_k)$$

- *Instrumental Payoff:* with probability z_i^p, party p finds out how the voter voted, and will deny it private transfers if it comes to power subsequently. Voting for party L then yields payoff

$$I_i = \gamma_L[V_i(g^L) + \sum_k q_{ik}^L v_{ik}] + (1 - \gamma_L)[V_i(g^R) + (1 - z_i^R) \sum_k q_{ik}^R v_{ik}]$$

if voter believes party L will win with probability γ_L (to be determined)

Voting

- A voter of type i will vote for party L if

$$\begin{aligned}&\epsilon_i + h[C^L - C^R] \\ &+ \theta[V_i(g^L) + \sum_k q_{ik}^L v_{ik} - V_i(g^R) - \sum_k q_{ik}^R v_{ik}] \\ &+ (1-\theta)[\gamma_L z_i^L \sum_k q_{ik}^L v_{ik} - (1-\gamma_L) z_i^R \sum_k q_{ik}^R v_{ik}] > 0\end{aligned}$$

- Vote share of party L:

$$\begin{aligned}S_L \equiv &\frac{1}{2} + \sum_i \mu_i \sigma_i \{\underline{\epsilon}_i + h(C^L - C^R)\} \\ &+ \sum_i \mu_i \sigma_i \{\theta[V_i(g^L) + \sum_k q_{ik}^L v_{ik} - V_i(g^R) - \sum_k q_{ik}^R v_{ik}] \\ &+ (1-\theta)[\gamma_L z_i^L \sum_k q_{ik}^L v_{ik} - (1-\gamma_L) z_i^R \sum_k q_{ik}^R v_{ik}]\}\end{aligned}$$

Election Outcome

- As in Grossman-Helpman (1996), probability that L wins is $\phi(S_L)$ mapping from $[0,1]$ to itself, strictly increasing, smooth function (reflects errors in voting and vote counting, besides macro swings in voter loyalties after parties have selected their platforms)
- However, owing to clientelism, vote shares depend on voters' anticipation of the likelihood of party L winning
- Equilibrium defined by voter expectations that are fulfilled:

$$\gamma_L = \phi(S_L(\gamma_L; \pi^L, \pi^R))$$

- Possibility of multiple 'sunspots' equilbria
- To rule this out, assume sufficient electoral uncertainty (upper bound $\bar{\phi}'$ to slope of ϕ):

$$\bar{\phi}' < [2(1-\theta)\sum_i \mu_i \sigma_i \max \sum_k v_{ik}]^{-1}$$

Proposition 1: Case of No Capture

Assume the capture parameter h equals zero. Then there is a unique equilibrium which is characterized as follows. The probability $\gamma_L(\pi^L, \pi^R)$ *of party L winning is a smooth function of policy choices* π^L, π^R *of the two parties. The policy choice* π^p *maximizes the quasi-utilitarian welfare function*

$$\sum_i \sum_k \mu_i \sigma_i [\theta + (1-\theta) z_i^p \gamma_p] q_{ik} v_{ik} + \theta \sum_i \sum_k \mu_i \sigma_i V_i (A - \sum_i \sum_k \mu_i q_{ik} \underline{t}_k)$$

taking as given γ_p*, the equilibrium probability of party p winning.*

Proposition

Equilibrium policy choice induced for party p maximizes

$$\sum_i \mu_i \sigma_i [\theta \{ \sum_k q_{ik}^p v_{ik} + V_i(g^p) \}$$
$$+ \underbrace{(1-\theta)\hat{\gamma}_p z_i^p \sum_k q_{ik}^p v_{ik}]}_{clientelism} + \underbrace{h\hat{\gamma}_p [\sum_k q_{ek}^p v_{ek} + V_e(g^p)]}_{capture}$$

where $\hat{\gamma}_p$ denotes the equilibrium probability of party p winning

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- If non-elite group is poor, while elite group is affluent, they will prefer different kinds of goods (inferior versus non-inferior goods)
- With heterogenous preferences, party will tend to allocate inferior goods to clientelistic non-elite poor groups, and non-inferior goods to elites

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- On the other hand, they both have positive effects on public good provision (assuming elites do not value public goods)
- Clientelism reduces political competition, provided the more popular party has a superior party organization at the local level which translates into superior clientelistic ability (eg PRI in Mexico, Left Front in West Bengal)

Application to West Bengal Context

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  - Also a reduction in extent of elite capture, owing to disruption of traditional deal of party bosses with elites

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  - (d) these effects will be more pronounced for pradhans with limited political and administrative experience
- Employment programs, BPL cards, housing and toilets, drinking water taps constitute inferior goods; agricultural minikits and IRDP loans constitute non-inferior goods

TABLE 3: LOGIT REGRESSION FOR LEFT FRONT VOTE IN GP (LOCAL GOVT) ELECTIONS

	Vote for Left Front
# one-time own-benefits*Left-share	.044
	(.095)
# one-time acquaintance-benefits*Left share	-.038
	(.073)
# recurring own-benefits*Left share	.403**
	(.165)
# recurring acquaint.-benefits*Left share	-.277*
	(.166)
GP help with occupation*Left share	.410**
	(.186)
GP help in emergencies*Left share	.284*
	(.159)
Income improvement since 1978*Left share	.020
	(.014)
Improvement in house type since 1978*Left share	.128
	(.202)
Increase in #rooms since 1978*Left share	.076
	(.089)
Agri. income improvement since 1978*Left share	.093***
	(.028)
Number of observations, villages	1637,89

Notes: Dependent variable is based on vote cast at end of survey.
Left Share denotes GP Left share at the time of receiving benefits.
Controls include village dummies, agri. and other land owned,education, dummies for SC, ST, occupation, gender of head and immigrant.
***, **, * denotes significant at 1%, 5%, 10%.

TABLE 7: EFFECT OF FEMALE RESERVATIONS ON SC/ST SHARE OF SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

	All Benefits	Drinking Water	Housing Toilet	Employ ment	BPL Card	Roads	IRDP Credit	Kits
Reservation Dummy	-.157*	-.351	.136	-.029	-.375	-.172	3.430***	.527***
	(.093)	(.228)	(.295)	(.208)	(.246)	(.185)	(.968)	(.169)
Reservation*% Land Medium Big	.298**	.368	-.632	.306	.888**	-.172	.931**	-.041
	(.139)	(.403)	(1.484)	(.295)	(.349)	(.247)	(.407)	(.880)
Number of observations,villages	164,87	118,75	75,51	95,66	105,67	132,78	53,43	68,52
R-sq.	.03	.20	.08	.04	.19	.10	83	.44

Notes: Controls include village and GP timeblock dummies,% Land medium and big, % households landless.
***, **, * denotes significant at 1%, 5%, 10%.Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at GP level.

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	All Benefits	Drinking Water	Housing Toilet	Employ ment	BPL Card	Roads	IRDP Credit	Kits
Reservation Dummy	-1.739*	-1.197	-5.467**	-4.576**	-1.741	-1.231		-4.417
	(.445)	(2.478)	(2.399)	(1.878)	(2.191)	(1.026)		(4.962)
Reservation*% Land	.603***	.343	.326	2.132**	1.346	-.028	.	-.029
Medium Big	(.181)	(1.020)	(1.452)	(.828)	(.841)	(.400)		(1.100)
Reservation*SCST	1.768***	1.065	6.370**	4.592**	1.245	1.509		5.535
Landlack Rate	(.413)	(2.378)	(2.38)	(2.193)	(1.893)	(1.034)		(4.70)
Number of observations,villages	157,82	115,73	72,49	92,63	100,64	126,74		65,49
R-sq.	.38	.22	.22	.21	.05	.23		.54

Notes: Controls include village,GP timeblock dummies,% Land med/big, SC-ST llack ,% households lless.
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TABLE 8: HETEROGENEITY OF WOMEN RESERVATION EFFECT ON SC/ST SHARE W.R.T. PRIOR EXPERIENCE

	Intra-Village SC/ST Share of:			
	All Benefits	Drinking Water	Kits 1998-2004	Kits 1978-2004
Reserved Dummy	-.100	.596	.403*	.089
	(.105)	(.394)	(.229)	(.229)
Reserved*New GP	-.072	-1.091***	.000	.537***
Member	(.088)	(.383)	(.000)	(.197)
New GP Member	-.077	-.001	.293	-.315**
	(.049)	(.105)	(.355)	(.127)
Number observations, villages	160,87	116,75	67,51	111,61
R-sq	.25	.34	.45	.58

Notes: New GP Member dummy: Pradhan is GP member for first time.
Last two columns run on 1998-2004 and 1978-2004 village panels respectively.
Controls include village and GP timeblock dummies,% Land medium and big, % households landless and interactions of these with reserved dummy.
***, **, * denotes significant at 1%, 5%, 10%. Robust s.e.'s in parentheses, clustered at GP level.

Reservations for SC Candidates

- Hypothesis: SC reserved pradhans (mostly male leaders of SC factions) have greater political experience than women elected to reserved posts, and are better informed (compared to non-reserved pradhans) about voting behavior of SC households

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- Hence the result is to *increase* clientelism with respect to SC groups, possibly decrease it for non-SC groups
- Implications for capture are ambiguous: no effect predicted by the model for purely opportunistic SC candidates that are equally politically experienced compared to non-reserved pradhans, otherwise a negative effect if they are less experienced

Predicted Effects of SC Reservations

- (e) Increase transfers of inferior goods to SC groups

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- (e) Increase transfers of inferior goods to SC groups
- (f) Reduce (or leave unchanged) transfers of non-inferior goods to elites, leaving more to be distributed (resp. with no effect on transfers) to non-elite groups, including SCs and female-headed households

TABLE 9: IMPACT OF SC RESERVATIONS

	Village Per HH # Benefits	SC/ST Share	FEM Share
SC Pradhan Reservation	.053	.092**	.033*
	(.045)	(.042)	(.017)
% HHs SC/ST	-.315***	-.068	.435
	(.104)	(.669)	(.521)
Constant	.445***	.405	-.102
	(.046)	(.263)	(.205)
Number of observations, Villages	178,89	164,87	164,87
R-sq.	.24	.07	.06

Notes: Controls include village and time dummies.
***, **, * denotes significant at 1%, 5%, 10%.
Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at GP level.

TABLE 10: IMPACT OF SC RESERVATIONS ON TARGETING OF SPECIFIC BENEFITS

	All programs	Kits and IRDP	Inferior Goods	Roads
SC/ST HHs	.124***	.008	.058*	.039**
	(.045)	(.006)	(.034)	(.018)
Number of observations, Villages	479,80	479,80	479,80	479,80
w-R-sq.	.41	.09	.27	.33
FEM HHs	.116**	.01	.075*	.034
	(.046)	(.009)	(.039)	(.024)
Number of observations, Villages	408,68	408,68	408,68	408,68
w-R-sq.	.32	.06	.15	.33

Notes: Dependent variable is per household number of benefits of specified type for specified group.
Inferior Goods include drinking water, employment, housing toilets and BPL cards.
Controls include village and GP timeblock dummies, % SC/ST, landless; % Land Medium and Big.
***, **, * denotes significant at 1%, 5%, 10%.
Robust s.e.'s in parentheses, clustered at GP level.

Conclusion: Some Implications

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- The hypothesis implies that effect of women reservations will be moderated over time as women Pradhans accumulate political experience
- Normative implications of improved targeting to SCs are ambiguous: are these the result of enhanced clientelism or genuine responsiveness of local governments to the needy?
- Suggests its not enough to use simple targeting ratios to measure government accountability
- Need closer examination of detailed composition of benefit programs: by categories of benefits (e.g., one-time versus recurring, private versus public), whether they are excessively narrowly targeted within beneficiary groups